



SARA SOLIS, flanked by children Hugo and Naomi, holds a picture of her son Mario, who was found dead in a Riverside County jail in 2022.

ALEX WELSH

A DEADLY JAIL SYSTEM SEES ITS DEADLIEST YEAR

Riverside County facilities reported their highest detainee fatality count in decades in 2022, including multiple suicides

By Christopher Damien



A MEMORIAL for Alicia Upton in her mother's home in West Virginia. Upton died by suicide in a Riverside County jail cell.

KRISTIAN THACKER

Alicia Upton paced the concrete floor of her jail cell. She looked around the cramped quarters. Then she pressed the alert button on an intercom attached to the wall.

"What is your emergency?" responded a voice, captured on video footage from a camera in the cell. It was a deputy about 50 feet away, in the control room of the women's mental health unit where Upton, 21, was being held.

"It's not an emergency, but —" she began, then the deputy cut off the call before she could finish. Charged with a misdemeanor, Upton was awaiting a court-ordered evaluation to determine whether she was competent to stand trial.

She took a few more listless steps, the video shows. She paused beneath a buzzing fluorescent light, then picked up a white bedsheet and said, "It's time to hang myself."

[See Riverside, A6]

Campaigns of Latino, Asian candidates may reshape Eastside

Voters have shown a willingness to cross racial or ethnic lines, one academic says.

By DAVID ZAHNISER

The text message that showed up on the phones of Eastside voters last month began with a warning: Forty years of Latino political representation is under threat.

The ad from Los Angeles City Councilmember Kevin de León's reelection campaign also featured a grainy, unflattering photo of his opponent, tenant rights attorney Ysabel Jurado.

"We need to protect Latino voices," the message said, "and re-elect Kevin de León for city council."

Those words brought into public view an issue whispered about for months: Voters in the 14th District, which includes heavily Mexican American neighborhoods such as

Boyle Heights and El Sereno, could soon elect a council member who is not Latino for the first time since 1985.

Jurado, 34, has been looking to make history by becoming the first Filipino American on the council. She has spent much of the campaign slamming De León over his participation in a secretly recorded conversation punctuated by crude and racist remarks.

That scandal left De León so politically weakened that two Latino state Assembly members, Wendy Carrillo and Miguel Santiago, challenged him for his council seat. But they lost in the March primary, and now their Assembly seats are up for grabs.

That chain of events could reshape the political landscape of the Eastside, the birthplace of Chicano activism in L.A.

In Tuesday's election, Asian Pacific Islander candidates are running against [See Eastside, A12]

Trump's culture of retribution seeps into U.S.

Moved by his words, his followers threaten teachers, librarians and election workers.

By JEFFREY FLEISHMAN

After a video went on social media portraying him as a radical groomer endangering children with sexually explicit books, Frank Strong, a Texas teacher, received threats and became a target in a disquieting and toxic culture of rage and retribution shaped, he believes, by nearly a decade of Donald Trump's political hold on the American imagination.

"It has a chilling effect," Strong, a high school English teacher, said of the backlash he has endured in fighting to prevent schools from banning books on race and sexual identity. "I don't

know who these people are or what they're capable of. This ugliness and sense of intimidation is a Trump era thing. There's a real danger of it accelerating."

Librarians are harassed, teachers vilified, election workers threatened. Immigrants are demonized and armed groups march outside state capitols. Even meteorologists are targeted in conspiracy theories.

"One election worker told me, 'I can't go to the grocery store without being seen as a pariah,'" Tammy Patrick, chief executive officer for programs at the National Assn. of Election Officials, said of the contempt Trump's supporters have for the election system since he lost in 2020. "Another had to take their name off the mailbox at their family farm in Wisconsin because they feared threats from people [See Revenge, A8]

CAMINOS DEL SOUTHWEST

Restaurateurs embrace divergent views

Two cousins with political differences lament divisive climate in U.S.

GUSTAVO ARELLANO

I left Las Vegas for home on a Tuesday morning, tired and optimistic after nearly a week on the road. I took so many notes talking to Latinos about their hopes and fears in this election year that I filled up my legal pad. So many quotes, so many anecdotes — and there was one more, delicious stop left.

