

PARIS  OLYMPICS



WALLY SKALIJ / Los Angeles Times

L.A. MAYOR Karen Bass displays the Olympic flag during the closing ceremony of the Paris Games at Stade de France on Sunday.

The flag's in Los Angeles' hands now

L.A. touts its musical culture and star power during showcase at closing ceremony

BY DAVID WHARTON

PARIS — No other city in the world can do what Paris has done over the last three weeks, staging the drama of Olympic competition against the mise-en-scène of a glowing Eiffel Tower and the lush gardens of Versailles.

The 2024 Summer Games, with their classical trappings and sheer visual beauty, raised an important question.

How can Los Angeles possibly top this?

The organizers who will bring the Olympics to Southern California in 2028 offered a sneak peek during Sunday night's closing ceremony at Stade de France. Instead of tradition, they leaned into production values and pop culture.

Like something out of "Mission: Impossible," Tom Cruise rappelled from the rim of the stadium to the field below, then roared off on a motorcycle. Snoop Dogg dropped a few bars. Billie Eilish performed,

albeit remotely, from Southern California beaches.

"We don't have an Eiffel Tower," said Casey Wasserman, chairman of the LA28 organizing committee. "We've got a Hollywood sign."

The next host city always gets 15 or so minutes near the end of each Olympic closing. These pre-

[See L.A. Olympics, A8]

HARRIS BACK IN BAY AREA TO RAISE FUNDS

Vice president rakes in \$12 million, touts California roots in high-energy event.

BY SEEMA MEHTA

SAN FRANCISCO — In a boisterous homecoming after becoming the Democratic presidential nominee, Vice President Kamala Harris returned to California on Sunday and reveled in being surrounded by supporters she has known for decades, while also warning of a bleak future for the nation if Democrats do not win in November.

"It's good to be home," Harris told about 700 people who roared and leaped to their feet as she walked on stage in a hotel ballroom in San Francisco. "This is a room full of dear, dear friends and long-standing supporters — folks I have known for my entire career. ... We've been through a lot together. I want to thank everyone in here for your love and long-standing support and friendship and for your dedication to this country."

The mood at the fundraiser was warm and optimistic — one woman in the front row waved a sign that said "Make America Joyful Again." But Harris turned serious when she argued that fundamental rights such as healthcare, same-sex marriage and abortion are at stake in the race against former President Trump.

"We know what we need to do — we need to knock on doors, we need to register folks to vote, we need to get people to the polls. And every day matters," she said. "That's why we're going to win, but let's not take anything for granted."

The event, which drew former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Gov. Gavin Newsom, San Francisco Mayor London Breed, Rep. Barbara Lee, San Francisco Giants Chief Executive Larry Baer and a slew of other elected officials and donors, raised more than

[See Fundraiser, A7]

Even Disney superfans bemoan park prices

BY SAMANTHA MASUNAGA AND TODD MARTENS

Clad in a two-tiered ruffled dress, Minnie Mouse ears and a folding fan, all made of recycled Disney parks merch bags, Patt Haro reminisced about the days, decades ago, when Disneyland's annual pass was just \$99.

Haro, 65, and her similarly decked-out husband, Richard, 66, have been annual pass holders for more than 40 years. The Fontana couple used to buy passes for loved ones as Christmas

presents.

"Prices have definitely gone up," said Haro, who also works as a travel planner specializing in Disney trips.

But that hasn't stopped the couple's tradition of visiting Disneyland every Sunday in coordinated, handmade outfits, similar to their get-up at the D23 Disney convention in Anaheim over the weekend. For their most recent annual passes, known as a "Magic Key," they paid about \$1,600 — which Richard Haro estimates works out to \$20 a day.

"It's really worth it to us," he said.

What keeps them coming back?

"The magic," Patt Haro said, smiling.

At Disney's biennial fan event at the Anaheim Convention Center, even the biggest fans acknowledged the higher prices for theme park admission and grumbled about the move to paid line-skipping perks. But D23 attendees, a self-selecting group of superfans, were far from willing to cut out trips.

That is good news for the Burbank media and enter-

[See Disney, A7]



RICHARD SHOTWELL / Invision / Associated Press

AT DISNEY'S biennial D23, even the biggest fans grumbled about the move to paid line-skipping.



MICHAEL CONROY / Associated Press

ANOTHER GOLDEN MOMENT

U.S. basketball team takes a selfie after defeating France. The gold medal is the U.S. women's unprecedented eighth consecutive. **SPORTS, D1**

Trump campaign alleges hacking

Ex-president's team blames Iranian actors, saying they stole and distributed sensitive documents. **NATION, A5**

Urban and rural teens swap lives

Exchange program aims to break down stereotypes and spark lasting friendships. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather
Mostly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 87/65. **B6**

For the latest news, go to latimes.com.



Printed with soy inks on partially recycled paper.

COLUMN ONE

Mystery shrouded L.A. watchmaker

Charles Allison often kept secrets about the timepieces he crafted. Perhaps that is what compelled his grandson to dig beneath surface

BY NOAH GOLDBERG

The miniature grandfather clock never ticked in Greg Allison's childhood.

The clock, just 7 inches high, sat under a glass dome on one of the highest shelves in the library of his family's house in Rochester, N.Y.

One night in 1981, when Greg was 15, his father, a World War II veteran of few words, opened up about the silent timepiece after a few drinks.

It was a wedding gift, he said, from Greg's grandfather, a master watchmaker in Los Angeles with unmatched technical prowess. Greg's father told him that about a dozen watches made by his grandfather had been lost. Perhaps they were somewhere in Los Angeles.

When Greg's grandfather gifted the clock to his son and daughter-

[See Clocks, A6]



Allison family

CHARLES ALLISON built watches and clocks at his little storefront in Sherman Oaks for decades during the first half of the 20th century.



Get breaking news, instantly.

Download the app for up-to-the-minute alerts.



PERSPECTIVES

Terrorism 'more diverse and difficult to counter'

Researcher says 'range of actors at play now is a lot broader' as the U.S. faces new threats.

BY JEFFREY FLEISHMAN

She wanted a rifle. He needed a soldier for his plan to overthrow the government.

Sarah Beth Clendaniel was a radical looking for a target when, authorities say, she plotted with Brandon Russell — a white supremacist who belongs to an organization known as Atomwaffen Division — to destroy the power grid around Baltimore. Clendaniel dressed in camouflage fatigues. Russell went by the alias "Raccoon" and, according to federal agents, kept a framed picture of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh on his dresser.

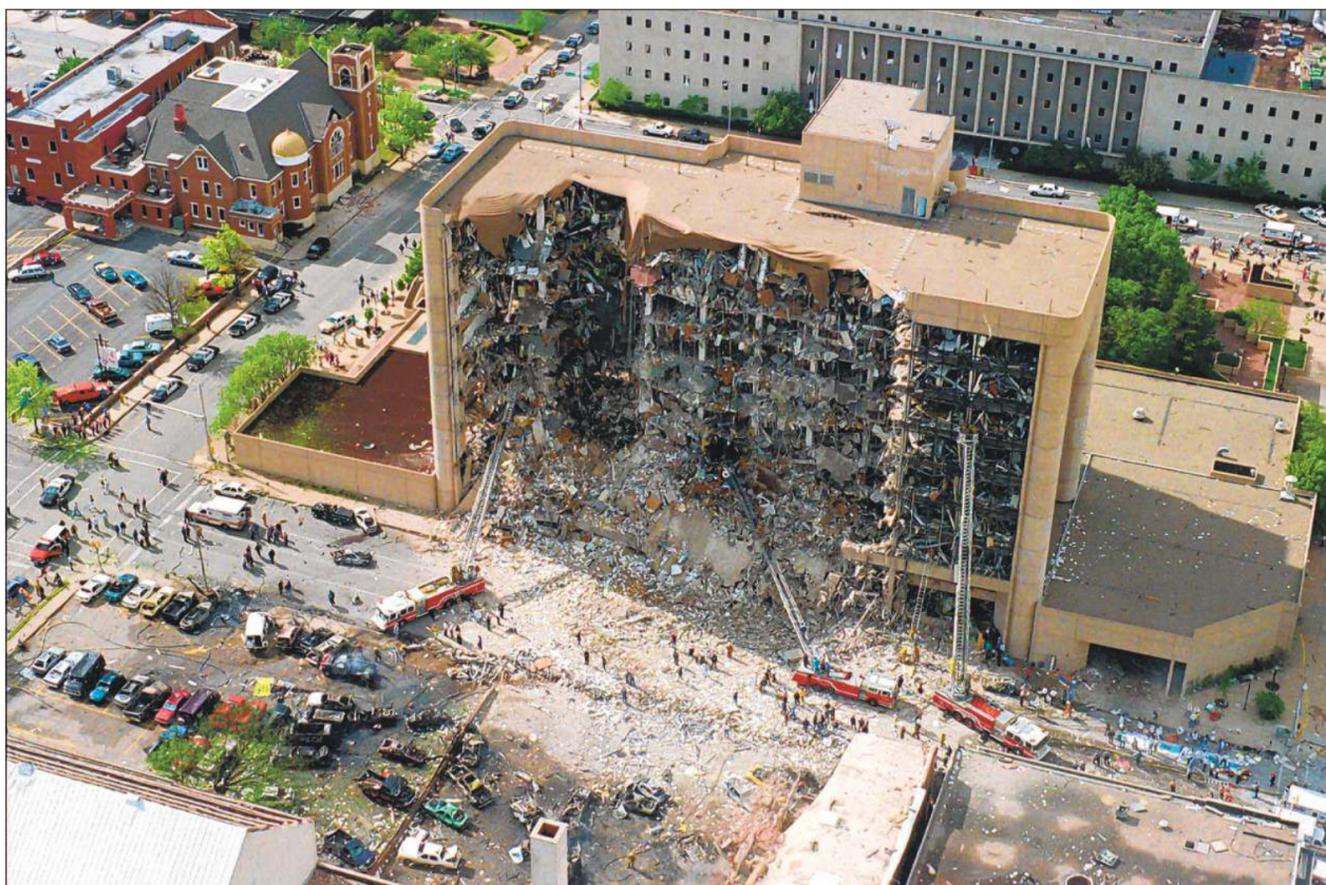
They communicated through encrypted messages, but the mission was foiled by authorities. Clendaniel pleaded guilty in May to conspiring to damage or destroy electrical stations in Maryland. Russell, who was charged earlier with possessing explosives, is awaiting trial. The case did not attract much attention outside Baltimore, but it was another reminder of the danger of terrorism in an unsettled nation.

The U.S. is facing security threats in a presidential election year coming from Islamic militants, far-right extremists, leftist radicals and an array of zealots disgruntled over the nation's culture wars and our polarized society. Officials are increasingly worried about the deepening strands of left- and right-wing venom rooted in antiestablishment anger and amplified by social media that are testing the government's ability to track militants like Clendaniel and Russell.

"The threat's not more potent than it was around 9/11, but it's certainly more diverse and difficult to counter," said Colin P. Clarke, the director of research at the Soufan Group, an intelligence and security consulting firm in New York City. "We're dealing with a more aggressive far-right, left-wing and what we call 'salad bar people,' who take a little bit of each ideology and thread them together. Incels. QAnon. The range of actors at play now is a lot broader than what we're used to."

The assassination attempt that wounded Donald Trump at a Pennsylvania rally in July was carried out by what has long haunted American life: the lone gunman.

Thomas Matthew Crooks, who was killed by the Secret Service while lying on a rooftop, appeared to harbor no intense political ideology. A nursing home employee who liked video games, Crooks, 20, scrolled the internet for topics in-



THE NORTH SIDE of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City is shown after a bombing perpetrated by Timothy McVeigh that killed 168 people and injured hundreds more on April 19, 1995. The U.S. is facing an array of security threats this year.

cluding depression and information on both Trump and President Biden. But unlike other shooters who leave behind manifestos, Crooks was largely silent about his motives.

The danger of the lone gunman, as well as the potential for politically motivated violence around the Israel-Hamas war, will have authorities on alert at the Democratic National Convention this month. Pro-Palestinian demonstrators are expected to arrive in Chicago en masse.

At the Democrats' convention in the same city in 1968, during an era of intense upheaval around the Vietnam War that some suggest parallels today's political tremors, police beat and tear-gassed marchers.

A threat assessment by local and federal authorities obtained by Chicago's ABC7 investigative team notes a number of disruptive tactics they could face at the Aug. 19-22 convention, including "targeted attacks, violent threats, swatting and doxing, mailing or delivering suspicious items, arson, and property destruction."

In recent years, most of the violence and "other threat indicators [are] from groups that lean more conservative," said Amy Cooter, a terrorism expert with the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Montreux. What's notable, she added, was that the extremist narratives, particularly accelerationist ones — like those espoused by Clendaniel that use violence to speed up social collapse — can appeal to radicals across the political spectrum.

"There's potential for people who have very different underlying political beliefs," said Cooter, "to join forces on issues they have common ground on."

National militant organizations complicit in the Jan. 6 riots, including the Proud Boys, remain a danger, Cooter said, despite arrests of its leaders and loss of a centralized online home since Facebook blocked extremist groups. Before the 2020 election, Trump told the Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by." Reuters reported that after Trump was found guilty in May of falsifying business records, a Proud Boys chapter in Ohio promised "war" in a statement that read: "Fighting solves everything."

Trump's increasingly militant campaign speeches against immigrants and conspiracies about the "deep state" also resonate with other groups in the so-called patriot movement. The former president suggested in veiled language that his followers might rise up if he were sent to prison: "I'm not sure the public would stand for it," he told Fox News. "You know, at a certain point, there's a breaking point."

"Not all militia members like Trump. Some think he's too brash, too old," said Cooter, who spent years interviewing and investigating militia groups in Michigan. "But they are very responsive to his rhetoric because he appeals to their worries about immigration or about changing culture in other ways. Even if they're not going to vote for him, their urgency around these issues

gets stirred up."

Today's turmoil has yet to reach the magnitude of the late 1960s or the 1970s, when far-left domestic terror groups like the Weather Underground and Symbionese Liberation Army orchestrated scores of bombings.

Many of the threats these days come from varied agendas, including Payton Gendron, who wrote a 180-page racist screed before killing 10 Black people at a supermarket in Buffalo, N.Y., in 2022, and James Hodgkinson, a left-wing radical who in 2017 shot and wounded at least four people at a baseball practice for Republican congressmen in Alexandria, Va.

In April, Kyran Caples, who police say was radicalized while at Fresno State and joined an obscure antigovernment group known as the Moorish sovereign citizens, shot and critically wounded two police officers in Florida. Caples was killed by police. In the plot to destroy the Baltimore power grid, the Justice Department quoted Clendaniel, once photographed heavily armed and wearing camouflage fatigues, a headscarf and a skull mask, as saying an attack "would probably permanently completely lay this city to waste."

The country has been shaken by anger and unrest in recent years around the COVID-19 pandemic, mass shootings, George Floyd protests, an insurrection at the Capitol and pro-Palestinian rallies on college campuses. Those domestic ruptures have coincided with a rejuvenated branch of

ISIS that is recruiting militants beyond its base in Afghanistan and this year carried out attacks in Russia and Iran that killed at least 220 people.

FBI Director Christopher A. Wray recently told cadets at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point that his agency was concerned about "a rogues' gallery" of foreign organizations calling for violence against Americans. But he suggested that the more pressing danger comes from individuals and small groups in the U.S. who "draw twisted inspiration from the events in the Middle East to carry out attacks here at home." The agency, he said, has been "running down thousands of reported threats."

He added that tensions around the Israel-Hamas war "will feed a pipeline of radicalization and mobilization for years to come." In April, Wray, describing what he called a heightened threat environment, told the House Appropriations Committee that the agency's 2024 fiscal year budget was nearly \$500 million below what it needed. "This could not come at a worse time," he said. "We need people. ... Now is not the time to cut back."

That threat landscape — radiating through a wide prism of anger and ideologies — has shaped America's discourse and sharpened its divisions. The battles playing out in Congress have run parallel to social and political fervor around antisemitism, Gaza, abortion, immigration and gun rights unfolding on college campuses, state houses,

podcasts, rallies and talk shows.

"The powerful emotions that have been unleashed aren't fading," said Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert and professor at Georgetown University. "Terrorism never occurs in a vacuum. It always leverages off of the divisions, contentiousness and controversies that are in the political arena and that will lead a very small fringe to conclude that violence is the only way" to overthrow a corrupt system.

The radicalization of the young is rooted in the generation that came of age during the isolation of the pandemic and has since seen governments as either powerless or indifferent to climate change, wealth gaps and stopping wars in Ukraine and Gaza.

"This seeds a bed of frustration and mistrust," said Hoffman, co-author of "God, Guns, and Sedition: Far-Right Terrorism in America." "They're looking to be entertained and stimulated rather than informed and confident that they're getting accurate information. TikTok is feeding them what they want."

When he testified before the House Appropriations Committee, Wray outlined the threats the U.S. faces from terrorism, cartels trafficking fentanyl, and cyberattacks on business and infrastructure.

"As I look back over my career in law enforcement," he said, "I would be hard-pressed to think of a time where so many threats to our public safety and national security were so elevated all at once."

Torture of 9/11 suspects could make a verdict impossible

Disagreement and a revoked plea deal highlight obstacles to a final legal reckoning.

BY ELLEN KNICKMEYER, ERIC TUCKER AND LARRY NEUMEISTER

WASHINGTON — A Defense Department disagreement over how to bring to justice the man accused of plotting the Sept. 11 attacks and two other men has thrown the cases into disarray and surfaced tension between the desire of some victims' families to see a final legal reckoning and the significant obstacles that may make that impossible.

Defense lawyers and some legal experts blame many of the endless delays on what they call the "original sin" haunting the military prosecutions: the illegal torture that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and his co-defendants were subjected to in CIA custody.

That years-old abuse has snarled the cases, leaving lawyers to hash out legal is-

ssues two decades later in the now often-forgotten military courtrooms at the U.S. military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

An approved plea deal sparing Mohammed and two co-defendants from the death penalty appeared to clear those hurdles and push the cases toward conclusion. But after criticism from some family members and Republican lawmakers, Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III on Aug. 2 revoked the deal signed by the official he had appointed.

Austin said later he believed Americans deserved the opportunity to see the trials through. Pentagon deputy spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said Friday the cases "will continue toward trial with pretrial proceedings as it has been."

Asked for comment, a CIA spokesperson said that the "CIA's detention and interrogation program ended in 2009."

The events reflect the disconnect between the wish of many to see the defendants convicted and sentenced in their death penalty cases and the view of many

experts that the legal obstacles caused by torture, disputes over evidence and other extraordinary government actions make it unrealistic to expect a conclusion anytime soon.

Relatives of some of the nearly 3,000 people killed in 2001 when Al Qaeda recruits flew four hijacked airliners into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a Pennsylvania field differed in their hopes for outcomes for the prosecution. Yet there is shared frustration with its handling so far.

Some said they still want the death penalty imposed even though they know legal complications may make that impossible.

"They've been telling us this for years," said Terry Strada, the leader of the group 9/11 Families United and one of the most vocal family representatives.

Strada said she is still willing to wait years for justice and for "the punishment to fit the crime. And that would be the death penalty."

Brett Eagleson, whose father, Bruce, was among the World Trade Center victims, said families should not suf-

fer the consequences of government failures.

"At the end of the day, if... they can't prosecute them, or they can't convict them, well, the blood's not on our hands because all the evidence that they've obtained was illegal. That's not our issue," he said.

"That's blood on the Bush administration's hands and that's blood on the CIA's hands," said Eagleson, the president of 9/11 Justice, a victims' advocacy group. "That has nothing to do with us, and I think the juice is worth the squeeze here."

Guantanamo defense lawyer J. Wells Dixon points to his own experience on how compelling revelations about the torture can be when cases reach trial. In 2021, seven of eight members of a military panel of officers serving as the jury at the Guantanamo trial of Majid Khan, a former Al Qaeda courier whom Dixon represented, surprised the court by requesting clemency for him after hearing his account of mistreatment.

The torture in CIA custody "is a stain on the moral

fiber of America; the treatment of Mr. Khan in the hands of US personnel should be a source of shame for the US government," the officers wrote to the judge.

After more than a decade of pretrial hearings on the admissibility of torture-tainted evidence and other significant legal challenges, the 9/11 case "is further from trial now potentially than it was at the time that it was charged," Dixon said. "And the reason for that is everything about this case is so tainted by torture."

Mohammed and two co-defendants, Walid bin Attash and Mustafa Hawsawi, had agreed to plea deals that would have required them to answer questions about the attack from victims' relatives.

A fourth defendant, Ammar Baluchi, did not agree to the deal and is the only one proceeding in pretrial hearings while the others challenge Austin's decision. The military judge at Guantanamo declared the fifth 9/11 defendant, Ramzi Binalshibh, mentally unfit last year, after a military medical panel diagnosed him with

post-traumatic stress disorder and psychosis after his torture and solitary confinement in CIA custody.

The abuse that the 9/11 defendants and other detainees underwent in CIA custody began in the stated interest of getting information urgently to stave off additional attacks. Critics question whether what the George W. Bush administration termed "enhanced interrogation" techniques ever yielded information that prevented attacks.

Eugene R. Fidell, who teaches military justice at Yale Law School, says the impact of torture on the case raises doubt that any death penalty would survive federal court review.

"I'm not an advocate for these defendants. I think the crimes they're accused of are horrendous," he said. "But as a matter of the administration of justice, there's a lot of problems here. And they seem to keep going."

Associated Press writers Knickmeyer and Tucker reported from Washington and Neumeister from New York.

THE WORLD

Israel widens evacuation orders in Gaza Strip

Army says rockets have been fired from area, which includes a humanitarian zone.

By WAFAA SHURAFU AND SAMY MAGDY

DEIR AL BALAH, Gaza Strip — The Israeli military ordered more evacuations in southern Gaza early Sunday, a day after a deadly airstrike on a school-turned-shelter in the north killed at least 80 Palestinians, according to local health authorities. The airstrike was one of the deadliest attacks in the 10-month war.

Israel has repeatedly ordered mass evacuations as its troops return to heavily destroyed areas where they previously battled Palestinian militants. The vast majority of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people has been displaced, often multiple times, in the besieged territory 25 miles long by about 7 miles wide.

The latest evacuation orders apply to areas of Khan Yunis, Gaza's second-largest city, including part of an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone from which the military said rockets had been fired. Israel accuses Hamas and other militants of hiding among civilians and launching attacks from residential areas.

The humanitarian zone has shrunk during the war with the various evacuation orders. Hundreds of thousands of people have crammed into squalid tent camps with few public services or sought shelter in schools, though the United Nations says hundreds of those have been directly hit or damaged.



ABDEL KAREEM HANA Associated Press

A PALESTINIAN woman displaced by the Israeli air and ground offensive in the Gaza Strip flees Hamad City after an evacuation order by the Israeli army to leave parts of the southern area of Khan Yunis on Sunday.

Khan Yunis suffered widespread destruction during an air and ground offensive earlier this year. Tens of thousands fled last week after an evacuation order.

The new order came in leaflets dropped from the sky. As smoke rose on the horizon, hundreds of families carrying belongings in their arms left homes and shelters, seeking elusive refuge. One child carried a stuffed Hello Kitty doll as others walked through rubble-filled streets.

"We don't know where to go," said Amal Abu Yahia, a mother of three, who had returned to Khan Yunis in June to shelter in their se-

verely damaged home. It was the fourth displacement for the 42-year-old widow, whose husband was killed when an Israeli airstrike hit their neighbors' house in March.

She said they went to Muwasi, a sprawling tent camp along the coast, but couldn't find space.

Ramadan Issa, a father of five in his 50s, fled Khan Yunis with 17 members of his extended family, joining hundreds of people walking toward central Gaza.

"Every time we settle in one place and build tents for women and children, the occupation comes and bombs the area," he said, referring

to Israel. "This situation is unbearable."

Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants, says the Palestinian death toll from the war is approaching 40,000. Aid groups have struggled to address the staggering humanitarian crisis, while international experts have warned of famine.

The war began when Hamas-led militants burst through Israel's defenses on Oct. 7 and rampaged through farming communities and army bases near the border, killing around 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducting around 250

people.

The United States, Egypt and Qatar have spent months trying to mediate a cease-fire and the return of the roughly 110 remaining hostages, around a third of whom Israeli authorities believe to be dead. Talks were due to resume Thursday.

The conflict has threatened to trigger a regional war, as Israel has traded fire with Iran and its militant allies across the region.

In the occupied West Bank, which has seen increased violence since the war began, Israel's military said that a Israeli civilian was fatally shot in an attack by "terrorists" in the area of

Mehola Junction. The military said "terrorists" opened fire from a passing vehicle at other cars, and another civilian was wounded. Soldiers pursued the attackers.

Israel's airstrike Saturday hit a mosque inside a school in Gaza City where thousands of people were sheltering. The Gaza Health Ministry said 80 were killed and around 50 others wounded during morning prayers. The Israeli military said it killed 19 Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants. Hamas and Palestinian activists disputed that, saying two of the 19 had been killed in earlier strikes, and others were known to be civilians or opponents of Hamas.

Gaza City and the rest of the north have been surrounded by Israeli forces and largely cut off from the world, and it wasn't possible to independently confirm the accounts from either side.

The U.N. human rights office says Israel has carried out "systematic attacks on schools," which have served as shelters since the start of the war, with at least 21 hit since July 4, leaving hundreds of people dead, including women and children.

European leaders and neighbors of Israel condemned the strike, while the U.S. said that it was concerned about the reports of civilian casualties. "Yet again, far too many civilians have been killed," Vice President Kamala Harris told reporters.

"We need a hostage deal and we need a cease-fire," she said. "The deal needs to get done and it needs to get done now."

Shurafa and Magdy write for the Associated Press. Magdy reported from Cairo.

Ukraine indirectly acknowledges incursion into Russia

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KYIV, Ukraine — Days after Ukraine began a surprise military incursion into Russia's Kursk border region, President Volodymyr Zelensky has broken the government's silence on it by indirectly acknowledging the ongoing military actions to "push the war out into the aggressor's territory."

Zelensky's comment came in his nightly address late Saturday.

Ukraine's incursion into Russia continued for a sixth day Sunday. It's the largest such attack since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022, and is unprecedented for its use of Ukrainian military

units on Russian soil. Ukraine's raid into Russia caught Moscow unaware and was an embarrassment to Russian military leaders who have scrambled to contain the breach.

Evacuation of civilians living in Russia's border areas with Ukraine continued Sunday. Russian state television aired footage of evacuees at a tent camp in the city of Kursk. According to the report by RTR, more than 20 temporary accommodation centers have been set up in the region.

The exact aims of the operation remain unclear, and Ukrainian military officials have adopted a policy of secrecy, presumably to ensure its success. Military experts have said that it is probably

intended to draw Russian reserves away from the intense fighting in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, while a presidential advisor suggested that it may strengthen Kyiv's hand in any future negotiations with Russia.

But Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Sunday that Ukraine "understands perfectly well" that the recent attacks "make no sense from a military point of view."

"The Kyiv regime is continuing its terrorist activity with the sole purpose of intimidating the peaceful population of Russia," she added.

Zelensky reiterated calls to Western allies to step up



Associated Press

RESIDENTS stand outside an apartment building damaged by shelling on Sunday in Kursk, Russia.

assistance to Ukraine, and that "to really stop Russian terror, we need not only a full-fledged air shield that

will protect all our cities and communities, but also strong decisions from partners — decisions that will re-

move restrictions on our defensive actions."

In Russia, Kursk's regional governor said that a Ukrainian missile shot down by Russian air defenses fell on a residential building, wounding 15 people.

Kursk acting Gov. Aleksei Smirnov said on Sunday that a "Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group" entered the Belovsky district the previous day, but that the situation had been "stabilized."

Ukraine hasn't commented on the Sunday drone attacks inside Russia. But they come as Ukraine has increased the pace of similar drone attacks largely targeting military infrastructure and oil depots in recent weeks.

Los Angeles Times
BUSINESS TO BUSINESS
 PUBLISHING

ORANGE COUNTY AND SAN DIEGO VISIONARIES MAGAZINE

RECOGNIZE AN EXCEPTIONAL BUSINESS LEADER

NOMINATE TODAY

latimes.com/b2b/nominate

Business magazines (print and digital) are produced by the L.A. Times B2B Publishing team and do not involve the editorial staff of the L.A. Times.

Los Angeles Times
BUSINESS TO BUSINESS
 PUBLISHING

BUSINESS OF BEAUTY & FASHION VISIONARIES

RECOGNIZE A VISIONARY WHO FINANCES OR ADVISES BEAUTY AND FASHION BRANDS

NOMINATE TODAY

latimes.com/b2b/nominate

This feature is produced by the L.A. Times B2B Publishing team and does not involve the editorial staff of the L.A. Times.

If you have questions about this notice, please contact the Debtors' Claims and Noticing Agent, Epiq Corporate Restructuring, LLC, at (888) 410-9433 (toll free) or +1 (971) 298-7638 (international), or via email by submitting an inquiry at https://dm.epiq11.com/SunPower. You may also find out more information at https://dm.epiq11.com/SunPower.

Information to identify the case:
 Debtor: SunPower Corporation, et al. EIN: 94-3008969
 United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware Case number: 24-11649 (CTG)
 Date cases filed for chapter 11: August 5, 2024
 Official Form 309F-1 [For Corporations or Partnerships] 10/20

Notice of Chapter 11 Bankruptcy Case
 For the debtor listed above, a case has been filed under chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code. An order for relief has been entered.

This notice has important information about the case for creditors and debtors, including information about the meeting of creditors and deadlines. Read both pages carefully.

The filing of the case imposed an automatic stay against most collection activities. This means that creditors generally may not take action to collect debts from the debtor or the debtor's property. For example, while the stay is in effect, creditors cannot sue, assert a deficiency, repossess property, or otherwise try to collect from the debtor. Creditors cannot demand repayment from the debtor by mail, phone, or otherwise. Creditors who violate the stay can be required to pay actual and punitive damages and attorney's fees.

Confirmation of a chapter 11 plan may result in a discharge of debt. A creditor who wants to have a particular debt excepted from discharge may be required to file a complaint in the bankruptcy clerk's office within the deadline specified in this notice. (See line 11 below for more information.)

To protect your rights, consult an attorney. All documents filed in the case may be inspected at the bankruptcy clerk's office at the address listed below or through PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records at https://pacer.uscourts.gov). The staff of the bankruptcy clerk's office cannot give legal advice. Do not file this notice with any proof of claim or other filing in the case.

Valid Picture ID is required for access to the J. Caleb Boggs Federal Building. Additionally, Debtor(s) must also present photo ID plus original verification of his/her social security number to the Bankruptcy Trustee. If you do not have a photo ID and/or original verification of your social security number, please contact the Office of the United States Trustee's (802-573-6491).

- Debtor's full name: SunPower Corporation
- All other names used in the last 8 years: See List Below: Jointly Administered Cases, Other Names (Last 8 Years), Case No., Tax ID No.: SunPower Corporation, SunPower Solar Corporation (Texas), Inc., SPWR Solar Corporation, SPWR Solar, SPWR Energy, 24-11649, 94-3008969; Blue Raven Solar, LLC, 24-11659, 32-0513692; Blue Raven Solar Holdings, LLC, 24-11660, 46-5434577; BR5 Field Ops, LLC, 24-11661, 81-4452370; Falcon Acquisition HoldCo, Inc., 24-11662, 88-1513335; SunPower Capital Services, LLC, SunPower Financial Services, 24-11655, 47-1889910; SunPower Capital, LLC, 24-11653, 80-0828450; SunPower Corporation, Systems, SunPower Energy Systems (Texas), Inc., SunPower Energy Corporation; SPWR Solar Corporation, Systems, 24-11651, 20-8248962; SunPower HoldCo, LLC, 24-11656, 47-1850454; SunPower North America, LLC, 24-11658, 20-4600194
- Address: 880 Harbour Way South, Suite 600, Richmond, CA 94804
- Debtors' Attorneys: RICHARD, LAYTON & FINGER, P.A., Kevin Gross, Mark D. Collins, Jason M. Madron, 920 North King Street, Wilmington, Delaware 19801. Contact Phone: (302) 651-7700. Email: gross@rlf.com, collins@rlf.com, madron@rlf.com - and - KIRKLAND & ELLIS LLP, KIRKLAND & ELLIS INTERNATIONAL LLP, Joshua A. Sussberg, P.C., Zach Manning, 601 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10022 - and - Chad J. Husnick, P.C., Jeffrey Michalik, Robert Jacobson, 333 West Wolf Point Plaza, Chicago, Illinois 60654, Contact Phone: (212) 446-4800, (312) 862-2000, Email: joshua.sussberg@kirkland.com, chad.husnick@kirkland.com, jeff.michalik@kirkland.com, zach.manning@kirkland.com, rob.jacobson@kirkland.com.

Debtors' Claims and Noticing Agent: If you have questions about this notice, please contact: SunPower Corporation, Claims Processing Center c/o Epiq Corporate Restructuring, LLC, P.O. Box 4421, Beaverton, OR 97076-4421. Contact Phone: (888) 410-9433 (toll free) or +1 (971) 298-7638 (international). Email: SunPowerInfo@epiqglobal.com. Website: https://dm.epiq11.com/case/SunPower

- Bankruptcy clerk's office: 824 N. Market Street, 3rd Floor, Wilmington, DE 19801. Hours open: Monday - Friday 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM. Contact phone 302-252-2900. Documents in this case may be filed this address. You may inspect all records filed in this case at this office or online at https://pacer.uscourts.gov.
- Meeting of creditors: September 10, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. (ET). Location: Telephone Conference Call. The meeting of creditors will be held by phone. Please call +1 888-655-8838 and use access code 54907168 to join the meeting. The debtor's representative must attend the meeting to be questioned under oath. Creditors may attend, but are not required to do so. The meeting may be continued or adjourned to a later date. If so, the date will be on the court docket.
- Proof of claim deadline: Deadline for filing proof of claim: Not yet set. If a deadline is set, the court will send you another notice. A proof of claim is a signed statement describing a creditor's claim. A proof of claim form may be obtained at www.uscourts.gov or any bankruptcy clerk's office. Your claim will be allowed in the amount scheduled unless: your claim is designated as disputed, contingent, or unliquidated; you file a proof of claim in a different amount; or you receive another notice. If your claim is not scheduled or if your claim is designated as disputed, contingent, or unliquidated, you must file a proof of claim or you might not be paid on your claim and you might be unable to vote on a plan. You may file a proof of claim even if your claim is scheduled. You may review the schedules at the bankruptcy clerk's office or online at https://pacer.uscourts.gov. Secured creditors retain rights in their collateral regardless of whether they file a proof of claim. Filing a proof of claim submits a creditor to the jurisdiction of the bankruptcy court, with consequences a lawyer can explain. For example, a secured creditor who files a proof of claim may surrender important non-monetary rights, including the right to a jury trial.
- Discharge of debts deadline: The bankruptcy clerk's office must receive a complaint and any required filing fee by the following deadline. If § 523(c) applies to your claim and you seek to have it excepted from discharge, you must start a judicial proceeding by filing a complaint by the deadline stated below. Deadline for filing the complaint: To be determined.
- Creditors with a foreign address: If you are a creditor receiving notice mailed to a foreign address, you may file a motion asking the court to extend the deadlines in this notice. Consult an attorney familiar with United States bankruptcy law if you have any questions about your rights in this case.
- Filing a Chapter 11 bankruptcy case: Chapter 11 allows debtors to reorganize or liquidate according to a plan. A plan is not effective unless the court confirms it. You may receive a copy of the plan and a disclosure statement telling you about the plan, and you may have the opportunity to vote on the plan. You will receive notice of the date of the confirmation hearing, and you may object to confirmation of the plan and attend the confirmation hearing. Unless a trustee is serving, the debtor will remain in possession of the property and may continue to operate its business.
- Discharge of debts: Confirmation of a chapter 11 plan may result in a discharge of debts, which may include all or part of your debt. See 11 U.S.C. § 1141(d). A discharge means that creditors may never try to collect the debt from the debtor except as provided in the plan. If you want to have a particular debt owed to you excepted from the discharge and § 523(c) applies to your claim, you must start a judicial proceeding by filing a complaint and paying the filing fee in the bankruptcy clerk's office by the deadline.

Seoul says North Korea has floated more trash its way

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEOUL — South Korea's military says North Korea is again flying balloons likely carrying trash toward the South, adding to a bizarre psychological warfare campaign amid growing tensions between the war-divided rivals.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said Saturday that the winds could carry the balloons to regions north of the South Korean capital, Seoul. Seoul City Hall and the Gyeonggi provincial government issued text alerts urging citizens to beware of objects dropping from the sky and report to the military or police if they spot any balloons.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or property damage.

North Korea in recent weeks has flown more than 2,000 balloons carrying waste paper, cloth scraps and cigarette butts toward the South in what it has described as a retaliation toward South Korean civilian activists flying anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets across the border.

Pyongyang has long condemned such activities as it is extremely sensitive to any outside criticism of leader Kim Jong Un's authoritarian rule.

North Korea last flew balloons toward the South on July 24, when trash carried by at least one of them fell on the South Korean presidential compound, raising worries about the vulnerability of key South Korean facilities. The balloon contained no dangerous material and no one was hurt, South Korea's presidential security service said.

South Korea, in reaction to the North's balloon campaign, activated its front-

line loudspeakers to blast broadcasts of propaganda messages and K-pop songs. Experts say North Korea hates such broadcasts because it fears it could demoralize front-line troops and residents.

The Koreans' tit-for-tat Cold War-style campaigns are inflaming tensions, with the rivals threatening stronger steps and warning of grave consequences.

Their relations have worsened in recent years as Kim continues to accelerate the North's nuclear weapons and missile program and issue verbal threats of nuclear conflict toward Washington and Seoul. In response, South Korea, the United States and Japan have been expanding their combined military exercises and sharpening their nuclear deterrence strategies.

Experts say animosity could further rise later this month when South Korea and the United States kick off their annual joint military drills that are being strengthened to deal with the North's nuclear threats.

The resumption of the balloon campaign comes as North Korea struggles to recover from devastating floods that submerged thousands of homes and huge swaths of farmland in areas near its border with China.

North Korean state media said Saturday that Kim ordered officials to bring some 15,400 people displaced by the floods to the capital city, Pyongyang, to provide them better care, and that it would take two or three months to rebuild homes in flood-hit areas.

He accused "enemy" South Korea of a "vicious smear campaign" to tarnish the image of his government, claiming that the South's media have been exaggerating the damage.



A PERFORMANCE in Mbale, Uganda, precedes the launch of Imbalu, the circumcision of thousands of Bamasaba boys every other year in Uganda. Some say presenting the ceremony to outsiders trivializes the ritual. HAJARAH NALWADDA Associated Press

In Uganda, a sacred ceremony takes on tourist attraction vibes

King's move to market mass circumcision as festival has angered members of his tribe.

BY RODNEY MUHUMUZA

NEAR MT. ELGON, Uganda — The dancers shook their hips to the beat of drummers who led the way, anticipating the start of mass circumcision among the Bamasaba people of Uganda's mountainous east.

Yet the frolicking in the streets belied a dispute brewing behind the scenes as some locals questioned their king over the very public presentation of Imbalu, the ritualized circumcision of thousands of boys every other year in this remote community near Uganda's border with Kenya.

Could it be turned into a carnival, put on for the gaze of foreigners? Or should it remain a sacred ceremony in which families quietly prepare their sons to face the knife with courage?

The king, known as the Umukuuka, had his way ahead of the Aug. 3 ceremonial inauguration at a park in the town of Mbale, arguing for a traditional festival that also looked attractive to visitors. The organizers of Imbalu received over \$120,000 in financial support from the Ugandan government and a corporate sponsor.

In an interview with the Associated Press, the Umukuuka asserted that organizing a modern Imbalu was challenging and defended his decision to market the ritual as a tourist event in line with Uganda's national development plan.

"Everything is changing as the population expands. People may not manage to follow the cultural processes," he said, citing the economic hardship and commercialization he said were diluting the communal aspect of Imbalu. "But we are fighting through the clan system that [Imbalu] remains intact."

But the Ugandan government's intervention has raised eyebrows among many Bamasaba and underscored angst over the

most important ceremony for this ethnic group of 4 million Ugandans. Some who spoke to the AP said they felt the Umukuuka, in his first year in office, was trivializing Imbalu by exposing it to outside interests.

"Our leadership is being hijacked" by national political leaders, said Wasukira Mashate, an elder who is a custodian of Bamasaba cultural property, charging that the Umukuuka was missing the counsel of clan leaders with real spiritual authority.

"I don't think they are having any role" in Imbalu, he said, speaking of clan leaders. "It was for our own benefit culturally, but now it is becoming a national event because the government of Uganda has captured it."

At the ceremonial inauguration, an angry crowd gathered outside the totemic shrine of the clan that historically has launched Imbalu by cutting the first candidates. Clan members pointed to the young mixed-breed bull tethered to the grass as offensive, saying only a local breed would suffice as an appropriate sacrifice to the gods.

"This cow is exotic. We are Bamasaba, and he brought us a white animal," said Kareem Masaba, speaking of the Umukuuka. "He has insulted us. His predecessors used to come into the shrine and participate in the rituals, but this man will not come here. He is disrespecting us."

The dispute over the sacrificial animal delayed the inauguration into the late afternoon as anger grew among men wielding machetes, sharp sticks and other crude weapons. The Umukuuka, seated not far away in a tent among dignitaries from elsewhere in Africa, did not budge. Clan members retaliated by refusing to present the first group of initiates before the Umukuuka, a former forestry officer whose real name is Jude Mudoma.

The mass circumcisions will last until the end of 2024.