For 87 years, Mitla Cafe in San Bernardino has served Cal-Mex classics such as chile colorado and huevos rancheros. It is best known for its hard-shell tacos: ground beef mixed with mashed potatoes, topped with a blizzard of orange cheese, green lettuce and red tomatoes, held together by a freshly fried shell that shines like an ingot.

The restaurant is on the old Route 66, and travelers regularly stopped by [See Arellano, A9]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

"I'M AFRAID to talk politics" publicly, said Steven Oquendo, who runs San Bernardino's Mitla Cafe with his cousin Michael Montaño.

Israel conducts raid in Syria

Military says it seized senior Hezbollah operative in its first known ground foray into the country. **WORLD, A3**

Repeat arrests raise questions

An L.A. man is accused in a string of robberies despite being fitted with a GPS ankle monitor. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather

Lots of sunshine. L.A. Basin: 75/52. **B5**

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World Series



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PERSPECTIVES

LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

Harris would protect democracy. Trump wouldn't

A look at six basic reasons that the Democrat is a better choice for president.

DOYLE McMANUS

It's easy to argue why Americans should vote against Donald Trump.

The former president neither understands nor respects the Constitution. He would use the powers of the federal government as an instrument of his whims, prosecuting political opponents and rewarding donors instead of serving the public interest. Armed with a grant of immunity from the Supreme Court, he would run roughshod over the rule of law.

The most basic case for Vice President Kamala Harris, then, is that her election would protect our democracy from the damage Trump would do.

But the positive case for a Harris presidency is also strong, if not as stark.

Here are six reasons Harris would be a better president:

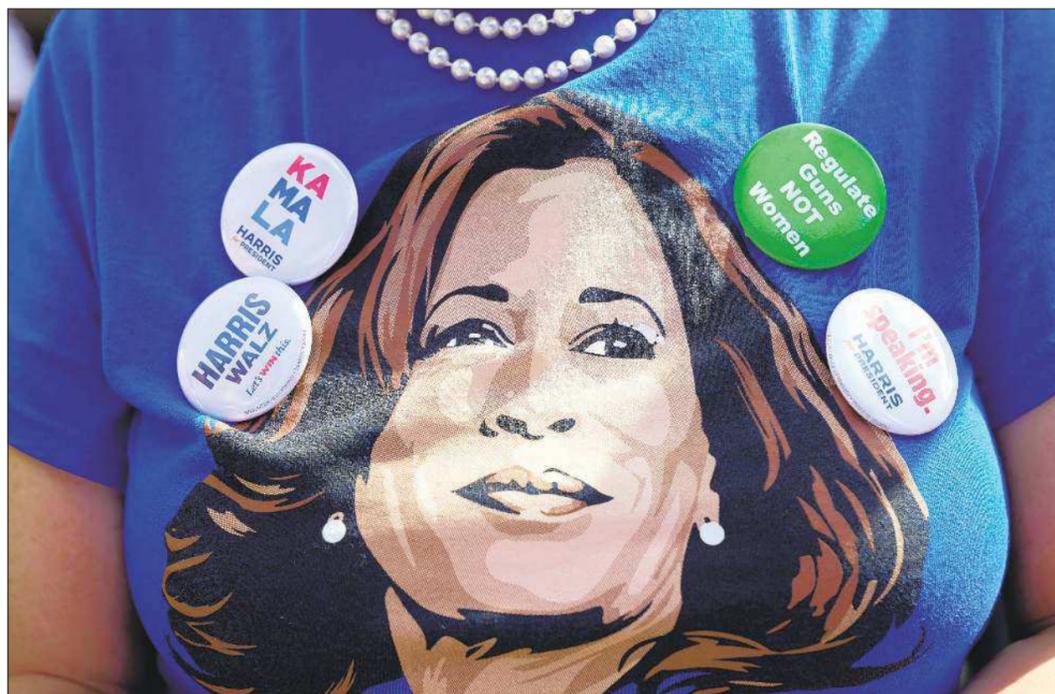
Consensus

She has promised to seek consensus and compromise, two words Trump has rarely uttered. We could use a dose of both.