The tribal initiation of boys into adulthood has long been controversial in African countries such as South Africa, where inci-

dents of botched, deadly circumcisions among Xhosa-speaking people have inspired campaigns for safe clinical circumcision.

Among the Bamasaba, whose cutting method is just as violent, there have been no calls to end the practice. The strongest adherents see Imbalu as more important than ever amid widespread infant circumcision in hospital settings. They say those boys who are not initiated in the tribal way risk suffering lifelong social delinquency.

Tribal circumcision is performed by a traditional surgeon wielding a knife usually fashioned from melted nails. Bamasaba hundreds of miles away in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, are known to hunt down Imbalu dodgers they then cut by force. The bodies of uncircumcised men can be violated before burial.

Circumcision "helps us to be strong," said Peter Gusolo, a traditional surgeon, gesticulating to express his people's purported sexual prowess. Those who resist circumcision will be cut "even if [they] are dying," he said. "We circumcise you at night. We bury you in the morning."

He added, "We cannot bury you in the land of the Bamasaba without [being circumcised]. No, no, no. It is in the constitution of the culture of the Bamasaba. ... It is a curse if you bury into the land people who are not circumcised."

Gusolo, whose family lives in a house on the side of a hill planted with arabica coffee plants, spent days isolating himself in a cave and postponing intimacy with his wife so that he could be possessed by the spirit of Imbalu. Even though men such as Gusolo wield certificates issued by local health authorities to prove their skill, the title is hereditary. The surgeons say they cannot afford to be flippant with their work because the wounds they inflict will not heal if they are not spiritually strong.

The first candidate for initiation this year was a teenager whose face had been smeared with mud and the dregs of homemade beer. He spread his legs and un-

blinkingly stared at the sky while a swarm of frenzied people around him pushed and shoved, demanding courage. The surgeon, applying no anesthetic, took hold of the boy and skinned him with a swift movement of his hands. A family member, aiming to protect the boy from the threat of witchcraft, collected the skin and took it home.

Emmanuel Watundu, the father of a 17-year-old boy who was among the first to be cut, said he stood by Imbalu, describing it as the life-changing event his son asked for. But he criticized what he saw as a carnival atmosphere by "peer groups [who] normally behave differently than we used to."

Outside Watundu's house, where a crowd had gathered, drunken people of all ages danced wildly, and one woman briefly exposed her breasts. A politician seeking a seat in the national assembly had a procession marching in the dirt road. Boys fondled girls and swung legs at them.

Watundu said that the street dancers he saw were "from different areas" and that most people attending Imbalu came "to do business." He said of the Ugandan government's involvement that it had "given some bad picture" about the Umukuuka's role as the chief organizer of Imbalu.

Wilson Watira, who chaired the Imbalu organizing committee, defended the government's role as a supporter of Bamasaba tradition. The exuberant street processions left people feeling joyful, he said.

"When it comes to performance of culture, of culture itself ... it remains culture. We only want to show the world that even when we are performing this culture, it can also attract other people," he said.

In the past, people thought the ritual was barbaric and brutal, Watira said.

"It's the reason why we said, 'No, we are not barbaric. We can make this thing very attractive, and you will enjoy it.'"

Muhumuza writes for the Associated Press.



IM SUN-SUK Associated Press

A BALLOON presumably sent by North Korea is seen in a paddy field in Incheon, South Korea, in June.

How to contact us

(800) LA TIMES

Home Delivery and Membership Program

For questions about delivery, billing and vacation holds, or for information about our Membership program, please contact us at (213) 283-2274 or customerservices@latimes.com. You can also manage your account at myaccount.latimes.com.

Letters to the Editor

Want to write a letter to be published in the paper and online? E-mail letters@latimes.com. For submission guidelines, see latimes.com/letters.

Readers' Representative

If you believe we have made an error, or you have questions about our journalistic standards and practices, our readers' representative can be reached at readers.representative@latimes.com, (877) 554-4000 or online at latimes.com/readersrep.

Advertising

For print and online advertising information, go to

latimes.com/mediakit or call (213) 237-6176.

Reprint Requests

For the rights to use articles, photos, graphics and page reproductions, e-mail reprint@latimes.com or call (213) 237-4565.

Times In Education

To get the digital Los Angeles Times at no cost (along with our newspaper-based teaching materials), contact us at latimes.com/tie, or email Heidi.stauder@latimes.com

The Newsroom

Know something important we should cover? Send a secure tip at latimes.com/tips. To send a press release go to the newsroom directory at latimes.com/staff.

Media Relations

For outside media requests and inquiries, e-mail commsdept@latimes.com.

L.A. Times Store

Search archives, merchandise and front pages at latimes.com/store.

Los Angeles Times

A California Times Publication
Founded Dec. 4, 1881
Vol. CXLIII No. 253

LOS ANGELES TIMES (ISSN 0458-3035) is published by the Los Angeles Times, 2300 E. Imperial Highway, El Segundo, CA 90245. Periodicals postage is paid at Los Angeles, CA, and additional cities. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the above address. Home Delivery Subscription Rates (all rates include applicable CA sales taxes and apply to most areas)

Print + unlimited digital rates:
Seven-day \$28/week, \$1,456 annually.
Thursday-Sunday \$16/week, \$832 annually, Thursday & Sunday \$10/week, \$520 annually, Saturday & Sunday \$9/week, \$468 annually, Sunday \$8.50/week, \$442 annually.
Monday-Saturday \$18/week, \$936 annually (also includes Sundays, except 3/31, 5/26, 9/1, and 10/13), Monday-Friday \$16/week, \$832 annually.

Printed with soy-based ink on recycled newspaper from wood byproducts.

Wildfire near Greece's capital spreads fast

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATHENS — A wildfire burned northeast of Athens on Sunday, darkening the sky as the smell of smoke and soot pervaded the Greek capital.

More than 400 firefighters, 110 fire engines and a large number of volunteers were fighting the fire, which broke out around 3 p.m. around 22 miles from Athens. The 15 firefighting planes and nine helicopters were operating by late afternoon but stopped at sunset.

The flames were moving fast toward Lake Marathon, an important reservoir supplying Athens with water, said Fire Col. Vassileios Vathrakogiannis, a spokesman for the fire department. An unknown number of houses have been damaged.



MICHAEL VARAKLAS Associated Press

A MAN watches as a house burns in the village of Varnava, north of Athens, in a wildfire Sunday.

Vathrakogiannis said winds reached gale force strength in the area of the fire and flames exceeded 80 feet in height. Residents of the villages near the area of

the fire have been warned by emergency text messaging to evacuate.

Late in the afternoon, messages were also sent to residents of some northern

Athens suburbs to do the same. Police said they evacuated more than 200 individuals, mostly elderly and others who did not heed the warnings.

Another fire that broke out west of Athens has been contained, the spokesman said.

Hot and dry weather, made worse by strong winds, increases the danger of wildfires. June and July were the hottest months ever recorded in Greece, which also recorded its warmest winter ever.

Meteorologists and government officials have warned of the heightened danger of wildfires because of weather conditions from Sunday until Thursday.

Half of the country will be under a "red alert," Climate Crisis and Civil Protection Minister Vassilis Kikiliadis said.



Download the app.
Discover more.

Los Angeles Times

THE NATION

Trump campaign says its emails were hacked

Former president's team claims Iranians stole and shared sensitive documents.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Former President Trump's presidential campaign said Saturday that it has been hacked and suggested Iranian actors were involved in stealing and distributing sensitive internal documents.

The campaign provided no specific evidence of Iran's involvement, but the claim comes a day after Microsoft issued a report detailing foreign agents' attempts to interfere in the U.S. election in 2024.

It cited an instance of an Iranian military intelligence unit in June sending "a spear-phishing email to a high-ranking official of a presidential campaign from a compromised email account of a former senior advisor."

Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung blamed the hack on "foreign sources hostile to the United States."

In a statement, a spokesperson for the National Security Council said it takes any report of improper foreign interference "extremely seriously" and condemns any government or entity that attempts to undermine confidence in U.S. democratic institutions, but said it deferred to the Justice Department on this matter.

Politico first reported Saturday on the hack. The outlet reported that it began receiving emails July 22 from an anonymous account. The source — an AOL account identified only as "Robert"



BEN GRAY/Associated Press

AN ANONYMOUS source sent Politico what appeared to be a research dossier on JD Vance, the Republican vice presidential nominee. A spokesperson for Trump's campaign said the documents were obtained illegally.

— passed along what appeared to be a research dossier the campaign had apparently done on the Republican vice presidential nominee, Ohio Sen. JD Vance. The document was dated Feb. 23, almost five months before Trump chose Vance as his running mate.

"These documents were obtained illegally" and "intended to interfere with the 2024 election and sow chaos throughout our Democratic process," Cheung said. He pointed to the Microsoft report issued Friday and its conclusions that "Iranian hackers broke into the account of a 'high ranking official' on the U.S. presi-

dential campaign in June 2024, which coincides with the close timing of President Trump's selection of a vice presidential nominee."

"The Iranians know that President Trump will stop their reign of terror just like he did in his first four years in the White House," Cheung said, adding a warning that

"any media or news outlet reprinting documents or internal communications are doing the bidding of America's enemies and doing exactly what they want."

In response to Microsoft's report, Iran's United Nations mission denied it had plans to interfere or launch cyberattacks in the

U.S. presidential election. Cheung did not immediately respond to questions about the campaign's interactions with Microsoft on the matter. Microsoft said Saturday it had no comment beyond its blog post and Friday report.

In that report, Microsoft stated that "foreign malign influence concerning the 2024 US election started off slowly but has steadily picked up pace over the last six months due initially to Russian operations, but more recently from Iranian activity." The analysis continued: "Iranian cyber-enabled influence operations have been a consistent feature of at least the last three U.S. election cycles. Iran's operations have been notable and distinguishable from Russian campaigns for appearing later in the election season and employing cyberattacks more geared toward election conduct than swaying voters."

"Recent activity suggests the Iranian regime — along with the Kremlin — may be equally engaged in election 2024," Microsoft concluded. Specifically, the report detailed that in June 2024, an Iranian military intelligence unit, Mint Sandstorm, sent a phishing email to an American presidential campaign via the compromised account of a former advisor.

"The phishing email contained a fake forward with a hyperlink that directs traffic through an actor-controlled domain before redirecting to the listed domain," the report states.

Vice President Kamala Harris' campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the reported hacking or on the Democratic nominee's cybersecurity protocols.

Frantic 911 calls add details on Uvalde school shooting

The gunman's uncle begged to speak to his nephew, who killed 19 students, 2 teachers.

BY JAMIE STENGLE

DALLAS — As shots rang out in the hallways and classrooms of Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, one of the terrified teachers who frantically dialed 911 described "a lot, a whole lot of gunshots," while another sobbed into the phone as a dispatcher urged her to stay quiet.

"Hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry!" the first teacher cried before hanging up.

The calls from teachers, and several from the uncle of the gunman who killed 19

students and two teachers, were part of a massive collection of audio and video recordings released by city officials Saturday after a prolonged legal fight.

The Associated Press and other news organizations brought a lawsuit after the officials initially refused to publicly release the information from one of the worst school shootings in U.S. history.

One of the first calls police received on the morning of May 24, 2022, came from a woman who called 911 to report that a pickup truck had crashed into a ditch and that the occupant had run onto the school campus.

"Oh my God, they have a gun," she said.

In a 911 call a few minutes later, a man screams: "He's shooting at the kids! Get

back!" "He's inside the school! He's inside the school," he yells as the screams of others can also be heard.

"Oh my God in the name of Jesus. He's inside the school shooting at the kids," he says.

The delayed law enforcement response — nearly 400 officers waited more than 70 minutes before confronting the gunman in a classroom filled with dead and wounded children and teachers — has been widely condemned as a massive failure.

The gunman, 18-year-old Salvador Ramos, was fatally shot by authorities at 12:50 p.m. He had entered the school at 11:33 a.m., officials said.

Just before arriving at the school, Ramos shot and



Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District / Austin American-Statesman via AP

THIS IMAGE from surveillance video shows authorities at the scene of the 2022 shooting. The delayed law enforcement response has been widely condemned.

wounded his grandmother at her home. He then took a pickup from the home and drove to the school.

Ramos' distraught uncle made several 911 calls begging to be put through so he could try to get his nephew to stop shooting.

"Maybe he could listen to me because he does listen to me, everything I tell him he does listen to me," the man, who identified himself as Armando Ramos, said on the 911 call. "Maybe he could stand down or do something to turn himself in," he said, voice cracking.

The caller told the dispatcher that the shooter had been with him at his house the night before. He said his nephew stayed with him in his bedroom all night, and told him that he was upset because his grandmother was "bugging" him.

"Oh my God, please, please, don't do nothing stupid," the man says on the call. "I think he's shooting kids."

But the offer arrived too late, coming just around the time that the shooting had ended and law enforcement officers killed Salvador Ramos.

Multiple federal and state investigations into the slow law enforcement response laid bare cascading problems in training, communication, leadership and technology, and questioned whether officers prioritized their own lives over those of children and teachers in the South Texas city of about 15,000 people 80 miles west of San Antonio. Families of the victims have long

sought accountability for the slow police response.

Brett Cross' 10-year-old nephew, Uziyah Garcia, was among those killed. Cross, who was raising the boy as a son, was angered relatives weren't told the records were being released and that it took so long for them to be made public.

"If we thought we could get anything we wanted, we'd ask for a time machine to go back in time and save our children but we can't, so all we are asking for is justice, accountability and transparency, and they refuse to give this to us," he said. "This small, simple ask that I feel that we are due."

Two of the responding officers now face criminal charges: Former Uvalde school Police Chief Pete Arredondo and former school officer Adrian Gonzales have pleaded not guilty to multiple charges of child abandonment and endangerment. A Texas state trooper in Uvalde who had been suspended was reinstated to his job earlier this month.

In an interview this month with CNN, Arredondo said he thinks he's been "scapegoated" as the one to blame for the botched law enforcement response.

Some of the families have called for more officers to be charged and filed federal and state lawsuits against law enforcement, social media, online gaming companies, and the gun manufacturer that made the rifle the gunman used.

Just before officers finally breached the classroom, one

officer can be heard on a body camera expressing concern about friendly fire.

"I'm kind of worried about blue on blue," an officer said. "There are so many rifles in here."

The classroom breach was followed by about five to six seconds of gunfire. Officers rushed forward as someone shouted, "Watch the kids! Watch the kids! Watch the kids!"

Less than a minute into the chaos, someone shouted, "Where's the suspect?" Someone else immediately answered, "He's dead!"

The police response included nearly 150 U.S. Border Patrol agents and 91 state police officers, as well as school and city police.

While dozens of officers stood in the hallway trying to figure out what to do, students inside the classroom called 911 on cellphones, begging for help, and desperate parents who had gathered outside the building pleaded with officers to go in.

Previously released video from school cameras showed police officers, some armed with rifles and bullet-proof shields, waiting in the hallway.

A report commissioned by the city, however, defended the actions of local police, saying officers showed "immeasurable strength" and "level-headed thinking" as they faced fire from the shooter and refrained from firing into a darkened classroom.

Stengle writes for the Associated Press.

Popular 'Double Arch' collapses in Utah's Glen Canyon rec area

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PAGE, Ariz. — A large geological feature in southern Utah known as the "Double Arch," the "Hole in the Roof" and sometimes the "Toilet Bowl" has collapsed, National Park Service officials said. Park rangers suspect changing water levels and erosion from waves in Lake Powell contributed to its demise.

The popular arch in the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area fell Thursday; no injuries were reported.

Michelle Kerns, superintendent of the recreation area that spans the border of Utah and Arizona, said the collapse serves as a reminder to protect the mineral resources that surround the lake.

"These features have a lifespan that can be influenced or damaged by man-made interventions," she said in a statement.

The arch was formed from 190-million-year-old Navajo sandstone originating in the late Triassic to early Jurassic periods. The

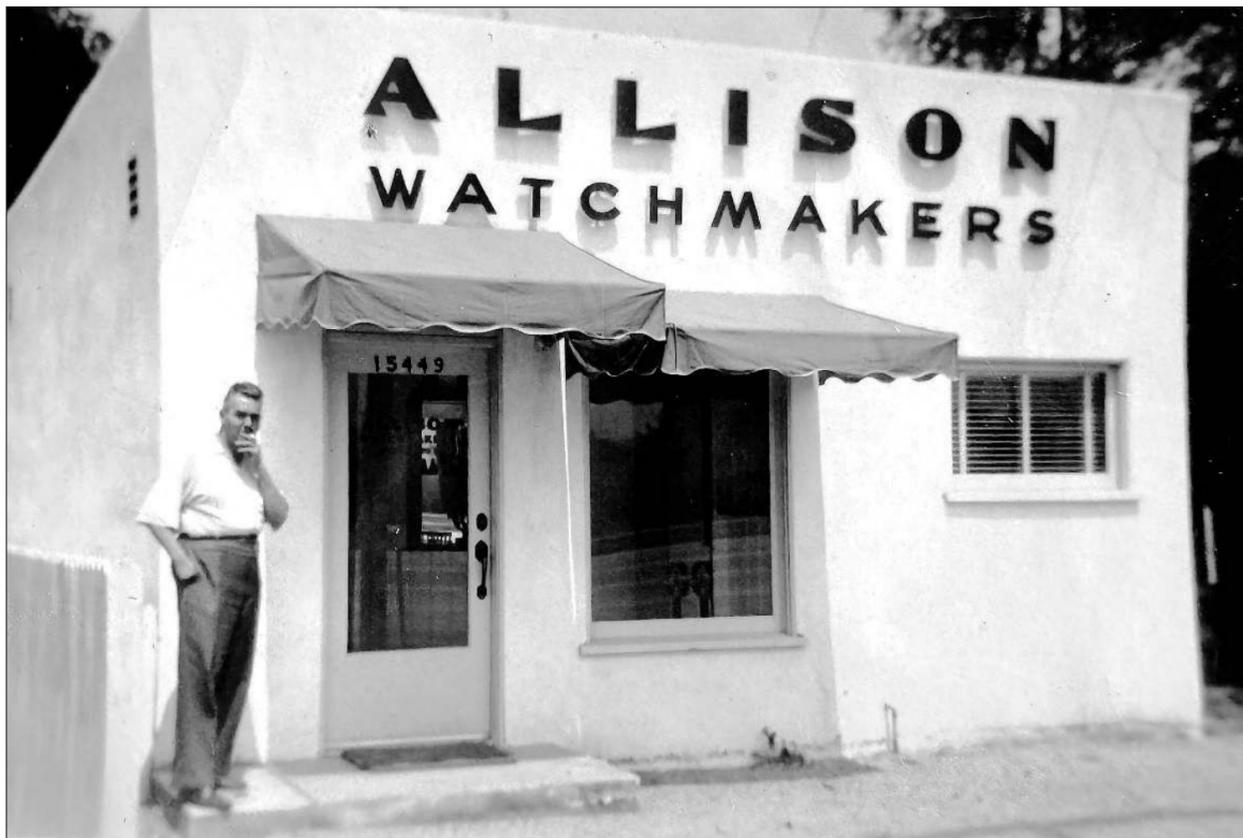


Associated Press

"DOUBLE ARCH," in an undated photo, formed eons ago. It collapsed last week near Lake Powell.

fine-grained sandstone has endured erosion from weather, wind and rain, according to the statement.

The recreation area encompasses nearly 2,000 square miles and is popular among boaters and hikers.



Allison family

CHARLES ALLISON, at his storefront in Los Angeles in an undated photo, is believed to be among the finest watchmakers.

Mystery of 12 missing precious clocks

[Clocks, from A1] in-law, he attached a note.

"See if you can find one like this," he wrote.

Greg took his grandfather's message to heart. He vowed in his diary that night to find the 12 other clocks.

Charles Allison is a mystery. Perhaps that is what has made him so compelling to his grandson. He built watches and clocks at his little storefront in Sherman Oaks for decades in the first half of the 20th century.

The technical difference between a watch and a clock is that a clock has a pendulum, while a watch does not. Most of the watches Charles made look like what we call clocks.

His business was as a repairman, though, and the watches he made were kept on a pair of shelves in the store.

Two small signs on the shelves bore the admonishments "DO NOT HANDLE" and "NOT FOR SALE."

Charles' store became the subject of a few newspaper stories, and those clippings were passed along to Greg by an uncle. One clipping, missing both the date and the name of the publication, called his grandfather "Charley": "Don't let the modesty of Charley Allison and his unpretentious shop fool you. He is one of the outstanding watchmakers and watch repairers in this country. ... We left [the shop] with the impression that Allison is not only a mechanic but combines with his work considerable artistry and creative ability." The reporter noted that Charles' watches weren't for sale.

When Greg's father told him about his grandfather, he recounted a story about a Texas oilman who tried to buy the "Allison Mystery Clock."

The Allison Mystery Clock — which was, to be precise, a watch — told time, but no one besides Charles had any idea how it worked. It simply ticked. The phenomenon delighted visitors to the store, who came from places as far off as Ohio and Alaska to see the clock and try to determine how it functioned.

"Why ask? He won't tell," one person wrote in the 700-page signature book Charles kept at the store.

"When you approach it you just seem to see right through it," wrote a reporter for the Van Nuys News in 1941. "You take it in your hands and there's nothing particularly to see, as far as what makes it tick is concerned. ... You don't wind this clock — it is not connected — as far as the eye can see with anything electric, static, psychic, psychological, radio beam or other phenomena."

The Texas oilman asked Charles for a price.

"It's not for sale," Charles said. The Texas oilman put a blank check on the table.

"It's not for sale," Charles repeated. The oilman left, the Mystery Clock stayed.

Celebrities, actors and musicians, engineers and watchmakers came to the store to marvel at Charles' creations.

"I'd like to be able to keep time as well as your clocks and watches do — and I'm supposed to be a fair drummer," Gene Krupa, the legendary jazz drummer, wrote in the signature book.

started with his second wife.

Judy Allison belongs in another branch, the one Charles started with his fourth (and final) wife. Charles' stepson from that marriage, Jimmy Smith, is Judy's stepfather.

A few years ago, Jimmy suffered a stroke and in 2021 Judy prepared to move him from his San Fernando Valley home to her place in Montana. When she asked him what she needed to bring with them, he croaked, "The clocks."

When she was growing up, she did not know much about Charles Allison.

He died before she was born. She just knew Jimmy always viewed Charles as a father figure.

She also remembered growing up in the Valley just around the corner from the old watchmaker's Woodland Hills shop, where her stepgrandmother continued to live after Charles' death. The front "showroom" had been left intact. Watchmaking tools were still strewn around.

After her stepfather's stroke, Judy went to his house and began packing. She found black-and-white photos curling at the edges in the garage. They were of Charles and his family. She realized the photos were not of her family members, but of those from one of Charles' previous marriages. Some were taken in New York, and Judy realized that they might be of interest to Charles' descendants in Rochester, of whom she had heard.

She also found a photo of 12 of Charles' timepieces, sitting on the store shelves, with the sign — "NOT FOR SALE."

After Judy found the photos, she realized her stepgrandmother's old room and found little bundles wrapped in cloth and tied with string or with rope, depending on their size. She had found the clocks.

"I could tell they had been wrapped up like that for the 70 years since he had died," Judy said.

She matched each clock to the photo she had like pieces in a puzzle. One, however, was missing: a miniature grandfather clock.

Why do people search for things? And what does it say about them?

Judy and Greg were both



SCOTT SERIO For The Times

KATHY SILBERMANN looks at her grandfather's timepieces at the National Watch and Clock Museum.

searching across the country: Greg for the clocks, Judy for the extended family members she had never met.

They both searched and researched. In 2017, after he turned 50, Greg was having a martini in front of the broken miniature grandfather clock. It was time to look in earnest for the clocks.

He started on the internet but could not find anything about watchmaker Charles Allison. Then he tried looking in California museums. Over five years, he made three trips to Los Angeles in search of clues.

He visited where the store used to be. He met with someone in the San Fernando Valley Historical Society. He made trips deep into the basements of the Los Angeles Public Library's central branch downtown.

What he discovered almost made him give up. A divorce decree between Charles and his third wife surfaced nothing about the watches, but laid bare nasty accusations against his grandfather — accusations of spousal violence.

"It put a big, dark cloud over everything for me," said Greg, now 58.

He returned to New York in 2019 dispirited and decided to focus on the timepiece he did have.

He brought the broken clock to an Amish watchmaker in Jasper, N.Y., who was able to take it apart and fix it — 68 years after it had stopped running.

"He mentioned that I should be really proud of my grandfather: that he was in a class of his own. It got me reignited on the path to find the clocks," Greg said. "It was validating to meet someone neu-

tral, who knows about clocks. Not just a watchmaker, but a watchmaker's watchmaker. For him to validate my grandfather meant a lot to me."

Greg brought the clock home and made a YouTube video about his grandfather and his search for the rest of the collection.

"I felt like the repair of that clock to me symbolically repaired some of the shame of the disconnect between my grandfather, my father and myself. I loved the concept of that being repaired," he said.

He went back to L.A. when the COVID-19 pandemic eased in 2022. He even hired a private detective, though he was disappointed with the man's effort.

By that point he'd spent five years searching, and he was no closer to finding the clocks than when he started.

Judy brought the clocks to Montana and decided to find the Rochester Allisons. Then her stepfather Jimmy fell and broke his hip. Life got in the way.

Every once in a while she would Google "Allisons in Rochester, New York." She never got any hits.

One day she typed in "Charles Allison Watchmaker," something she'd searched for before. This time, a YouTube video popped up, the one Greg made about the miniature grandfather clock.

"Greg was just so excited about this story," Judy said. "He was so enamored by the skill of his grandfather. I thought, 'That's so awesome. He's been searching too.' I

totally could relate to the searching: wanting to solve the story and tie it up."

So she commented.

"Hello! My name is Judy Allison," she wrote. "Your grandfather married my step-grandmother. I recently cleared out my stepfather's home and I have many many photographs of your grandfather and your family and I have been searching for a way to get these photographs to your family."

She sent Greg an email. She sent him a message on Facebook.

In her haste and excitement, Judy made a typo: "My step grandmother was married to your grandfather and I how the clocks you are looking for."

Greg saw the message at work and thought that "how" was supposed to be "know" — that she had heard about the clocks as well. He didn't immediately trust Judy, who coincidentally had the exact same name as his sister, Judy Allison. (She had changed her name from Smith to Allison to make her name stand out more in her profession, real estate.) He suspected a scammer. Eventually, he responded that he might be able to have a "quick chat" that week.

"I have a box of really cool photographs that I know are your families," she replied. "I also have the rest of the clocks."

Greg's jaw dropped "to the floor," he said.

"I was like 'holy s—,' " he said.

"I was just super excited to tell him," Judy said. "He had been searching for so long for these clocks. Here they are on my windowsill. I've been looking at them for a year, marveling at them. I already knew I wanted him to have the clocks."

The two got on the phone that night and talked for hours.

Judy understands the complicated relationships some people have with their fathers. She was raised by her stepdad, who was raised by his stepdad.

When she was 17, she found her biological father.

"I understood Greg's quest, him wanting to know about his family and his connection to them. I understood him wanting to understand," she said.

Greg had not been close to his father. He was the youngest of six. His father was already 46 when he was born.

"This is about seeking connection with my paternal heritage," Greg said. "I had this mysterious, genius grandfather I didn't have a chance to meet. I needed to learn about who I am and where I'm going in life and what I'm going to accomplish."

"Greg grew up looking at the clock and wondering. He had that fire in him," Judy said. "I never thought about it for two seconds. It was a done deal. I knew those clocks should go to him. I never even thought about keeping them."

She invited Greg to her home in Hamilton, Mont.

Greg drove with his sister — also Judy Allison (he calls them Judy Florida and Judy Montana) — to Montana, where they spoke with Judy and Jimmy Smith — who was able to communicate a bit despite his stroke.

"He was able to sit down and relive his childhood," Judy said of her stepfather. "He would say a few words and I could fill in the story for everybody. He just really enjoyed himself and sat there with us all three hours going through photos."

Judy gave the clocks to Greg, and he packed them into the car and drove them to Rochester. The Amish watchmaker helped him get them running again.

"I believe the man was definitely above and beyond the average watchmaker's capabilities — in fact quite a bit," said the watchmaker, who asked that his name not be used. "I believe the man was a genius."

The watchmaker disassembled and reassembled the timepieces, studied their intricate parts all handmade by Charles. Some of the pieces are unique, the watchmaker said, and more complex than a Rolex. His favorite is the World Clock, which tracks time in 24 time zones. You can see through the center of the clock.

"I have yet to see a picture of another clock that will match this," the watchmaker said.

Greg decided to fulfill his grandfather's wish and put the clocks in a museum.

They are now on display in Columbia, Pa., at the National Watch and Clock Museum. On July 26, the Allison family gathered at the museum for a reunion to celebrate the family watchmaker whose creations were so long forgotten.

Only one clock is missing from the display: the Allison Mystery Clock. No one can find it. Judy believes it may have been thrown out accidentally during the cleaning of her stepfather's house.

But Greg has a smaller version of the clock, called the American Mystery Clock. And he has what may be his next mission.

"We may someday re-create the big mystery clock."



SCOTT SERIO For The Times

GREG ALLISON shows the American Mystery Clock, one of the unique timepieces created by his grandfather on display at the National Watch and Clock Museum in Columbia, Pa.

Greg's father descended from one of several branches in Charles' family tree, the one Charles

Still 'a magical place,' but 'it's too expensive'

[Disney, from A1] tainment company, which last week reported relatively soft financial results in its experiences division, which includes the theme parks, cruise line and merchandise. The division reported a 2% increase in revenue for the fiscal third quarter, compared with a year ago, but a 3% decrease in operating income.

The segment dominated previous earnings reports and brought in about 70% of Disney's operating income during the most recent fiscal year. For a while, the segment was a bright spot for the company as streaming lost billions of dollars while cannibalizing its cable networks and theatrical movie releases.

But company executives and analysts say pent-up demand for travel since the COVID-19 pandemic is starting to subside. Moreover, the company told financial analysts to expect "flat-ish" revenue for the experiences division for the next fiscal quarter and for several quarters after that. The company cited signs of softening demand among U.S. consumers, a sign that economic stress might finally be weighing on people's travel plans.

That's led to questions about whether Disney has priced out lower- or middle-income visitors and how the park will handle consumers increasingly squeezed by inflation. These days, a family of three could expect to pay at least \$700 just to get in the turnstile with Park Hopper tickets at the Disney theme parks in Anaheim.

"It is not news that a Disney trip is expensive, but the magnitude and speed of price increases over roughly the past five years was jarring to many respondents, and we do not believe similar increases over roughly the next five years are feasible," wrote Ric Prentiss, managing director at Raymond James, in a note to clients about results from a survey of 20 Disney super fans, travel agents and local business owners.

A Disney spokesperson said in a statement that the company offers a range of



BRYAN ROHRENBACHER, left, and Ashley Rowlett dressed as characters from the Indiana Jones movies for D23, a conference that drew tens of thousands of Disney devotees to the Anaheim Convention Center.

prices starting from \$106 at Disneyland Resort in Anaheim and \$109 at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla., which "gives guests the opportunity to visit during periods when they can get even greater value." The spokesperson also noted that a typical trip to a Disney theme park can last 10 to 16 hours, and that guest experience ratings are trending higher.

"Over 70 years, Disney parks have navigated through many economic cycles like this before," the spokesperson said. "We firmly believe in a bright future for our business, and we're committed to investment and expansion around the world."

To keep Disney parks competitive with rivals, including Universal's soon-to-open Epic Universe park in Orlando, the company plans to invest \$60 billion over 10 years into its experiences division, including a devel-

opment of at least \$1.9 billion at Disneyland Resort.

On Saturday night, company executives unveiled plans for a new "Avatar"-themed section and a new "Coco" boat ride in Disney California Adventure, as well as a villains-themed land in Disney World's Magic Kingdom, "Encanto"- and "Indiana Jones"-themed attractions in Orlando's Animal Kingdom and a "Monsters, Inc." land at Disney's Hollywood Studios.

Many questions remained, including when those attractions would open and where, exactly, in the parks they'd be located, but Josh D'Amato, chair of the company's experiences division and a potential successor to current Chief Executive Bob Iger, said all were in some stage of development.

"Disney's plans are drawn," he said onstage at Saturday night's presentation at the Honda Center

arena. "This means the dirt is moving."

The more concrete plan of action was welcomed by fans, who groused at the last D23 convention in 2022 that Disney's parks presentation was heavy on potential but light on actual details. Some fans said they wanted to see new attractions that would freshen things up. The last thing they want is to feel as if they're paying more for the same old thing.

Wes Strickland, 27, said the parks have been "pretty stagnant" since the pandemic, which has been "kind of frustrating."

Disney is "not adding enough in the parks to justify price increases," said Strickland, an Anaheim resident who worked at Disneyland for three years and is an annual pass holder. He also noted the paid line-skipping service, an option that was formerly free, as a concern.

Yet he still goes every other week. The park is too

full of memories for him, as it reminds him of visiting as a child and of his first date with his now-fiancee.

"It's a magical place for us, even though it's too expensive," said Strickland, who was wearing a purple button-down festooned with the creepy eyes from the wallpaper in the Haunted Mansion ride. "It's top bar for theme parks."

Wearing torso-sized replicas of the now-discontinued Disney FastPasses over their chests, longtime friends Ryan Wenzel and Allie Ring have resigned themselves to higher prices.

"I feel like inflation is everywhere," said Wenzel, 31, from Chicago, wearing a giant replica of a FastPass for the Haunted Mansion ride. "I've always gotten the value out of the parks that I expect."

"Everything has gotten more expensive," added Ring, 31, who wore a Jungle Cruise FastPass.

The two, who have been best friends since high school and visit Disney parks multiple times a year, said they understood that Disney had to enact some changes in the parks. But the company seemed open to guest feedback, they said, citing adjustments to its paid line-skipping feature.

Others, though, voiced some frustration with recent visits to Disney theme parks, noting a particular feeling of being aggressively marketed to with merchandise.

"Buy 'Coco' stuff. Buy Avengers stuff. Buy 'Avatar' stuff," said Marie Santos, 37, of San Francisco. Santos suggested a simple remedy for the company's challenges: "Make new attractions."

But the parks still hold a particular draw for Disney superfans, particularly at D23.

At a cosplay photo meet-up Saturday, a cluster of people dressed up as the Spaceship Earth ride at Epcot, an ax-wielding bride from the Haunted Mansion and unnamed animatronic characters from the Pirates of the Caribbean ride at Disneyland. One woman in a nightgown lugged around green shutters, cosplaying as a character in the ride who shouts to a man named Carlos.

That nostalgia keeps devotees coming back.

Darryl Paltao, 33, said that as the price of his annual pass price has gone up, he's had to crunch the numbers to make sure he gets to Disneyland at least six times a year to get his money's worth. He bemoaned some of the changes over the years to the parks, such as the advent of the pandemic-era reservation system that ended his spontaneous visits to Disneyland after, say, a dinner at Downtown Disney.

But he keeps coming back because it reminds him of family trips, when his grandfather would push him down Main Street in a stroller.

"It always brings back memories," said Paltao, a Foster City resident.

He said he'd deal with the consequences to his wallet.

Harris brings in \$12 million at fundraiser in Bay Area

[Fundraiser, from A1] \$12 million in the city that laid the foundation for Harris' political career. Tickets cost \$3,300 to \$500,000.

Harris worked as a prosecutor and a City Hall attorney in San Francisco before being elected district attorney in 2002, which served as a springboard to her later roles as state attorney general and then U.S. senator.

"This is a good day when we welcome Kamala Harris back home to California," said Pelosi, who introduced the vice president. "She makes us all so proud, she brings us so much joy, she gives us so much hope."

The event had the feel of a family reunion. Harris' niece's young children posed for pictures in front of a large Harris/Walz campaign sign on the stage. She called out several attendees from the stage, showering the most attention on Newsom.

She reminisced about the day in 2004 when they took their oath of office in San Francisco, she as district attorney and he as mayor, and also their work marrying gay couples that year.

"I have known Gavin as a friend and colleague for so, so many years," she said. "I want to thank you in front of all of our friends who are here for being an extraordinary leader of California and the nation."

The event capped a whirlwind three weeks in the presidential campaign, with President Biden announcing he would not seek reelection, Democrats quickly coalescing around the vice president as their nominee and Harris selecting Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz as her running mate.

In Biden's first interview since he announced he would not seek another term, he said his decision was driven by the importance of beating Trump, the concerns among some members of the House and the Senate that he could harm their chances and that his candidacy could "be a

real distraction."

"The critical issue for me still, it's not a joke, maintaining this democracy," he said on an interview that aired on CBS on Sunday. While "it's a great honor being president, I think I have an obligation to the country to do what I—the most important thing you can do — and that is, we must — we must — we must defeat Trump."

Harris and Walz spent last week barnstorming battleground states — events that have drawn large crowds.

"Folks are coming to these events and they're bringing with them so much joy. People are singing and they're dancing in the aisles long before we get there," Harris said. "They're showing up not only because we must beat Donald Trump, they're showing up because they believe in our country and our freedom."

On Saturday, the Democrats collected the endorsement of the powerful Culinary Workers Union in Las Vegas, and Harris announced she supported not taxing tips — an immensely popular proposal among service industry workers and one Trump backed in June.

"Copy Cat Kamala directly plagiarized President Trump's No Tax on Tips policy proposal to let hard-working service workers keep more of their own hard-earned money," the Republican's campaign said in a statement.

Sunday's fundraiser also took place four years from the day Biden selected her to be his running mate, months after Harris' 2020 presidential campaign sputtered out.

"It's been the best decision I've made," Biden wrote in a fundraising appeal. "Kamala's sharp. She's tough. She's going to make one hell of a president."

California Republicans chose the location of Sunday's fundraiser to cast doubt on Democratic leadership and point out dys-

function in San Francisco.

"For anyone unsure of what a Harris presidency would look like, take some time to tour her hometown where crime is running rampant, homelessness is visible on seemingly every street corner, and storefronts and office spaces sit empty as businesses close and people move away with no plans to return," said state GOP chairwoman Jessica Millan Patterson in a statement.

Given California's deep blue tilt, it will not be contested in November. But it is home to so many wealthy donors that it provides the most campaign cash to candidates on both sides of the aisle.

The GOP's vice presidential nominee, Sen. JD Vance of Ohio, recently headlined two fundraisers in the state. On Tuesday, Walz is expected to attend a fundraiser in Newport Beach, the same day Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff raises money at an event in Los Angeles.

Attendee Susie Tompkins Buell, the co-founder of Esprit and the North Face who has known Harris since the 1990s, said she could not recall the last time she had seen this much energy among Democrats, which she attributed to Harris' candidacy as well as the "danger to our country from within" posed by the prospect of Trump winning another term.

"Kamala's youth and positive energy is like a fresh gust of a cool breeze on a sweltering, humid day. So refreshing and hopeful," said Tompkins Buell, whose husband served as Harris' finance chair during her district attorney and attorney general campaigns.

"She has been an important part of our community for so long," she added. "I am so impressed by her consistency. She is very confident in who she is and her style has always been the same, just improved. It's all impressive."

GRAND PERFORMANCES

Presented in partnership with MOCA

FREE CONCERTS IN DTLA

**SATURDAY
AUG. 17, 6-10PM**

Madison McFerrin

SOULFUL RNB

LUSH VOCALS



FREE | OUTDOORS | ALL AGES

**CALIFORNIA PLAZA
350 S. GRAND AVE. | DTLA 90071**

GRAND PERFORMANCES



www.grandperformances.org

Mom warned surgeon general to avoid politics

'Nation's Doctor' isn't shying away from the chaos, as his mother had once hoped.

By AMANDA SEITZ

MIAMI — The gold and silver trophies packed in the china cabinet of Dr. Vivek H. Murthy's childhood home boast the surgeon general's many talents, from dance performances to math competitions.

Growing up in a Florida suburb, it seemed to his family that Murthy could succeed at just about anything.

But when a middle school world history teacher suggested he might make a good secretary of state, his mom intervened.

"She got really worried," Murthy told the Associated Press, while his mom giggled. "She called my dad. She said, 'You need to come home and talk to him because he's thinking about going into politics.'"

Now, in his second term as the "Nation's Doctor," Murthy hasn't run from the political, as his mother hoped. He's charged toward it. He's taken on powerful tech companies, accusing their addictive algorithms and dangerous content of making the country's children mentally sick. He's asked Congress to approve a warning label on social media on platforms such as Instagram or TikTok. In June, Murthy released his most politically charged report, declaring that gun deaths and injuries had become a public health crisis.

Focus on gun deaths and injuries

Murthy attracted Democratic President Obama's attention while Murthy was an internist at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, when he organized doctors to lobby for passage of the Affordable Care Act. The group also lead him to his



SURGEON GENERAL Dr. Vivek Murthy speaks at the White House in Washington in April. Murthy was asking Congress to require warning labels on social media platforms that are similar to those for cigarettes.

wife, Alice Chen, who signed onto his letters from Los Angeles, where she was a doctor. The two bonded over text messages and phone calls.

Nominated by Obama as surgeon general, Murthy made comments calling guns a healthcare issue, something that delayed his confirmation until late 2014. He was fired from the post by Republican President Trump but returned to the job under the Biden administration in 2021. He collects an annual salary of \$191,900 in the position.

As surgeon general, Murthy largely stayed quiet on gun violence, until now.

He says gun deaths and injuries had increased so much that he could not ignore it. Firearm injuries are now the leading killer of U.S. children, surpassing car crashes and cancer.

"When you hear these stories again and again from

middle school students, from high school students and college students, those stories stick with you," Murthy said. "It was inescapable to me that we had to do something about this."

Murthy called on Congress to ban large-capacity magazines for civilian use, require universal background checks for gun purchases, restrict gun usage in public spaces and penalize people who fail to safely store their weapons.