"For too long, we have been consumed with too much division, chaos and mutual distrust," Harris said in her "closing argument" speech last week. "It doesn't have to be this way.... Unlike Donald Trump, I don't believe people who disagree with me are the enemy. He wants to put them in jail. I'll give them a seat at the table."

Economy

Harris' economic policies are less likely to produce runaway inflation and deficits than Trump's. Most economists say his high,



JACQUELYN MARTIN/Associated Press

A SUPPORTER shows her Kamala flair while awaiting the arrival of the Democratic presidential nominee at a campaign rally Saturday outside the Atlanta Civic Center in Georgia, one of the closest swing states.

indiscriminate tariffs would raise prices on both imports and domestic goods. Non-partisan deficit hawks say his ever-expanding tax cut promises would increase the federal deficit by almost \$8 trillion, twice as much as Harris'.

Housing, childcare, elder care

Harris has offered serious proposals to address three pressing problems: housing, childcare and elder care. Critics have raised doubts about the details, including the uncertain effects of her plan to subsidize down payments for first-time homebuyers, but she has at least made those issues high priorities.

Immigration

She has fully embraced Biden's belated toughening of asylum rules on the border — and since she's been stung by the issue, she's likely to follow through. But she would do so in a measured, humane way, unlike the mass deportations and

deliberate cruelty her opponent has promised.

Foreign policy

Harris says U.S. foreign policy should be based on strong alliances with other democracies, not cynical partnerships with tyrants like Russia's Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping. She has pledged to maintain the U.S. commitment to help Israel defend itself, but has also signaled — without offering any specifics — that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would not get a free pass for attacks on Palestinian civilians.

Reproductive freedom

And, of course, she would work to ensure that women can make decisions about abortion without state governments endangering their lives.

Harris isn't perfect; no candidate is. But in the 15 weeks since she became the Democratic candidate, she has proved herself an abler politician than her critics expected.

She took a distressingly long time to define a clear, overarching vision. Early in the campaign, her answers to tough questions often devolved into word salad. She struggled to explain how her presidency might differ from a second Joe Biden term ("There is not a thing that comes to mind," she said on "The View").

Put some of that down to the fact that she had only three months to construct a platform instead of the usual two years. Put some of it down to the fact that she spent four years as vice president avoiding any daylight with Biden, only to face demands for a detailed list of differences. Still, those wobbly moments raised doubts about her readiness for the job.

Over time, though, she supplied more clarity. "My presidency will be different because the challenges we face are different," she said in her speech on the Ellipse in Washington. "Our top priority as a nation four years ago was to end the pandemic and rescue the economy. Now our biggest

challenge is to lower costs."

Other complaints have come from both ends of the political spectrum: Trump charges that Harris is "a radical left Marxist," while Sen. Bernie Sanders complains that she's moved too close to the center.

Harris' 21-year record in elected office — more experience than Trump or Barack Obama had — solves this non-riddle: She's always been a center-left pragmatist, not a progressive ideologue. In her very first election in San Francisco in 2003, she defeated a progressive district attorney by promising to raise conviction rates.

"She's a mainstream Democrat, but she's a product of California — which makes her a left-of-center Democrat," her biographer, Dan Morain, told me.

Like Biden, Harris has generally aimed at what she saw as the center of gravity in the Democratic Party. That led her into the biggest mistake of her career, her attempt to impersonate a progressive in the campaign for the 2020 presidential

nomination. Voters saw through it, and her candidacy ended before the first primary.

This time, she has moved relentlessly back toward the center.

Biden talked of being a "transformative" president, but Harris has framed her agenda more modestly, as solving problems incrementally. There's nothing as ambitious as Sanders' "Medicare for All" on her wish list.

"I'm a capitalist. I believe in free and fair markets," she told business leaders in Pittsburgh.

She has even, on a few issues, staked out positions a little to the right of Biden's. The president has proposed raising capital gains taxes to a top rate of almost 40%; Harris said she would raise them to a more modest 28%.