Doctors and Democrats praised the surgeon general's report. Republicans jeered. The National Rifle Assn. called it a "war on law-abiding citizens." Sen. Mike Braun (R-Ind.) accused him of "flip-flopping," noting that Murthy had told him gun violence wouldn't be a focus of his term.

Murthy believes his recommendations, which have no teeth, might move the conversation. He sat down

with the AP just four days after Trump had been nicked in the ear with a bullet from a would-be assassin during a campaign rally in Pennsylvania.

"My hope is that we can shift looking at it as a polarizing and political issue and see it for what it is, which is a public health issue that affects all of us, from people in small communities in America to people who [are] running for high office in our land," Murthy said.

The surgeon general also emphasized another side effect of gun violence in his report: the mental health toll. He noted that half of U.S. teenagers 14 to 17 worry about school shootings.

Declining mental health of Americans

Murthy didn't expect to tackle mental health when he was first appointed to the job a decade ago.

But loneliness skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic, when people spent just 20 minutes every day with friends, a historic low. Loneliness can increase the risk of premature death by roughly 30%, he noted in 2023. Murthy spent his time during the pandemic and in between terms consulting, raking in \$2 million working with companies such as Netflix, Airbnb and Carnival Cruises, and writing a book, "Together," focused on loneliness.

As a young doctor, he felt unprepared to handle the impact loneliness had on his patients, he shares in his book. It's why he thinks his report on the topic resonates with doctors.

"And I have a theory as to why," he said, "which is that doctors are actually seeing loneliness and mental health challenges on the front lines themselves in exam rooms, in hospitals

each and every day."

After his term ends in March, Murthy doesn't know what's next. But he says he wants to keep focusing on mental health and loneliness.

People are everything

Murthy traces his interest in eradicating loneliness back to the Miami suburbs, where he retreated last month with his wife and two young children to spend a few summer days under the palm trees of his childhood home alongside his parents, sister and grandmother.

It's where he learned about the power of relationships. First, from watching his parents, immigrants from India, carve out a community in a city where they knew no one when they arrived. Then, as he grew older, helping his parents visit patients' homes for his dad's medical practice.

"Whenever they had a patient who was in need, a friend who lost a job or lost a loved one, they would be there on the phone or in person, bringing food or just sitting by the bedside and holding their hand," Murthy said of his parents, Myetraie and Hallegere.

Even in the July humidity and heat, his family crowds around the kitchen to fry dosas, an Indian crepe, and kesari bath, a sweet raisin wheat mix, over the hot oven. His mother stuffs plastic bags full of food, insisting visitors take one home. Murthy's 7-year-old son wraps himself around his father — and won't let go — as dinner is served in the kitchen.

Family meals are a longstanding tradition that Hallegere Murthy passes on to his patients. "Family unity and family interaction is very important, especially if the only time you all can be interacting is during the dinner time," he said.

Seitz writes for the Associated Press.



ALEX BRANDON Associated Press

SEN. JD Vance says there is merit to the suggestion that presidents exert control of U.S. monetary policy.

Rebuffing criticism about family life, Vance also touts Trump's Fed idea

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance used a round of Sunday news show appearances to disparage the Democratic ticket and promote Donald Trump's record and second-term plans and defend himself from criticism over past remarks that have become a campaign issue.

The Ohio senator, in a series of taped interviews, said there was merit to Trump's suggestion that presidents have more control of U.S. monetary policy and kept up the GOP line that Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, the Democrats' vice presidential candidate, had exaggerated his military record.

Vance, who shadowed Vice President Kamala Harris and Walz during their visits to several battleground states last week, was quizzed about abortion and his past comments about American family life, among other topics.

Trump recently suggested that presidents "should have at least a say" on monetary policy set by the Federal Reserve.

He did not offer specific proposals.

Curtailing the Fed's independence from political interference as it determines

interest rates would be a fundamental change. Even as he tried to argue that Trump said nothing about taking "direct" control of rates, Vance endorsed Trump's general idea.

During Vance's Senate campaign in 2021, he said in a Fox News interview that "we are effectively run in this country via the Democrats," and referred to them as "a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives and the choices that they've made and so they want to make the rest of the country miserable, too."

He said that included Harris, who has two adult stepchildren, and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, who is gay and a married father of twins but had no children at the time of Vance's comment.

Vance also in the past has suggested giving extra votes for people with children.

"It's not a policy proposal. It's a thought experiment, right?" he said in a Sunday interview, arguing he was reacting to others' ideas to lower the voting age.

"Anybody who disagrees with him is anti-child?" Buttigieg countered in a news show appearance. "He seems incapable of talking about a vision for this country in terms of lifting people up. ... It's always about disparagement."

An L.A. showcase at Paris Games

[L.A. Olympics, from A1] sensations often involve music and dancers, some colorful lights. They often get overlooked.

But LA28 needed to make a splash in Paris. A big part of that was money.

..

Over the last six months, Wasserman and his private group remained secretive about their abbreviated production. Not until details began to leak last week did they acknowledge hiring Ben Winston.

Winston was the Emmy-winning executive producer of "The Late Late Show With James Corden" and thus partly responsible for bringing the world carpool karaoke.

The 42-year-old Brit said in a statement that he wanted Sunday night's presentation to evoke "the city's people, creativity, music and, of course, sport, all wrapped up with a little Hollywood magic."

All of this matters because LA28 saw its moment in the spotlight as a crucial advertisement, not only for viewers but also big business. As the International Olympic Committee said: "All eyes will be on you."

The 2028 Olympics will cost an estimated \$7 billion — a figure likely to rise — and organizers have vowed to cover all expenses with IOC contributions, ticket sales and, most importantly, corporate sponsorships.

Despite having deals in hand with Nike, Deloitte and Delta Air Lines, LA28 is about \$1 billion short of its \$2.5-billion goal in the last category with four years to go.

The numbers are important to Southern California residents because, if the Games go over budget, city and state lawmakers have agreed to provide hundreds of millions in taxpayer dollars.

Organizing committees hope eye-catching presentations will generate excitement and jump-start sponsorship negotiations. The problem, said Michael Payne, a former IOC marketing executive, is that "not many of them stand out when they are up against the full power of the real ceremony."



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

TOM CRUISE rappels from the top of the Stade de France as part of L.A.'s 2028 showcase during the closing ceremony of the 2024 Paris Olympics on Sunday.

Paris had reason to celebrate after producing a Games free of major glitches and full of memorable performances.

Global stars such as gymnast Simone Biles, tennis player Novak Djokovic and pole vaulter Mondo Duplantis lived up to their billing. Among the French athletes, swimmer Leon Marchand won five medals and NBA rookie sensation Victor Wembanyama led his teammates to the men's basketball final, where they lost to LeBron James and the U.S.

With 9.5 million in ticket sales, venues were packed and loud. There was lots of predictable French goofiness, including the Olympic debut of breaking — previously known as breakdancing — and a viral moment from an ungainly Australian B-girl named "Raygun."

"There is no way we could have prepared for everything we have just experienced together," said Tony Estanguet, president of the Paris 2024 organizing committee. "We wanted excitement, we got passion."

The closing ceremony featured a spiny figure, the "Golden Voyager," that arrived from the night sky.

Performers cartwheeled and danced along an interlocking series of platforms. Acrobats hung from giant wheels that rolled across a futuristic stage as scenes of

past Olympics flickered up from the floor.

Artistic director Thomas Jolly said: "As a theater and opera director, the configuration of the stadium gives me the opportunity to use the tools of live performance: the lighting, the decor, the costumes, the machinery, the set design."

It was creative and symbolic and so very French, to the point that earlier in the day, when workers arrived with leaf blowers, it was hard to tell whether they were part of the rehearsal or just tidying up.

And when popular French band Phoenix played a mini-concert late in the program, athletes got so excited that they rushed the stage and had to be shoed away by the public address announcer.

After two-plus hours, L.A. took over.

..

Things started simply enough with Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo handing the Olympic flag to her Los Angeles counterpart, Karen Bass, the first time two women have performed this tradition. Biles was there. Grammy winner H.E.R. sang the national anthem.

Then Cruise appeared, spotlighted atop the stadium's curved roofline. Looking a bit wind-blown, he

made his big entrance and took hold of the flag, rushing off to the waiting motorcycle. From there, the action shifted to video.

It was a nod to both the movie business and the evolution of the Games into a made-for-TV event. Cruise tore through the streets of Paris and onto a waiting cargo plane — "I'm on my way" — before skydiving to the Hollywood sign.

A series of athletes took over, with Olympic mountain biker Kate Courtney pedaling the flag to the Coliseum, handing off to famed sprinter Michael Johnson, who ran it to skateboarder Jagger Eaton on the beach.

There, by the Pacific — perhaps the only Southern California scenery that can compete with Paris — the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Eilish and Snoop, joined by Dr. Dre, closed things out with a concert that bled into a one-hour show on NBC and Peacock.

It remains to be seen whether all this will achieve the desired effect of generating buzz — and dollars. But, having watched Paris close up, Wasserman knows he cannot replicate the Olympics of the last few weeks.

"The 2024 Games have been authentically French and Parisian," he said. "And the 2028 Games will be authentically Los Angeles."

BUSINESS

WHAT DO EMMY Award-winning actor Kyra Sedgwick, environmental groups Friends of the Earth and the Rainforest Action Network, the Doors' former drummer John Densmore, acclaimed climate change activist Bill McKibben and "Anchorman" director Adam McKay's Yellow Dot Studios have in common?

They all want to see the Los Angeles Dodgers drop an oil industry advertiser.

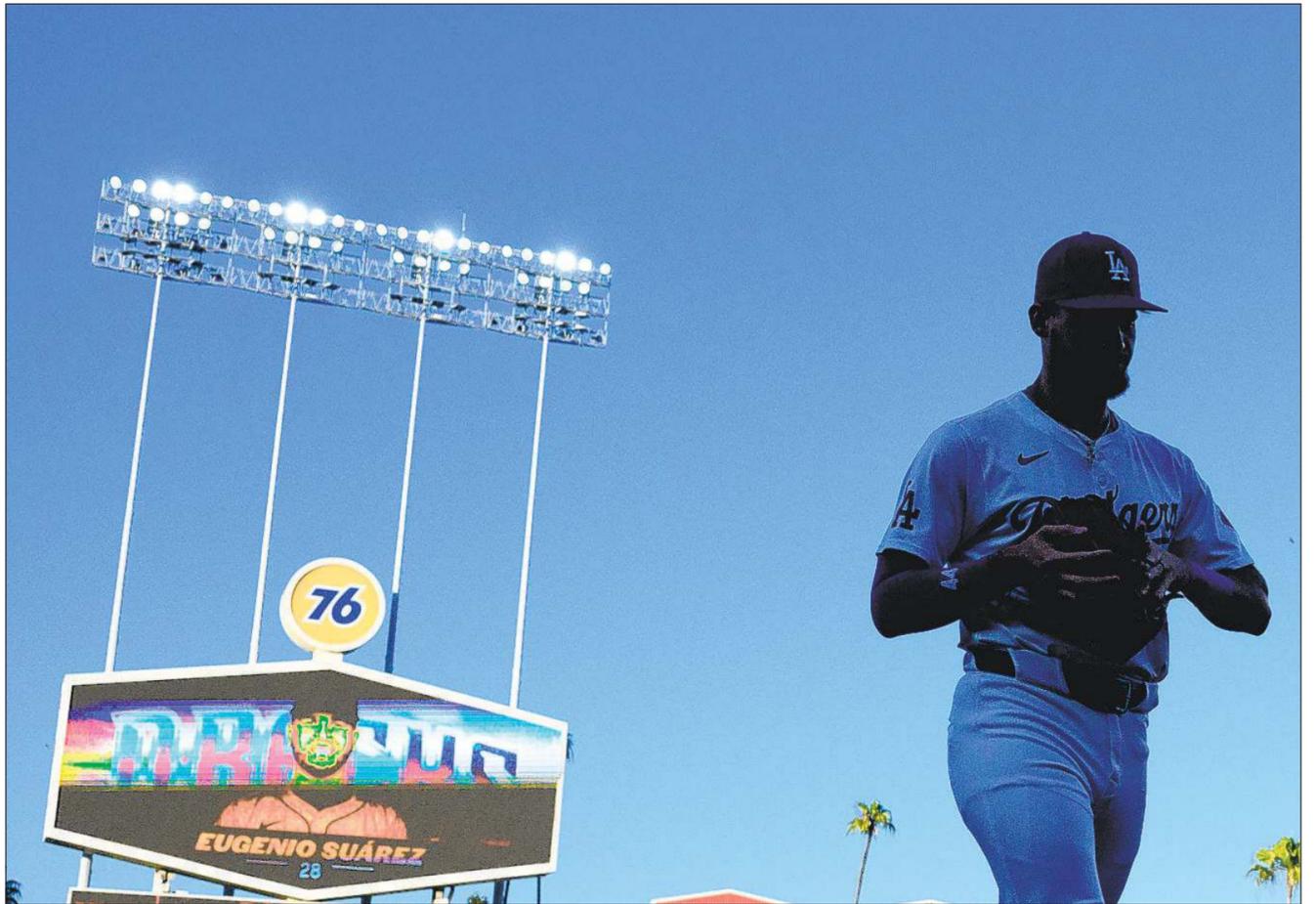
In a letter made public last week, dozens of people and groups called on the team's owner, Mark Walter, to end a sponsorship deal with Phillips 66, owner of the 76 gasoline station chain. Previously known as Union 76, the chain's orange-and-blue logo has been a fixture at Dodger Stadium since the ballpark opened, and currently occupies prime real estate above both scoreboards.

But with Earth recently suffering through 13 straight months of record heat — and with raging megafires, torrential floods, toxic air pollution and other deadly consequences of fossil fuel combustion ravaging people and the planet — some Angelenos believe it's time for Walter to put their health and safety above the easy profits that come from doing business with Big Oil.

South L.A. resident Jordan Howard, who signed the open letter, lives a mile from a Phillips 66 filling station just off the I10 Freeway, where trucks carrying cargo to and from the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports stop to refuel. Phillips 66 also operates a South Bay oil refinery — as does Marathon Petroleum, which advertises its Arco gas stations at Dodger Stadium.

Those are two of many companies fouling the air breathed by Black, brown and low-income families in south L.A. County — to the detriment of people like Howard. She's been diagnosed with lupus, which can be caused in part by environmental factors.

"I'm walking the dog [on a hill], and I see the El Segundo refinery," Howard told me, referring to yet another highly polluting fossil fuel facility, this one belonging to Chevron. "As



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

THE 76 gasoline station chain's logo has been at Dodger Stadium since it opened and occupies prime real estate above both scoreboards.

Activists and stars urge Dodgers to dump oil industry advertiser

The 76 logo belongs to a fossil fuel company accused of covering up the climate crisis

SAMMY ROTH

soon as I hit the other corner, I can see the Marathon refinery in Carson."

Is Howard a Dodgers fan? Of course. There's a bobblehead of former Dodgers first baseman and current broadcaster Eric Karros on her mantle. She'd like to see the team "be part of the solution" and "find a business model that doesn't enable extraction."

"Don't pledge your allegiance to the corporations that are causing harm," she said.

The question now: Will Walter listen?

When I first wrote about the problematic nature of the Dodgers' continued partnership with Phillips 66, the team didn't respond to my request for comment. When I followed up with a column criticizing the team's official charity for taking money from Phillips 66 and Marathon Petroleum to fund health and education programs for kids — a column that spurred activ-

ist Zan Dubin to write the open letter to Walter and start soliciting signatures — the team's ownership group again declined to weigh in.

The silence continues. I asked the Dodgers for comment for this story and got nothing.

I wonder if the letter will change the equation for Walter — especially if the list of signatories continues to grow.

In addition to the folks I mentioned earlier, early signatories include the Center for Biological Diversity, former Culver City Mayor Meghan Sahli-Wells, science historian Naomi Oreskes, public radio broadcaster Warren Olney and "MASH" actor Mike Farrell.

When I asked McKibben why he signed the letter, he offered a simple response.

"Baseball is the great American pastime," he said. "What a shame to see it tainted with the thing that's destroying summer, and making it impossible for us to relax and recreate the way that all who came before us in this country were able to."

If that sounds hyperbolic, you're not paying attention.

It was so hot in July that Las Vegas — future home of Major League Baseball's Oakland Athletics — hit 120 degrees, breaking the old record by 3 degrees. Death Valley recorded the hottest month ever measured anywhere, with an average temperature of 108.5 degrees. Needles, Calif., home to Snoopy's brother Spike — averaged 103.2 degrees, shattering Phoenix's all-time mark for the hottest

month for any U.S. city. Earth suffered through its hottest day on record — then broke the record the next day.

Anecdotally, I took a bunch of friends to a Sunday afternoon Dodgers game in July. We were sitting in direct sunlight, and most of them couldn't stand the scorching heat. They spent the majority of the game secluded in shaded areas under the stands.

What will happen as the planet gets even hotter?

"Sitting out in the sun on a hot summer day is tradition. But it doesn't work when it's 109," McKibben said.

Fossil-fueled heat waves and other increasingly extreme weather events can be a menace for athletes too. Reporting from Paris, The Times' David Wharton described the Olympic Games as "the latest in an Olympic trend that has winter athletes scrambling to find enough snow and their summertime counterparts facing health risks — cramping, vomiting, heat stroke."

"We are in a race against time," wrote Sebastian Coe, a former Olympian and head of the international track federation. "Whilst global temperatures continue to rise, climate change should increasingly be viewed as an existential threat to sport."

Back home, the oil and gas companies fueling the climate crisis also damage the lungs of vulnerable kids and parents.

Morgan Goodwin fights to protect those families. As director of the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter, he's helped lead campaigns — all works in progress — to end oil drilling in Culver City, Signal Hill and across L.A. County. Researchers have found that living near oil and gas wells can increase the risk of health problems such as asthma and preterm birth — and possibly much worse.

By implicitly endorsing those companies, Goodwin said, Walter is sending a message to Dodgers fans.

"It's like the Dodgers are giving their 16-year-old a new car with a set of keys and a bottle of rum and saying, 'Go for it!'" he said.

But if Walter were willing to stop taking money from Phillips 66 and Marathon Petroleum, the Dodgers owner could help clean up Southern California's filthy air — saving who knows how many lives, and preventing who knows how many tragic illnesses.

I'm not saying the Dodgers are to blame for Big Oil's misdeeds.

But by selling ads to Phillips 66 and Marathon — both of which are mentioned in a lawsuit filed by California officials accusing oil companies of a "decades-long campaign" of climate deception — Walter is enabling "sportswashing." That's the sports version of greenwashing, a tried-and-true tactic for industries facing public relations crises, such as tobacco. Knowing the future looks bleak, they seek to buy goodwill, and influence public policy, by associating themselves with beloved brands such as sports teams.

So long as folks like Walter are willing to keep taking their money, it often works.

"When you have that nice, warm, fuzzy, orange 76 [at Dodger Stadium] — it sets the tone for everything else," Goodwin said.

As a climate journalist, I find the whole thing demoralizing. As a die-hard Dodgers fan, I find it absurdly frustrating. It drives me crazy to see my favorite players — Mookie Betts, Freddie Freeman, Clayton Kershaw — used to sell planet-wrecking propaganda.

It's also disappointing that Walter and his partners have refused to comment, probably hoping the story will just go away.

Well, it's not going away. I plan to keep writing about fossil fuel advertising at Dodger Stadium and in sports more broadly.

Even the Bay Area — with its long-standing reputation for robust environmentalism — has a sportswashing problem. I've watched the Dodgers play in San Francisco and Oakland this summer. Both ballparks feature Chevron ads along the outfield walls.

"It would be great for the Dodgers to beat the Giants in the race to get fossil fuels out of their stadiums," said Jennifer Krill, who lives in Berkeley and is executive director of the national environmental group Earthworks, which signed the open letter.

"Don't tell my Giants fans friends I said that," Krill added, laughing.

The Chevron advertisement down the left-field line at San Francisco's Oracle Park is actually quite unusual. As SFGate reported in 2021, it periodically requires special approval from Major League Baseball because it juts up from the otherwise flat wall, creating

extra publicity for Chevron — and also the possibility of fly balls that would otherwise sail over the fence staying in play.

I'm sure it's a lucrative deal for the Giants. I'm sure it's easy for MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred to keep saying "yes," in the same way it's easy for Walter and other executives to wash their hands of responsibility for climate change and blame someone else.

But there is no one else.

Scientists tell us we should be hurrying to cut climate pollution nearly in half by 2030, to avoid the worst consequences of global warming. Right now, we're not close. Either all of us commit to making better choices — consumers with our lifestyles, politicians with their votes, executives with their profit margins — or before long, we'll regret whatever it was that felt more important.

Phillips 66 didn't respond to my request to comment for this story. Neither did Marathon Petroleum.

The letter's organizers plan to keep collecting signatures on their MoveOn.org petition until the Dodgers dump 76. I don't know whether they'll succeed. But Dubin, who's leading the charge, has a track record of success. Earlier this year, she led a campaign that prompted Disneyland to accelerate its timeline for phasing out gas-guzzling engines at its iconic Autopia ride.

Like Disney, the Dodgers "can really set an example that could have an enormous impact," Dubin said.

"In the Disney case, we were successful," she said. "We're fearlessly hoping for the same with the Dodgers."

The letter's organizers have one other request: electric vehicle chargers at Dodger Stadium.

That's right: Somehow, there are no EV charging stations in Chavez Ravine's sprawling parking lots. Even the Oakland Coliseum — notorious for its reputation as baseball's worst ballpark — has two charging ports, as I learned when I visited this month.

The Dodgers wouldn't tell me if they have plans to install any.

This column is the latest edition of Boiling Point, an email newsletter about climate change and the environment in California and the American West. For more climate and environment news, follow @Sammy_Roth on X.



JORDAN STRAUSS Invision/AP

PEOPLE and groups are calling on Dodgers owner Mark Walter to end sponsorship deal with Phillips 66.



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

DODGER Mookie Betts fist-bumps a fan at DodgerFest 2024 in February at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles near the 76 logo, a familiar sight at the stadium.

OPINION

EDITORIALS

Huntington Beach should leave transgender kids alone

LESS THAN 2% of U.S. teenagers identify as transgender. It would be safe to guess that a lot of them tell their parents sooner or later; if they want any form of medical or surgical intervention, they need parental consent. Others simply feel a strong enough bond with their parents to share what's going on and seek support.

The remainder — transgender students who are not ready to tell their parents, sometimes with very good reason — are a tiny portion of the student population. Yet in a few under-informed spots in California, you'd think that transgender secrecy was an issue as vital to public education as illiteracy.

A few school districts flouted state rules by passing requirements that teachers and other school staff tell parents about gender-identity changes by their kids, such as using different names or pronouns. The Legislature decided to put the kibosh on any such attempts to intimidate students and school employees. In July, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 1955, which allows staff to keep students' records about such matters confidential.

You'd think school districts would drop it and get on with the business of education. That's what the public apparently wants. In two of those districts — Orange and Temecula Valley unified — anti-transgender board members were recalled by voters in June.

But another transgender-obsessed school board, Chino Valley Unified, is suing the state over that law. And now, the Huntington Beach City Council — no stranger to weird municipal policy — has stuck its toe into this culture war issue with a proposal to become a "Parents' Right to Know" city.

The City Council wasted more than four hours on the subject Tuesday, giving the floor to sometimes vitriolic speakers — many of whom might not have even been city residents — with opinions on something that will have no effect. In the end, the conservative majority on the council voted to go forward with an ordinance.

The exact reach of the ordinance planned by the council isn't clear, but the idea is to require teachers to tell parents if their kids change their gender identity. It's unknown if it would have any effect because the city doesn't have jurisdiction over how the schools are run. A municipal law wouldn't go very far if it prohibited teachers from teaching algebra, for example.

Of course, on a real-life scale, many parents do know — by being the kind of parents whose kids feel comfortable telling them important things. And parents whose children are afraid to tell them because they fear rejection, or verbal or even physical abuse, aren't going to change their kids' gender identity as a result. The students will simply keep it a secret from all adults and become more isolated, sometimes dangerously so.

"The governor can raise his children the way he wants," Huntington Beach Mayor Gracey Van Der Mark said in an interview. "I will raise my children the way I want.... He needs to stick his nose out of our business."

But it is Van Der Mark — who also was the force behind a new public-library policy that will have a panel of people who might have no library or literary expertise deciding which books the city library can buy — who is inserting her beliefs into areas where they don't belong. The City Council does not run the schools — the school districts do. (A few



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times
MAYOR Gracey Van Der Mark, center, and Huntington Beach City Council members at City Hall in January.

districts serve Huntington Beach students.) And teachers have enough to do. It is not their job to interject themselves into potentially sensitive family matters.

Doesn't the city have something better it could do, such as offer recreation and mental health programs that build strong and positive bonds between teenagers and their parents, so that kids feel safe sharing what's on their minds? Or possibly even ensure that its residents have access to books deemed worthy by city librarians?



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times
BEVERLY CASSIRER and Claude Cassirer, the grandson of Lilly Cassirer, with a copy of the Pissarro painting their family wants returned. Both have since died.

Nazis stole a Jewish family's Pissarro. This may help return it

IN THE TWISTS and turns that an exquisite Impressionist painting of a rainy Paris streetscape has taken from Lilly Cassirer's Berlin home in 1939 to the wall of a Spanish museum where it hangs today, no one has ever questioned that the artwork was stolen by the Nazis.

Yet, her descendants, now living in California, haven't been able to get it back.

Finally, after two decades of fighting in court from California to the U.S. Supreme Court, a bill in the state Legislature may give the Cassirer family the best chance yet of winning back the Camille Pissarro painting, "Rue Saint-Honore in the Afternoon. Effect of Rain," which the Nazis forced Cassirer to give up in exchange for exit papers out of Germany.

Assembly Bill 2867, written by Assembly member Jesse Gabriel (D-Encino) and sponsored by California Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis, would mandate that all court cases filed by California residents or their families to recover their stolen art held by museums be adjudicated according to state law. Under California law, a thief has no legal right to stolen property and therefore cannot pass legitimate title to others no matter how many times the property is sold or how much time passes.

Gabriel and Kounalakis know how hard it is to find and retrieve property stolen during the Holocaust. Gabriel, an attorney, has represented Holocaust victims, and Kounalakis was previously ambassador to Hungary, a country that sent more than half a million Jewish people to their deaths.

This morally compelling bill solves a

glitch that had stymied the Cassirer family's case. Currently, courts deciding a case in a state where the plaintiff is suing a foreign entity (like the Spanish museum) are required to make a decision whether to apply that state's law or the law of the defendant's country. In the Cassirer case, federal courts always decided to apply Spanish law. And in Spain, the holder of stolen property has the right to keep it after a certain period of time — even if it was stolen.

Under those rules, the Cassirer family lost in federal district court, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, and — after the U.S. Supreme Court sent the case back to the appellate court in 2022 — again in the appellate court. Earlier this year, a panel of the 9th Circuit applied Spanish law and ruled that the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid had the right to keep the painting. If the bill passes, the Cassirer family can go back to the 9th Circuit based on the new law or they can appeal the 9th Circuit's recent decision to the U.S. Supreme Court.

No matter what law was applied, it's outrageous that the museum has kept it. Even a concurring judge on the 9th Circuit said the museum should give it back to the Cassirer family.

This bill will send a clear message from the people of California to all courts — as well as the government of Spain — that museums should have no right to hold stolen art. The Legislature should pass this quickly and Gov. Gavin Newsom should sign it into law as soon as it passes. The bill has an urgency clause, meaning it will go into effect immediately after the governor signs it.

LETTERS



GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press
THICK PLASTIC bags came into widespread use after California banned flimsier plastic bags in 2016.

What to do with all those bags

Re "Yes, California needs to ban plastic grocery bags, again," editorial, Aug. 6

Both during the pandemic and again more recently while recuperating from surgery, I have had to rely on delivery service for my groceries, which resulted in my accruing of those thick plastic bags.

As your editorial correctly points out, I couldn't just toss them into the recycling bin (it would be pointless for me to do so), and I couldn't reuse them at the store, because delivery necessitates new bags for every order.

What I did with the pandemic-era bags — and what I will do with my latest stock once I am out and about again — is donate them to a local food bank. They are always in need of bags, and those who depend on food banks are probably more likely to reuse them many times before they become unusable (such as the mind-

set of anyone forced to make do with fewer resources).

I would urge everyone who has a pile of these thick plastic bags to do likewise. Recycling is important, and so is reusing, but too often we forget about repurposing.

KYMBERLEIGH RICHARDS
Van Nuys

::

Thank you for highlighting the absurdity of our existing policies on "recyclable" plastic bags.

How did the minor detail that the new, thicker bags are not in fact recyclable ever get overlooked by the lawmakers who enacted California's ban in 2016? Add to that the fact that consumers are charged 10 cents per bag, which we were led to believe went to help recycling efforts. Instead, the money is profit for the sellers.

It's incompetence or collusion, with the only winners being the plastic manufacturers and the margin-starved grocery

stores. Keep the spotlight bright on this problem.

KAREN GALAS
Palos Verdes Estates

::

Loopholes in California's bag ban have wasted eight years of environmental progress. Plastic bags still dangerously float around our highways on windy days, on our beaches and everywhere else.

We need the Legislature to pass Assembly Bill 2236 and Senate Bill 1053, identical bills that would require stores to provide only paper bags made out of a minimum of 50% recycled material. We passed that 2016 single-use plastic bag ban for a good reason, but the state still needs to address sustainability issues.

Let's hope our lawmakers move forward with our environmental standards that keep California beautiful and our landfills less clogged.

JONATHAN LIGHT
Laguna Niguel

Law and order on encampments

Re "San Francisco and Newsom take a wrong turn on homelessness," editorial, Aug. 9

Los Angeles' response to the problem of street camping has been ineffective, not effective.

If a river coming down from higher elevation is not managed, it floods the surrounding countryside. The flood will destroy the area where most people live.

When 75% of the campers on the street have a substance abuse or mental health condition, according to a 2019 UCLA study, it is wishful thinking that more public generosity will solve the problem. Some meaningful law and order must be applied to street camping, or encampments in the city will continue to proliferate.

LEE MEISTER
San Pedro

::

I agree with your editorial on Gov. Gavin Newsom's misguided encampment orders.

However, I am disappointed you are not using people-first language to describe people experiencing homelessness. I hope you will do so in the future.

PAM MARINO
Pacific Grove, Calif.

Was that a news conference?

Re "Trump relents, debate is set," Aug. 9

In your article about former President Trump's news conference on Thursday, you wrote that he "answered questions from reporters."

I'd have to check the transcript to see if I missed something, but I don't recall any questions being truly answered. He bobbed and weaved; spewed long, rambling, unintelligible quasi-sentences; never pronounced Vice President Kamala Harris' name correctly; and made indefensible accusations.

It was a travesty, and to even call it a news conference is very generous.

RICHARD SHAFARMAN
Santa Clarita

::

JD Vance, Trump's running mate, is disparaging Democratic vice presidential candidate Tim Walz because after serving honorably in the Army National Guard for 24 years, he resigned to run for Congress in 2005 in his home state of Minnesota.

Vance accused Walz of abandoning his unit before it deployed to Iraq in 2006.

I would like to remind Vance that his running mate reportedly said people who served and died in defense of our country were suckers. Trump also reportedly said he did not want disabled veterans at one of his photo ops. He also avoided being drafted during the Vietnam War, claiming he had bone spurs in his heels.

People who partner with individuals living in glass houses should not be throwing rocks.

JOSE LOPEZ
Chino Hills

Fake grass is a toxic, hot mess

Re "Real benefits of fake grass," letters, Aug. 8

To the readers who wrote in support of fake grass, I have two comments.

First, plastic recycling is basically a hoax perpetrated by the plastics industry. Ultimately, almost all plastic winds up in landfills,

oceans and our bodies. Fake grass adds to this problem.

Second, fake grass has absolutely zero habitat value. At a time when we are losing plant and animal species because of climate change, we should be doing all in our power to create native plant habitats in our public and private spaces to support the animals with whom we share our Earth.

CHUCK PETTITHOMME
Burbank

::

In an overheating world, there is no excuse for smothering outdoor spaces with plastic or tire waste. Synthetic turf is plastic carpet masquerading as grass, but it is the exact opposite of cooling, oxygenating, natural grass.

Plastic carpeting can be hotter than asphalt, and it sheds plastic fibers and microplastics that are inhaled, ingested and stick to skin. And, a recent study published in the journal Environment International found that the chemicals in plastics can cross the skin barrier into our bodies.

Grass fields can be engineered to be water efficient, durable and low maintenance. There is no excuse for exposing children and athletes to hot, toxin-laden plastic surfacing.

KATHLEEN MICHELS
Silver Spring, Md.

HOW TO WRITE TO US

Please send letters to letters@latimes.com. For submission guidelines, see latimes.com/letters or call 1-800-LA TIMES, ext. 74511.



OP-ED

What Kamala Harris has to remember about California's anti-immigrant past

By Manuel Pastor and Miguel Santana

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, and its presidential nominee Kamala Harris, should stop touting “border security” and offer a new approach to the immigration debate, one firmly rooted in American values of justice, opportunity and truth-telling.

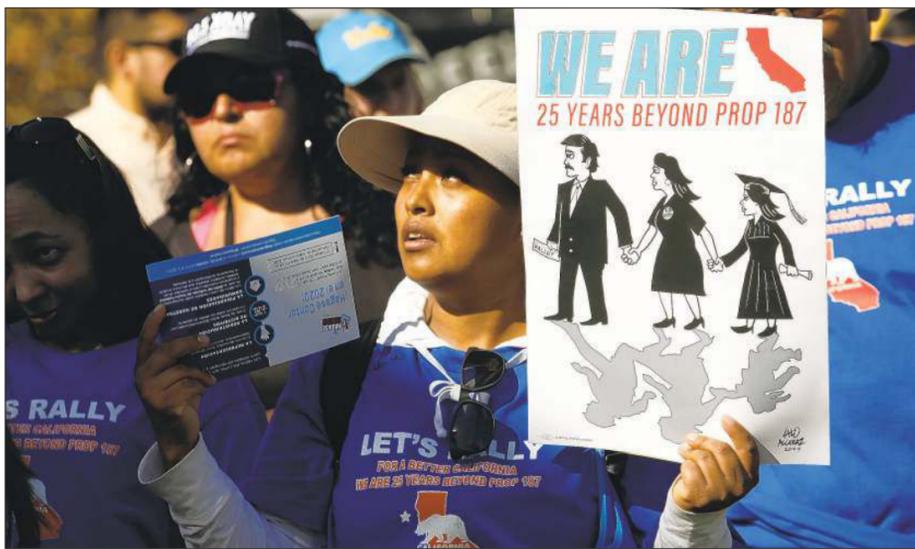
The contrast with Donald Trump should be easy to sell: The former president is promising to enact the “largest mass deportation” in the nation’s history and issue an executive order denying birthright citizenship to any child born of residents who are in the country without papers. These actions would have a devastating effect on millions of people, many of whom have been in the United States for decades. It would wreak havoc on our economy, which is not just dependent on immigrants with and without papers, but bolstered by them. And it would tarnish beyond repair our moral standing as a human rights leader around the world.

While the Republican Party’s embrace of exclusion is frightening, equally troubling is the Democrats’ embrace of policies that falsely equate border security with more restrictive asylum regulations, including President Biden’s executive order in June that closes the border to asylum applicants when numbers reach certain limits. The hope seems to be that a somewhat less cruel approach than mass deportation will satisfy those sympathetic to immigrants but also pull some would-be MAGAists away from the xenophobic abyss.

Harris seemed to play into this strategy with her now infamous 2021 remarks telling Guatemalans: “Do not come.... If you come to our border, you will be turned back.” Although it may have been more a statement of fact than a threat, it revealed a serious lack of understanding about the forces leading migrants to leave their homes.

It also hurt her — and the administration’s — credibility with immigrant communities; a “big blemish,” as a political scientist at UC Irvine told *The Times*. Her latest talking points — emphasizing drug cartel prosecutions and the border crackdown bill Republicans tanked earlier this year — lean in the same anti-immigrant-tinted direction.

So what should Harris say and



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

A RALLY in 2019 celebrated California’s ultimate rejection of the anti-immigrant Proposition 187. Harris’ campaign should follow her home state’s lead on “border security” politics.

do? To borrow her own emerging slogan, she should argue that “we are not going back” to divisive policies and “build the wall” attitudes. Tough talk against immigrants has a short political shelf life. We in California know this story firsthand.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the state’s passage of Proposition 187 in 1994, a measure that sought to block undocumented immigrants in California from accessing basic, lifeline services — especially healthcare and public education for their children. It required every teacher, school nurse, firefighter and police officer to report anyone they merely suspected to be undocumented. The initiative was stayed and eventually deemed unconstitutional by federal courts, but even without going into effect it ignited a counteroffensive on behalf of all Californians.

Three decades later, California’s political terrain has shifted so significantly that the state has extended earned income tax credits, college tuition programs and health insurance to undocumented residents. Most significantly, it is now nearly impossible for an anti-immigrant candidate to win statewide office.

The move away from exclusion didn’t happen on its own. At first, it activated a tug-of-war between California moderates and progressives about how to push back against anti-immigrant fear and fervor, with some arguing for the

defensive middle ground, similar to Harris’ stance now.

What prevailed instead was a grassroots effort to establish a multiracial, cross-sector coalition of support for commonsense policies in a sanctuary state. In just one example, when anti-immigrant jurisdictions began using traffic stops to criminalize noncitizens — upending families, communities and swaths of the economy, not to mention traffic — the coalition got Assembly Bill 60 passed, after a battle spanning more than a decade, in 2013, giving undocumented immigrants access to a special driver’s license.

Along the way the process proved the benefits of inclusion to the state. As *The Times* reported recently, international migrants have “lifted” the U.S. and California economies, filling and creating jobs and “pumping millions of tax dollars” into government coffers.

Indeed, Golden State politicians are now likely to remind their audiences that the state’s economy — the fifth largest in the world — is home to more than 10 million immigrants with \$383 billion in spending power, and that 40% of the state’s entrepreneurs are immigrants. Even undocumented immigrants are a proven boon: At a national level, they contribute \$13 billion more annually to the Social Security system than they will even be able to withdraw.

California’s shift away from

Proposition 187 thinking can and should be exported nationally. It’s a ready-made opportunity for any political figure, but especially Harris and the Democrats, to look to the future.

Surveys show that despite the attacks on their very existence, immigrants and their children are largely optimistic, a sharp contrast to the dark tones of a MAGA movement that thinks America can be great only if it goes back to some mythical, all-white past. Harris should wholeheartedly embrace a more hopeful vision of America, one rooted in facts that prove the contributions of immigrants, instead of being tempted to in any way countenance Trump’s hate-filled agenda.

We are both the children of once-undocumented parents. We know that immigrants enrich our society, that the demonizing of newcomers is morally and factually wrong. A bold and brave commitment to inclusion will strengthen the United States, reflect the values of a democratic and diverse nation, and move us closer to realizing the American dream that so many, especially immigrants, aspire to.

MANUEL PASTOR is a professor of sociology and director of the Equity Research Institute at USC. MIGUEL SANTANA is president and chief executive of the California Community Foundation.

Can Venezuela be rescued from Maduro?

By Will Freeman

THE LATIN AMERICAN left has a decision to make about Venezuela: Oppose Nicolás Maduro’s totalitarian bid to remain in power indefinitely or enable it. Efforts to constrain Maduro may not succeed. But giving in to him will destabilize neighboring countries — with consequences for the United States — while undermining the left’s claims to respect democracy and possibly costing its leaders political support.

According to an Associated Press review of about 80% of Venezuelan voting machines’ paper tallies provided by the opposition, Maduro lost the July 28 election to opposition coalition candidate Edmundo González Urrutia by a more than 2-to-1 margin. Rather than acknowledge it, however, Maduro simply announced that he had won and blamed an unsubstantiated cyberattack by Elon Musk for his inability to prove it.

Maduro’s blatant steal marks a dark new chapter in Venezuela. Until July 28, the country was authoritarian with a patina of democracy, holding periodic unfree, unfair elections. Now that Maduro knows he lacks the popular support to win even on a tilted playing field, he is scrapping the facade and going full totalitarian, exceeding even his previous crackdowns.

Maduro’s government has arrested more than 2,000 people without trial since election day; deployed Russian Wagner Group mercenaries, Cuban secret police and other forces; and promised to send critics to “reeducation camps.” At least 24 people have been killed since election day.

Venezuela’s descent into authoritarianism and a coinciding economic collapse in the 2010s pushed about 8 million Venezuelans into exile abroad, more than half a million of whom came to the United States; fueled Colombia’s internal armed conflict by providing rebels with a haven on Venezuelan territory; and polarized Latin American politics into pro- and anti-Venezuela



MATIAS DELACROIX Associated Press

A POLICE OFFICER throws a gas canister at protesters demonstrating in Caracas the day after Venezuela’s election.

camp.

The lurch toward full-fledged totalitarianism could prove even more destabilizing. Preelection polls suggested about 3.7 million additional people planned to migrate if Maduro remained entrenched. Given Venezuela’s abundance of armed groups and Maduro’s naked lack of legitimacy, it’s not hard to imagine his government losing control as warring forces vie for territory.

Can anything hold Maduro back? Barring an improbable uprising within his security forces, further mass protests seem unlikely to rein him in. The United States could tighten its sanctions, but Maduro and his inner circle already know how to live under them, having forged ties with other pariah states during their years of isolation dating to the Trump administration.

If anyone outside the country has any leverage, it’s those often seen as Maduro’s friends: the leftist presidents of Brazil, Mexico and Colombia.

These leaders have taken Maduro’s side at times, but Colombia’s Gustavo Petro and Brazil’s Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva have criticized him more recently. They even dissuaded Maduro’s government from disqualifying opposition candidate González — as it had opposition leader María Corina Machado and the first

candidate chosen to replace her. Since the election, Mexico’s Andrés Manuel López Obrador has joined Petro and Lula in demanding the release of voting tallies.

The three presidents aren’t pushing Maduro to honor the results and concede outright, which would risk rupturing their ties with Venezuela’s ruling party and upsetting pro-Maduro hard-liners in their own. Given that Maduro threatened to move troops through Brazilian territory to invade Guyana last year, Lula might also fear what he could do if he were even more isolated and vengeful. But the presidents of Brazil and Colombia have said publicly that they are eager to avert mass bloodshed. Brazil is also keen to prevent China and Russia, which quickly recognized Maduro’s “win,” from becoming more involved in the hemisphere and increasing geopolitical tensions, the newspaper *O Globo* reported.

Given their preference for behind-the-scenes diplomacy — and the risks of burning bridges by publicly slamming Venezuela’s government — if the three leaders are seeking to sway Maduro or his inner circle, it’s happening behind closed doors.

That could produce a range of outcomes. Endorsing another election with a weaker opposition figure on the ballot would amount

to propping up Maduro. If the leftist leaders pursue that course or simply do nothing as Maduro’s crackdown proceeds, they will enable another exodus, more economic chaos and further isolation while discrediting themselves.

Pushing Maduro toward a power-sharing deal and giving his opponents control of some government institutions — as the U.S. government envisioned in 2020 — could move Venezuela closer to democracy and increase the opposition’s leverage. The alternative — hoping mass protests push security forces to break with Maduro — looks increasingly unlikely.

Petro, Lula and AMLO don’t have to be idealists to act. They should see the parallels between what’s happening in Venezuela today and the repression the left suffered under their own countries’ authoritarian regimes decades ago. But they also have self-interested reasons to get involved. Many of the voters and allies the leftist leaders need to win elections and implement policy will be alienated if they ignore or embrace Maduro’s totalitarian turn.

Their response will also send an important signal about the health of their own democracies, which are home to nearly 60% of Latin Americans. Colombia’s and Mexico’s presidents are pushing for major institutional changes; Brazil’s president took office only after a failed coup plot.

Government critics in all three countries allege, with varying amounts of evidence, that they will roll back democracy or are already doing so. Standing aside as Maduro crushes his opponents would not convince anyone otherwise.

Hopes (including mine) that an overwhelming opposition victory would produce fissures within the Maduro government and enable a transition were not borne out. If there is any hope for such an outcome now, it rests with Venezuela’s neighbors.

WILL FREEMAN is a fellow for Latin America studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

GOP’s ‘Tampon Tim’ joke is already backfiring

By Jennifer Weiss-Wolf

BEFORE TUESDAY, vice presidential contender Tim Walz was hardly a household name. Now that the Minnesota governor has been the subject of round-the-clock news interviews and viral videos, he has also picked up a new nickname. Enter “Tampon Tim,” conservatives’ response to the 2024 state law Walz signed that requires public schools to provide menstrual products in student bathrooms.

It hardly feels like much of a “gotcha” moniker, though. Periods have been a mainstream public policy priority for the better part of the last decade. And California has been at the forefront. Since 2017, the Legislature has passed a series of laws — including ones that eliminate the state sales tax on menstrual products; mandate the provision of menstrual products in all public school restrooms for students in grades 6-12, as well as at California state universities; and require county jails and state prisons to provide free access to tampons and pads to people who are incarcerated.

California has also proposed legislation to improve public health disclosure requirements around the ingredients in menstrual products — an especially timely effort in light of recent headlines: A study last month out of UC Berkeley shows that toxic chemicals including lead and arsenic were found in several name-brand tampons.

While California is a leader, it is hardly an outlier. It is one of 30 states that have scrapped the “tampon tax” in the last eight years; the latest to join the roster is Texas, with a signature from Republican Gov. Greg Abbott on a bill that garnered notable bipartisan support. Across the country, 28 states also mandate the provision of menstrual products in public schools; another 25 states require the same in their jails and prisons.

In an era of often intractable political polarization, menstrual policy has proved something of a unicorn. Hardly the butt of jokes, “menstrual equity” is a bipartisan agenda on which the two major parties have found common ground — and agree that ameliorating the economic burden and easing the stigma of menstruation is plain common sense.

So why the Tampon Tim uproar? Mostly it is about the language of the Minnesota law, which states that pads and tampons must be available to “all menstruating students” and “in restrooms regularly used by students in grades 4 to 12,” rather than qualifying that only “female restrooms” stock the products. Though an amendment to alter the wording failed, it did not set off a culture war, nor did it stymie support for the bill. One Republican lawmaker, Dean Urdahl, remarked, “Just talking with my wife and family members, they felt like it was an important issue I should support.”

Making menstruation into an internet meme seems destined to backfire now too. To begin with, who but silly preteens does that? As Walz would say, it is just plain weird.

Second, recent elections and polling show that reproductive health and rights are wildly popular to voters. As a presidential candidate, Kamala Harris is a strong, steady voice — including on an array of adjacent issues including menstrual literacy and the need for data protection regarding period tracking apps. (I joined a White House discussion with her on those topics after the Supreme Court decision that reversed *Roe vs. Wade*.)

Republicans know their positions on reproductive rights are out of step with popular opinion — so much so that they barely whispered it at their national convention last month. They have more substantive damage control to do for their own vice presidential candidate. JD Vance’s controversial commentary about “childless cat ladies” and assisted fertility might just be bested by his own congressional voting record — which includes ... wait for it ... enabling menstrual cycle surveillance by state law enforcement agencies. And lest we forget Trump’s own crude remarks on the matter: On Aug. 8, 2015, he accused newscaster Megyn Kelly of having “blood coming out of her wherever.”

Gone are the days when periods were a punchline. In 2024, they may well prove to be the most powerful political rallying cry. Former presidential candidate Hillary Clinton posted last week that it was “nice of the Trump camp to help publicize Gov. Tim Walz’s compassionate and common-sense policy.”

She added, “Let’s do this everywhere.” Hear, hear.

JENNIFER WEISS-WOLF, executive director of the Birnbaum Women’s Leadership Center at New York University School of Law, is the author of “Periods Gone Public: Taking a Stand for Menstrual Equity” and the forthcoming “Period. Full Stop. The Politics of Menopause.”

MERCI AMERICA

Thank you for cheering from your living rooms, gathering with loved ones, and following every moment on the go as we celebrated the world's greatest athletes. The Games reached one of every two Americans - with a daily average of nearly 30MM viewers on the platforms of NBCUniversal.

To our host city Paris, you provided the backdrop and scenes for an Olympics like never before.

To Team USA and athletes from around the world, thank you for sharing your remarkable stories and achievements.

To our advertising, distribution, affiliate, local, digital and social partners, your creativity, enthusiasm, and support made these games truly special.

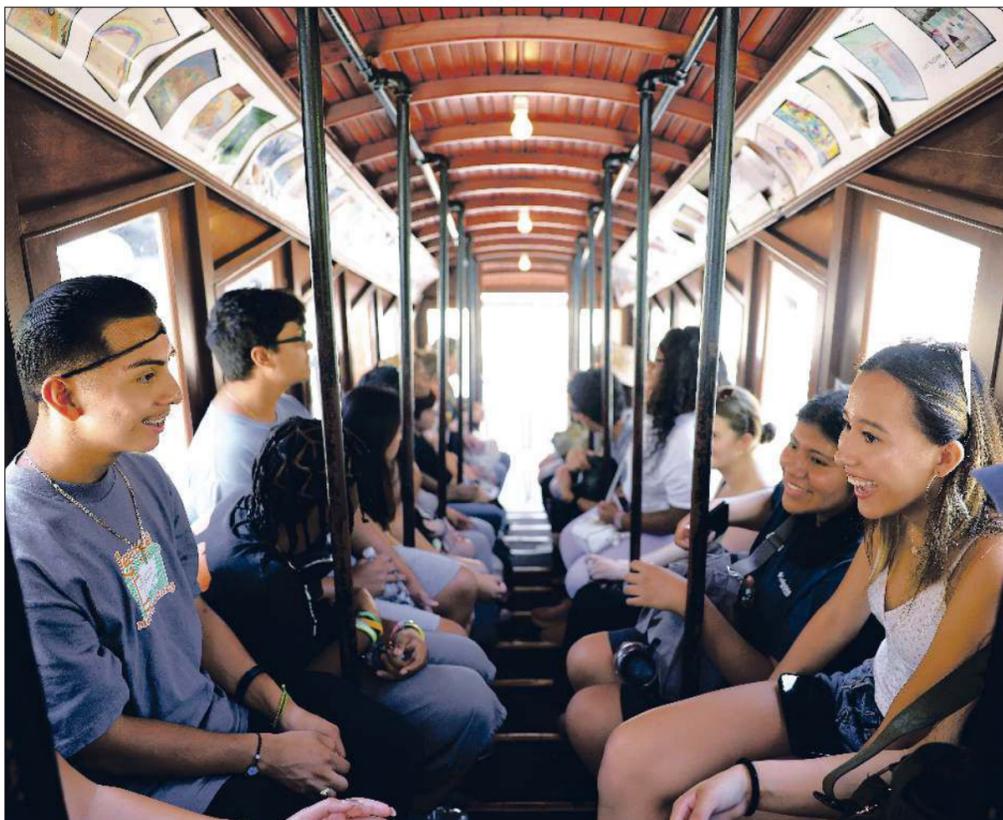
Join us on August 28th for the Paralympic Games and then we will see you in Los Angeles in 2028.

COMCAST  NBCUNIVERSAL



CALIFORNIA

MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/CALIFORNIA



Photographs by CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

STUDENTS in the American Exchange Project ride the Angels Flight funicular railway in downtown Los Angeles. The project's founder aims to build a "more connected country" through the exchanges.

Urban-rural swaps are an eye-opener for teens

Students find common ground, friendships in exchange

By VERONICA ROSEBOROUGH

This summer, a group of high school students brought a whole new meaning to foreign exchange programs.

Wendy Rojas of Koreatown immersed herself in Sioux Falls, S.D. Expecting to see Mt. Rushmore, she instead found herself setting the record straight about her hometown. No, she explained to locals, her neighborhood is not overrun with gangs and rife with gunfire as they'd seen in the movies.

Maggie Quine of Kilgore, Texas, was just as shocked with what she had to clarify to L.A. teens visiting her hometown. No, Texans don't get around on horseback.

Although Rojas and Quine didn't need a passport for their trips, they might as well have traveled to a foreign land. In a novel program designed to break down entrenched stereotypes and spark lasting friendships, the American Exchange Project sent 13 urban L.A. teens to places like rural Arkansas, Ohio and South Dakota while 10 students from Texas, Pennsylvania and elsewhere arrived in Los Angeles.

"We're trying to create a kind of antidote to prejudice by bringing together groups of young people who are very different from each other ... politically, racially, ethnically, culturally, socioeconomically and providing them with experiences that help them humanize the other so they don't demonize them later," said David McCullough III, founder of the organization.

The genesis of the program is rooted in a 2016 cross-country trip McCullough took as a 22-year-old Yale student working on a research project, interviewing students and teachers in impoverished areas. In the throes of the polarizing 2016 Donald Trump versus Hillary Clinton presidential race, McCullough said, he expected to face some animosity. He was [See Exchange, B5]



EXCHANGE students learn all about the Central Library during a guided tour by Gordon Johnson of the L.A. Conservancy.



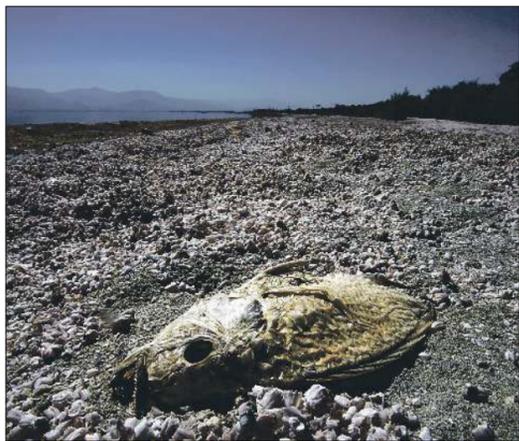
HIGH SCHOOLERS pack a crosswalk during their tour of downtown Los Angeles as part of a summer exchange program.

Salton Sea is smellier than ever and worsening residents' asthma

By JIREH DENG

Five years ago, Lisa Clark and her husband left her hometown of El Centro, Calif., for Niland, Calif., a small town of 500, in search for more affordable housing. But now they're paying a hidden cost for living just two miles southeast of the Salton Sea.

"I've been having very bad asthma lately," the 56-year-old manager of the Oasis Mobile Village RV Park said. Before, she'd need to use only one inhaler a year; since moving to Niland, she's been using three. "It's getting worse, and my husband's been experiencing the same effect. Our health



THE CARCASS of a tilapia by the Salton Sea in 2012. California's largest lake has continued to evaporate.

seems [to be] declining."

The air quality is notoriously bad near the Salton Sea. As California's largest lake has continued to evaporate, it's become saltier and dustier, causing breathing problems for locals like Clark. Alongside the health problems is what she describes as a "putrid dead smell" emanating constantly from the water.

A soon-to-be published study by UC Riverside shows that the Salton Sea's rotting odors have become a yearlong nuisance for residents in cities near the lake. The South Coast Air Quality Management District recently issued another odor advisory for parts of the [See Sea, B2]

Mutation may have a role in COVID spike

Increase in California's summer cases may be due in part to a very contagious subvariant.

By RONG-GONG LIN II

California's strongest summer COVID wave in years is still surging, and an unusual midsummer mutation may be partly to blame.

There are a number of possible culprits behind the worst summer infection spike since 2022, experts say. A series of punishing heat waves and smoke from devastating wildfires have kept many Californians indoors, where the disease can more easily spread. Most adults are also well removed from their last brush with the coronavirus, or their last vaccine dose — meaning they're more vulnerable to infection.

But changes in the virus have also widened the scope of the surge.

Of particular concern is the rise of a hyperinfectious subvariant known as KP.3.1.1, which is so conta-

gious that even people who have eluded infection throughout the pandemic are getting sick.

"COVID is extraordinarily common now," said Dr. Elizabeth Hudson, regional chief of infectious diseases for Kaiser Permanente Southern California's 16-hospital healthcare system.

COVID hospitalizations are ticking up, but remain lower than the peaks for the last two summers, probably thanks to some residual immunity and the widespread availability of anti-COVID drugs such as Paxlovid.

The World Health Organization has warned of COVID infections rising around the world, and expressed concern that more severe variants could emerge.

"In recent months, regardless of the season, many countries have experienced surges of COVID-19, including at the Olympics," said Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's technical lead on COVID.

Among those caught up was 27-year-old American sprinter Noah Lyles, who af- [See COVID, B5]

City attorney read staffers' emails, employee alleges

Worker's filing says Feldstein Soto used 'intimidation tactics' to discourage dissent.

By DAVID ZAHNISER

Los Angeles City Atty. Hyde Feldstein Soto has been reviewing the emails of her employees without their knowledge, contributing to a climate of fear within the office, an employee has alleged.

In a document recently filed with the city, Sean C. Tyler said he saw Feldstein Soto order a supervisor to look through the emails of Michelle McGinnis, then the head of the office's criminal branch. Tyler, an administrative coordinator, also believes that Feldstein Soto searched his email account.

Tyler and McGinnis have

criticized Feldstein Soto and her team in recent months, both in the workplace and in separate claims for damages. In April, McGinnis was placed on leave and escorted out of the office in front of co-workers.

Tyler's allegations, contained in the six-page document filed July 26, are among the latest to be lodged against Feldstein Soto. Since January, he and three colleagues have alleged in separate claims that they faced retaliation — either from their managers or Feldstein Soto — after they highlighted problems within the office. Two of those colleagues said they also believe their work emails were monitored without their knowledge by Feldstein Soto or others.

In the July 26 filing, Tyler described a fraught atmosphere in the city attorney's [See Emails, B4]

Some landlords love gray vinyl flooring. Tenants, not so much

The trend has become a subject of contempt among renters who find it drab and sterile.

By JACK FLEMMING

Sarah Warner's hopes were high as she approached the two-bedroom bungalow up for rent in Echo Park. The price was reasonable, the location was great, and the place had plenty of curb appeal.

When she opened the door, her heart sank. Bright white walls. Sterile lighting. And the coup de grace: gray laminate floors.

"As soon as I saw them, I knew it wouldn't work," she said. "Gray floors are my one deal-breaker."

Warner, 26, politely endured the tour, as the landlord bragged about the clean, sleek spaces and the

modern color palette. The gray laminate floors were actually luxury vinyl planks, the landlord assured her.

"The gray floors are everywhere," she said. "You'll come across a super charming home built 100 years ago, and inside it feels like a doctor's office waiting room."

The trend soared in popularity over the last decade, but during that time, it became the subject of contempt on social media. People call it soulless, posting regretful before-and-after photos of house flippers ripping out hardwood in favor of gray laminate or turning warm Midcentury spaces into cold, modern ones.

The gray takeover isn't confined to boxy new apartment complexes or brand-new builds. Across L.A., century-old Craftsman homes and picture-perfect bungalows have been hollowed out inside, outfitted with drab [See Floors, B6]

Salton Sea air quality is a persistent problem

[Sea, from B1]
Coachella Valley just north of the Salton Sea, a warning that covered six days.

Why does the Salton Sea smell so bad?

Several factors have contributed to this persistent stink, said Caroline Hung, a doctoral candidate and researcher in the Lyons Biogeochemistry Lab at UC Riverside.

For starters, the Salton Sea is very polluted, Hung said. "It's a terminal lake, which means things go in, but they don't come out."

Agricultural runoff from nearby farms deposits fertilizer in the lake, causing algae to bloom rapidly in a process called eutrophication. When the algae decays, it consumes oxygen, making the lake hypoxic — a dead zone without oxygen to support marine life.

The nuisance of the rotten-egg smell is a byproduct of bacteria producing hydrogen sulfide during decomposition. Usually, thermal layers of the lake trap those odors beneath the surface, Hung said, and residents in the Coachella Valley would smell the lake only during hot summer days. But in recent years, the lake has become shallower, dropping more than 10 feet in the last 20 years, which has caused those layers to mix more often and the hydrogen sulfide scent to permeate the area yearlong.

Is the stink dangerous?

Fortunately the stink itself is not a toxin, said Scott Epstein, who oversees air quality assessments for the South Coast Air Quality Management District. "Hydrogen sulfide exposure is a bit more of a nuisance in that it can cause headaches or nausea, but we don't expect it to cause any sort of long-term health effects," Epstein said.

But researchers have found that there is still something in the dust that is causing higher rates of asthma among people living



UC RIVERSIDE professor Tim Lyons and doctoral student Caroline Hung collect samples at the Salton Sea in 2021. Hung said recently that several factors have contributed to a persistent stink from the sea.

near the Salton Sea. Dr. David Lo, director of UC Riverside's Bridging Regional Ecology, Aerosolized Toxins, and Health Effects Center, said the culprit isn't actually the chemicals in agricultural runoff.

"The major toxic effect is coming from these bacterial toxins that we are seeing in the dust," Lo said. "Things like heavy metals and pesticides may be a concern, but they aren't really at high enough levels where their levels in the dust are going to cause disease."

As the Salton Sea has become a fertilized petri dish, the prevailing winds have pushed aerosolized bacteria south to communities in the Imperial Valley where people have complained of respiratory issues.

It's less clear whether the air quality of the lake has affected wildlife. There simply aren't enough studies, said Jonathan Shore, manager at the Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge.

But we do know that the Salton Sea's bacteria have also killed the lake's fish by depleting its oxygen and increasing its salinity. In 1999, The Times reported that as many as 8 million fish were dying per day and that the native tilapia population in the Salton Sea was nearly wiped out.

"When there was a vibrant fish population in the sea, you would see a lot of pelicans and cormorants and other fish-eating birds," Shore said. "Many of those are not around the Salton Sea anymore."

Are there any solutions?

A state panel rejected a plan in 2022 to revitalize the Salton Sea by infusing the lake with desalinated ocean water, and residents — many of them from low-income and marginalized communities — have been left in limbo.

But Hung said she has some hope that the lithium

deposits, a mile below the Salton Sea, could be the key to revitalizing the lake. Silicon Valley industries have already begun flocking to the lake for the precious mineral that is essential for the batteries in electric vehicles.

As the lithium draws a new wave of workers into the area, they'll quickly discover that "it's just not a pretty place to live," Hung said. "It puts the Salton Sea environmental issues in the spotlight."

In the meantime, Epstein advises residents to check air quality regularly through the AQMD website and suggests that they follow best practices when pollution is particularly bad.

"Staying inside with your windows and doors closed, minimizing heavy outdoor exertion, potentially wearing an N-95 mask if you have to be outside, running an air purifier or an air conditioner can all help reduce exposure," Epstein said.

Shore lives just south of

the Salton Sea in Brawley with his wife and two children. He worries constantly about the air quality and tries to mitigate its impact in their household.

"I have air filters in almost every room of my house. I change them frequently," Shore said. "Changing the filters is expensive. It's something that I prioritize and can afford, but I recognize that many people cannot." In Brawley, the median household income is \$56,000, and nearly a quarter of families live in poverty.

Clark's cost-cutting move to Niland has proved ironic. Now that her household medical bills have doubled, she said, it costs as much to live in Niland as it did in El Centro.

"We're discussing where we would move," Clark said of conversations with her husband as they consider leaving California for Oregon, Colorado or Utah. "We're still up in the air about that."

Whale carcass on Torrance Beach

By Russ Mitchell

Officials are asking beachgoers to keep a distance from a 35- to 40-foot fin whale that washed ashore on Torrance Beach on Saturday evening and later died.

"Due to its size & location it is expected that the whale will remain on the beach while responders create a plan to remove it," the Los Angeles County Lifeguards group said in a posting on X. "If you are in the area please give the animal & responders plenty of space to work."

Lifeguards discovered the whale about 6 p.m. Saturday between Redondo Beach and Malaga Cove.

The cause has not yet been determined, but fin whales are especially susceptible to collisions with ships, according to marine mammal experts. Warming ocean waters are also disrupting food supplies, while entanglement with commercial fishing lines is another danger whales face.

Fin whales are the second-largest animals on Earth after the blue whale. Like the blue whale, fin whales are baleens, sporting, instead of teeth, hundreds of rows of baleen plates made of keratin. The plates are used to strain food from water — mainly small fish and plankton.



A CREW works to clear the carcass on Sunday.



Download the app. Discover more of The Times.

Use your camera to scan the QR code.

Tap the link when it appears to be directed to your device's app store.

Hit download and start exploring.



CITY & STATE

Post office honors a Vietnam hero

Compton site is renamed for James Anderson, who died to save other Marines.

By DANIEL MILLER

There was a grenade, and the biggest choice of his life — to be made in an instant.

Marine Pfc. James Anderson Jr.'s decision in the Vietnamese jungle on Feb. 28, 1967, is the reason a ship, a barracks, a dining hall, a park and a street all have borne his name. And, as of Wednesday, a post office in his hometown, Compton.

Anderson, the first Black Marine to be awarded the Medal of Honor, was recognized at a ceremony Wednesday at the former Hub City Post Office.

"Pfc. Anderson did something that every human being has to go, 'Would I have had the courage to do what James did?'" said Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Los Angeles), whose district includes Compton.

It took several years to secure the name change for the Willowbrook Avenue property. The effort began under Rep. Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-San Pedro), whose district previously included Compton until reapportionment took effect in 2023. In her remarks, Barragán recalled a 2021 conversation with then-Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Bakersfield) in which she had to convince him to vote for a bill she had first introduced a year earlier that would bring about the renaming.

"I told him the story ... and Kevin at that point was, like, 'I'm on board,'" said Barragán, whose bill was signed into law by President Biden in December 2022.

Anderson, who went to Centennial High School, has been honored with namings around the world. In 1985, for example, a Military Sealift Command ship was dedicated to him in Sparrows Point, Md. It was used to support a Marine brigade in the Indian Ocean until 2009.

Some time after the nearly 50-ton ship was retired, Barragán said, she remembered thinking, "We've got to introduce a bill to make sure we carry on his legacy."

..

Denise Cross, one of Anderson's nieces, remem-

Arrest in death of newborn in 1987

By GRACE TOOHEY

In October 1987, a man was combing through a Riverside dumpster when he discovered the body of newborn baby.

Riverside County officials at the time ruled the death a homicide, but detectives were unable to identify any suspects in the baby's death, according to the Riverside Police Department.

But now, after almost 37 years, authorities say a breakthrough in the cold case from a new DNA analysis has helped detectives identify and arrest the baby's mother, Melissa Jean Allen Avila, 55. She was 19 when the baby was found dead, police said.

Avila was recently apprehended in North Carolina and extradited this month to Riverside County, where she was booked on suspicion of murder. She is being held in lieu of \$11-million bail.

Detectives said there was no evidence the baby's father had any link to the case.

Riverside police reminded the public that state law protects parents or caregivers who surrender a newborn 3 days or younger to any hospital room or fire station without fear of arrest or prosecution.

That law, however, was established in 2001.



Photographs by GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

MARINE Corps Vietnam veteran Charles Cook Jr., left, salutes during the national anthem at the ceremony Wednesday to rename the Hub City Post Office in Compton in honor of Marine Pfc. James Anderson Jr.

bered how her uncle, before his deployment, would drive her to elementary school on his way to Los Angeles Harbor College.

What stood out was his car: a 1965 Chevrolet Impala painted Evening Orchid, a rare color available for only one year.

"He would let me sit behind the wheel while he washed and polished it," Cross said in an interview.

In February 1966, with the Vietnam War underway, Anderson enlisted in the Marine Corps. After training at Camp Pendleton, he was deployed to Vietnam in December 1966.

"This was a choice that he made," said Cross, who was 5 at the time. "What strikes me now that I am a grandmother is that he was only 19."

Just after Anderson departed for Southeast Asia, she said, his beloved Chevy was stolen. He never learned its fate.

Trained as a rifleman, Anderson found himself in Vietnam's Quang Tri province. On that day in February 1967, he and his platoon went on a rescue mission to save a reconnaissance patrol that had been besieged by North Vietnamese forces. Anderson and his comrades were in dense jungle when they came under fire. Soon, Anderson was on the ground with a "tightly packed group of Marines," according to a U.S. Defense Department account of the episode. The enemy was about 65 feet away.

Then, a grenade lobbed at the Marines landed near Anderson's head. Without hesitating, he grabbed the explosive and pulled it close, wrapping his body around it just before the device detonated.



MELISSA TATE, left, Valencia Vallery and Denise Cross — Anderson's nieces — attend the ceremony. He jumped on a grenade to protect other Marines.

"Anderson's body absorbed the blast," the department said. "He was immediately killed."

Anderson had just turned 20.

Because of his selfless actions, no other Marines near him were killed.

"If James Anderson were with us today," Waters said, "he would be 77 years old."

..

The PFC James Anderson Jr. Post Office was built in 1935 in the civic center at Willowbrook and Compton Boulevard. It's a squat Spanish Revival structure with a red tile roof framed by tall palm trees.

After Anderson's death, the facility probably played a role in directing droves of letters to his family. The story of his valor spread widely a

year after he was killed, when Anderson was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. That led to tons of mail from people across the country who wanted to offer their condolences.

But, said Cross, who lived with the Anderson family, there was a problem: "They didn't know our address."

"They actually sent letters to the 'mother of medal of honor recipient' — and they were delivered," she said. "It is a strong possibility those letters went through that post office."

Now, it bears his name. Much of the event Wednesday was focused on Anderson's valorous sacrifice, and rightly so. But, a day earlier, Cross shared a happier story about her uncle — one she relishes telling.

One day in the 1960s, she said, her uncle was washing

his prized Impala when an ice cream truck stopped nearby. All the neighborhood kids went to place orders — except one, a boy who sat on the fence because he didn't have money for a treat. Anderson noticed the child, called him over and "told him to get whatever he wanted," Cross said.

The boy wanted only a pack of baseball cards, but Anderson threw in ice cream, so that he could eat with the others. Cross said that she learned that story only about a decade ago — when the boy with the baseball cards, long since a grown man, reached out to her to share the tale.

"What James did for him that day meant so much to him that he still felt emotional about it," she said. "James was always a person of service."

1 arrested after ton of meth seized

By ROSANNA XIA

A man has been arrested in the San Gabriel Valley and accused of attempting to ship more than a metric ton of methamphetamine to Australia, according to federal authorities.

Jing Tang Li, 32, of El Monte faces federal charges of distribution of and possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute controlled substances, exportation of controlled substances, and attempt and conspiracy to export controlled substances, the U.S. attorney's office said Friday.

U.S. customs officers inspected seven shipments last year that were set to be sent to Australia, authorities said. The shipping containers were falsely listed as holding carpets and textiles, furniture, wheel hub testing equipment and a casting machine, according to the U.S. attorney's office. The shipping companies listed for the products were also determined to be fake.

Authorities seized more than 1,000 kilograms — the equivalent of more than 2,200 pounds — of meth embedded in the containers.

"Dangerous drugs such as methamphetamine devastate our community. We see the misery brought by highly addictive drugs on our streets every day," U.S. Atty. Martin Estrada said in a statement. "The massive amount of methamphetamine seized in this case shows how brazen drug traffickers have become and why it is imperative that we use our resources to hold these criminals responsible."

Authorities said they eventually traced these shipments to Li, who was arrested Thursday when he was spotted driving near a South El Monte warehouse where the L.A. County Sheriff's Department had responded to a reported robbery earlier in the day.

Inside that warehouse, authorities said, were shipping labels, scales and a package containing meth.

If convicted, Li would face a maximum sentence of life in federal prison.

Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Australian Federal Police have all been investigating the case.

"Being a mere three hours north of the busiest land border crossing in the Western Hemisphere has made Los Angeles a critical cog in the transnational narcotics trafficking trade," Eddy Wang, Homeland Security Investigations' L.A. special agent in charge, said in a statement.

San Francisco towing firm operator faces fraud charges

By RUBEN VIVES

The U.S. Department of Justice charged a San Francisco towing company operator last week with insurance fraud on the same day that federal agents executed search warrants at one of his tow yards.

Jose Vicente Badillo, 28, the towing company operator, is facing mail fraud, wire fraud, and money laundering charges related to a scheme to defraud an auto insurance company. Also charged in the case is 30-year-old Jessica Elizabeth Najarro.

Federal prosecutors alleged in a criminal complaint that Badillo and Najarro conspired to defraud the company by submitting a fraudulent insurance claim on a wrecked car that he had purchased in June 2019. Prosecutors said the car Badillo purchased already had front-end damage and a nonfunctioning engine.

Still, prosecutors alleged Najarro took ownership of the car, purchased insurance for it, then filed a car ac-

cident claim. They said she received an insurance reimbursement check for \$34,000 and deposited it in a Wells Fargo Bank account allegedly controlled by Badillo.

Badillo was arrested Thursday, the same day that FBI agents were executing several search warrants in San Francisco, including at one of the towing yards operated by Badillo and his wife, Abigail T. Fuentes.

A spokesperson with the Department of Justice said Badillo was arrested at a residence during the FBI raids. He was later released after posting a \$50,000 bond.

Badillo and Fuentes did not respond to requests for comment.

It is the latest criminal case brought against Badillo who, along with Fuentes, is facing multiple felonies stemming from an alleged welfare fraud scheme that was brought against them in October by the San Francisco County district attorney's office.

Prosecutors in that case alleged that as a Human Services Agency worker, Fuentes approved Badillo's applications for public welfare

programs and failed to disclose her relationship to him.

They alleged that the pair also lied about their income and assets to receive other public benefits including Medi-Cal and CalWorks.

Prosecutors said while both schemes were happening, Badillo and Fuentes jointly operated three towing businesses between 2018 and 2023.

Prosecutors said the three companies — Auto Towing, Jose's Towing and Specialty Towing and Recovery — generated more than \$2 million in gross annual income. The scandals started to come more into light in April after a video, which went viral, showed a Specialty Towing truck driver trying to tow a couple's car while they were stopped at a red light in downtown San Francisco.

The video shows the truck reversing with its wheel-lift lowered, attempting to hook the front wheels of a silver Honda sedan, which kept reversing to avoid the tow truck.

By then, Badillo and Fuentes had been banned from

operating in the city because of the welfare fraud case and allegations that one of their companies was profiting from illegal tows.

Last August, San Francisco City Atty. David Chiu initiated debarment proceedings against Auto Towing to ban the company from bidding or receiving contracts for five years after investigators learned employees had illegally placed a towing sign in the parking lot of a local bank and towed cars without permission between February and May 2023.

The debarment process often requires an administrative hearing before contractors accused of misconduct are prohibited from receiving city funds.

Chiu said many of the victims whose cars were towed were residents who primarily spoke Spanish and Cantonese, a group that is already susceptible to predatory towing.

"Auto Towing also made it difficult for vehicle owners to retrieve their vehicles, restricted the hours when vehicles could be retrieved, and pressured vehicle own-

ers to pay in cash," Chiu said in a written statement at the time.

As part of the process, he listed seven witnesses including car owners and the bank's branch manager in court documents.

Also included in the complaint were photos that showed tow trucks hooking up cars from the bank's parking lot, as well as a receipt for more than \$500 that Chiu said each car owner had to pay to retrieve their vehicles.

Chiu took additional action in February by suspending Badillo and Fuentes as well as the three companies they jointly operate, immediately prohibiting them from receiving public funds and receiving contracts until the welfare fraud case is resolved.

"Fuentes and Badillo have demonstrated a clear pattern of predatory behavior designed to enrich themselves at the expense of the most vulnerable among us," Chiu said in a written statement. "Our City has no interest in contracting with exploitative businesses engaged in illegal conduct."

Finding common ground, friends in town swaps

[Exchange, from B1] wary that people from different parts of the country might not welcome a stranger — let alone a white researcher from an elite East Coast institution. What he found was much different.

In Cotulla, Texas, McCullough said, his host family offered warm acceptance, taking him to church and giving him a tour of the town it was proud to call home. He soon met Kevin Coleman, a Texan who shared his love of cheeseburgers and Budweiser, and they quickly became close friends.

They connected past their political differences, McCullough said, because they got to know each other as people first.

"I care about Kevin because I care about Kevin," McCullough said. "If there's one thing I learned from that, it's that you can find some of your best friends in some very unlikely places — places that are different from your own."

He launched the American Exchange Project in 2019 with a few thousand dollars in funding, linking high school seniors from Albuquerque and Anchorage to Flowood, Miss., and Palo Alto. This year, McCullough said, the nonprofit sent its 1,000th student on exchange with funding from Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg's Heartland Foundation and other contributors.

Downtown Magnets High School is one of 54 participating in the exchanges and the first in Southern California.

Rojas is one of 500 traveling students, the biggest group yet for the program. When she joined other project students and host families for pizza in Sioux Falls, she expected to learn more about the place she would call home for the next week.

Instead, she found herself confronting stereotypes when she described Sioux Falls as "quieter" than Koreatown.

"No more gunshots, right?" another host family member asked. "Maybe we'll shoot outside your window to make you feel at home," they joked.

They continued, asking her about gangs and if she knew any gang members.

"I've never really seen anything," Rojas told them, taken aback by the assumption. "I did explain to them [that] sometimes you will see the gang markings on walls but [that] you don't really see a group of guys pulling up like in the movies. ... That's not really real."

Instead, she explained, it is the hustle and bustle of her apartment-dense neighborhood that makes Koreatown lively — the chatter of neighbors, the honks of traffic and the occasional



Photographs by CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times
LEXA SMITH of Warren, N.H., left, and Anna Gordon of Jackson, Miss., check out the art and architectural details of the Central Library during a tour of downtown Los Angeles on July 19. The two, who are both 18, were participating in the American Exchange Project.

squealing of a street race — not gangs and gunshots.

Though shocked, Rojas brushed off the comment as a bad stereotype — one she had hopefully busted — and continued on with her week getting to know students who were interested in learning about her, not just about where she was from.

Rojas said she learned that her peers wanted to be engineers and doctors, and she shared plans to study biotechnology at Cal Poly Pomona.

While they may think differently from her, they all want to find a way to contribute to the world, she said.

As the week came to a close, Rojas found herself at a barbecue with the same local host family. But this time, the conversation was different. They asked Rojas to tell them about the L.A. she knows, which gave her a chance to describe the different cultures she encounters on a daily basis. They found common ground in the close-knit nature of both their communities, she said.

"We have our own perceptions of different places and different people, but I feel like when we come together like this and we talk face to face, there is always a connection," Rojas said. "Even if we disagree on maybe our political views or whatever, we can find something in common."



THE DOWNTOWN skyline is reflected in the glasses of Axel Ruiz. The Angeleno recently traveled to Little Rock, Ark., as part of the American Exchange Project.

Landing back in Los Angeles, Rojas joined fellow Downtown Magnets students in welcoming 10 visiting students for their first meal together.

As they sat around a table full of strangers, it was the L.A. students who were first to break the silence, sharing stories of their own exchanges and eager to

learn about the hometowns of their peers.

The initial nerves calmed throughout the week as the students visited Griffith Observatory, sampled Grand Central Market eateries and got lost in a sea of blue at a Dodgers game.

Evelyn Moctezuma of Scranton, Pa., got to see the ocean for the first time.

Da'Kenzi Robinson of Paris, Texas, successfully rode the Metro. And Quine felt she could be anyone she wanted to be in a city where no one seemed to judge or even pay attention to her, a stark contrast to her hometown where everyone knows everyone else's business.

By week's end, it seemed as though the group could

talk about anything — politics, race, their shared love of SpongeBob, Robinson said.

"When Joe Biden had posted that he was resigning [from the 2024 presidential campaign], we were on the Metro, and then we all just started talking about it," Robinson said.

"You wouldn't think you could just have a regular conversation about that, but it felt good to not have to be on a side."

These are the kinds of experiences that can change the way students think about others with different views, McCullough said. And along the way, he added, hopefully make some friends, just like he did.

"We're defining people by fractions of who they are. ... We're pretending that because we know one of their views, we know all of their views, which is very rarely true," McCullough said.

"The trip had me appreciate the complexity of all people and taught me how to navigate nuance — brought a world that's not at all black and white very much into color — and that's what we're trying to do for these kids."

McCullough added that he plans to continue expanding the project until a senior exchange is as commonplace as senior prom in hopes of building a "more connected country."

Summer mutation may be factor in state COVID surge

[COVID, from B1] ter winning the gold in the men's 100-meter finals, came up short Thursday during the 200-meter finals, taking the bronze. Lyles collapsed after the race, fighting shortness of breath and chest pain, and was later taken away in a wheelchair.

"It definitely affected my performance," he said of the illness, estimating that he felt "like 90% to 95%" of full strength.

The rate at which reported coronavirus tests are coming back positive has been rising for weeks — to above 10% globally and more than 20% in Europe. In California, the coronavirus positive test rate was 14.3% for the week that ended Aug. 5 — blowing past the peaks from last summer and winter — and up from 10% a month ago.

There were already indications in May that the typical U.S. midyear wave was off to an early start as a pair of new coronavirus subvariants — KP.2 and KP.1.1, collectively nicknamed FLiRT — started to make a splash, displacing the winter's dominant strain, JN.1.

But by July, a descendant strain, KP.3.1.1, had clearly taken off.

"KP.3.1.1 is extremely transmissible and a little bit more immune evasive. It kind of came out of the blue during the summer," said Dr. Peter Chin-Hong, an infectious-diseases specialist at UC San Francisco.

Cases are up at Kaiser Permanente Southern California, and "looking through

the CDC data ... KP.3.1.1 is really what is driving this particular surge," Hudson said. "We are certainly much higher than we were last summer."

Anecdotally, some infected people report being "pretty darn miserable, actually — really severe fatigue in the first two days," Hudson said.

People may want to think their symptoms are just allergies, she said, but "it's probably COVID. So we're just really encouraging folks to continue to test."

An initial negative test doesn't necessarily mean you're out of the woods, though. Officials recommend testing repeatedly over as many as five days after the onset of symptoms to be sure.

California has now reported four straight weeks with "very high" coronavirus levels in its wastewater, according to data released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday. That followed five weeks of "high" viral levels.

Last summer, California recorded only eight weeks with "high" coronavirus levels in wastewater, and never hit "very high" levels. In the summer of 2022, California spent 16 weeks with "high" or "very high" levels of coronavirus in wastewater.

"Fewer people got immunized this year compared to last year at this time," Chin-Hong said. "That means, particularly amongst people who are older, they're just not equipped to deal with this virus."

There are 44 states with "high" or "very high" coronavirus levels in their wastewater, according to the CDC.

The CDC said coronavirus infections are "growing" or "likely growing" in 32 states, including California.

In Los Angeles County, coronavirus levels in wastewater jumped to 54% of last winter's peak over the 10-day period ending July 27, the most recent available. A week earlier, coronavirus levels in wastewater were at 44% of last winter's peak.

For the week ending Aug. 4, L.A. County reported an average of 479 coronavirus cases a day, double the number from five weeks earlier. Cases are an undercount, only reflecting tests done at medical facilities — not self-tests conducted at home.

In Santa Clara County, the most populous in the San Francisco Bay Area, coronavirus levels were high in all sewersheds, including San Jose and Palo Alto.

Hospitalizations and emergency room visits related to the coronavirus are also rising. Over the week ending Aug. 3, there were an average of 403 coronavirus-positive people in hospitals in L.A. County per day. That's double the number from five weeks earlier, but still about 70% of last summer's peak and one-third the height seen in summer 2022.

For the week ending Aug. 4, 4% of emergency room encounters in L.A. County were classified as related to the coronavirus — more than double the figure from



ZOE CRANFILL Los Angeles Times
PEOPLE don masks in Laguna Beach in July.

seven weeks earlier. The peak from last summer was 5.1%.

"We've had a few people who have become very ill from COVID. Those are people who tend to be pretty severely immunocompromised," Hudson said.

UC San Francisco has also seen a rise in the number of coronavirus-infected hospitalized patients. As of Friday, there were 28, up from fewer than 20 a week earlier, Chin-Hong said.

In the Bay Area, three counties have urged more people to consider masking in indoor public settings because of the COVID surge. Contra Costa County's public health department "recommends masking in crowded indoor settings, particularly for those at high risk of serious illness if infected," the agency said Tuesday, following similar pleas from San Francisco

and Marin County health officials.

Compared with advice such as washing hands and staying away from sick people, suggesting wearing a mask can provoke strong opposition from some.

"The moment people see this, like in their mind, it sets off this chain reaction of, like, all the negative things of the pandemic, having to have society shut down and social isolation," said Dr. Abraar Karan, an infectious-disease doctor and researcher at Stanford University.

But masks do help reduce the risk of infection, and people don't have to wear them all the time to benefit. Karan says he socializes and eats at indoor restaurants. But he'll decide to mask in other situations, like "when I'm traveling," and, obviously, at work.

Doctors say that wearing a mask is one of many tools people can use to reduce

their risk, and can be especially helpful when in crowded indoor settings.

Karan said he's seen more coronavirus-positive patients while working shifts in urgent care, and he suggested that more health-care providers take the time to order tests.

He said he worries that when people come in with relatively mild symptoms, they may be sent home without testing.

But that could miss potential COVID diagnosis, which could allow a patient to get a prescription for an antiviral drug such as Paxlovid.

Without testing, "you run the risk of taking shortcuts and not prescribing people meds that they actually should technically be getting," Karan said.

Times staff writer David Wharton contributed to this report from Saint-Denis, France.

Obituaries

Place a paid notice latimes.com/placeobituary
Search obituary notice archives: legacy.com/obituaries/latimes

Elaine G. Levin

Mount Sinai Mem Parks - H. Hills 800-600-0076

www.mountsinainaparks.org

To place an obituary ad please go online to: latimes.com/placeobituary

In Memoriam

Greta Ruth Diaz

August 12, 1932 - January 7, 2014

Happy Birthday!

Forever in my heart.

-Roger

THE WEATHER

Today in Southern California

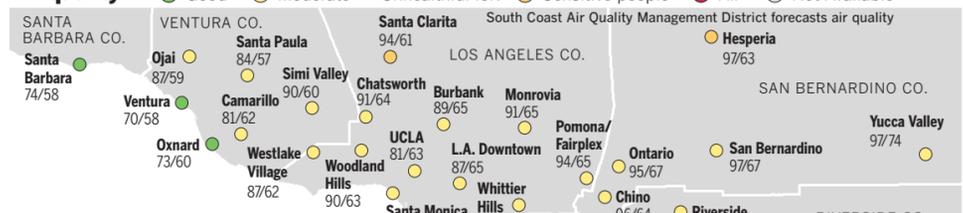
Not as warm inland: A dip in the jet stream across California will knock temperatures down a few degrees across the interior Monday, including the deserts. There may be a pop-up thundershower in the mountains, but most places will be rain-free. Low clouds are likely to affect the coast with more of an onshore flow Monday and that will probably continue into the middle of the week.

5-day forecasts

High/low temperatures are average forecasts for entire zone.

	L.A. Basin	Valleys	Beaches	Mountains	Deserts
Today	87/65 Mostly sunny	90/63 Sunshine	76/64 Humid with sunshine	78/50 Partly sunny	109/82 Breezy in p.m.
Tuesday	Mostly sunny	86/64	Partly sunny	75/61	Sunny
Wednesday	Mostly sunny	87/63	Sunny; warm	92/65	Partly sunny
Thursday	Sunny	87/64	Sunny; warm	95/65	Mostly sunny
Friday	Lots of sun	85/65	Sunny; warm	92/65	Mostly sunny

Air quality



Surf and sea

POINT CONCEPTION TO MEXICO
Inner waters: Wind variable, becoming west at 5-10 knots in the afternoon. Mixed south and west swell around 2 feet. Most waves 2-3 feet.
Surf zone: The risk of strong and dangerous rip currents is moderate at L.A., Ventura and S.D. county beaches and lower elsewhere.

County	Height	Period	Direction	Temp
Santa Barbara	1-3'	10 sec	SW	62
Ventura	2-4'	11 sec	SW	64
Los Angeles	2-4'	10 sec	SW	69
Orange	1-3'	9 sec	SSW	68
San Diego	2-4'	9 sec	SSW	70

Tides

L.A. Outer Harbor, in feet.

Today	3:51a	2:7 Hi	7:11a	2:5 Lo
	3:12p	4:7 Hi	11:46p	1:4 Lo
Tue.	4:24p	4:9 Hi		

UV index

Minutes to burn for sensitive people
 Las Vegas, 25 Phoenix, 25
 Los Angeles, 25 San Francisco, 25

California cities*

City	Sun.*		Today		Tue.	
	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo
Anaheim	89	66	--	88 66	89	66
Avalon/Catalina	86	70	--	85 68	83	66
Bakersfield	103	74	--	100 69	97	66
Barstow	110	76	--	106 77	104	74
Big Bear Lake	77	52	--	78 50	78	45
Bishop	104	63	--	100 54	97	55
Burbank	91	67	--	89 65	90	64
Camarillo	85	63	--	81 62	79	59
Chino	95	67	--	91 64	91	64
Chico	86	66	--	85 66	84	61
Compton	85	66	--	85 66	84	66
Dana Point	78	67	--	77 67	77	67
Death Valley	121	90	--	118 97	111	84
Del Mar	79	69	--	75 67	74	66
Escondido	94	67	--	90 63	89	58
Eureka	60	54	.01	62 50	65	53
Fallbrook	88	65	--	88 62	87	58
Fresno	104	70	--	99 65	95	67
Fullerton	87	67	--	87 66	87	66
Hemet	96	67	--	97 63	96	61
Hesperia	94	68	--	93 65	92	60
Huntington Beach	77	67	--	77 67	77	66
Idyllwild	81	69	--	83 69	85	66
Irvine	86	66	--	84 66	83	65

Sun and moon

Today's rise/set
Los Angeles Co. Sun 6:13a/7:43p Moon 1:49p/11:55p
Orange Co. Sun 6:12a/7:41p Moon 1:47p/11:54p
Ventura Co. Sun 6:16a/7:47p Moon 1:53p/11:58p

Almanac

Sunday Downtown readings

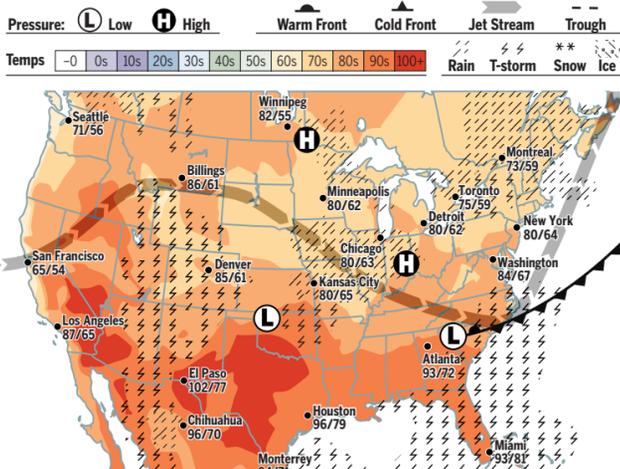
Temperature	Los Angeles	Fullerton	Ventura*
High/low	89/67	87/68	76/58
Normal high/low	84/65	86/66	76/59
High/low a year ago	78/68	82/69	72/64
Record high/date	98/1879	98/2022	86/1971
Record low/date	53/1894	60/2010	48/1948

Precipitation Los Angeles Fullerton Ventura*

24-hour total (as of 2 p.m.)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Season total (since Oct. 1)	22.15	16.59	24.79
Last season (Oct. 1 to date)	28.03	21.37	27.06
Season norm (Oct. 1 to date)	14.27	11.83	16.12
Humidity (high/low)	90/66	93/41	93/61

Today in North America

More storms for the Plains: A round of storms will roll through the Rockies and central Plains on Monday. Though not as severe as over the weekend, some thunderstorms may be locally damaging and disruptive to travel but will bring drought relief.



U.S. cities

SUNDAY'S EXTREMES AS OF 2 P.M. FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES

City	Sunday*	Today	City	Sunday*	Today
Albany	81 56	10 72	Seattle	71 59	-- 71 56
Albuquerque	96 68	.06 93	Tampa	90 82	.08 92 80
Anchorage	58 48	.56 56	Tucson	96 78	Tr 96 77
Aspen	73 46	.59 73	Tulsa	80 67	.26 92 75
Atlanta	91 69	-- 93 72	Washington, D.C.	85 71	.43 84 67
Austin	96 75	-- 99 76	Wichita	81 62	.23 89 72
Baltimore	83 67	Tr 85			
Boise	95 66	-- 95 68			
Boston	82 69	-- 79 64			
Buffalo	73 61	.08 73			
Burlington, Vt.	76 60	10 73			
Charleston, S.C.	94 79	.43 94			
Charlotte	89 74	.26 86			
Chicago	79 58	-- 80 63			
Cincinnati	79 56	-- 80 63			
Cleveland	77 57	-- 77 60			
Columbia, S.C.	92 76	.16 89			
Columbus	79 56	-- 81 63			
Dallas/Ft.Worth	99 81	-- 101 80			
Denver	88 56	.11 85			
Detroit	78 56	.01 80			
El Paso	102 77	-- 102 77			
Eugene	87 54	-- 77 53			
Fort Myers	94 80	.31 93			
Hartford	84 61	-- 79 57			
Honolulu	89 76	.05 89			
Houston	96 76	-- 97 79			
Indianapolis	78 55	-- 79 63			
Jacksonville, Fla.	93 79	.39 94			
Kansas City	77 61	.08 80			
Knoxville	85 63	Tr 85			
Las Vegas	105 90	.10 105			
Louisville	81 64	-- 81 66			
Medford	95 62	-- 87 54			
Memphis	86 69	.01 88			
Miami	92 81	.01 93			
Milwaukee	79 59	-- 81 64			
Minneapolis	77 56	-- 80 62			
Nashville	85 63	-- 86 68			
New Orleans	95 83	-- 96 79			
New York	80 69	-- 80 64			
Norfolk	82 75	-- 82 68			
Oklahoma City	91 65	6.58 95			
Omaha	75 58	.08 75			
Orlando	95 76	.08 94			
Philadelphia	81 72	-- 83 65			
Phoenix	105 88	-- 106 88			
Pittsburgh	76 56	-- 79 57			
Portland, Ore.	79 64	-- 74 61			
Providence	81 61	-- 78 60			
Raleigh/Durham	90 75	.04 87			
Reno	86 62	-- 90 56			
Richmond	86 70	-- 85 66			
St. Louis	83 68	-- 76 68			
Salt Lake City	97 73	.02 90			

World

City	Sunday*	Today	City	Sunday*	Today
Acapulco	89 77	.04 87	Amsterdam	81 61	-- 89 70
Atlanta	94 79	-- 96 77	Athens	94 79	-- 96 77
Bangkok	95 84	.14 97	Barcelona	84 77	.01 87 74
Berlin	80 64	-- 82 58	Buenos Aires	80 67	.26 92 75
Cabo San Lucas	91 75	.04 91	Cairo	102 78	-- 96 80
Cebu	109 91	-- 108 94	Dubai	109 91	-- 108 94
Dublin	70 48	.13 71	Havana	91 76	.01 92 76
Hong Kong	90 83	.08 88	Ho Chi Minh City	95 82	.06 92 79
Istanbul	88 75	-- 91 75	Jakarta	90 83	.08 88 82
Jerusalem	85 69	-- 88 68	Johannesburg	79 43	-- 70 45
Kuala Lumpur	88 76	.64 89	Lima	84 57	Tr 86 58
Lima	82 63	-- 90 56	London	102 72	Tr 100 69
Madrid	109 86	-- 104 81	Manila	81 62	Tr 89 72
Mexico City	74 59	.82 73	Montreal	75 63	.22 73 59
Moscow	68 61	.02 63	Mumbai	86 81	.22 88 80
New Delhi	84 82	1.03 87	Paris	88 63	-- 89 67
Prague	84 59	-- 85 63	Rome	93 73	-- 93 73
Rome	93 73	-- 93 73	Seoul	95 81	.30 95 80
Singapore	88 81	.04 90	Singapore	88 81	.04 90 81
Taipei City	97 81	.03 97	Tokyo	95 84	-- 95 82
Tokyo	95 84	-- 95 82	Vancouver	71 61	.08 69 59
Vancouver	71 61	.08 69 59	Vienna	93 66	-- 93 68

Key: Su sunny; Pc partly cloudy; Cy cloudy; Fg foggy; Prcp precipitation; Dr drizzle; Hz hazy; Sh showers; Ts thunderstorms; R rain; Sn snow; Sf snow flurries; I ice; Rs rain/snow; W windy; Tr trace. **Notes:** National extremes exclude Alaska and Hawaii. * - data estimated. Sunday's readings as of 2 p.m.

Forecasts by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2024
 AccuWeather Visit AccuWeather.com

Renters hate but tolerate dull floors

[Floors, from B1] shades of white and gray. "It's so sad to see a house with so much character gutted for the sake of a trend that already feels super outdated," Warner said.

Despite the criticism, it's no mystery why the floors caught on. Cool and neutral, they reflect the larger architectural landscape of the day, where clean lines and minimalism reign supreme, the Apple-ification of housing that brought us modern box homes.

They're also cheaper than hardwood, and easier to keep clean. For developers, landlords and house flippers looking to turn a profit in a time when construction costs are high, gray laminate has become a go-to.

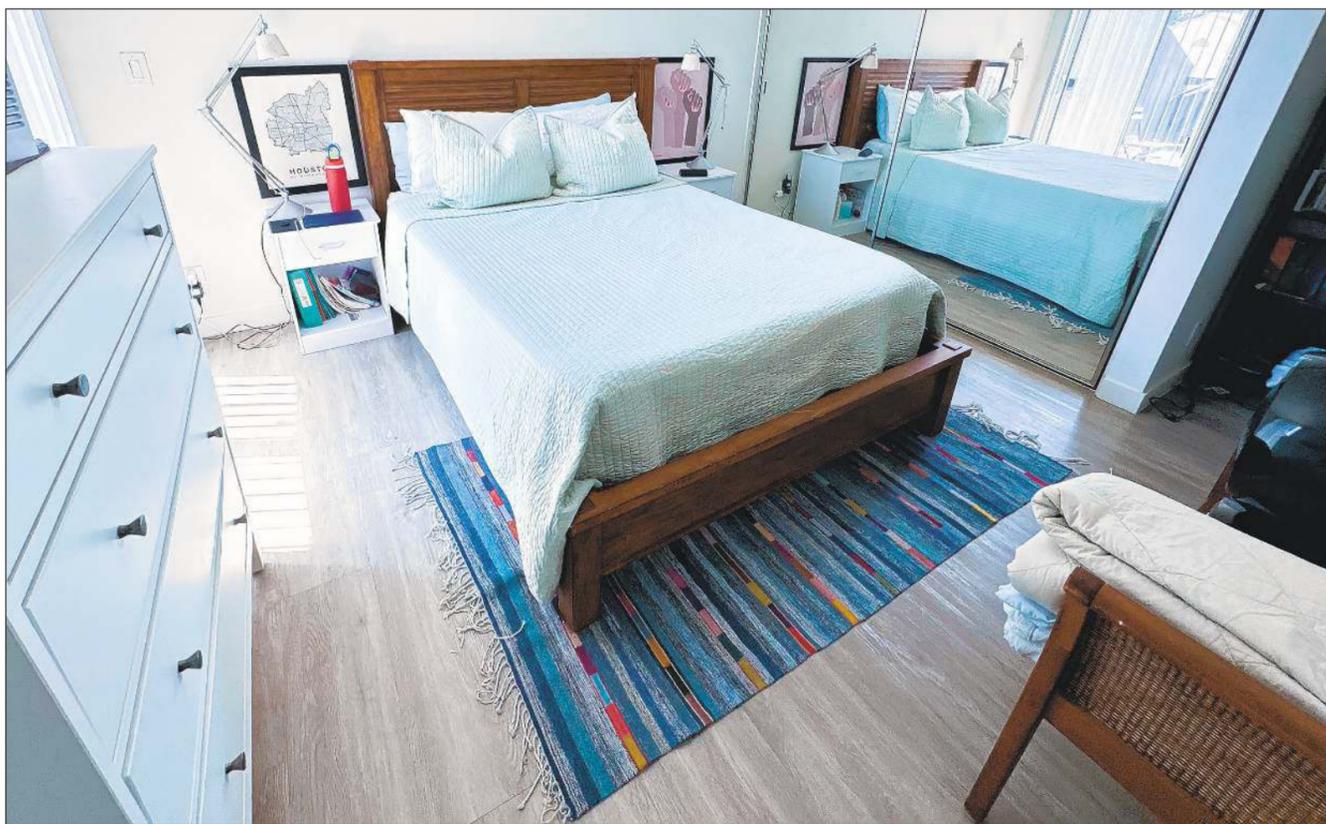
"It's the only flooring I use," said John Arzarian, a landlord who rents out a handful of apartments in central L.A. "It appeals to a broad amount of tenants, and I never have a problem filling the units."

For Arzarian, it's not about designing a unit that a renter will fall in love with; he's simply trying to appeal to the broadest swath of people. Bold design choices — accent walls, colorful kitchens, etc. — could limit the potential tenant pool.

"I don't really have an eye for design, so I just stick with the trends," Arzarian said. "Once they go out of style, I'll swap them for the next thing, as long as it's cost-effective."

Although many renters may pine for hardwood or tile, they're rarely in a position to make demands. L.A. consistently ranks as one of the priciest metro areas in the country for renters, and for some, price and location outweigh aesthetic when looking for a new place.

But that doesn't mean they're happy about it.



Los Angeles Times

GRAY VINYL floors are "soul-sucking" and outdated, renters complain. Still, one real estate agent says, "it's L.A. Someone will rent it."

"I just try to cover it up. I've bought so many rugs," said Marissa Lackey, 31, who moved into a West Hollywood apartment with gray laminate floors last year.

At \$2,300 a month, the place was cheaper than most others in the area, so she moved in despite the fact that it was "somewhat soul-sucking."

"Hardwood floors were out of my price range. Anything with any character at all was out of my price range," she said.

Lackey and several others interviewed for the story have an apocryphal theory about why gray has become the go-to floor color for rentals across L.A.: men.

"It's become an inside joke among my friends," she said. "If your landlord is a man, your floors are either gray or they will be gray soon."

The theory is purely anecdotal, of course, and doesn't explain design choices everywhere in L.A. But several renters claim that male landlords often ar-

en't concerned with design and are not in touch with what renters want aesthetically.

"I like my landlord and think he's a great person to rent from. But he doesn't care about interior design, and it shows," Lackey said.

Warner agrees. When house hunting across the Eastside, she found that if the rental was recently renovated and listed by a man, it was much more likely to have the white-and-gray color palette.

"We need more women in real estate for a lot of reasons, but the best argument for it is that I don't know one woman who enjoys gray floors," she said.

But the hate hasn't hampered the market.

Fallon Dobrisky, a real estate agent with the Rental Girl who specializes on the Eastside, has noticed that many of the cookie-cutter grayscale apartments are owned by large corporations that lease hundreds of units. With so many rentals, the

goal is to design units cheap and bland enough that they can appeal to anyone, whereas a mom-and-pop landlord is more likely to preserve a rental's original style since it might be the only home they rent out.

"Charming rentals go quick, but if a unit has a good price, it'll find a renter no matter how it looks," Dobrisky said. "Gray floors get more negative feedback, but it's L.A. Someone will rent it."

She currently has a unit up for lease in Glassell Park for \$2,995 per month. The two-bedroom guesthouse is newly constructed with A/C and splashes of tile in the kitchen, but also showcases gray-brown laminate floors in the listing photos.

Nevertheless, Dobrisky already has five tours set up after just a few days on the market.

"Anyone putting gray floors into a home isn't seeing a negative financial impact because the units are still being rented," she said.

As gray creeps into more and more homes, a submarket has surfaced across L.A. as people become desperate for color. Deep-pocketed renters are willing to pay hundreds or thousands more per month for houses that feel like homes.

Dobrisky recently listed a \$3,000 one-bedroom rental in Los Feliz with wood floors, arched doorways and original built-ins. Renters swarmed.

"Those types of properties don't last long. There's so much demand for places that feel unique," she said.

One boutique rental company, GLB Properties, has homed in on that market. Founded in 1980, the family firm of Gene, Louise and Ivana Bramson focuses on restoring and renting out vintage, architecturally significant properties including Art Deco, Spanish Revival, Italianate and Hollywood Regency-style homes.

In a world of gray, its properties feel almost alien, remnants of a bygone archi-

tectural era. Flamingo pink paint jobs. Checkered floors in the kitchen. Old-school bathrooms wash in shades of gold, green and powder blue.

"We stay away from the trends," Gene Bramson, 73, said. "White marble, subway tile. It's predictable and safe, but it'll get boring and dated soon."

And people pay a premium for the company's homes. Rentals usually get snatched up within a day or two of listing, and there's typically a wait list of 10 to 12 people ready to move when a unit becomes available.

Upcoming projects include a one-bedroom Spanish Revival-style casita in Hancock Park for \$3,495, a two-bedroom French Gothic-style carriage house in Los Feliz for \$6,995, and a five-bedroom villa in Miracle Mile for \$14,000.

PARIS 2024

THE SUMMER OLYMPICS



Last, perhaps, but still a winner

Bhutan marathoner Lhamo shows what it truly means to be an Olympic athlete.

By Kevin Baxter

PARIS — The original Olympic motto translates from Latin as “swifter, higher, stronger.” And those who live up to it are the ones who win gold medals and climb to the top step of the podium.

But what about those who go slower, lower and are weaker? Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, had them covered too.

“The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win,” he said, “but to take part.”

Kinzang Lhamo, a 26-year-old in the Royal Bhutan Army and the only woman on her country’s three-person Olympic team, is one of those who didn’t win but simply took part in the Paris Olympics, finishing last in the women’s marathon Sunday, the final day of the Games.

Sifan Hassan, an Ethiopian who runs for the Netherlands, won the race in 2 hours, 22 minutes and 55 seconds, breaking the Olympic record and completing a difficult triple that saw her run 62 kilometers in Paris, winning bronze medals on the track in the 5,000 and 10,000 meters in addition to her marathon gold. Shortly after crossing the line, she wrapped the Dutch flag around her head and wept with joy.

Lhamo needed another hour and a half to finish, crossing the line in 3:52:59. She didn’t see the leaders after she left the starting line and finished nearly an hour behind the next-closest runner.

[See Lhamo, D4]



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

ATHLETES watch as fireworks light up the Stade de France during the closing ceremony of the 2024 Summer Olympics on Sunday.

Another star turn for L.A.

Paris is a tough act to follow, but the city of champions will again find a way to shine

BILL PLASCHKE

Finally, dramatically, it has ended, the 2024 Paris Olympics finishing its last lap Sunday with incomparable enthusiasm, unbridled joy, and one last look at the gloriously intimidating *tour Eiffel*.

All of which means one thing. We’ve got next.

Gulp.

How on earth can the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics surpass what the world just witnessed in a two-week burst of picturesque rejoic-



ing from the Champ de Mars to the Palace of Versailles?

How can we match the overwhelming emotion from screaming fans and weeping athletes in a blockbuster Parisian party that was two weeks of pure Hollywood?

How can we clone Simon Biles?

The Paris Olympics are going to be the toughest act for this town to follow since the five-time champion Minneapolis Lakers moved here 64 years ago. We have to somehow take greatness and make it even greater, and we have to accomplish this without ample time or Jerry West.

At first glance, this task would seem as difficult as finding a new

drone vendor for the Canadian women’s soccer team or appropriate undergarments for French pole vaulter Anthony Ammirati.

This is going to be one tough canoe slalom.

An area that can’t logistically handle one sport in one venue — hello, Dodger Stadium — must suddenly manage more than 40 sports in venues that should stretch from the Valley to Temecula.

A freeway system that can’t hack a Thursday night Rams game at SoFi must survive a two-week influx of millions of visitors who will be in gridlock before they leave LAX.

Public transportation? What’s that? The new Chargers coach, Jim Harbaugh, recently remarked that he was struck by the emptiness on the Metro train that runs above his El Segundo practice facility. You really think people around here are going to start using public transportation?

This week Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass reiterated her message of an earlier Times interview when she brazenly called for “a no-car Games.”

Seriously? If true, that would pretty much be the same as a “no-Los Angeles Games.” Good thing the LA28 organizing com-

[See Plaschke, D5]

By a toe, U.S. women pull off historic Olympic feat

Last long shot ruled a two as basketball team wins unprecedented eighth gold in a row.

By Thuc Nhi Nguyen

PARIS — It’s not easy making history.

The United States survived a scare from France to win an unprecedented eighth consecutive Olympic gold medal Sunday with a 67-66 victory at Bercy Arena. The Americans trailed by 10 in the third quarter, never led by more than eight and won by inches as French star Gabby Williams momentarily thought she hit a three-point shot at the buzzer to send the game to overtime.

When referees said her toe was on the line, she covered her mouth in disbelief. Her eyes started filling with tears.

Brittney Griner pointed to the spot on the floor dur-



MARK J. TERRILL Associated Press

AMERICAN A’ja Wilson goes strong to the basket as she towers over two French defenders during their gold-medal game. Wilson scored 21 points, grabbed 13 rebounds and had four blocks in the one-point victory.

ing the U.S. celebration with a relieved grin on her face.

A gold medal would have been the ultimate exclamation point on a triumphant Olympics for the host nation. France is already celebrating its largest medal haul in more than a century. But the home team was agonizingly close to its first Olympic gold in basketball with the men’s and women’s teams both advancing to the final. Despite basketball’s steady globalization, the United States asserted its continued dominance as the U.S. women remained undefeated in Olympic play since 1992, a streak of 61 games.

“History doesn’t earn you another one,” said Diana Taurasi, who earned her record sixth Olympic gold medal but didn’t play in the final. “You got to go and earn it.”

Led by Las Vegas Aces star A’ja Wilson’s 21 points, 13 rebounds and four blocks, the United States fended off [See Basketball, D4]

SPORTS ON THE BACK: Before they win, Dodgers lose Ryan for rest of the season. D8



The latest on the field and off.

Download the app for instant highlights, recaps and more.



PRO CALENDAR

	MON 12	TUE 13	WED 14	THU 15	FRI 16
DODGERS	at Milwaukee 5 SNLA	at Milwaukee 5 SNLA	at Milwaukee 5 SNLA	at Milwaukee 11 a.m. SNLA	at St. Louis 5:15 SNLA
ANGELS	TORONTO 6:30 BSW	TORONTO 6:30 BSW	TORONTO 6:30 BSW		ATLANTA 6:30 BSW
SPARKS				NEW YORK 6 ESPN	
GALAXY	NEXT: AUG. 24 VS. ATLANTA, 7:40, APPLE TV+				
LAFC		SAN JOSÉ** 7:30 Apple TV+			
ANGEL CITY	NEXT: SUNDAY VS. FC JUAREZ*, 7				

CHARGERS: Saturday vs. Rams (preseason), 4 p.m., Channel 7
RAMS: Sunday vs. Chargers (preseason), 4 p.m., Channel 7
 Shade denotes home game. *Friendly match **Leagues Cup

TODAY ON THE AIR

TIME	EVENT	ON THE AIR
BASEBALL		
4 p.m.	Texas at Boston	TV: ESPN
5 p.m.	Dodgers at Milwaukee	TV: SNLA R: 570, 1020
6:30 p.m.	Toronto at Angels	TV: BSW R: 830, 1330
6:30 p.m.	Atlanta at San Francisco	TV: MLB
6:30 p.m.	Pittsburgh at San Diego	TV: ESPN+
PRO SOFTBALL		
1 p.m.	Athletes Unlimited, Team McQuillin vs. Team Kilfoyl	TV: ESPN2
3:30 p.m.	Athletes Unlimited, Team Lorenz vs. Team Palacios	TV: ESPNU
SOCCER		
9 a.m.	Coppa Italia, Frosinone vs. Pisa	TV: Paramount+
9:30 a.m.	Coppa Italia, Lecce vs. Mantova	TV: Paramount+
11:45 a.m.	Coppa Italia, Salernitana vs. Spezia	TV: Paramount+
Noon	English championship, Luton Town vs. Burnley	TV: Paramount+
12:15 p.m.	Coppa Italia, Cagliari vs. Carrarese	TV: Paramount+
7:30 p.m.	Leagues Cup, Seattle vs. Pumas UNAM	TV: FS1, UniMas
TENNIS		
3 p.m.	Montreal (ATP), Toronto (WTA) singles finals	TV: Tennis

SPORTS EXTRA

For late coverage of Dodgers, Angels, Lakers and Clippers games and more, see our daily digital eNewspaper. Subscribers get free access to an exclusive "Sports Extra." View it on your phone, tablet or computer at latimes.com/enewspaper.



THE DAY IN SPORTS

Winner of 21 titles, Dorrance retiring

WIRE REPORTS

Anson Dorrance, whose 21 NCAA championships are the most by a head coach in any Division I sport in college history, is retiring after 45 seasons directing the women's soccer program at North Carolina.

The Tar Heels said Dorrance informed athletic director **Bubba Cunningham** of his plans Friday and told the team Sunday, four days before their season opener at Denver.

Dorrance also overlapped as both the men's and women's coaches early in his career, but his greatest success was with the women.

Associate head coach **Damon Nahas** will serve as interim women's coach this season. Cunningham plans to conduct a search for a new coach.

ETC.

Nix looks strong in his pro opener

Rookie quarterback **Bo Nix** threw one touchdown pass and took Denver on long scoring marches to close the first half and open the second half Sunday as the Broncos picked up a 34-30 victory at Indianapolis in their preseason opener.

Nix, the No. 12 overall draft pick in April, was 15 of 21 for 125 yards while rushing three times for 17 yards before departing midway through the third quarter and being replaced by former New York Jets starter **Zach Wilson**.

But in his first NFL game, Nix may have taken the lead in the battle for Denver's starting job.

"Bo Nix is just a great athlete, and I was so close to getting that dude," Colts rookie and former UCLA star **Laiatu Latu** said. "But I didn't get him."

The New York Giants first-round draft pick **Malik Nabers** left practice late with a possible minor sprain to his left ankle. It was not clear how Nabers was hurt, but the No. 6 overall pick in the draft was examined by

trainers on sideline. ... The Jacksonville Jaguars signed veteran safety **Tashaun Gipson** to a one-year contract, reuniting him with the franchise despite a six-game suspension to start the regular season.

Amanda Anisimova beat eighth-seeded Emma Navarro 6-3, 2-6, 6-2 in an all-American semifinal in the windy National Bank Open in Toronto. Third-seeded defending champion Jessica Pegula, also of the United States, faced No. 14 Diana Shnaider of Russia in the second semifinal for the other spot Monday in the title match.

Ty Majeski took the lead on a restart with eight laps remaining in the NASCAR Trucks regular-season finale at Richmond (Va.) Raceway and held on to win his second consecutive race on Saturday. ... **Denny Hamlin** won the pole for Sunday night's NASCAR Cup Series race, topping qualifying in his Toyota. It was Hamlin's third pole of the year, although he went on to finish out of the top 10 after his first two at Phoenix and Nashville.

In Tulsa, Okla., **Rianne Malixi** beat **Asterisk Talley** 3 and 2 to win the U.S. Women's Amateur at Southern Hills. ... **Robert Karlsson** of Sweden fired a 65 to open a two-stroke lead over Charlie Wi of South Korea in the second round of the Champions' Boeig Classic in Squawamie, Wash. American **Kirk Triplett** is third, six strokes behind Karlsson. ... **Graeme McDowell** is the first LIV Golf player to be suspended under its antidoping policy for using an over-the-counter decongestant that contained a banned substance.

Boston left-hander **James Paxton** limped off the field after suffering a right calf strain while making a quick move to cover first on a grounder in the opening inning against Houston. ... **Max Scherzer**, who has been limited to eight starts this season, is returning to Texas to get his fatigued right shoulder checked out, GM **Chris Young** said.



ERIC SONDHEIMER Los Angeles Times

LAST SEASON, Palos Verdes High quarterback Ryan Rakowski threw for 1,866 yards and 23 touchdowns.

From a scenic perch, Rakowski should ascend to new heights

Palos Verdes High quarterback led team to a 10-1 record as a freshman last season.

ERIC SONDHEIMER ON HIGH SCHOOLS

First in a series of stories profiling top high school football players by position. Today, Ryan Rakowski, Palos Verdes quarterback.

Driving along Palos Verdes Drive on the way to Palos Verdes High, your brain tells you to pull over. On the right is the ocean. Peering down from the cliffs, your senses are immediately activated — smell, hearing, sight. It's the most picturesque of views. You hear birds. You feel the breeze. You see miles of peaceful blue water. You experience a real breath of fresh air.

Football coach **Guy Gardner** says he tries not to take his daily routine coming and going along the scenic route for granted.

"We think this is a fun place to play," he said. "The other teams in the South Bay are closer to the water than we are. We overlook the water. We're pretty spoiled."

It's the day of the total solar eclipse in April, and the team's star quarterback, **Ryan Rakowski**, has shown up for practice wearing shorts with a pattern so colorful he could be hanging out at the beach. During a seven-on-seven competition, the ball flies out of his right hand with powerful velocity and accuracy.

Then Rakowski runs an option play and actually slides as if he's about to be tackled. His old days playing baseball are perfectly evident.

"The turf is nice here," he said. "I'm pretty familiar with sliding."

Whatever Rakowski does is not a surprise, because last season as a freshman he was stunningly calm, cool and effective, completing 70% of his passes for 1,866 yards and 23 touchdowns with three interceptions.

"He puts the ball in the right spot," Gardner said. "One of the things among many he does well is he can extend the play, but his attention is downfield."

Rakowski is a workaholic. He has private coaches for passing and speed training. He lives in the weight room and has gone from 158 pounds to 170. He's 6 feet tall and spent the spring and

summer playing in numerous seven-on-seven competitions. He studies college and pro quarterbacks. He has a 3.8 grade-point average and used to be a multi-sport athlete until focusing on football. During the school's March Madness days, he joined a group of football players playing basketball and helped them reach the Final Four.

"He works hard at whatever he does," Garner said. "He loves to play this sport and loves to compete."

In an era where height is no longer considered an obstacle at the highest level, Rakowski continues to work on the details and skills needed to succeed.

"I'm not the tallest quarterback, so I have to make it up in other ways," he said. "I feel improvising I can make it up. Nowadays, there's a lot of shorter quarterbacks, **Noah Fifita**, **Bryce Young**. They just go out there and ball."

And that's what Rakowski does — he gets the ball to his receivers even when opponents think they have him trapped or on the verge of blowing up a play. He uses his instincts to be a disruptor and frustrates those who think he's about to fail.

"I feel I have it in me, I can feel someone attacking me if I'm rolling out and know I have to get the ball out. I try to direct traffic with the receivers," he said.

Palos Verdes won its first 10 games last season before having to face Orange County power Mission Viejo in the opening game of the Division 2 playoffs. The Sea Kings lost 59-35. A number of important players have graduated, leaving the team to build around the 16-year-old Rakowski, who will make his sophomore debut on Saturday in Hawaii against Iolani.

There are many good quarterbacks this fall, from **Husan Longstreet** of Corona Centennial to **Luke Fahey** of Mission Viejo to **Brady Smigiel** of Newbury Park. Rakowski is capable of earning respect along with them. And his development will give college recruiters another reason for asking to visit Palos Verdes, where the view coming and going is not to be missed.

"Every day I try to drive home down Paseo del Mar so I can see it," Gardner said. "I do it on purpose to remind myself we got it pretty good."

Tuesday: Oak Hills running back **Karson Cox**.

QUARTERBACKS TO WATCH

Player	School	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Eric Sondheimer's Comment
Bear Bachmeier	Murrieta Valley	6-2	220	Sr.	Stanford commit is accurate and dual threat
Dash Beierly	Mater Dei	6-1	215	Sr.	Washington commit takes over at school with three Heisman Trophy winners
Wyatt Becker	Sierra Canyon	6-3	180	Sr.	Utah commit passed for 30 touchdowns as a junior
Luke Fahey	Mission Viejo	6-0	185	Jr.	Accurate, clutch and improving weekly
TJ Lateef	Orange Lutheran	6-3	190	Sr.	Nebraska commit is versatile and tough
Husan Longstreet	Corona Centennial	6-2	190	Sr.	Texas A&M commit ready for best season yet
Madden Iamaleava	Warren	6-2	190	Sr.	UCLA commit passed for 3,626 yards, 43 touchdowns
Steele Pizzella	Sherman Oaks Notre Dame	6-0	173	Sr.	Washington State commit runs 10.64-second 100
Ryan Rakowski	Palos Verdes	6-0	170	So.	Completed 70% of his passes as a freshman for 10-1 team
Brady Smigiel	Newbury Park	6-5	205	Jr.	Will one day break record for most touchdown passes

Angel City lures Zelem to lend hand

Club signs European national team player to multiyear deal to fill big midfield void.

BY KEVIN BAXTER

PARIS — **Katie Zelem** and **Claire Emslie** were supposed to get together in the French Riviera this summer at the wedding of former teammate **Caroline Weir**.

"We were both bridesmaids," said Zelem, the former captain at Manchester United. "But Claire couldn't go because Angel City had a game."

So the two World Cup veterans decided to reunite in Los Angeles instead, with Zelem signing a free-agent contract with Angel City FC that will keep her in the NWSL through 2026.

"The NWSL obviously speaks for itself. It's one of the most competitive leagues in the world," Zelem said. "I had different options and that was to stay in England, go to Europe, go to the U.S. And for me, Angel City shows huge ambition of where they want to go."

"They've got a project that they want to build on. And it's just so exciting to be



GARY OAKLEY Associated Press

KATIE ZELEM is a former captain for Manchester United and has 32 goals across all competitions.

involved in."

Zelem, a Manchester native, made her professional debut for Liverpool at 17, then played a season in Italy with Juventus before returning home to play for United in 2018. She was named team captain ahead of her second season there and went on to score 32 goals and notch 46 assists in 161 appearances in all competitions.

Zelem, 28, is the sixth European national team player to sign with Angel City and could fill the gaping hole in the midfield created by the departure of Savannah McCaskill, who led the team in goals in each of its first two seasons before leaving as a

free agent last winter.

This season no midfielder has more than a goal in NWSL play for Angel City (4-9-3), which will return from the Olympic break on Aug. 24 in 11th place in the 14-team league table, three points and three places below the playoff line with 10 games to play.

"Katie Zelem is a wonderful addition to our squad at the perfect time," **Angela Hucles Mangano**, Angel City's general manager, said in a statement. "She has honed leadership skills at high levels as the captain of Manchester United, is a skilled midfielder with an elite-level football acumen,

and her desire to bring championships to L.A. was palpable upon first communication."

Zelem, who made two appearances for England in last summer's World Cup, said she's been talking with the club for weeks.

"It went back and forth," she said. "Obviously, it was a huge decision for me. I live in Manchester at the minute, and all my family and friends are in Manchester. So for me, the 11-hour flight is a lot different to see my parents."

"Angel City were really patient with me and let me know how much they would support me. So that made it a lot easier."

So did the push from **Emslie** and forward **Christen Press**, who played 14 games with Manchester United before signing with Angel City.

"They both give me some nice insights into Angel City. What they're working towards, what they have now," Zelem said. "They definitely said that the lifestyle is very different to Manchester."

Angel City, which reportedly was working on a couple of other signings, has until the end of the month to get deals done. The NWSL secondary transfer window closes Aug. 30.

RAMS TAKEAWAYS

Back playing, Bennett finds success on rollouts

BY GARY KLEIN

The Rams defeated the Dallas Cowboys 13-12 in their preseason opener at SoFi Stadium on Sunday.

Observations from the game:

Bennett working his way back

For the first time since struggling in the final preseason game in 2023, quarterback Stetson Bennett played.

He completed 15 of 27 passes for 139 yards, with three interceptions.

Bennett was at his best when offensive coordinator Mike LaFleur had him rolling out for passes or running for a first down on a bootleg play.

The Rams drafted Bennett in the fourth round in 2023 to back up and possibly succeed Matthew Stafford. But Bennett, who led Georgia to two national titles, was sidelined last season and was away from the team after he was placed on the nonfootball injury/illness list.

He returned for offseason workouts and rejoined a quarterback room that now features Stafford, new backup Jimmy Garoppolo and Dresser Winn.

Bennett said last week that he was “excited about



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

RAMS DEFENSIVE TACKLE Larrell Murchison (52) pressures Cowboys quarterback Trey Lance (19) in the first half of their preseason opener at SoFi.

playing football again” and was looking forward to the opportunity against the Cowboys.

He wasted no time showing it, and was at his best when making passes off rollouts.

Bennett led a 61-yard scoring drive that ended with Joshua Karty's field goal for a 3-0 lead. Bennett completed four of five passes, including two to rookie receiver Jordan Whittington for 43 yards.

But on the second play of his second series, Bennett's pass over the middle was intercepted by safety Marquese Bell.

He bounced back and directed a 76-yard drive that Karty completed with a 39-yard field goal for a 6-3 lead.

Late in the first half, Bennett drove the Rams to the Cowboys' 19-yard line. But cornerback Eric Scott intercepted a pass to end the threat.

Whittington catches on fast

Whittington, a sixth-round draft pick from Texas, showed he can contribute to a receiving corps that includes stars Cooper Kupp and Puka Nacua, and veterans Demarcus Robinson and Tutu Atwell.

Whittington caught six passes for 74 yards. He was particularly effective on crossing routes and came up big on fourth down.

During the first drive, Whittington caught a 13-yard pass on a crossing pattern.

He also caught another pass over middle, broke a tackle and ran for a 30-yard gain to set up a field goal.

On the final drive of the first half, Whittington had 14- and four-yard receptions.

Starters and top rookies sit

Rams coach Sean McVay held out established star players, other starters and projected major contributors. Likewise Cowboys coach Mike McCarthy.

Among Rams' draft picks on the sideline were edge rusher Jared Verse and defensive tackle Braden Fiske, the Rams' first- and second-round selections.

They were joined by running back Blake Corum (third-round pick).

Rookie safety Kamren Kinchens (third round) started and made one tackle. Defensive lineman Tyler Davis (sixth round) made two tackles. Whittington and center Beaux Limmer (sixth round) also started.

Scott makes an impression

Kyren Williams is the starting running back, Corum the probable backup

and Ronnie Rivers is a dependable third option.

But the Rams learned last year with Royce Freeman that a veteran on the roster can contribute in the wake of injuries.

Boston Scott has an opportunity to replace Freeman as that veteran.

Scott rushed for 60 yards in 13 carries.

Defensive rotational players get work

With starters such as Kobie Turner and Bobby Brown not playing, veteran Larrell Murchison and second-year pro Desjuan Johnson led a front that mostly neutralized backup quarterbacks Cooper Rush and Trey Lance.

Karty kick-starts special teams

The Rams drafted Karty in the sixth round, confident the former Stanford standout could help them overcome last season's kicking woes.

Karty did not disappoint. He kicked a 28-yard field goal in the first quarter to give the Rams a 3-0 lead. His 39-yard field goal in the second quarter put them ahead, 6-3.

Playing for the first time under the NFL's new kickoff rules, Xavier Smith had two returns for 47 yards.

CHARGERS TAKEAWAYS

After loss, Harbaugh sees ‘a lot of work to be done’

BY ANTHONY DE LEON

How much longer until Chargers starting quarterback Justin Herbert returns?

With backup Easton Stick commanding the offense, the Chargers' starters struggled to move the ball during their 16-3 loss to Seattle Saturday night at SoFi Stadium, reminding fans how much the team needs Herbert.

Here are some key takeaways from the Chargers' loss:

Stuck a bit with Stick

The chemistry the team worked to build in Herbert's absence was noticeably lacking from the first series, especially with other key offensive players Joshua Palmer, Gus Edwards and J.K. Dobbins held out.

The Chargers struggled mightily during their first six possessions with Stick at quarterback, resulting in five three-and-outs and one interception.

“Frustrating,” Stick said about his performance. “A bunch of three-and-outs and a turnover.”

Stick's interception came on an overthrown deep pass intended for tight end Hayden Hurst, who took a hit to the legs that left him shaken up. The turnover set up a Seahawks touchdown.

“I felt there was enough space between the linebacker and safety to get it in,” Stick said about his interception. “In hindsight, should have checked that ball down, especially with us backed up.”

Stick tossed several other inaccurate throws and near interceptions throughout the game.

Though his last two drives of the half were far from impressive, the Chargers secured a first down at the 5:01 mark of the second quarter, leading to a 58-yard field goal by Cameron Dicker. It was the team's only points of the game.

During the scoring drive, Stick scrambled for an 11-yard run and threw a 15-yard pass to Stone Smartt.

Stick completed five of 13 passes for 31 yards as the Chargers only gained 71 total yards of offense in the first half, much of which came from Jared Patterson's runs.

“The offense struggled,” Chargers coach Jim Harbaugh said. “A lot of

work to be done.”

Max Duggan took over for much of the second half, completing four of seven passes for 41 yards. Newcomer Luis Perez took over during the final 4½ minutes, finishing as the team's leading passer, but much of his production came from a deep pass to Jaylen Johnson for 36 yards.

“I don't think we're in a position to be comfortable,” Harbaugh said of his confidence in the backups with Herbert out. “There's a lot to be gained.”

Harbaugh was hesitant to give a definitive answer when asked whether Stick would start next week against the Rams, noting it was still to be determined during next week's practice. He added, “We're going to evaluate all positions. Why wouldn't we?”

Receivers are short-handed

With the first-team offense on the field, the receiving corps was missing key players: Joshua Palmer, who wasn't dressed for warm-ups, and rookie Ladd McConkey, who was dressed but didn't play.

DJ Chark and Brenden



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

CHARGERS cornerback Tarheeb Still (29) tips a pass by Seattle quarterback PJ Walker in the fourth quarter of his team's 16-3 preseason loss to the Seahawks.

Rice started at wide receiver for the first-team offense. Chark was targeted three times early and Rice saw three targets throughout the game, but neither managed to record a reception.

Quentin Johnston went without a target or a catch. The tight ends were the primary beneficiaries of the Chargers' passing game, with Smartt making a couple of catches, including a 15-yard reception on the team's only scoring drive. Simi Fehoko added three receptions for 33 yards.

Johnson led the team in yardage with his catch for 36 yards.

A bright spot

After a disappointing 2023 season, this year's Chargers' defensive performance was a bright spot during an otherwise difficult game.

“There was more good out there on defense,” Harbaugh said. “I thought our defense played winning football.”

Although the Chargers allowed 325 yards — much of it from Seattle's running game (156 yards) — the defense featured several standout performances.

Nick Niemann and second-year linebackers Tuli Tuipulotu and Daiyan Hen-

ley stepped up without defensive stalwarts Derwin James Jr., Khalil Mack and Joey Bosa.

Niemann finished with 12 tackles and one sack, while Tuipulotu had three tackles and Henley added four.

Coming out of the locker room at halftime, the defense delivered the Chargers' best series of the game — a goal-line stand.

Seattle started the second half with four plays of 10-plus yards, driving deep into Chargers territory.

Facing third-and-goal, Niemann and Shane Lee stopped the Seahawks from scoring a touchdown on a fourth-down run.

NFL's new rules breathing life into the ho-hum kickoff

[**Kickoffs**, from D8] been abandoned. Last season featured the lowest kickoff return rate in NFL history. This year's showdown between Kansas City and San Francisco was the first Super Bowl with zero kickoff returns.

Behind the scenes, league experts were working on a solution — a blueprint for making kickoffs relevant again and revitalizing what once was the game's most exciting play.

“We're in the business of creating an entertaining product, putting a product on the field where you can be competitive in every moment,” said Atlanta Falcons president Rich McKay, chairman of the NFL's competition committee. “And we've created a play that's no longer competitive. Our job as a league, as a membership, is to try to find a way to make that play competitive. This was our best option.”

In 2018, a group of special teams coaches convened in New York for a traditional offseason meeting in which they talked over rules, statistical changes, injury rates and the like. Then, they turned to kickoffs.

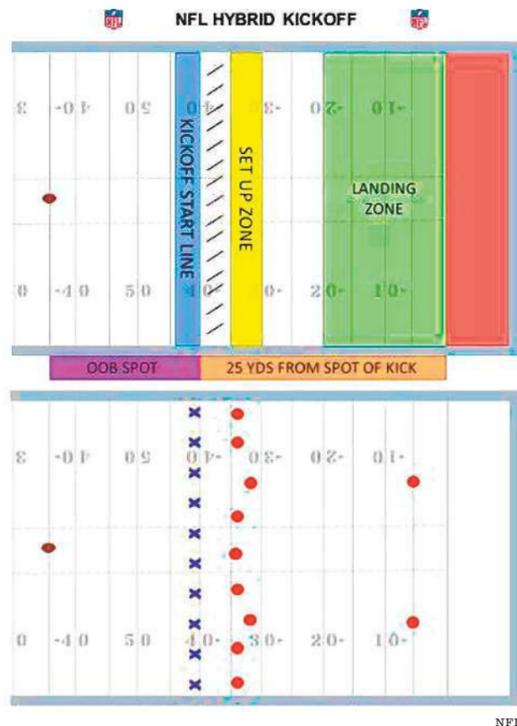
“That's when we did a deep dive on all the leagues,” said Rizzi, who

along with Dallas Cowboys special teams coordinator John Fassel presented the proposed new kickoff to owners at the league meetings in March. “We said, ‘Let's look at the CFL. Let's look at the XFL. Let's look at the USFL. Let's look at anybody that had a kickoff and try to pull the best ideas and try to make this the safest and most exciting play possible.’”

What emerged was a version of the XFL kickoffs, but not an identical copy. Whereas the XFL has a single returner, the NFL allows for two. And the NFL did not adopt the XFL rule that everyone can begin moving once the kicked ball has been on the ground for three seconds.

“What you saw in the XFL was there were a lot of kickoffs that landed on the ground,” Rizzi said. “We're trying to avoid that, trying to avoid sloppy play. So the ability to have two guys back and kind of split the field gives us a chance to field every ball.”

The XFL, which merged with the USFL after last season, had the kicking team line up on the 35. The NFL is five yards back at the 40. Otherwise, the general concept of the kickoffs is the same, and those were un-



NFL's new rules put opposing teams closer together.

veiled in last weekend's weather-shortened Hall of Fame game.

Thursday marks the start of preseason games across the league, although

the expectation is that teams aren't going to tip their hand if they have any tricky kickoff plays. Best to keep the preseason as vanilla as possible.

Rest assured, though, every special teams coach is trying to find new ways to get a jump on the competition and keep ahead of the curve, the way the Philadelphia Eagles mastered the short-yardage “Brotherly Shove.”

“Everyone, especially early on, is going to try to have an idea that somebody hasn't thought about that they could take advantage of,” Rizzi said. “And listen, it might be as simple as a blocking scheme because we've never had to block in this.”

Because the vast majority of players cannot move until the kicked ball lands — either in the hands of the returner or on the ground — hang time is no longer relevant. Particularly important now is the accuracy of the kickers, who will be asked to land the ball in specific spots, the way golfers control pitching wedges.

For that reason, Rizzi said, it's unlikely teams will use a position player — for instance, a safety — to kick off, even though that would give them another sure tackler on the back end.

who can run around or through the first line of defense.

“I'm a big believer that I can't let the kicker tackle me,” said Sweeting, a Vegas Vipers returner who ranked third in the XFL last season with an average return of 23.4 yards. “That's the thing with this new return, a lot of kickers are going to have to buckle up their chin strap and really squeeze the space between the second level and the return.”

“It's going to be interesting to see what kicker is going to be good at doing it, because they're definitely going to have to make some tackles during the season.”

Sweeting, whose first name is pronounced SIN-cue, is playing in Austria and hopes that the new kickoffs might afford him an opportunity to realize his NFL dream, considering he was so dangerous in the XFL. What's more, he's convinced NFL fans will love the change.

“Usually during kickoffs a lot of people are expecting the ball to be a touchback,” he said. “They're going to get snacks from the concession stand or things like that. So I think this is going to make more people be glued to their TV during all aspects of the game.”

PARIS OLYMPICS

FINAL MEDALS TABLE

THE LEADERS

UNITED STATES
126 G: 40 S: 44 B: 42

CHINA
91 G: 20 S: 47 B: 24

BRITAIN
65 G: 14 S: 22 B: 29

FRANCE
64 G: 16 S: 26 B: 22

AUSTRALIA
53 G: 18 S: 19 B: 16

THE OTHERS

Country	G	S	B	Tot.
Japan	20	12	13	45
Italy	12	13	15	40
Netherlands	15	7	12	34
Germany	12	13	8	33
South Korea	13	9	10	32
Canada	9	7	11	27
New Zealand	10	7	3	20
Brazil	3	7	10	20
Hungary	6	7	6	19
Spain	5	4	9	18
Uzbekistan	8	2	3	13
Iran	3	6	3	12
Ukraine	3	5	4	12
Sweden	4	4	3	11
Kenya	4	2	5	11
Belgium	3	1	6	10
Poland	1	4	5	10
Romania	3	4	2	9
Denmark	2	2	5	9
Cuba	2	1	6	9
Norway	4	1	3	8
Switzerland	1	2	5	8
Greece	1	1	6	8
Turkey	0	3	5	8
Ireland	4	0	3	7
Georgia	3	3	1	7
Bulgaria	3	1	3	7
Azerbaijan	2	2	3	7
Croatia	2	2	3	7
Taiwan	2	0	5	7
Israel	1	5	1	7
Kazakhstan	1	3	3	7
Jamaica	1	3	2	6
South Africa	1	3	2	6
Thailand	1	3	2	6
North Korea	0	2	4	6
Kyrgyzstan	0	2	4	6
India	0	1	5	6
Serbia	3	1	1	5
Czech Republic	3	0	2	5
Austria	2	0	3	5
Ecuador	1	2	2	5
Mexico	0	3	2	5
Bahrain	2	1	1	4
Hong Kong	2	0	2	4
Philippines	2	0	2	4
Ethiopia	1	3	0	4
Portugal	1	2	1	4
Armenia	0	3	1	4
Colombia	0	3	1	4
Lithuania	0	2	2	4
Moldova	0	1	3	4
Slovenia	2	1	0	3
Algeria	2	0	1	3
Indonesia	2	0	1	3
Argentina	1	1	1	3
Egypt	1	1	1	3
Tunisia	1	1	1	3
Dominican Republic	1	0	2	3
Tajikistan	0	0	3	3
Botswana	1	1	0	2
Chile	1	1	0	2
Saint Lucia	1	1	0	2
Uganda	1	1	0	2
Guatemala	1	0	1	2
Morocco	1	0	1	2
Kosovo	0	1	1	2
Albania	0	0	2	2
Grenada	0	0	2	2
Malaysia	0	0	2	2
Puerto Rico	0	0	2	2
Dominica	1	0	0	1
Pakistan	1	0	0	1
Cyprus	0	1	0	1
Fiji	0	1	0	1
Jordan	0	1	0	1
Mongolia	0	1	0	1
Panama	0	1	0	1
Cape Verde	0	0	1	1
Ivory Coast	0	0	1	1
Peru	0	0	1	1
Qatar	0	0	1	1
Refugee Olympic Team	0	0	1	1
Singapore	0	0	1	1
Slovakia	0	0	1	1
Zambia	0	0	1	1



MICHAEL CONROY Associated Press

FRANCE'S Romane Bernies, left, knocks the ball away from Kelsey Plum of the United States in their gold-medal showdown on Sunday.

U.S. wins its eighth straight gold medal

[Basketball, from D1] an inspired French team that was fueled by the energy of a crowd hoping to win the nation's first Olympic basketball gold medal.

France dictated the pace of play early with a suffocating defense. The United States looked frantic and frazzled. The Americans turned the ball over 13 times in the first half compared with eight made field goals. France ran off 10 consecutive points to begin the second half.

The team that had dominated teams for more than three decades looked lost with Wilson and Breanna Stewart missing point-blank shots. The leading scorers entered the game each averaging at least 18 points a game on a combined 62% shooting. The linchpins of U.S. basketball started Sunday's game a combined three-for-16 from the field.

The Americans instead got a lift from new faces. After leading the United States to a 3x3 Olympic gold medal in Tokyo, Kelsey Plum scored or assisted on every point of an 8-0 third-quarter run. Olympic rookie Kahleah Copper changed the game with her grit and energy off the bench and fin-



MARK J. TERRILL Associated Press

AMERICAN Sabrina Ionescu, playing in her first Olympics, holds the Stars and Stripes after her team's one-point victory over France to clinch the gold medal.

ished with 12 points and five rebounds. Fellow Olympic rookie Sabrina Ionescu assisted Collier on two layups that helped the Americans reclaim a two-point lead going into the fourth quarter.

After the final buzzer, U.S. players celebrated with a star-studded court-side row that included U.S. women's basketball legends Dawn Staley and Lisa Leslie. Plum, who said she knows all the U.S. players who have worn her No. 5 jersey for the national team, shared a look with three-time Olympic champion and fellow No. 5 jersey Seimone Augustus, who watched from the stands.

In the mixed zone after the game, Taurasi passed an imaginary torch to Ionescu. Taurasi will not be back in the Olympics — the Chino native said she will attend the Los Angeles 2028 Games from the beach with a beer — but she knows players like Ionescu will be.

"I'm ready," Ionescu said. "I think being able to learn from a lot of the veteran players here, knowing it's kind of my time and a lot of our times, that this younger generation is able to kind of take this legacy and continue to push forward and go for nine."

Last in the marathon but a winner nonetheless

[Lhamo, from D1]

But simply finishing made her a winner in a race that had nearly as much symbolism as it did competitors.

Traditionally the men's marathon is the final track and field event of the Summer Games, but this year, when the number of participating athletes was equal between men and women for the first time, the women went last. The switch was significant because women were banned from running the Olympic marathon until 1984; the distance, it was believed, was too taxing for them.

In Paris the women not only ran, they were given a place of honor, running through enthusiastic crowds that lined the entire route and finishing before massive grandstands filled with thousands more. In another historic nod, Kathrine Switzer, the first woman to run the Boston Marathon, was on hand to get things started by delivering the "coup de baton," a French cultural tradition that involved tapping a wooden baton on the floor to indicate a show is about to start.

The 26.2-mile course to Versailles and back was symbolic as well, retracing part of the 1789 women's march on the royal gardens, a key moment from the French Revolution in which thousands of market women, shopkeepers and laborers gathered at the Hôtel de Ville, Paris' city hall, to demand bread and arms, then marched to Versailles to bring Louis XVI back to the capital.

That day the king also



VADIM GHIRDA Associated Press

KINZANG LHAMO of Bhutan nears the finish line of the women's marathon. The human drama of her last-place finish captivated thousands along the route.

bowed to demands that he ratify the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which became the prelude to the first written constitution of France in 1791.

Unfortunately for the runners, the revolutionaries marched up and down some steep hills. So the marathon course, which started at the seven-century-old Hôtel de Ville, near the Notre Dame cathedral, and passed the Palais Garnier opera house, the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower on its way to the finish line at the Esplanade des Invalides, was one of the most challenging in Olympic history.

And if Lhamo didn't ex-

actly conquer it, she at least survived it.

In distance running DNF means "did not finish"; 11 of the 91 starters, including Fiona O'Keefe, winner of the U.S. trials in February, took that option Sunday. Lhamo was a DNF — did not quit.

If the most important thing in the Olympic Games is to take part, the second most important is to finish. And she did.

It wasn't easy. Lhamo was competing with a "universality place," a spot on the starting line reserved for athletes from underrepresented national Olympic committees. And Bhutan certainly qualifies. The Southeast Asian country of

fewer than 1 million people has never won an Olympic medal.

Lhamo began running after joining the army, then became an ultramarathoner, competing in a five-day event that treks up mountain passes as high as 18,000 feet.

Her best marathon time, however, is 3 hours, 26 minutes, so she quickly lost touch with the rest of the field, flogging more than 4½ minutes behind the next-slowest runner by five kilometers. But she never had to run alone.

The spectators lining the course cheered her, some waving the orange-and-yellow Bhutanese flag with the

dragon in the center, the one Lhamo carried in the opening ceremony two weeks ago.

She walked most of the final two kilometers, with dozens of people on either side of the barricades that lined the course walking alongside her, offering encouragement and simply company. The procession soon became a parade as a man on a bike attempted to pace her while others reached over the barriers to urge her on.

In the huge grandstands lining the blue carpet covering the final 100 meters of the finish at the Invalides, a military complex dating to the 15th century reign of Louis XIV, thousands waited for the medal ceremony, which was delayed by the building human drama of Lhamo's race.

Fans followed her on scoreboard-size video monitors, and just before she came into view from the stands, Lhamo, her face furrowed in concentration if not pain, began running again — slowly and tentatively. When she entered the final stretch, the crowd stood and applauded.

After crossing the line, Lhamo made her way to a plastic folding chair as a volunteer placed a wet towel on her shoulders. She would need medical attention, her coach said.

"Cramps," he added. "But the cramps aren't expected to keep her from carrying her country's flag again in the closing ceremony. Because as Lhamo's marathon performance proved, the Olympics aren't about winning, they're about taking part."

PARIS  OLYMPICS

Photographs by WALLY SKALLI, Los Angeles Times

THE SUN sets over the Eiffel Tower as the U.S. and Canadian women's beach volleyball teams warm up before a match. The Americans failed to medal, a rarity.

Another Olympics in L.A.? Yes, we can

[Plaschke, from D1] mittee later clarified that while public transit would be preferred, nobody will be told they cannot drive to a competition.

Traffic will be only one of our issues. If the last two weeks are any indication, four years from now the weather will be scorching, crime will be rising, and the entire Olympic footprint could smell like burnt toast.

This is going to be one tough speed climb.

That said ...

This is the city of champions, a city whose sporting soul is rooted in resilience, a city whose fans urge greatness and whose stars supply magic.

This is a city that doesn't flinch. Kobe Bryant never flinched.

This is a city that doesn't scare. Kirk Gibson never feared.

This is a city where even the most insurmountable of sporting challenges are met, embraced, and summarily destroyed.

The Los Angeles Rams didn't exist in 2015, yet won a Super Bowl six years later.

The Kings were plunked down in a place that hated the cold, yet they made ice cool and won two Stanley Cup championships.

The greatest basketball player in history works here. The greatest baseball player in history works here. The greatest hockey player in history once worked here. The great coaches in both pro and college basketball once worked here.

This town invented the high five, for Dusty's sake.

Los Angeles knows sporting excellence, and we darn sure know how to throw a bash to celebrate it. This city has already held an Olympics twice, with 1984 being arguably the most successful Games ever. Ask any of your neighbors who witnessed it or worked it, they'll never forget it.

So, yeah, bring it on, forget four years, we can be ready for these Olympics in four days, we're built for it, we're meant for it, we're perfect for it.

We can do this. We will do this.

There will be traffic but, like in 1984, here's guessing enough people will leave town or work remotely to make it manageable.

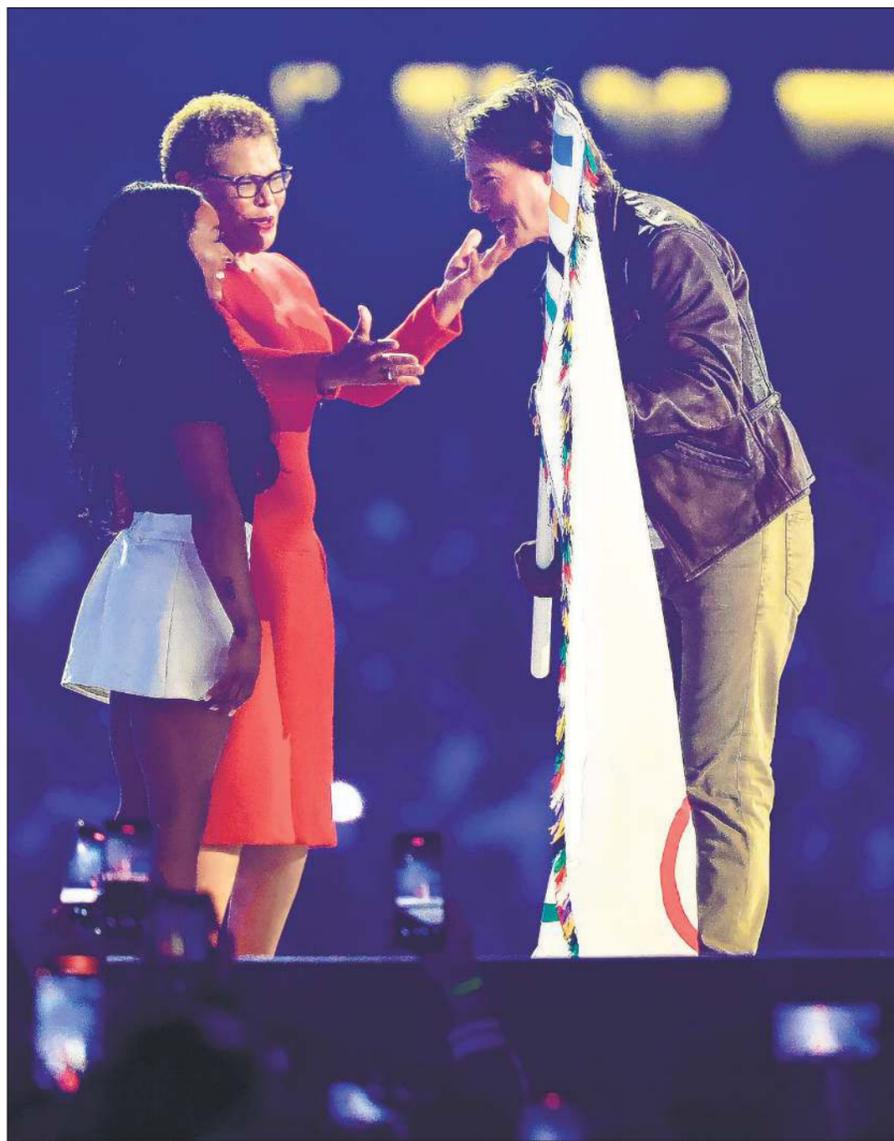
There will be heat but, unlike in Paris, we actually have that strange new contraption called air conditioning.

It will be complicated, messy and endlessly frustrating. But if you stick around to buy tickets or volunteer, trust history, it will be wonderful.

Just listen to Steve Miller, a longtime Los Angeles basketball coach who has taught the game at various levels for 51 years yet will never forget those two weeks in 1984.

He was the volunteer who would choose the MVPs for the losing basketball teams at the Sports Arena and accompany them to the news conferences. He had a backstage look at effort and anguish and the sort of passion he has rarely seen since.

"It was a great, great experience for me," Miller remembered Sunday. "Every single game felt like a game between Garfield and Roosevelt. Everybody diving on the floor, doing whatever it took. Every country, every player, it meant something special to all of



TOM CRUISE, right, holds the Olympic flag as he greets L.A. Mayor Karen Bass, center, and U.S. gymnast Simone Biles during the closing ceremony of the Paris Summer Games.



AT A PARIS CAFE, fans watch France battle the Netherlands in the gold-medal game of the 3x3 basketball tournament. The Dutch won on a buzzer beater, 18-17.

them."

Miller still has photos of his volunteer group hanging on a wall in his home. And he's hoping to add to his collection.

He'll be 83 in 2028, but he's ready for an encore.

"If they'll have me, I'm there," he said. "There's nothing like it."

Agreed. I've covered 10 Olympics, and never once has an individual event failed to inspire and amaze.

It could be the first round of fencing. It could be the final moments in wrestling. No matter the stage of the competition, each of the competitors has devoted their lives to this moment in a way they've never done before, each of them fighting not for some professional team or college sweater or rich sponsor, but for their country.

Unlike in virtually every other major sporting event, the Olympics are all about patriotism, pure and simple and chilling. To see hundreds of athletes scrambling for a scrap of a flag or a hint of an anthem catches somewhere beyond the mere chants of "USA, USA," catches somewhere deep in the soul.

Hint: Buy tickets to a medal event, any medal event. In watching the ensuing podium ceremony, guaranteed, you will cry. Even if you've never heard of the winning athlete and are not particularly fond of their anthem, you will cry.

To see a lone figure triumphantly representing an entire country with their hand over their heart and the voice booming out words is one of the coolest things in sports.

Now, to see it happen to an American in America? That's worth rushing to la28.org and getting in line now.

The venues are historic. The venues are ready. The venues are perfect.

The gymnastics will be at Crypto.com Arena, a place where Kobe once climbed on a scorer's table as if it was a balance beam.

The track and field will be — where else? — at a Coliseum where folks are still talking about Rafer Johnson's ascent into heaven in 1984.

The swimming will be at SoFi Stadium, and, really, how cool is that? The last time that place made national news, Aaron Donald was appropriately finishing off a Super Bowl championship with a swim move.

Dodger Stadium is, of course, a natural for baseball, maybe good enough to persuade Major League Baseball to shut down for two weeks and allow its athletes to compete.

And while nobody yet knows what it's like to watch basketball at the Intuit Dome, it is supposed to contain this wall of sound, which will make life hell for all the other countries.

In all, it should be an incredible ride, one which officially began Sunday with Tom Cruise theatrically dropping into the Stade de France and carrying the Olympic flag via plane and motorcycle across the world to Venice Beach. Once there, the star of these Olympics was among various local artists welcoming the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics with the brightest of hopes.

They'll always have Paris. But we'll always have Snoop.

PARIS  OLYMPICS

Golden State has Olympic-size talent

Of 594 athletes on the U.S. team, 121 are from California, where nice weather is a huge plus.

BY KEVIN BAXTER

PARIS — The U.S. women's soccer team, which won the gold medal at the Paris Olympics on Saturday, has five players from California. All four U.S. beach volleyball players who advanced to the quarterfinals are Californians, as are 11 of the 13 women on the water polo team, which fell in the bronze-medal match Saturday.

In fact, everywhere Team USA has competed in these Paris Olympics, chances are a Californian was involved. One hundred twenty-one of the 594 athletes on the American team — more than one in five — are from the state. And that doesn't include the California natives who competed for other nations, such as Trinidadian swimmer Dylan Carter, Filipina gymnast Emma Malabuyo and Japanese tennis player Ena Shibahara.

Not only is no state better represented in France than California, but also consider: fewer than 24 countries have more Olympians in these Games than California. And the reasons are simple, said David Wallechinsky, president of the International Society of Olympic Historians and a native Californian.

"Obviously it's the weather," he said. "But also it's the universities. People from other states come to UCLA, USC and Stanford and they stay. Having good coaching at the universities really helps attract people to California."

"And then the other factor, which I think is really important, is that it's role models. You grow up in Minnesota or Vermont, your role model, if you have any in sport, is not going to be an Olympic summer sport



PHOTOS BY ROSS MAY AND BRIAN VAN DER BRUG / L.A. Times; AURELIEN MORISSARD; LUCA BRUNO; FRANK FRANKLIN II; ALTAF QADRI / AP

[athlete]. But if you're Californian, it's going to be. Or it's more likely to be."

The population is also a plus. With 39.5 million residents, California has 10 million more people than the next most populous state, Texas. As a result, the number of kids playing high school sports in California last year was larger than the number of people living in Wyoming, Vermont, Alaska or North Dakota.

Bob Larsen, a former track coach at UCLA, also credits the state's geography, which allow athletes to train at sea level or on the slopes of Mt. Whitney, the highest mountain in the contiguous 48 states, on the same day. California, he said, also has excellent facilities and a robust system for finding and grooming young athletes.

"Youth clubs and middle and high school programs

identify and encourage talented athletes early," said Larsen, who coached at the club, high school and college level, helping Deena Drossin of Agoura Hills to a marathon bronze medal in 2004. "Many college and university teams with good coaches grow the sport."

And the schools take that mission seriously, even if it doesn't just benefit Team USA. Stanford, for example, sent 60 Olympians, representing 15 countries, to Paris. UCLA sent 40 athletes from 18 countries and USC 66 from 26 nations. Even UC Irvine had four former athletes in Paris and Santa Barbara City College one.

"We place a significant emphasis on the development of Olympians and other world-class competitors," said Stanford athlete director Bernard Muir, whose school, if it were a nation, would have finished

11th in the medal count in Tokyo and 10th in Rio de Janeiro. "Several of our peer institutions throughout the state operate the same way. We take tremendous pride in things like leading the medal count among colleges."

Mark S. Dyreson, professor of kinesiology and history and the co-director of the Penn State Center for the Study of Sports in Society, said California's rise toward becoming an Olympic power took root about a century ago when the state — and especially Hollywood — began to alter the country's culture.

California was seen as a land of affluence, fashion, celebrity and new ideas — no matter that much of that was a facade. So when Los Angeles hosted the 1932 Olympics, whose scale and quality were beyond anything that had come before, sports became an indelible

part of that brand. Hollywood's film industry, which heavily promoted the Los Angeles Games, then sold that brand to a global audience.

A boom in swimming pool construction tied to the post-war suburbanization of the state was another factor popularizing an idealized California lifestyle built around leisure and recreation. (It's also why the state traditionally has produced more Olympic swimmers than any other, though just two Californians, male butterfly specialist Luca Urlando and relay medalist Abbey Weitzeil, were part of this summer's team.)

More recently, the addition of sports such as skateboarding, beach volleyball, table tennis, badminton, golf and surfing, which have long been ingrained in the California culture, also swelled the number of Olympians

from the state. Thirty of the 44 U.S. Olympians in those sports come from California.

"You know, another thing is, I've been reading a lot of the [athletes'] biographies. There's one thing that comes up over and over again, and it's very strong, which is the parents," Wallechinsky said. "They've got an overactive kid, and they'll just enroll them in five or six different sports, and then eventually one takes. It's not so much that the parents are pushing them, they're just giving them a lot of opportunities. And they find something they like."

"Part of it is the enthusiasm."

And part of it is the competition. Trinity Rodman of Newport Beach, whose three goals in the Olympic soccer tournament tied for second on the team, said it's nice to have weather that allows you to play year-round. But what really made her better was being matched against talented players growing up in south Orange County. "The clubs that I faced in California were good, like, really good, and top level," she said. "I don't know what it was. I can only speak to my experience. [But] we played a lot of good teams, which was nice."

California just seems to breed stronger, healthier people, which even makes the nonathletes better, something Wallechinsky learned after taking a physical fitness test in junior high.

"I saw the results and I was way down in my school. Way, way down," he said. "Then they released the national results and I was like, in the top 5%. Wow, I guess I'm not so bad after all."

"Even at the age of 13, it gave me a perspective how different California was than the rest of the country when it came to youth sport."

Sixty-three years later, that hasn't changed. And the U.S. Olympic team is reaping the benefits.

OLYMPICS ROUNDUP

U.S. settles for silver medal in women's volleyball

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Italy beat the defending champion U.S. team Sunday to win gold in women's volleyball at the Paris Olympics.

The victory came in straight sets, 25-18, 25-20, 25-17. The Italians ended a dominant tournament having lost just one set.

It's the first medal in the sport for top-ranked Italy and sends the Americans home in disappointment after they won their first Olympic title in Tokyo. It's a huge win for the Italians, whose previous best Olympic finish was fifth.

The victory came in front of a boisterous crowd at South Paris Arena, where many fans waved Italian and U.S. flags. People danced and cheered as the Italians romped to the decisive win.

When Italy scored the match point to end it, many of the players collapsed to the court, then began hugging in a huge scrum. Together they tossed veteran Monica De Gennaro into the air. De Gennaro is a 37-year-old, four-time Olympian.

The U.S. was up 6-5 in the third set before Italy scored the next seven points to take a 12-6 lead. The Americans fought back, scoring three of the next four points. The U.S. got within 19-16 before Italy closed it out with a 6-1 run capped by the match point by Paola Egonu, who had a dominant performance, scoring 22 points.

The silver finish by the Americans gives them a seventh Olympic medal to make them the winningest country in the sport.

Men's water polo

Adrian Weinberg made 16 saves in regulation and denied Vince Vignari in the penalty shootout, helping the United States beat Hungary 11-8 for the bronze medal in men's water polo.

It's the first medal for the U.S. men since the team lost to Hungary in the final of the 2008 Olympics. The U.S. also won bronze the last time Paris hosted the Summer Games in 1924.

Ben Hallock had two



RICARDO MAZALAN Associated Press

JENNIFER VALENTE of the United States celebrates after taking the gold medal in the women's omnium.

Officials plan appeal to restore Chiles' medal

USA Gymnastics says it will submit proof that its scoring inquiry was filed in time.

BY THUC NHI NGUYEN

PARIS — USA Gymnastics is not letting Jordan Chiles give up her bronze medal without a fight.

Hours after the International Olympic Committee ruled that the U.S. gymnast should return her medal because of a score change, USA Gymnastics will now submit a new appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport arguing that everything was done correctly the first time.

According to a statement released by USAG on Sunday night, the federation will submit video evidence that shows U.S. head coach Cecile Landi filed an inquiry 47

seconds after Chiles' score was published, which is within the one-minute time window. The Romanian Gymnastics Federation initially got the inquiry voided with an appeal to the CAS claiming that it was filed one minute and four seconds after the score was posted.

In a statement, USA Gymnastics said its time-stamped video was not available prior to the first decision.

The competition took place last Monday and the CAS upheld the Romanian petition Saturday, voiding the inquiry that gave Chiles an additional one-tenth in difficulty value that pushed her from fifth to third place. The International Gymnastics Federation re-ranked the gymnasts after the decision, putting Romania's Ana Barbosu into bronze medal position with a 13.700, but left it up to the IOC to reallocate

the medals. The organization got in touch with the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee to facilitate a return of Chiles' medal.

Since winning her third Olympic medal — her first individual medal — on Monday, Chiles has returned to the United States, where her post-Games media tour included a stop at the Nasdaq composite, a visit to the "Today" show to announce her return to UCLA, and a conversation with Elmo.

Chiles was the last gymnast to compete in the floor exercise final, and her coaches had one minute to inquire about her score after it was posted.

The inquiry submitted on behalf of Chiles added one-tenth to her score, moving her into third place with a 13.766, after judges decided she should have gotten full credit on a leap that involved

a 540-degree turn in the air.

"All this talk about the athlete, what about the judges?? Completely unacceptable," U.S. teammate Suni Lee posted on an Instagram story.

"This is awful and I'm gutted for Jordan. I got your back forever Jo. U have all my flowers and you will ALWAYS be an Olympic champion."

Chiles helped the United States to team gold in Paris and competed in the all-around team final.

She also has a silver medal in the team competition from Tokyo.

"Sending you so much love Jordan," Simone Biles posted in an Instagram story with a photo of her hugging Chiles after the floor competition.

"Keep your chin up Olympic champ! We love you!"

goals for the U.S., which bounced back after losing to Serbia in the semifinals. Gergo Zalanki and Denes Varga each had two goals for Hungary, the winningest men's water polo program in history.

Hungary took home the bronze at the Tokyo Games.

Hungary opened an 8-6 lead on Daniel Angyal's goal with 3:22 left. But the U.S. rallied with man-up goals by Alex Bowen and Hannes Daube.

Daube, Max Irving and Bowen converted their opportunities in the penalty shootout, and Hungary was shut out in the tiebreaker. Varga hit the cage before Vignari was turned away by Weinberg. When Zalanki hit the cage again, it was over.

As the U.S. coaches and players celebrated wildly — on the sideline and in the pool — Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." played on the sound system at Paris La Defense Arena.

Final medal count

The U.S. women's basketball team held off France to win gold in the final event of the Paris Olympics, and that hardware was needed for the Americans to tie China for the most with 40.

The U.S. easily won the total medal count with 126. Aside from the 40 gold, the Americans won 42 silver and 44 bronze.

"I saw the medal count beforehand so I knew," said U.S. women's coach Cheryl Reeve, who thought to herself, "that's what we need — more pressure."

The U.S. lost a bronze medal Sunday when the International Olympic Committee said it was reallocating the bronze given to Jordan Chiles in the women's floor final to Romanian Ana Barbosu.

U.S. Olympic officials are appealing. China came in second in the total medal race with 91. China won 40 gold, 27 silver and 24 bronze. Japan was a distant third with 20 gold medals, 45 overall.

Britain won 65 medals, but only 14 were gold for an overall ranking of seventh.

STANDINGS

Through Saturday

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Table with columns: West, W, L, Pct., GB, L10. Lists teams like Dodgers, San Diego, Arizona, San Francisco, Colorado, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Atlanta, New York, Washington, Miami.

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Table with columns: West, W, L, Pct., GB, L10. Lists teams like Houston, Seattle, Texas, Angels, Oakland, Cleveland, Minnesota, Kansas City, Detroit, Chicago, Baltimore, New York, Boston, Tampa Bay, Toronto.

Today's games

Table listing today's games with columns: Team, Time, Location.

ON THIS DATE

1974: Nolan Ryan of the California Angels set an American League record by striking out 19 in a 4-2 win over the Boston Red Sox. Ryan, who walked two, bettered the 18 strikeouts set by Bob Feller in 1938 and tied the major league record set by Steve Carlton in 1969 and Tom Seaver in 1970.

Dodgers' rally secures weekend sweep

[Dodgers, from D8] when Teoscar Hernández misplayed a ball in left field that allowed Pittsburgh's automatic runner to score.

However, Teoscar Hernández redeemed himself a half-inning later, following Kiké Hernández's game-tying double with a two-out, opposite-field single to salvage a game that got much closer than it ever should have been.

Ryan will miss rest of season

Dodgers rookie pitcher River Ryan will miss the rest of the season with an elbow injury, Dave Roberts announced Sunday, a day after Ryan exited his start in the Dodgers' 4-1 win over the Pirates on Saturday with what was termed right forearm tightness.

Roberts said Ryan was still waiting on "other scans" to determine the exact diagnosis of his injury. However, a Sunday morning MRI exam confirmed that Ryan's injury was significant enough to sideline him for at least the next two months.

Ryan's next course of action is to be determined, but Roberts said surgery could be "in play."

"Fortunately, we've got a lot of depth and a lot of good ball players, so we'll just try to backfill," Roberts said Saturday night. "But I just feel bad for River."

In four MLB starts this season, Ryan had a 1.33 ERA and 18 strikeouts in 20 2/3 innings. Despite his inexperience, the right-hander had been "making a case" to be part of the Dodgers' pitching plans down the stretch, Roberts said, impressing with his high-velocity fastball and swing-and-miss slider/curveball combination.

Ryan's injury is the latest to strike the Dodgers' short-handed pitching staff. It continued a particularly alarming pattern of injuries among young Dodgers pitchers.

Already this season, the Dodgers were without homegrown arms, including Dustin May, Tony Gonsolin, Emmet Sheehan and Kyle Hurt. Walker Buehler (who will return from the injured list next week, effectively replacing Ryan in the rotation) and Bobby Miller (who remains in triple A trying to refine his arsenal) are also



JAYNE KAMIN-ONCEA Associated Press

TYLER GLASNOW delivers in the first inning of his seven-inning, two-run, four-strikeout performance for the Dodgers, who came back from a 5-4 deficit late at Dodger Stadium.

missed time on the injured list. "I think that we clearly don't have the answers to taking care of pitchers and keeping them healthy," Roberts said of the baseball industry at-large, which has reckoned with a perceived epidemic of pitching injuries in recent years. "I think the industry is doing the best they can to manage workload, manage pitch count, but clearly we don't have it nailed ... The bottom line is injuries are way up."

Lux sparks win

Galvin Lux continued his resurgence with three RBIs, Teoscar Hernández hit a home run and the Dodgers got past standout rookie Paul Skenes and the Pirates 4-1 on Saturday night.

Hernández had three hits for the Dodgers, who won despite losing Ryan after 4 1/2 scoreless innings because of right forearm tightness.

Paul Skenes (6-2) gave up a career-high four runs on six hits over six innings with one walk and eight strikeouts.

Short hops

Rookie pitcher Landon Knack was called up Sunday to provide

bullpen coverage with Ryan on the IL ... Reliever Ryan Brasier (calf) is expected to rejoin the Dodgers next week in St. Louis ... Yoshinobu Yamamoto (shoulder) will also travel on this week's trip to throw a bullpen session in Milwaukee on Tuesday, and a simulated game in St. Louis next weekend ... Chris Taylor (groin) has been taking live at-bats in simulated games this weekend, and is scheduled to go to the club's facility in Arizona next week to continue his rehab.

Angels rookie gets first major-league win

Jack Kochanowicz pitched 7 2/3 innings to earn his first major league win, Kevin Pillar hit a three-run double and the Angels beat the Washington Nationals 6-4 on Sunday.

The Angels avoided a three-game series sweep in their first visit to Washington since 2017 and went 3-3 on a trip that began in New York against the Yankees.

The Nationals issued 13 walks, matching their most since the franchise moved to Washington in 2005. The Angels turned four of those

into runs to help deny the Nationals their fourth series sweep of the season.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

SATURDAY'S LITE BOX DODGERS 4, PITTSBURGH 1

Scoreboard table for Dodgers vs Pittsburgh. Columns: Team, AB, R, H, BI, Avg. Lists players like K-Fal 2b, Reynolds lf, Cruz 2b, etc.

Additional scoreboard table for Pittsburgh vs Dodgers. Columns: Team, IP, H, R, ER, BB, SO, NP, ERA. Lists pitchers like Skenes, L, 6.2, etc.

BASEBALL: SATURDAY FLASHBACK

WASHINGTON 5, ANGELS 4. Angels AB R H BI Avg. Washington AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

N.Y. YANKEES 8, TEXAS 0. Texas AB R H BI Avg. New York AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

TEXAS 9, N.Y. YANKEES 4. Texas AB R H BI Avg. New York AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

OAKLAND 1, TORONTO 0. Oakland AB R H BI Avg. Toronto AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

SAN FRANCISCO 3, DETROIT 1. Detroit AB R H BI Avg. San Francisco AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

WASHINGTON 5, ANGELS 4. Angels AB R H BI Avg. Washington AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

N.Y. YANKEES 8, TEXAS 0. Texas AB R H BI Avg. New York AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

TEXAS 9, N.Y. YANKEES 4. Texas AB R H BI Avg. New York AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

OAKLAND 1, TORONTO 0. Oakland AB R H BI Avg. Toronto AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

SAN FRANCISCO 3, DETROIT 1. Detroit AB R H BI Avg. San Francisco AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

KANSAS CITY 8, ST. LOUIS 3. St. Louis AB R H BI Avg. Kansas City AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

N.Y. YANKEES 8, TEXAS 0. Texas AB R H BI Avg. New York AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

HOUSTON 5, BOSTON 4. Houston AB R H BI Avg. Boston AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

OAKLAND 1, TORONTO 0. Oakland AB R H BI Avg. Toronto AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

SAN FRANCISCO 3, DETROIT 1. Detroit AB R H BI Avg. San Francisco AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

KANSAS CITY 8, ST. LOUIS 3. St. Louis AB R H BI Avg. Kansas City AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

N.Y. YANKEES 8, TEXAS 0. Texas AB R H BI Avg. New York AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

HOUSTON 5, BOSTON 4. Houston AB R H BI Avg. Boston AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

OAKLAND 1, TORONTO 0. Oakland AB R H BI Avg. Toronto AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

SAN FRANCISCO 3, DETROIT 1. Detroit AB R H BI Avg. San Francisco AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

MILWAUKEE 1, CINCINNATI 0. Cincinnati AB R H BI Avg. Milwaukee AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

N.Y. YANKEES 8, TEXAS 0. Texas AB R H BI Avg. New York AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

HOUSTON 5, BOSTON 4. Houston AB R H BI Avg. Boston AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

OAKLAND 1, TORONTO 0. Oakland AB R H BI Avg. Toronto AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

SAN FRANCISCO 3, DETROIT 1. Detroit AB R H BI Avg. San Francisco AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

MILWAUKEE 1, CINCINNATI 0. Cincinnati AB R H BI Avg. Milwaukee AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

N.Y. YANKEES 8, TEXAS 0. Texas AB R H BI Avg. New York AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

HOUSTON 5, BOSTON 4. Houston AB R H BI Avg. Boston AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

OAKLAND 1, TORONTO 0. Oakland AB R H BI Avg. Toronto AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

SAN FRANCISCO 3, DETROIT 1. Detroit AB R H BI Avg. San Francisco AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

MILWAUKEE 1, CINCINNATI 0. Cincinnati AB R H BI Avg. Milwaukee AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

N.Y. YANKEES 8, TEXAS 0. Texas AB R H BI Avg. New York AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

HOUSTON 5, BOSTON 4. Houston AB R H BI Avg. Boston AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

OAKLAND 1, TORONTO 0. Oakland AB R H BI Avg. Toronto AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

SAN FRANCISCO 3, DETROIT 1. Detroit AB R H BI Avg. San Francisco AB R H BI Avg. Lists players like Stroman, Pineda, etc.

SPORTS

MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/SPORTS



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

THE RAMS AND COWBOYS line up in the new kickoff formation in their preseason opener. The revamped format is designed to make it safer for players.

New rules breathe life into kickoffs

Players, coaches, officials, fans must be quick studies to understand NFL's makeover

SAM FARMER
ON THE NFL

To get up to speed on the dramatic change to NFL kickoffs this season, everyone is in for an education — players, coaches, officials and millions of fans.

With that in mind, “Thursday Night Football” executive producer Fred Gaudelli has gone back to campus.

In advance of an Aug. 22 preseason game between Indianapolis and Cincinnati, Gaudelli has arranged for a high school football team to walk through the various formations and possibilities of the new kickoff in order to get the best camera angles.

“We sat down and drew up a coverage plan,” said Gaudelli, who was working with director Pierre Moossa and producer Mark Teitelman. “We had one way of covering conventional kickoffs. So we’re going to have a totally different way of covering this kickoff. We’re trying to plan for all eventualities. So we’re bringing in a high school team to mimic the kickoffs so we can shoot it and see what works and what doesn’t.”

No ordinary rules tweak, these new kickoffs might be the biggest on-field rules change since the advent of the forward pass.

The new rules put the majority



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

CHARGERS SAFETY Thomas Harper sacks Seahawks quarterback PJ Walker in the fourth quarter during a preseason game at SoFi Stadium on Saturday. The Chargers lost 16-3.

Bennett finds success in rollouts

Backup quarterback happy to be back as Rams top Dallas 13-12 in preseason opener. **D3**

Mixed results in Chargers' loss

Harbaugh says there's 'a lot of work to be done' on offense but praises defensive unit. **D3**

of opposing players much closer together for kickoffs, so they won't be able to build up a head of steam for those explosive collisions. The ball is kicked from the 35-yard line with 10 kick coverage players assembled on the opposing 40, five on each side of the field.

Those players are within point-blank range of the “set up zone” between the 30- and 35-yard lines, the area where at least nine of the return-team blockers are required to assemble. So almost everyone on the field is gathered in a tight cluster.

That looks strange enough, but it's even weirder that no one in that area is allowed to move until the kicked ball either hits the ground or is touched by a returner inside the 20.

Old kickoffs looked like cars barreling toward each other in a destruction derby. The new version is like a movie shoot with everyone frozen in place until the director yells, “Action!”

“Millions of people are going to turn on the TV and say, ‘What the heck is this?’” said New Orleans Saints special teams coordinator Darren Rizzi, who was instrumental in the design and implementation of the rules change.

The adjustment is to make kickoffs safer and breathe new life into a play that essentially had

[See Kickoffs, D3]



THE DODGERS' AMED ROSARIO slides under a high throw to the Pirates' Isiah Kiner-Falefa for a stolen base in the first inning Sunday.

JAYNE KAMIN-ONCEA Associated Press

Rally rescues Dodgers but injured Ryan out for season

Teoscar Hernández's walk-off single in 10th lifts L.A. after it learns fate of rookie pitcher.

BY JACK HARRIS

The Dodgers bypassed the easy route to victory on Sunday afternoon.

Instead, they took a more dramatic path to a 6-5 extra-innings win against the Pittsburgh Pirates.

After leading by four runs early, then squandering the lead behind poor situational hitting and an eighth-inning blunder from the bullpen, the Dodgers regrouped, erased a one-run deficit in the 10th inning on Kiké Hernández's leadoff double, then finally prevailed on

Teoscar Hernández's walk-off single — securing a weekend series sweep over the Pirates to grow their narrow National League West lead back to 3½ games.

The Dodgers took their four-run lead in the first two innings, scoring twice in the opening frame on a double from slumping catcher Will Smith (his first extra-base hit since July 14) and single from Amed Rosario, before doubling the advantage on Teoscar Hernández's two-run double in the second.

From there, however, they squandered opportunity after opportunity.

Rosario was caught stealing to end the third. Shohei Ohtani and Teoscar Hernández stranded two runners in scoring position in the fourth. Walks from Freddie Freeman and

Miguel Rojas were wasted in the fifth. A two-out Ohtani triple in the sixth led to nothing, as well.

By that point, the Pirates had gotten back in the game on Andrew McCutchen's first home run of the game, a two-run blast off Tyler Glasnow in the third.

And while Glasnow (seven innings, two runs, four strikeouts) held the score there, left-handed reliever Anthony Banda was ambushed in the eighth. Michael A. Taylor legged out a leadoff infield single. Then McCutchen deposited a dead-red fastball into the left-field pavilion, giving his dugout a LeBron-esque shoulder shrug before rounding the bases.

The Dodgers went behind 5-4 in the top of the 10th, [See Dodgers, D7]

SPORTS EXTRA

A TIMES E-NEWSPAPER EXCLUSIVE :: MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2024

UCLA TAKEAWAYS

Garbers is clearly lead slinger of the group

By BEN BOLCH

It didn't matter that this was just a practice in the early stages of preseason training camp, or that it was UCLA's third-string offense going against the third-string defense.

Before the final snap Saturday morning, with the score tied in a competition between the opposing sides, the defensive players watching from the sideline hopped and hooted in anticipation.

Buoyed by his teammates, freshman linebacker Ty Lee surged into the backfield and blew up the play, causing the rest of the defense to converge around him in celebration.

Final score: Defense 52, Offense 51.

A few minutes later, tight end Moliki Matavao revealed the team's ultimate motivation.

"Our thing is, we're going to the Big Ten championship," Matavao said. "That's our goal."

That would be quite the story for a program that has not won a conference championship since coach DeShaun Foster's freshman season in 1998. Can the Bruins get there? Here are five takeaways from Saturday's practice that was open to fans and the media:

Garbers looks like a top-tier quarterback

If there was one player who looked locked in on every play, it was Ethan Garbers.

The redshirt senior made more good throws than the rest of the quarterback group combined, connecting with Matavao, Titus Mokiio-Atimalala, Michael Churich and Rico Flores Jr. for touchdowns worthy of any highlight reel.

"Ethan's the one," Foster said. "He's the best QB. You guys are watching him, he's spinning it pretty well right now. His leadership has really grown and he's just taking on the role of being QB1."

Matavao said Garbers embodied the team's mantra of "Do more" by leading summer workouts, ensuring that everyone knew the plays and perfected the timing on their routes.

"Ethan makes sure that we know we always got to do more — meet up in the meeting rooms and all that," Matavao said, "so I think that's kind of a testament to who we are as an offense right now."

Offensive line withstood a small but scary injury

Visions of a 2-10 season might have flitted through some fans' heads when right tackle Garrett DiGiorgio sustained a left ankle injury and had to be helped to a medi-



RIC TAPIA Getty Images

IN ADDITION to making several highlight throws in training camp, Ethan Garbers also impressed teammates with his leadership.

cal shed.

DiGiorgio later emerged with the ankle taped and ran a few sprints to ensure he was OK. Redshirt sophomore Niki Prongos replaced DiGiorgio for the rest of the practice.

"I know if that was a game," Foster said, "Garrett probably would have come back, but it was good to get these young guys some reps."

Redshirt sophomore center Sam Yoon also played a significant number of snaps with presumed starter Josh Carlin sidelined during team periods for unspecified reasons.

Earlier in the practice, it appeared that the first-string offensive line consisted of DiGiorgio at right tackle, Alani Makihele at right guard, Carlin at center, Spencer Holstege at left guard and Reuben Unije at left tackle.

Pass rush remains a major work in progress

Life after Laiatu Latu is not go-

ing to be easy for UCLA's defense. There's juggling at edge rusher as the Bruins attempt to find the best way to pressure the quarterback.

As of now, the first-string edge rushers appear to be Jacob Busic and Devin Aupiu, with Drew Tuazama and Grant Buckey backing them up. Tuazama, a transfer from South Carolina, made one of the best plays of the practice when he burst into the backfield to make backup quarterback Justyn Martin force a throw that fell incomplete.

While coaches have long talked of using linebacker Oluwafemi Oladejo in a hybrid role that also allowed him to rush the quarterback, it was linebacker Kain Medrano who performed in that capacity Saturday. Interestingly, projected edge rusher Collins Acheamong mostly played interior defensive line.

Foster said Cherif Seye, a highly touted edge rusher from Florida A&M, continues to round into form before being cleared to fully

practice.

TJ Harden is back

After looking slow and unsteady during spring practices, UCLA's presumed top running back, TJ Harden, has displayed more of his usual burst during the first two weeks of fall camp.

Part of his progression, Foster said, can be attributed to dropping some weight, and another part to learning new offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy's playbook.

"He looks more explosive because he knows the plays a little bit more, you know what I mean?" Foster said.

"When you're thinking and going, it's kind of different and kind of hard. So, I think he's a little bit more comfortable with the offense."

Keegan Jones, who appeared to be pushing Harden for the starting role in the spring, also made several nice plays. Anthony Frias II, a transfer from Kansas State, did not make much of an impression in

his limited carries. The Bruins are still waiting for Jalen Berger, a transfer from Michigan State, to work his way into shape before making his debut in team periods.

Interior defensive line looks Big Ten-ready

Where's the beef?

Check defensive tackles Jay Toia and Keanu Williams. While Toia is FDA-certified to eat whatever he wants at 6 feet 3 and 325 pounds, Williams isn't missing many meals either at 6 foot 5 and 310.

These guys make anyone think twice about running up the middle, possessing the size and skill to stop even the Big Ten's burliest tailbacks.

Second-stringers Siale Taupaki and Sitiveni Havili Kaufusi also regularly clogged things up during practice, giving the Bruins reason to believe their opponents won't be able to make much of a run for it this season.

Evolution of Pepe just in time to help USC shape up for Big Ten

By RYAN KARTJE

His physical transformation, spanning four years at USC, may not have been the stuff of Instagram thirst traps. His shirtless before-and-after shots weren't shared by USC's social team this summer, such as some of his more trim teammates whose stunning body fat percentages lingered somewhere in the single digits.

But when Lincoln Riley looks at Kobe Pepe today, USC's coach sees an entirely different defensive tackle than the one he first met in 2021.

"He's just totally changed his body," Riley said of the 315-pound redshirt senior. "He's one of the ones that I'm most proud of from where he was a couple of years ago till now."

Those changes couldn't come at a better time for USC, which has made a point to beef up its defensive interior heading into the Big Ten. Its new scheme under defensive coordinator D'Anton Lynn also puts a premium on bigger defensive tackles, leaving USC desperate this fall for any capable — and sizable — defensive tackles who can plug holes up front.

Pepe, as one of just three players pushing 300 pounds on USC's defense, is among the few hefty options able to naturally fill that void

at nose tackle. All-conference stalwart Bear Alexander — at 315 pounds — is locked into one interior spot, while Carlon Jones, a 310-pound freshman, has turned heads early despite just being cleared this week for full contact. Sophomore Elijah Hughes (290), Wyoming graduate transfer Gavin Meyer (290), Vanderbilt transfer Nate Clifton (295) and freshman Jide Abasiri (290) should also rotate in on the interior.

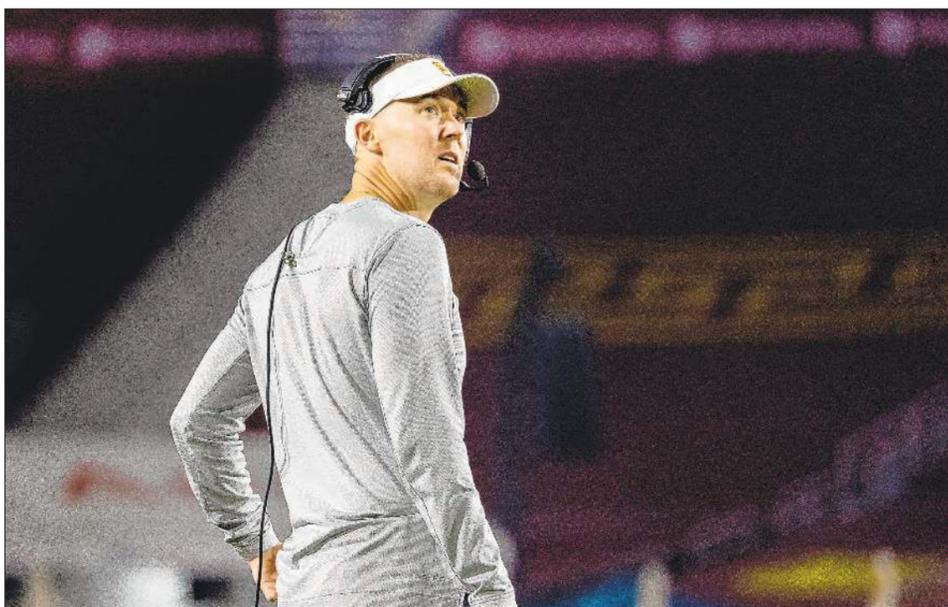
None, in Riley's estimation, have made changes as stark as Pepe. When Riley first took the USC job in 2021, he had serious doubts Pepe would stay on the team.

"I just didn't know if he was going to be one of the ones that were here that were going to survive, or that were going to kinda just, float away," Riley said. "I mean, he was easily the most out-of-shape player on this roster."

Riley didn't mince words with him at the time.

"He told me straight up, 'If you don't do these things, you're not going to fit,'" Pepe recalled.

He promised Riley that he would make a change. But the switch didn't just flip right away. Pepe appeared in two games as a freshman, then missed his redshirt freshman season because of injury. He suited up for just a single game as a redshirt sophomore in 2022,



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

LINCOLN RILEY and his staff have emphasized more strength and size on the defensive interior.

Riley's first season.

That December, he decided to enter the transfer portal. Then-defensive coordinator Alex Grinch was trying to cut significant weight on the defensive front, for the purpose of speeding up the group. Pepe, who had been dealing with injuries, struggled to keep up. He wondered if there was a better fit elsewhere.

Another conversation with Riley convinced him to stay. Then, Pepe said, support from defensive line coach Shaun Nua helped get him finally get on the right track.

"Coach Nua was my rock, my guy giving me motivation, teaching me how to better myself," Pepe said.

Bennie Wylie, USC's strength and conditioning coach, got in Pepe's ear, pushing him to work harder in practice and training.

The turning point, Pepe said, came this past offseason. Now another assistant, new defensive line coach Eric Henderson, was on his case too. Henderson drilled into him how important his role could be on USC's defense, if he could only rise to the occasion.

He should get his chance to prove that along USC's front this season, if only out of necessity. Nua acknowledged Wednesday that Pepe still struggles, at times, to bring consistent effort.

"Kobe, bring the friggin fire, bring the energy — that's some-

thing he has to understand," Nua said. "Sometimes he has great days, but I'm like, 'You've got to have elite days every day.' To take his game to the next level, you're just not a big nose. We expect you to be extra."

Size has never been the problem for Pepe. But now, after four years of finding his way, the redshirt senior is feeling much better than he ever has. He's more comfortable in the playbook — and more comfortable in his own skin.

He thinks back to that first conversation he had with Riley and the changes the coach told him he needed to make to stay at USC.

Pepe smiles. "And that's what I did," he said. "I'm still here."

latimes.com/sports

BONUS COVERAGE

Go to our website for takeaways from The Times' staff on your favorite home teams at latimes.com/sports.



THE SPORTS REPORT

Sign up for our daily sports newsletter at latimes.com/newsletters/sports-report.

STAY CONNECTED

■ On Instagram @latimes_sports
■ On X @latimesports

PARIS  OLYMPICS

TEAM USA celebrates on the pit at the Stade de France during the closing ceremony of the Paris Summer Olympics. The Americans won 126 medals, 40 of them gold. Photographs by WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

THE CITY OF HIGHLIGHTS

After two weeks of stellar clashes, Paris says *au revoir* at a beaming closing ceremony



SWISS PIANIST Alain Roche performs "Hymn To Apollo." Acrobats hung from giant wheels that rolled across a futuristic stage as scenes of past Olympics flickered up from the floor.



PERFORMERS cartwheeled and danced, and a shimmering, spiny figure, the "Golden Voyager," descended from the sky.



THE FRENCH indie rock band Phoenix, from Versailles, was one of the musical performers at the closing extravaganza.



FIREWORKS fly at the Stade de France, where many track records were set, including by Americans Cole Hocker and Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone.



THE CEREMONY was so very French, to the point that when workers arrived with leaf blowers, it was hard to tell whether they were part of the rehearsal.

ENTERTAINMENT

MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/ENTERTAINMENT

MOVIE REVIEW

'It Ends With Us' bumbles the book

Blake Lively leads a romance-drama that blurs some of its lines about domestic abuse.

By KATIE WALSH

To understand the new Blake Lively-starring romantic melodrama "It Ends With Us" is to understand that it exists in context: the context of the current landscape of the publishing industry, which is dominated by female authors and consumers. This understanding explains the film's existence, as it serves an audience that is often overlooked in today's film market, and sports extensive name recognition.

The source text of "It Ends With Us" (adapted for the screen by Christy Hall) is the massively successful 2016 novel by Colleen Hoover, an author who started out self-publishing her own books. They became so popular on Kindle Unlimited that she made it to the New York Times bestseller list on her own before she was picked up by Atria Books, a division of Simon & Schuster.

"It Ends With Us" is a cathartic personal story for Hoover, based on family experience, about a woman, Lily (played in the film by Lively) overcoming a cycle of domestic abuse, which she witnessed in her parents' marriage and later experiences herself in a toxic relationship.

The story follows Lily Bloom, a young woman living in Boston, who has dreams of opening up her own flower shop (yes, it is called "Lily Bloom's"). The film opens at the funeral of her father (Kevin McKidd), at which Lily struggles to name even a few things she loved and respected about him. While processing her complex feelings on a rooftop patio at night, she encounters a hunky neurosurgeon with a temper, Ryle (Justin Baldoni).

Running into each other [See 'It Ends,' E3]



NICOLE RIVELLI Sony Pictures LIVELY with Justin Baldoni, who also directs.



ISAAC Psalm Escoto relaxes before first solo show, "Gas Station Dinner," at Jeffrey Deitch gallery.

ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

DE LOS

In his realm of grit and humor

Isaac Psalm Escoto has mined the intersection of graffiti and gallery. His recent show confirms his rising star.

By CERYS DAVIES

My car got impounded again. I am so sorry I'm late," said Isaac Psalm Escoto, practically running into Jeffrey Deitch, a contemporary art gallery on Santa Monica Boulevard, energy drink in hand.

It was the second night in a row that his 2006 Scion xA had gotten towed. Escoto, also known by the graffiti alias Sickid, was on a tight deadline to finish the final installment in his first solo exhibition, "Gas Station Dinner." From the crevice of his ear to the shoelaces on his Converse sneakers, he was covered in unintentional paint splatters.

The unfinished piece is a 20-by-60-foot canvas wall that mimics a billboard — a size the graffiti artist is well acquainted with. The painting depicts a city-

scape that brings together imagery from Escoto's artistic world of dysfunction. A massive woman is sprawled across the horizon. Her body is framed by warped skyscrapers branded with Cup Noodles, the Playboy Bunny, Western Exterminators' mascot, Mr. Little, and a blimp reading, "Ice Cube's a Pimp." Below the woman, the chaos of the city ensues, including depictions of a car accident, a police chase, a wounded skater, a strip of discount stores and a piano-playing duo. The spray-painted mural is complete with the religious imagery of a crucifix and several battling angels and devils wreaking havoc. All of Escoto's work is set in this realm of mischief and humor.

Inspired by his diet of 7-Eleven hot dogs and taquitos, the 25-year-old painter came upon the name "Gas Station Dinner" as both a [See Escoto, E2]

Disney projects include familiar faces

At D23 expo, the studio promotes a slew of upcoming sequels and spinoffs.

By TRACY BROWN

If there's one thing Disney knows how to do, it's put on a show.

The various arms of Walt Disney Studios — including Disney Animation, Pixar, Lucasfilm and Marvel Studios — shared the giant spotlight at the Honda Center in Anaheim on Friday for a three-hour presentation to promote each of its upcoming films and television series. One of the marquee events of this year's D23 fan event, the Disney Entertainment Showcase wowed its audience with trailers, first-look footage, concept art, musical performances, pyrotechnics and even an interactive magic trick.

Walt Disney Co.'s Chief Executive Bob Iger, noting it was his first D23 expo in five years, received a rock star welcome as he took the stage to get the evening started.

"I was going to say good evening and thank you for that warm welcome, but that was more than a warm welcome," said Iger to the Disney faithful who greeted him with enthusiastic cheers and a standing ovation.

Among the filmmakers and actors tapped to tease their future projects were "Avatar's" James Cameron, "Moana 2's" Auli'i Cravalho and Dwayne Johnson, "Andor's" Diego Luna, "Ironheart's" Ryan Coogler, "Freaky Friday" duo Jamie Lee Curtis and Lindsay Lohan and "Tron's" Jeff Bridges.

Here are the biggest takeaways from Disney's studios showcase.

DISNEY CONTINUES TO DIP INTO ITS VAULT

Sequels, threequels and spinoffs seems to be the name of Disney's current game.

The show kicked off with Cravalho performing "We're Back," a song from the upcoming "Moana 2," which reunites the film's eponymous hero with the demigod Maui for a new adventure. Disney Animation's portion of the presentation also included Ginnifer Goodwin teasing "Zootopia 2" and the studio's chief creative officer Jennifer Lee sharing news [See D23, E6]

COMMENTARY

Rekindling that love affair with the Olympics

U.S. interest took a hit during delayed Tokyo Summer Games. Paris brought it back again.

By MEREDITH BLAKE AND TRACY BROWN

It seems like only yesterday that a robotic disco horse was galloping down the Seine and a chorus of decapitated Marie Antoinettes were kicking off the Paris Games in a rain-soaked fever dream of an opening ceremony. And now, with Sunday's closing ceremony, it's all over. And what a smashing success it turned out to be. Despite safety concerns that were amplified by sabotage of the country's high-speed rail lines as the Games were about to begin and political turmoil in France, the competition proceeded without incident.



NOAH LYLES celebrates win in the 100 meter finals Aug. 4 in Paris. A few days later, he ran the 200 meter race with COVID and needed medical help afterward.

WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

From a ratings perspective alone, Paris 2024 was a success. U.S. viewership was way up compared with Tokyo in 2021, an event plagued by COVID delays, massive time differences and a creepy lack of spectators at most events. Over the first nine days of the Paris Olympics, an average of 32.6 million people tuned into coverage across NBC Universal platforms, including NBC and Peacock, a 77% uptick from the last Summer Games.

These Olympics offered plenty of gripping human drama — uplifting stories, heartbreaking disappointments and photo finishes — that made them compelling even to millions of people who don't usually consume hour after hour of televised sports. Athletic superstars like Simone Biles, Katie Ledecky and Noah Lyles all lived up to the hype, turning [See Olympics, E6]



HELEN QUACH De Los; photo from Univision

Cumbia giants get their due

Los Angeles Azules will receive a Hispanic Heritage Award and also perform at the ceremony Sept. 5. E2

Don't forget your popcorn

Inspid "Borderlands," revealing "Good One" and heart-tugging "Daughters" face reviewers' scrutiny. E3

Comics E4-5
Puzzles E5

Singing praises of Los Angeles Azules

Hispanic Heritage Awards to salute the beloved Mexican band in September.

By ANDREA FLORES

Los Angeles Azules have forged their path across generations of cumbia listeners, from Mexico City's Izta-palapa to the world. Now they are set to receive the 2024 Hispanic Heritage Award and perform at the 37th Hispanic Heritage Awards in Washington on Sept. 5.

"We are very grateful to the Hispanic Heritage Awards for this great recognition of our long artistic career," said co-founding member Elías Mejía Avante in a statement. "We also want to thank all our follow-

ers and those who have supported us throughout this time."

The event, known as "America's Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration," is presented by the Hispanic Heritage Foundation and will be broadcast Sept. 27 on PBS. Other honorees include fashion designer Carolina Herrera, Beautyblender creator Rea Ann Silva and NBA star Carmelo Anthony.

"Los Angeles Azules have literally moved audiences around the world through their music and messages for decades," said Jose Antonio Tijerino, the foundation's president and CEO. "We are thrilled to honor this remarkable group of musical giants with our arts award, and we look forward to sharing our collective cultural pride, achievement and vision, along with the

other honorees."

Formed by the Mejía Avante siblings in the late 1970s, the Mexican band has been performing for nearly half a century. In 1997, it broke into the Latin music mainstream with its romantic ballad "Cómo Te Voy a Olvidar," peaking at No. 7 on the Billboard Hot Latin Songs chart.

With more than 19 million monthly Spotify listeners, the bandmates are known for experimenting with cumbias sonideras, a synthesizer-heavy subgenre and have also created symphonic cumbias that incorporate classical orchestra instrumentation.

Over the last decade, the "Entrega De Amor" singers have re-recorded many of their popular hits with contemporary vocalists including Natalia Lafourcade and Pepe Aguilar. In 2019, the



MARTA LAVANDIER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES AZULES, shown receiving the Artistic Trajectory Award at the Latin Billboard Awards in 2023, will be honored with a Hispanic Heritage Award.

group landed its first No. 1 in 19 years on the Regional Mexican chart with "Nunca Es Suficiente," featuring Lafourcade. Los Angeles Azules are also the first Mexican group in the YouTube "Billion Views Club," with two videos reaching more than 1 billion views: "Mis Sentimientos," featuring Xi-

mena Sariñana (1.2 billion), and "Nunca Es Suficiente," with Lafourcade (2 billion).

The band has received multiple Grammy and Latin Grammy nominations, including recognition for "Cumbia del Corazón" for best cumbia/vallenato album, which included collaborations with Nicki Nic-

ole, Carlos Vives, Juanes and others. The group also received a Billboard lifetime achievement award.

Following the foundation's recognition during Hispanic Heritage Month, the band will also be honored later this year for its lifetime achievements at the 2024 Latin Grammys.



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

ISAAC Psalm Escoto, a.k.a. Sickid, pauses during the installation of his show at Jeffrey Deitch gallery.

He adopted the practice at age 14, spending weeknights sneaking out at all hours to draw his characters around town.

"I was lucky enough to have supportive older siblings who took me to the places that were gateway drugs to a deeper art experience," said Escoto.

That included Melted Comics, a beloved, now closed comic shop in West Hollywood that specialized in all things comedy and collectibles. When he entered the storefront, everything changed for him. He equates the experience to entering an art museum for the first time; it was an introduction to a whole new world where he could blend the grit of graffiti with the lively spirit of comics.

"Graffiti is an empowering act because it's so lawless, and there are consequences to it. So maybe it's lawful. I don't know," Escoto said. "It puts my brain in a place where I put out only images I want to."

The urgency of graffiti helped him commit to imagery and build confidence as an artist. Saving his "weirder subject matter" for the studio, he found that in the streets he didn't need to worry about perfection.

"What matters most is what you're trying to come across in a piece. It's all about your intention behind it and how are you trying to communicate that," Escoto adds.

The namesake and owner of the gallery, Jeffrey Deitch, first discovered a Sickid billboard while driving on the 101 Freeway. Attracted by the eye-catching imagery, he knew he had to meet the artist.

"Isaac is painting a different kind of L.A. that we all know. It's those little convenience stores inside gas stations, the rack of products in car washes and the interior of liquor stores," said Deitch. "He introduces us to that world which we all know but we haven't seen yet in art. It's a very interesting thing how he captures this essential aspect of contemporary Los Angeles."

As Escoto enters his mid-20s, he's realized that the true theme of his work is rooted in the struggles that come with adulthood and wanting to return to a child-like place of comfortability.

"A lot of pieces are not biographical but I'm projecting myself into a lot of my subject matter. I live vicariously through my figures, and that's the basis of the painting," said Escoto. "I'm depicting the struggles and insecurities of growing up and trying to find yourself through dysfunction."

Hence the need for gas station dinners.

"As I was sketching the mural with the big extension roller with no ladder, an extreme sense of gratitude came over me, like this is what I would do down the street on a billboard," Escoto said. "I'm using the same hand, and it's like I'm looking up at a black billboard, but I'm on the inside of Jeffrey Deitch."

Amid his realm of grit and humor

[Escoto, from E1] joke and a tribute to the people in his life who have stuck by him and his art. Walking the line between hyper-realism and hyperbole, his ambiguous reality is inhabited by characters with brown skin, pointy eyeballs, rosy cheeks and rug-burned knees.

Escoto's work in the show, which closed Saturday, also included canvases featuring characters in acts of misconduct. They are pictured punching the screen of a Taco Bell drive-

through menu, chainsawing an ankle monitor and pointing a gun from behind the counter of a convenience store. No matter how outrageous the characters' behavior, the artist grounds them in familiar settings such as a bedroom, a grocery store and a gas station bathroom.

Escoto created a series of smaller-scale works that explore points of view within the context of his world. In some paintings, viewers are looking at the world through a microwave door, a fishbowl or a security camera lens.

"I'm inspired a lot by my viewing history of different forms of media. I'll take something that was super impactful, like '90s anime that inspired 'The Matrix' and 'Blade Runner.' Those kinds of things depict cities with a dystopian tone and mix it with culturally rich, diverse and funny imagery," Escoto said. "I look to Eastern ways of shelling futuristic cities and landscapes and fuse them with my ideas of modern Los Angeles lifestyle."

The show is a product of

Escoto's first official practice at Tlaloc Studios, where he focused on painting. Before landing a coveted spot at the artist-run studio in South Central L.A., he worked out of a space he created within his mother's walk-in closet. Over the last three years, Ozzie Juarez, founder of Tlaloc Studios and a fellow artist, has witnessed Escoto transition to bigger-scale works and continuously introduce new techniques.

"When I look at [Escoto's] paintings, I see an artist that's enjoying himself while making work," said Juarez. "The amount of work he puts in tiny sections throughout his paintings is ridiculous. It's those details that really give you an insight of who Isaac is, what his personality is like and, above all, what it's like to grow up as Latino in Los Angeles."

Escoto's parents emigrated from Mexico and Guatemala. As he reflects on his childhood in East Hollywood, he says the neighborhood helped form his "opinions and viewpoints."

The works included in "Gas Station Dinner" showcase Escoto's ability to flesh out his world, where "uncommonality becomes the mundane" and his devious characters are free to run amok.

"It's a city that's shaped by other cultures from other countries and by the immigrant lifestyle. That's kind of how I view my city," Escoto said. As he says "my city," he lets out a laugh.

Alongside the inventive cityscape, Escoto's work is deeply rooted in humor. Making fun of modernity while portraying absurdity is a balance he is well acquainted with. In the painting where a woman aims a

gun from behind a convenience store counter, she is surrounded by SpongeBob SquarePants bongs, a wall of sex pills and potato chip bags with rappers' faces on them.

"It's not necessarily putting a bow on it or trying to romanticize a delinquency or dysfunction. Instead, I'm just putting out an image saying, 'This is reality, and it's not necessarily good or bad,'" said Escoto.

Even before Escoto's first major gallery exhibition, Los Angeles was already well acquainted with his work. Be-

'A lot of pieces are not biographical but I'm projecting myself into ... my subject matter. I live vicariously through my figures.'

— ISAAC PSALM ESCOTO, on his artwork

fore he put his characters on canvases, he spent years painting them all over the city under the guise of Sickid. Instead of tagging his name like other graffiti artists, he is known for creating intricate scenes on billboards, the sides of buildings, bus stops and abandoned storefronts.

From a red devil baby urinating on an obstructed wall in Chinatown to outlandish depictions of *luchadores*, police officers and angels on an Echo Park billboard, Escoto first found his artistic style as a graffiti-addicted teenager.

LAEMMLE™ Info Line 310.478.3836		NOT AFRAID OF SUBTITLES www.LAEMMLE.com	
ROYAL 11523 Santa Monica Blvd. West L.A. CLOSE TO YOU R 7:00 PM SIROCCO AND THE KINGDOM OF THE WINDS 1:00 3:10 5:15 7:30 WIDOW CLICQUOT R 5:15 PM THE CONVERSATION PG 1:20 4:10 MODERNISM, INC.: THE ELIOT NOYES DESIGN STORY 1:00 3:10 7:30	TOWN CENTER 17200 Ventura Blvd. Encino DANCE FIRST 1:30 7:30 IT ENDS WITH US PG-13 1:00 4:00 7:00 THE INSTIGATORS R 1:20 4:10 7:20 WIDOW CLICQUOT R 4:30 PM FLY ME TO THE MOON PG-13 1:00 PM THELMA PG-13 4:20 PM THE CONVERSATION PG 1:10 4:10 7:10 BREAKING BOUNDARIES 7:00 PM	GLENDALE 207 N. Maryland Ave Glendale CUCKOO R 1:20 4:30 7:30 KNEECAP R 4:20 PM DEADPOOL & WOLVERINE R 1:00 4:00 7:00 THELMA PG-13 1:30 PM THE CONVERSATION PG 1:10 4:10 7:10 BREAKING BOUNDARIES 7:00 PM MADE IN ENGLAND 1:00 4:00 SEBASTIANE NR 7:10 PM SHORT FILM PROGRAM PLAY AGAIN FINAL: 6:45 PM SHORT FILM PROGRAM I AM READY WARDEN: 3:20 PM	NoHo 7 5240 Lankershim Blvd. No. Hollywood BORDERLANDS PG-13 1:20 4:20 7:20 CUCKOO R 1:30 4:30 7:30 IT ENDS WITH US PG-13 1:00 4:05 7:10 THE INSTIGATORS R 1:15 4:10 TRAP PG-13 1:10 4:00 7:00 DEADPOOL & WOLVERINE R 1:00 4:00 7:00 THE LONG WALK OF CARLOS GUERRERO 1:20 4:20 7:10 CLAREMONT 450 W. 2nd Street Claremont LAWRENCE OF ARABIA PG 7:00 PM BORDERLANDS PG-13 1:20 4:20 7:20 IT ENDS WITH US PG-13 1:00 4:05 7:10 HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON PG 1:00 3:10 HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON PG 5:15 7:30 TRAP PG-13 1:30 4:30 TRAP PG-13 7:20 PM DEADPOOL & WOLVERINE R 1:10 4:10 7:10 BREAKING BOUNDARIES 7:00 PM
MONICA 1332 Second Street Santa Monica CUCKOO R 1:30 4:30 7:30 DANCE FIRST 1:10 4:10 7:00 IT ENDS WITH US PG-13 1:00 4:00 7:00 KNEECAP R 1:15 4:15 7:15 THE INSTIGATORS R 1:00 4:00 BREAKING BOUNDARIES 7:00 PM FOUR SOULS OF COYOTE 1:20 4:20 7:20	NEWHALL 22500 Lyons Ave. Santa Clarita LAWRENCE OF ARABIA PG 7:00 PM BORDERLANDS PG-13 1:20 4:20 7:20 CUCKOO R 1:30 4:30 7:30 IT ENDS WITH US PG-13 1:00 4:05 7:10 HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON PG 12:55 3:05 5:15 7:30 TRAP PG-13 1:20 4:20 7:10 DEADPOOL & WOLVERINE R 1:00 4:00 7:00 TWISTERS PG-13 1:10 4:00 7:00		

FOR 8/12/2024 ONLY

Drama blurs lines about abuse

['It Ends,' from E1] months later, they fall into a relationship, which is complicated by yet another coincidental run-in with Lily's first love, Atlas (Brandon Sklenar), the also-hunky chef and owner of a favorite restaurant, whom Lily has not seen since high school. Ryle's jealousy toward Atlas escalates the increasing volatility of his relationship with Lily, which has started to result in violence and injury, whether accidental or not.

For all the limitations of Hoover's novel, with its juvenile writing style and cringe-worthy prose, it's at least clear-eyed about the realities of intimate-partner violence. Lily in the book is young (her early 20s) and an often irritatingly immature character, but her eyes are at least open to what's happening in her relationship. The Lily of the movie reads older and cooler; the dialogue, sharpened by Hall, is much funnier. But in the film, Lily is delusional about her relationship and the movie blurs the lines of the abuse for too long to a frustrating degree that essentially robs our hero of her agency, and elides some of Ryle's obvious manipulation.

Of note here is that Baldoni, playing the abusive Ryle, is also the film's director. Perhaps it was in the screenwriting or a top-down decision based on test screenings and audience reaction, but there is a clear choice made to conceal Ryle's true nature, revealing his intentions late in the film, in a montage that does not square with how the events proceed in Hoover's telling. Perhaps this decision was made so that the audience (who may not have read the book) might not turn on his character too soon.

Other small changes alleviate Ryle of some of his darker actions. Choices to condense and omit in the process of adaptation are always necessary, but the ones made for "It Ends With Us" result in Lily, though seemingly more mature and intelligent, becoming a character who is helpless, complicit and confused, which is troubling for this topic.

Baldoni's stylistic approach to crafting Hoover's world is to offer the romantic escapist fantasy inherent to the literary and cinematic genre: elaborate costume and production design, luxe interiors, a Boston where it mysteriously never snows, extensive courtship and seduction montages set to indie ballads. But there are also harsh realities that the story must face, and gilding Lily's experience by softening the trauma doesn't serve the harsh truths that Hoover unearthed in her book, which clearly connected with a large female readership.

"It Ends With Us" continues the tradition of "women's pictures" that were an essential part of Hollywood film production in the 1940s — Bette Davis could have starred in a version of this some 80 years ago. But women's pictures also have to express a stark reality that unfortunately gets muddled here, in a bungled adaptation that is at once too close and too far from its source.

Walsh is a Tribune News Service film critic.



JOJO WHILDEN Sony Pictures
BLAKE LIVELY stars as florist Lily Bloom.

'It Ends With Us'

Rated PG-13, for domestic violence, sexual content and some strong language
Running time: 2 hours, 10 minutes
Playing: In wide release

MOVIE REVIEW

Boring ride through 'Borderlands'

The star-studded cast in this game-to-screen misfire is wasted amid jumble of sci-fi tropes.

BY CARLOS AGUILAR

In writer-director Eli Roth's atrociously uninspired sci-fi fantasy escapade "Borderlands," Claptrap, an acerbic droid voiced by Jack Black, calls to mind the humor of "Mystery Science Theater 3000," the parody TV show in which a group of sentient robots comment on unintentionally risible B-movies.

Black's similarly acid quips — aimed at the story's pack of misfit protagonists searching for "keys" to open an ancient trove of knowledge — are the only morsels of discernible entertainment in this stillborn adaptation of the first-person-shooter video game, tolerable only in brief instances.

An insipid mishmash of trite genre tropes, "Borderlands" is devoid of any real edge. At every turn it comes off desperate to tap into the corporate-approved cynicism that has helped "The Suicide Squad" and more recently "Deadpool & Wolverine" seem "cool." But with a PG-13 rating and some of the worst not-even-trying writing of any theatrically released production this year, "Borderlands" feels like an especially boring ride through a barren landscape. It goes from one destination to another, but there's little excitement to be found on the road.

Despite the exposition that Lillith (Cate Blanchett), a planet-hopping bounty hunter, spills throughout



Lionsgate

KEVIN HART, clockwise from left, Jamie Lee Curtis, Florian Munteanu, Cate Blanchett and Ariana Greenblatt portray a pack of misfits in "Borderlands."

the dull adventure, those unfamiliar with the source material still might find themselves confused about how this world operates. Roth and credited co-screenwriter Joe Crombie fail to effectively synthesize the game's lore and the characters' individual histories in a way that can entice the uninitiated.

The plot is set in motion when Atlas (Edgar Ramirez), a stock power-hungry villain with plenty of high-tech weapons, hires ruthless Lillith to track down his bunny ears-wearing teenaged daughter Tina (Ariana Greenblatt) in Pandora, a wasteland. Atlas believes the lab-created Tina is the chosen one to open the portal and unleash the wisdom from a long-gone civilization he plans to use for war. When Lillith, originally from Pandora, reaches the girl without much trouble, Tina already has a pair of guardians — including the

gas-masked brute Krieg (Florian Munteanu).

Among the underwritten characters protecting Tina — all of them with as much depth as a puddle of muddy water after a middling sprinkle — Kevin Hart's soldier, Roland, and Jamie Lee Curtis' scientist, Tannis, are the most surprising for how forgettable they are. Pluck them from the narrative and it'd be difficult to pinpoint why they were there at all.

Meanwhile, Greenblatt's playfully mischievous demeanor as Tina often reads as overacting. Since the production of "Borderlands" experienced numerous setbacks that caused major delays, it's possible these forced scenes were shot long before the young actor appeared as a moody adolescent in Greta Gerwig's "Barbie," a much better showcase of her skills.

Throughout it all, as if battling to emerge from quicksand, Blanchett com-

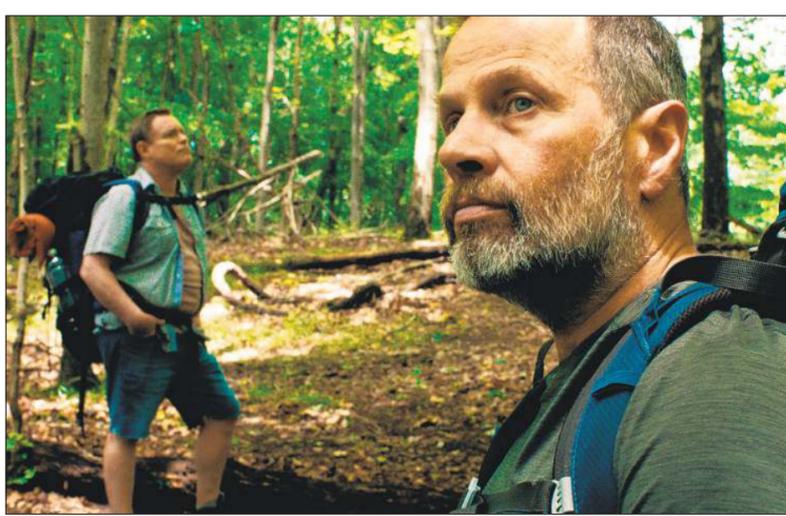
'Borderlands'

Rated: PG-13, for intense sequences of violence and action, language and some suggestive material

Running time: 1 hour, 42 minutes

Playing: In wide release

mits to Lillith's fierce nonchalance. And testament to her regal magnetism, she escapes mostly intact. At one point, a towering Blanchett even flies through the sky with fiery wings suitable for a character from the "X-Men" canon, which one can only hope was more amusing for her to shoot than the movie is to watch. (If every actor has that one entry in their body of work that will forever puzzle fans, this could certainly be Blanchett's.) Mawkish flashbacks to Lillith's late mother



Metrograph Pictures

CHRIS (James Le Gros, right), Matt (Danny McCarthy) butt heads in the film.

MOVIE REVIEW

A hiking trip with Dad and pals. What could go wrong?

Plenty, a teen girl finds in 'Good One,' which takes some unexpected turns.

BY ROBERT ABELE

A woody hike becomes a Petri dish of human nature in "Good One," writer-director India Donaldson's tense, revealing and exquisitely composed feature debut about a 17-year-old at the cusp of adulthood.

In its lived-in quality and gathering churn, "Good One" is a dream of an indie, from the craft in every frame to the humor, epiphanies and mysteries that gird its portraiture.

Its watchful soul is a New York daughter of divorce, Sam (Lily Collias, a real find), who with her remarried architect dad, Chris (James Le Gros), is expecting their excursion to be a backpacking foursome.

But when the teenage son of Dad's oldest pal, Matt (Danny McCarthy), bows out at the last second, making them a trio, Sam finds herself without a peer, a deflation that Collias perfectly conveys without words from the SUV's backseat. Over an endurance test of a weekend, we'll get to know this Mona Lisa-esque face very well as Sam's microexpressions and utterances betray fascinating variations on "How did I get here?"

That's because the trip quickly becomes the Matt and Chris show, a long-run-

'Good One'

Rated: R, for language
Running time: 1 hour, 29 minutes

Playing: Landmark Theatres Sunset, Los Angeles

ning two-hander stuffed with bickering, personality tics and grievances that suggest a friendship of opposites past its sell-by date.

Sam's gently patronizing dad, masterfully rendered by one of our most underappreciated actors (when will Le Gros get his Oscar?), is an uptight, over-organized weekend warrior with little tolerance for his old chum's shambolic quality and self-mythologizing patter.

Matt, meanwhile, is avuncular and parlor-philosophical, but in McCarthy's perfectly captured performance of an ego barely hanging on by some well-chewed fingernails, he can barely hide how depressed he is about a life gone sideways, or how hurt he is by Chris' jabs.

It all leaves Sam in a situation where she's not only a lone target for the pair's "kids today"-style ribbing but also, by turns, a personal assistant, cook, advisor and peacekeeper. (When Sam tends to her period squatting behind a tree, the vibe is that of a worker's ill-timed break.)

A quality getaway with loved ones starts to feel like managing a suffocating situ-

ation. Even her sympathy gets weaponized: When she indulges Matt's harmlessly random musings or laughs with him, you can feel her father's irritation rise.

"Good One" is so expert at tracking a young woman's emotional intelligence — as amusing, precise and patient as a Kelly Reichardt film like "Certain Women" — that when everything shifts, it's a legitimate surprise. Don't call it a twist, though. (No spoilers here.)

It's a built-in hinge, and the melodrama-averse Donaldson treats it as such, letting it open the door for a final act of decision-making and discovery that positions Sam as emerging from this odd, illuminating trip a more self-possessed individual.

So much of this psychologically complex movie's artistry is wonderfully assured, from cinematographer Wilson Cameron's textured intimacy with nature and faces, to the tenderly applied, deceptively varied music.

But what most gives me hope for Donaldson as a filmmaker is how much she cares about the lost magic of scene work, those building blocks of human interaction — movement, composition, dialogue, pacing, depth and, in this case, the gifts of an incredible newcomer in Collias — that fuse us to a movie's internal logic, its intangibles.

"Good One" is as complete a piece of storytelling as you'll see all year. For a pot of frogs coming to a boil, it's a great place to be.

MOVIE REVIEW

Beautiful case for second chances

Doc looks at program that lets incarcerated dads attend dance with their daughters.

BY ROBERT ABELE

When a parent goes to jail, everyone in the family does time. And in Black communities most severely affected by the impersonal whims of the prison industry, a unique program has been fostered, intended for girls seeking a deeper connection to their incarcerated fathers: a date with them at the jail.

The new documentary "Daughters," from directors Natalie Rae and Angela Patton, follows one such Daddy Daughter Dance in Washington, D.C., a carefully arranged night in which orange prison uniforms are swapped for jackets and ties, the jail's decorated gym takes on a prom-like air and dressed-up girls get a few celebratory hours in which their separation anxiety is briefly, movingly set aside.

The film, which focuses on a handful of girls and their dads as the dance looms, is as touching as it sounds — and invariably as sad. It's to the great wisdom of the collaboration between Rae, whose background is directing, and Patton, an activist whose nonprofit prioritizes the futures of Black girls, that while the dance is clearly intended to be positive and inspiring (we're told that 95% of the fathers who participate never go back to jail), the movie isn't afraid to show just how much fragility and uncertainty goes into the buildup and its aftermath.

That commitment to the emotional integrity of a process that might reveal heartache as much as hope keeps "Daughters" from seeming like a commercial, even as it wholeheartedly sells us on the worth of this program.

Your buttons will be pushed when you meet the charming, chatty 5-year-old Aubrey, a math whiz whose joy at numbers is offset by their representing the years her dad, Keith, will be away.

Elsewhere, 10-year-old Santana, who helps her mother raise an infant sibling, is a serious kid with an outer shell hardened by the

are an unsuccessful attempt at building an emotional anchor, coming in too late and with little context.

Light-years away from being so bad that it's good, "Borderlands" lacks a distinct visual aesthetic, even if the costume designing and hairdressing teams seemed to have tried to stay as faithful to the source material as possible. There are holographic masks, giant monsters and a wasteland that looks like a discarded set from the "Mad Max" universe, but cohesiveness is elusive, given our ignorance about why these elements exist and what their purpose is.

As far as the action goes, repetitive shootouts never inspire much of a thrill, but rather call attention to their length and inability to reach a compelling climax. Though competent, the flashy computer-generated effects give the impression of being recycled instead of uniquely designed for this lackluster mélange.

By the time "Borderlands" wraps up with an anticlimactic thud, this intergalactic sludge confirms itself as a waste of resources (reportedly \$115 million) and of everyone's valuable time, not to mention ours. What other projects did the star-studded cast pass on to partake in this misstep?

Near the end of the ordeal, the camera pans slowly to capture the faces of each character after they have completed their mission with a "we did it" attitude that is shamefully unearned. That self-congratulatory cinematic gesture almost feels insulting, when it's the audience who deserves a reassuring pat on the back. They're not always this bad.

weakness of the adults in her life, while 11-year-old Ja'Ana — who doesn't know her dad at all — carries her mother's doubts about his commitment level. And struggling high schooler Raziah has, according to her mother, already expressed worrying thoughts of self-harm.

The dads, required to meet in fatherhood circles led by a supportive coach, are a believably nervous bunch. They reflect honestly on their predicaments and are encouraged to view the dance in terms that prioritize how their daughters need to view them: as potential promise-keepers.

We learn the men's names, but the filmmakers never tell us what they're in for, which feels right — who they are striving to become, as opposed to what they were, defines them for us. In a riskier but effective grace note, interspersed throughout are poetic, home movie-fashioned interludes, scenes of the girls at play that suggest missed experiences.

Unsurprisingly, on the big day, when these spiffed-up fathers wait expectantly for their dates, your throat may not be able to handle the lumps. But while there are hugs, tears, laughs, silly photos and adorable dances, there are also pockets of getting-to-know-you awkwardness and even full-on tension. Rae and Patton, who filmed across years, are attuned enough to the many feelings in play.

"Daughters" doesn't have an obvious ending, and it's in the realities of distance that we come to fully grasp the complexity of the dance, girls and fathers bonding without plexiglass barriers or pricey video calls separating them. To touch, and to be touched, makes "Daughters" an achingly beautiful case for second chances in an isolating, fractured world.

'Daughters'

Rated: PG-13, for some thematic elements and language

Running time: 1 hour, 47 minutes

Playing: Bay Theater, Pacific Palisades; streaming Wednesday on Netflix

COMICS

LA CUCARACHA By Lalo Alcaraz



PICKLES By Brian Crane



CRABGRASS By Tauhid Bondia



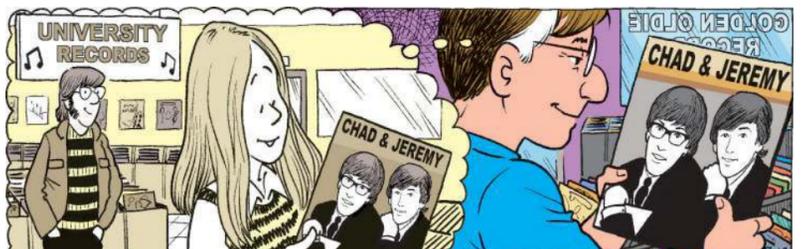
BABY BLUES By Jerry Scott & Rick Kirkman



CANDORVILLE By Darrin Bell



CRANKSHAFT By Tom Batiuk & Chuck Ayers



LOOSE PARTS By Dave Blazek



JUMP START By Robb Armstrong



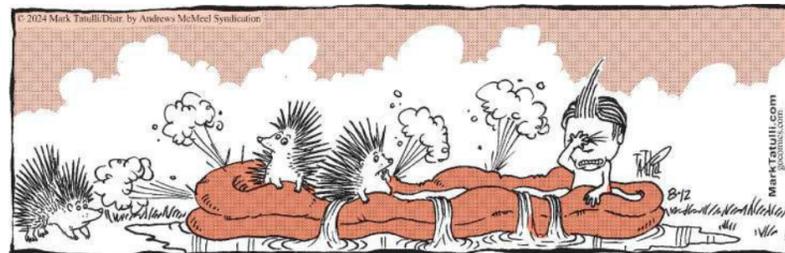
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE By Stephan Pastis



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 Isabella Bannerman



DRABBLE By Kevin Fagan



FRAZZ By Jef Mallett



MUTTS By Patrick McDonnell



NON SEQUITUR By Wiley



PEANUTS By Charles M. Schulz



COMICS

SUDOKU

9x9 Sudoku grid with numbers 7, 8, 2, 1, 3, 3, 1, 5, 6, 7, 2, 7, 9, 4, 8, 2, 8, 9, 4, 6, 9, 3, 6, 6, 5, 8, 2, 7

9x9 Sudoku grid with numbers 6, 4, 6, 5, 6, 4, 2, 3, 3, 3, 1, 5, 3, 1, 5, 1, 6, 4, 3, 2, 5, 1, 5, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 4, 2, 1, 6, 3, 5, 3, 6, 5, 1, 2, 4, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 2, 2, 5, 6, 4, 1, 3

©2024 The Mepham Group. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency. All rights reserved. Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 or 2-by-3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9...

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.

6x6 KenKen puzzle with cages and target numbers: 1-, 2-, 2, 2, 7+, 3-, 2-, 5+, 6x

6x6 KenKen puzzle with cages and target numbers: 5-, 2-, 10x, 1-, 10+, 1-, 11+, 10x, 3, 5-, 5, 1-, 7+, 7+, 11+, 2-, 2, 1-

PREVIOUS ANSWERS grid with numbers 4, 1, 3, 2, 3, 4, 2, 1, 2, 3, 1, 4, 1, 2, 4, 3, 5, 6, 4, 1, 2, 3, 1, 4, 6, 3, 5, 2, 3, 5, 2, 6, 1, 4, 2, 1, 5, 4, 3, 6

HOROSCOPE

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

Aries (March 21-April 19): You're naturally curious, but never so much as when an attractive someone steps into your world with a mystery. Let instinct guide you to pleasure or excitement. Taurus (April 20-May 20): You'll articulate your thoughts and make things happen, all while contributing to a community that shares your values.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Learning what another person likes, wants and needs is a challenge best approached with more curiosity and less ego. Avoid deferring to your own means of expression. Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): Small acts of kindness are so easy, you might consider small acts of self-service. You'll save someone from having to serve you later. Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): The thing that sends exuberance buzzing through you should appear more regularly in your life. It's up to you to initiate this plan. Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You'll come up with an idea that is so stellar, you won't need to sell it. When you talk to the right people, they'll want in right away. Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You're looking out for your friends. If needed, you'll swoop in and save the day. If not, you'll just give your superstar support while looking every bit the part.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): There's competition on the scene, and it's not a bad thing. The stakes seem heightened, amping up a pressure to perform. Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20): Those who respect your arrangements with attendance make you smile. You can't abide people who don't show up where they said they would. Cut them loose. Today's birthday (Aug. 12): It's a year of increased understanding of your processes, talents and purposes. Embracing your true nature will make many areas of life easier to navigate. High-lights: Love in various forms; a financial raise; a monumental gift of comfort and stability that stands the test of time. Scorpio and Sagittarius adore you. Lucky numbers: 3, 13, 24, 1, 29. Mathis writes her column for Creators Syndicate Inc. The horoscope should be read for entertainment.

BRIDGE

BY FRANK STEWART

"My high school teachers said I would never be successful because I procrastinate," Cy the Cynic told me. "I don't know why they would say that," I said, knowing Cy is the world's worst putter-offer. "I told them, 'Just you wait,'" Cy said. Procrastination often serves Cy well — when he waits to draw trumps. In a team match Cy was declarer at four hearts, and West led the queen of spades. Cy won and did not lead a trump. He started a crossruff: ace of diamonds, diamond ruff, spade ruff, A-K of clubs, club ruff, diamond ruff. East overruffed with the 10 and led another spade, but Cy ruffed for his eighth

trick and ruffed another diamond. East overruffed queen and took the ace, but Cy still had one trump in each hand. Making four. In the replay, South led a trump at Trick Two, and East won with the 10. East was able to overruff dummy on a diamond lead and take his ace of trumps, leaving declarer a trick short. This week: trump management. You hold: ♠ A ♥ 9 8 7 4 2 ♦ A J 7 6 3 ♣ A 7. Your partner opens one diamond, you respond one heart and he bids two clubs. What do you say? Answer: Since neither opponent has bid spades, partner may have a few; hence not many hearts. If he has 8 7 6, A, K Q 10 8 2, K J 6 4, you have a grand slam. Jump to three diamonds if it's forcing. If not, or if not sure, bid

South dealer N-S vulnerable. NORTH: ♠ 7 5 2, ♥ K J 6 5 3, ♦ Q, ♣ K J 5 2. WEST: ♠ Q J 9 4 3, ♥ None, ♦ K 10 9 4 2, ♣ 10 8 4. EAST: ♠ K 10 8 6, ♥ A Q 10, ♦ 8 5, ♣ Q 9 6 3. SOUTH: ♠ A, ♥ 9 8 7 4 2, ♦ A J 7 6 3, ♣ A 7. SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST: 1♥ 1♠ 4♥ All Pass. Opening lead — ♠ Q. Tribune Content Agency

ASKING ERIC

Dear Eric: I recently discovered my husband was messaging/talking to three women through the dating portion of Facebook. I saw messages on his phone from one woman and a phone call for 44 minutes. I confronted him and he said he was trying to learn how to communicate and he was not cheating. I decided that if he thought this was OK, then it should be OK for me too. I started my own profile. He did not like the attention I got and he shut down his account and ended all communication. I also ended mine. We have a great intimate relationship, but I'm still hurt and untrusting of him. We have been through a lot over the past 28 years. Do you have any advice? SORE MESSENGER

It may be that you both agree that taking "conversation lessons" like Eliza Doolittle in "My Fair Lady" is OK. His jealousy about the attention you were getting shouldn't dictate the rules. But I'd be very cautious of making any moves that are simply tit for tat. You can't revenge-date your way to a healthier relationship. If you want to add zip to your talks, try conversational card games like the And by Skin Deep and Where Should We Begin by Esther Perel. Dear Eric: Since the pandemic started, a few relatives have chosen to distance themselves from the rest of my immediate family. We saw each other every weekend like clockwork for years, and then, with no explanation, they dropped off the face of the earth. Naturally, this dynamic no longer includes gifts or greeting cards. Last year, I learned that three of these now-distant relatives have been in constant connection with one another. I sent each a simple birthday gift in the mail to let them know they're loved and were being thought of. Not one of them thanked me. As one of your previous columns noted: Sometimes no answer is an answer. This year, I sent a quick happy birthday text. Yep, you guessed it: They acknowledged my texts! Mes-

sage received: They prefer not to participate in gifts. But riddle me this: They don't acknowledge my gifts, we hardly speak, yet they will send me hundreds of dollars for my birthday and Christmas. What's going on here? TO GIVE OR NOT TO GIVE Dear Give: The plot twist at the end of your question really got me! Hundreds of dollars? Oh my word! These relatives may not think they're as distant as you think they are. Money talks, but sometimes it mumbles. Reach out to ask your relatives to translate. Try a phone call. "We've been out of contact for a while. Did something happen and, if so, can we fix it?" They may think, since they're sending stacks of cash, that all is well. The fact that the break happened around the pandemic might be a clue here. It was easy for relationships to fall out of rhythm, and some haven't recovered. It was also a fraught time politically. Maybe someone in your immediate family posted something online that the distant relatives didn't like. Judging by the gifts, though, they've clearly thought of you. Reach out and find out exactly what they're thinking. Email questions to eric@askingeric.com.

CROSSWORD

Edited By Patti Varol By Zhouqin Burnikel

- ACROSS 1 Wrap party party 6 C and D in D.C. 9 Muscat's country 13 "Say Anything ..." director Cameron 14 At the summit of 15 Bring back to health 16 Brass player's recital piece 18 "¿Cómo __ usted?" 19 Gulp down 20 Concave navel 21 Barely known celebs 22 Port on the Strait of Gibraltar 25 Worker without lungs 26 Pumpkin __ 27 Emails covertly 30 Networking device 33 FaceTime platform 35 Thai language kin 36 Anise-flavored Italian liqueur 38 Digit covered by a sock 39 Address in a hyperlink 40 Flannel pattern 41 NASCAR great Petty 42 Makes fuzzy 44 Prefix sometimes paired with "het" 46 Classic Chaney horror film 52 Happen next 53 Got out of 63-Across 54 Aircraft carrier letters 56 Wild animal's den 57 Debut sport at the Paris Olympics, or what 16-, 22-, 36-, and 46-Across do to their circled letters 59 Item used onstage 60 "It's the least __ do!" 61 "From the top!" 62 __ serif 63 Place to sleep 64 Scholarship factor

12x12 crossword grid with numbers 1-64 and circled letters.

- 7 Symbol carved on a pole 8 Infrared sauna spot 9 Second-largest spotted cat in South America 10 Nashville nickname 11 Drawing class offerer 12 "Excellent!" 14 Hathaway of "Interstellar" 17 "I'll handle that!" 21 Comedy counterpart 23 "That's What I Want" singer Lil __ X 24 Oil cartel letters 27 __ray disc 28 Pasta dish with bacon, eggs, and cheese 29 Illegal cooperation 30 UFC fighting style 31 __-Wan Kenobi 32 Commercial flop 34 "Didn't I warn you?" 36 Retail therapy session 37 In addition 41 Sunflower Showdown sch. 43 Takes over by force 44 Whiskey barrel 45 Winter river blockage 46 Assists 47 Absurdist comedy 48 Anticipate with fear 49 Multicolored horse 50 Moon-related 51 Computer character set 55 In the mail 57 Tot's dinner garb 58 13.7 billion years, for our universe

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE grid with words: HEIR, CLE, SOAPS, ACCENTRUG, INURE, WHALESONG, PETIT, NOLOOKPASS, SODS, APES, HIDE ME, ABIDED, BETACAMS, TENET, FILLED, TOO, HOLD, BILLS, CONN, ORA, STIRES, AUNTY, SILENTES, ELISHA, GALOSH, AMES, LILLA, YOUTETICAN, INAPP, STARANISE, MANSE, EASYPEASY, ELDER, SHH, SOTO

FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane



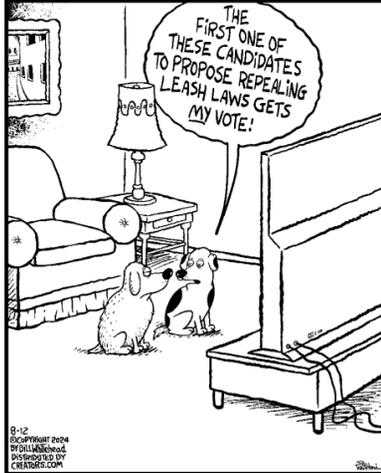
"We're waiting for Daddy to come back from jogging."

DENNIS THE MENACE By Hank Ketcham



"IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE MR. WILSON WHEN HE SAYS HE WAS MY AGE ONCE."

FREE RANGE By Bill Whitehead



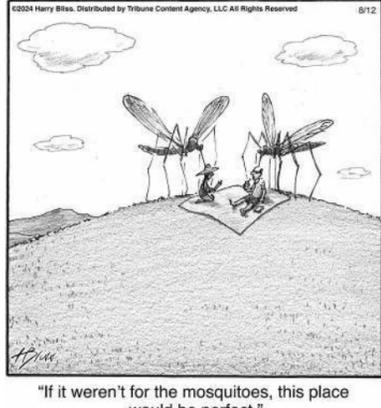
"THE FIRST ONE OF THESE CANDIDATES TO PROPOSE REPEALING LEASH LAWS GETS MY VOTE!"

MARMADUKE By Brad & Paul Anderson



"Marmaduke is the biggest garden pest I have."

BLISS By Harry Bliss



"If it weren't for the mosquitoes, this place would be perfect."

SPEED BUMP By Dave Coverly



"SINCE HE GOT THAT THING, HE MOSTLY JUST KILLS TIME."

Disney leans into sequels (and ‘Star Wars’)

[D23, from E1] about “Frozen III” (and “IV”).

Pixar’s Pete Docter announced the studio is working on “Incredibles 3” with Brad Bird. Also on the way from the studio is “Toy Story 5,” directed by Andrew Stanton, and “Dream Production,” an “Inside Out” spinoff series headed to Disney+.

In the pipeline on the live-action (and live-action-like) side are “Avatar: Fire and Ash” and “Tron: Ares” — both the third films in their respective series — as well as “Freakier Friday,” a sequel to the 2003 cult favorite. Not to mention the live-action adaptations of “Snow White” and “Lilo & Stitch.”

With the recent success of “Inside Out 2” and “Deadpool & Wolverine” (\$1.56 billion and \$925 million, respectively), leaning into sequels and franchises would seem like a safe bet. But they perhaps shouldn’t forget that not all of their recent sequels and reboots have been as successful.

‘STAR WARS’ BUILDS HYPE FOR ITS MOVIES

“Star Wars” has found success on TV with such shows as “The Mandalorian” and “Andor,” but the galaxy far, far away is ready to get back into movies.

Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni made an appearance to tease their upcoming “The Mandalorian and Grogu,” currently in production, which will see Baby Yoda make his big-screen debut. The first-look footage included glimpses of Zeb (another character that first

appeared in “Star Wars Rebels”), snow troopers, AT-AT walkers and a group of Anzellans (the species of tiny mechanic Babu Frik).

While “Mando & Grogu” was the only film to take the stage at D23 expo, several other “Star Wars” films have been announced to be in development in recent years, including an untitled film starring Daisy Ridley and another untitled film directed by Filoni.

The last “Star Wars” film to hit theaters was 2019’s “Episode IX — the Rise of Skywalker,” a whole pandemic and presidency ago. Are Baby Yoda and his TV cohorts the new hope for another era of “Star Wars” films? This is the way.

MARVEL STUDIOS HASN’T FORGOTTEN TELEVISION

Marvel’s Hall H presentation at San Diego Comic-Con in July was all about its movies. At D23 expo, it was all about its TV shows.

The long-awaited “Ironheart” was back in the spotlight with Coogler and the show’s cast members including Dominique Thorne and Anthony Ramos. Expected to hit Disney+ in 2025, the series will follow Riri Williams as she resorts to desperate measures to finish making her own high-tech supersuit.

Kathryn Hahn and her “Agatha All Along” castmates Aubrey Plaza, Patti LuPone, Joe Locke, Sasheer Zamata, Ali Ahn and Debra Jo Rupp took the stage to perform “The Ballad of the Witches’ Road.” The series



JAMES CAMERON, left, Sam Worthington and Zoe Saldana were among those teasing future projects at the Disney Entertainment Expo. Their “Avatar: Fire and Ash” is one of the projects in Disney’s pipeline.

— apparently a musical — will debut on Disney+ on Sept. 18.

The “Daredevil: Born Again” cast was also on hand to tease its upcoming show, set to launch in March. The most recent new Marvel series to be released was “Echo,” which hit Disney+ in January (under the studios new Marvel Spotlight banner), and it also featured familiar faces from “Daredev-

il.” But it seems like after a long absence, Marvel Studios is ready to return to a more regular cadence on TV.

ORIGINAL FILMS’ FOOTPRINT IS SMALL, BUT STILL THERE

Disney’s showcase leaned heavily on familiar film series and franchises, but there were a couple original films that got some attention.

Pixar showed footage from its upcoming film “Elio,” about an imaginative kid who gets caught up in intergalactic escapades, and also announced “Hoppers,” about a young animal lover who chooses to transfer their consciousness into a robotic beaver. (The studio also has its first upcoming original series, “Win or Lose,” to premiere Dec. 6.)

Disney Animation’s Lee

also mentioned the studio is working on a new original film but provided no additional details.

D23 expo is a fan event, so it makes sense to lean into familiar characters and worlds to build up excitement. (And Disney did build its empire on adaptations of existing fairy tales.) But you can’t build new franchises without new ideas and giving them room to grow.

Falling in love again with the Olympics

[Olympics, from E1] in medal-winning performances under extraordinary scrutiny. There also was a steady flow of meme-worthy breakout stars, known not only for their athleticism but also for their passion for chocolate muffins, an insouciant shooting stance or Zen-like focus amid the frenzy of competition.

There were culture-war dust-ups, concerns about sewage in the Seine and controversies over failed drug tests, soccer spying and athletes competing with COVID. But nothing about Paris 2024 rose to the level of the scandals and political corruption that tarnished so many recent games.

As the Olympics were winding down, it was time for a Paris 2024 vibe check. Writers Tracy Brown and Meredith Blake wrestled with the question: When did we stop worrying and learn to love the Games again?

Meredith Blake: I have never been someone who watches professional or college sports. But every four years, for most of my life, I get very, very into the Summer Olympics. I chalk some of this up to growing up in the ‘80s and ‘90s, at the tail end of the Cold War, when rooting for gymnast Shannon Miller over Svetlana Boginskaya felt like a healthy, nonviolent outlet for my latent patriotic fervor. There was also the thrill of seeing teenage girls who were just a few years older than I was at the center of such geopolitical drama, like sparkly leotard-clad proxies for the countries they represented. I was enthralled and always felt a pang of sadness when the Games were over and Bob Costas was no longer on my TV every night.

I continued to watch pretty regularly well into adulthood, especially the Summer Games, because I am a normie who loves swimming, diving, gymnastics and track and field. I vividly recall watching Michael Phelps score his eighth gold medal in 2008 and Gabby Douglas making history in 2012 as the first Black woman to win the gymnastics all-around title, but between the doping scandals, the human rights abuses in certain host countries and the terrible treatment and exploitation of our own athletes, somewhere along the line I fell out

of love with the Games. It all just seemed, well, wrong. Maybe the Tokyo Games could have lured me back, but for a variety of pandemic-related reasons, the whole thing felt like a bummer.

Then came Paris, and I am back into the Olympics like it’s 1996 all over again — only this time, gymnastics coach Béla Károlyi is nowhere to be found, and instead of being locked in brutal competition, the athletes I’m watching seem to be nothing but kind and supportive to each other. There have been many unforgettable moments, but none as indelible as the image of Biles and her teammate Jordan Chiles bowing down to Brazilian gymnast Rebeca Andrade during the medal ceremony for the floor exercise. It was both a laudable display of sportsmanship and a celebration of a historic first — three Black women claiming the top three spots in Olympic gymnastics.

Maybe it’s because of all the conflict around the world and the deepening political division at home, but these Games — at least the tightly packaged version of them we see on American TV — feel unifying in a way that few cultural events have in years. After the ghostly, spectator-free Games of 2021, it’s lovely to hear the roaring crowds and see proud parents cheering in the stands (although COVID remains a real threat, as made clear Thursday when Lyles ran the 200 meters while battling the virus and required medical attention after the race). I can’t get the Paris 2024 theme song out of my head — sorry, but it’s a banger — and I’ve had to repeatedly resist the urge to attempt a wolf turn on my kitchen floor. Tracy, have I completely lost my mind? Have I been NBC-pilled? Or do the Games feel fun again?

Tracy Brown: Very fun. It seems like a lot of us have taken a sip of the Olympic Kool-Aid this time around because watching these Games has felt like a collective experience that, at least during the Tokyo Games in 2021, I thought we’d never get back to. Like you, I grew up with the Summer Olympics being must-see TV, finding myself suddenly invested in sports I forget exist outside these few



BRYNN ANDERSON Associated Press

KATIE LEDECKY, right, with teammate Paige Madden, lived up to the hype, turning in medal-winning performances under extraordinary scrutiny in Paris.

weeks every four years. (Sorry, athletes: It’s not you, it’s me.) It’s one of the few occasions where patriotism feels uncomplicated and you get to just cheer on people chasing their dreams.

I don’t know if it’s the more forgiving time difference, but more people are watching and talking about these Games. My social media feeds are flooded with genuine appreciation for moments like that historic podium shot of Biles and Chiles bowing down to Andrade and Katie Ledecky’s impressive medal streak, as well as the memeification of our new favorite athletes like South Korean shooter Kim Ye-ji, Turkish shooter Yusuf Dikeç and America’s own pommel horse guy Stephen Nedoroscik. Folks are even discussing their favorite commentators. That’s not to mention the snippets the athletes themselves are providing from the scenes like Suni Lee poking fun at her beam fall in the event finals, swimmer Henrik Christiansen chronicling his love for a certain pastry and pretty much every post from rugby sevens content queen Ilona Maher. It’s exciting when it feels like we know the people we are rooting for outside the NBC-produced packages or interview segments, and then see them deliver with medals.

Of course, not all of it has been feel-good “content.” There’s been some outcry regarding the women’s floor final podium, which ended with Chiles claiming the bronze after her coach submitted an inquiry about the difficulty rating initially assessed by the judges — a common occurrence — that resulted in her score inching above those of Romanian gymnasts Ana Maria Barboșu and Sabina Maneca Voinea. (Romania filed an appeal, and Chiles has been ordered to return her medal; U.S. Olympic officials say they will appeal that ruling.)

Unsurprisingly, some of the online comments and attacks targeting Chiles, rather than the process or the officials, have been racist.

The social media outrage around boxer Imane Khelif also got very ugly, with misinformation helping fuel false accusations regarding her gender. Female athletes being questioned about their gender when they don’t fit certain standards of femininity is nothing new, but the hostility around those even perceived to be transgender has increased outside of sports in recent years. Being dragged into the conservative culture war against queer and trans people might be another signal that the Olympics are enjoying a bigger moment this time around, though. What about you, Meredith? Why do you think these Olympics have been able to strike a chord?

Blake: You are right, Tracy. The vibes have not been entirely immaculate. Khelif was cruelly targeted by people who pretend to care about the integrity of women’s sports but have done nothing to celebrate the performance of the American women in Paris. Republican vice presidential candidate JD Vance — the same guy who suggested Biles was “showing weakness” when she withdrew from competition in Tokyo — joined the Khelif pile-on with a tweet suggesting that somehow Vice President Kamala Harris was responsible for “a grown man pummeling a woman in a boxing match.” Despite his professed concern for women in sports, Vance hasn’t had a single thing to say about how the American women have fared in Paris.

Which may be because they’re crushing it: The American women are on track to win more medals than their male counterparts at the Summer Games for the fourth con-

secutive time — a fact that doesn’t sit well with the cat-lady-haters of the world.

A lot of these culture warriors don’t actually want to see women competing at the Olympics. They’re the same people who spent years griping about Title IX or are happy to criticize women for having messy hair or too much muscle.

But I think a large part of the success of these Games is the very representation that some people resent. To me, it’s a heartening sign of progress to have a women’s gymnastics squad made up of grown women, mostly in their 20s, who come from diverse backgrounds and have overcome truly insane odds to reach the pinnacle of their sport. One of the great stories of these Games is Biles’ comeback after Tokyo. Unlike too many athletes in recent memory — especially in women’s gymnastics, which has always had a masochistic streak — she put her well-being first and triumphed as a result. It’s a paradigm shift we should all celebrate.

As we’ve seen so many times in TV and movies, there’s something powerful about seeing yourself — or, in the case of the Olympics, a much fitter, faster, flexible version of yourself — at the center of the culture. No doubt Paris is breaking through because the Olympians and their stories seem like a more accurate reflection of the country we live in — or wish we did. Social media also makes these elite athletes more accessible and human. We might not be able to swim as fast as that Norwegian guy, but we sure can relate to his passion for chocolate muffins.

One tell-tale sign that the Olympics have reclaimed their mojo is the sheer number of celebrities who’ve shown up to celebrate and/or bask in the reflected glory of Team USA. At times, the Games have felt like an extended Golden Globes

ceremony, complete with appearances by John Travolta and John Legend. As you discussed recently, NBC has been all too happy to plug these celebrity cameos — “Oh look, there’s Mariska Hargitay, star of ‘Law & Order SVU,’ the longest-running prime time drama in the history of American TV. Now back to diving.” But if I squint a little, I am able to see it in a more charitable light. Stars, they’re just like us. And they too want to see Ledecky win the 1,500-meter freestyle or Biles do the Yurchenko double pike vault.

As we look ahead to 2028, when the Games come to Los Angeles, what are your predictions? Do you think the proximity — and lack of a time difference — will elevate the vibes?

Brown: I’m sure that’s what U.S. TV rights-holder NBC is hoping for. And if you thought the Hollywood celebrity presence was overplayed by the telecasts this time around, NBC would like you to hold its beer. I wouldn’t be surprised if a reality competition show to determine who will be the Olympics’ next celebrity mascot (à la Snoopy Dogg in Paris) is in the works.

I’m not quite old enough to remember the last time L.A. hosted the Olympics in 1984, although, according to my parents, toddler me attended some events. But a part of me is worried that the Games being so close to home that it affects my daily life might take some of the shine away from it as a television event in the same way that covering the Oscars and Emmys has changed awards shows for me. (And that’s not to mention the valid concerns and criticisms people have raised over L.A. hosting the Games to begin with.)

That said, it is fun to imagine how L.A. will be celebrated in 2028. An opening ceremony that includes a flash mob on the 405, a parade of food trucks down Hollywood Boulevard and dancing water fountains in Echo Park Lake? Why not? (Don’t answer that.) Just keep the torch relay away from our mountains.

And although it is much to soon, I can’t help but wonder who will be our L.A. Olympic breakouts. Katie Ledecky and Simone Biles have deservedly become synonymous with the Summer Games, but will both 27-year-olds extend their historic runs? (Neither Ledecky nor Biles has ruled it out.) What new-to-me sport will become my favorite? (This year, it was women’s rugby sevens.) What food item will be an athlete’s unexpected obsession? (Tacos seems too obvious an answer.) Will we still be on TikTok and Instagram or will we have all moved on? Only time will tell.