This outbreak of centrism may include a dose of election-year calibration. Still, most presidents stick to their campaign promises, if only because they know voters will be angry if they don't.

Besides, by reaching out to corporate executives, national security hawks and conservatives like former Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, Harris has built a potential foundation for broad support that could restore a measure of bipartisanship to Washington.

If she's elected, that will prove harder than it sounds, just as it did for Biden. When President Harris makes mistakes in office, as she undoubtedly will, her supporters — and columnists like me — must hold her to account.

And that returns us to the bottom-line choice in this election: One candidate will preserve the Constitution and the rule of law; the other will erode them.

As my colleague Alexandra Petri of the Washington Post put it with admirable concision: "I am endorsing Kamala Harris for president because I like elections and would like to keep having them."

Or, to paraphrase President Biden: Don't compare her to the almighty. Compare her to the alternative.

How does the electoral college work?

To become president, a candidate needs to reach a majority of 270 electors.

BY FAITH E. PINHO

After all the ballots in this year's presidential contest are cast, the count will begin to be reported. But in the United States' unusual election system, there are in essence two counts — the popular vote and the results in the electoral college.

Here's how they work:

What is the popular vote?

The popular vote is your vote — the votes of the people. The popular vote is equal to the number of ballots cast.

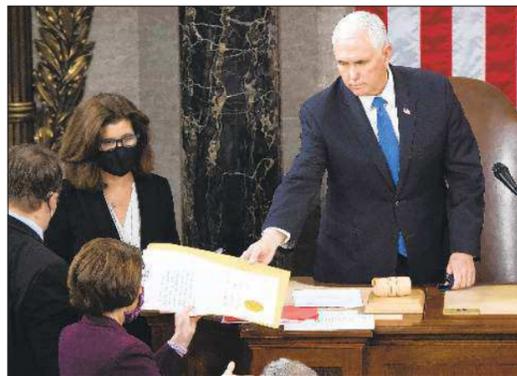
What is the electoral college?

The electoral college is made up of 538 electors — one for every representative and senator in Congress, plus three for the District of Columbia. To become president, Vice President Kamala Harris or former President Trump needs to reach a majority of 270 electors. The electoral college is based upon a state's representation in Congress, which is based upon a state's population.

As the most populated state in the country, California has the most electors: 54, for its 52 representatives and two senators. Harris is widely expected to win the popular vote in California, and therefore collect all 54 electors.

In most states, whichever candidate wins the popular vote in a state is awarded the state's electors in a "winner-take-all" system.

However, two states — Maine and Nebraska — have a proportional representation electoral college. Both



SAUL LOEB/Pool Photo

MIKE PENCE presides over a joint session of Congress counting the electoral college vote Jan. 6, 2021.

states award two electoral votes to the candidate who wins the popular vote, and then one for the winner of each congressional district (Maine has two congressional districts, Nebraska has three).

Each state's political party generally appoints the slate of electors.

So how does a candidate become president?

To become president, a candidate must win 270 electoral votes.

A president can win the electoral college without winning the popular vote. This has happened four times in U.S. history, twice in the 1800s and twice this century. Trump lost the popular vote to Democrat Hillary Clinton but prevailed in the electoral college in 2016. Republican George W. Bush lost the popular vote in 2000 but defeated Democrat Al Gore.

What happens if the electoral vote is a tie?

If the candidates tie at 269 electors each, the election turns to the House of Representatives. Each state gets to cast one vote for president, and at least two-thirds of the chamber

must be present to vote.

The last time the House of Representatives decided a presidential election was in 1824, when it picked John Quincy Adams.

Why do swing states matter so much?

Although there are voters of many parties in every state, and those aligned with none, most states have a comfortable majority of either Republicans or Democrats.

In California, for example, 46% of registered voters are Democrats, compared with almost 25% Republicans and nearly 22% voters stating no party preference, as well as 7% others. With voter registration numbers like that, the Democratic candidate for president is almost guaranteed to win the popular vote and, as a result, the state's electors. However, in the seven swing states — Arizona, Nevada, Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan — the numbers are much closer, so the popular vote can come down to a very slim margin.

In 2020, for example, Joe Biden won Pennsylvania by 80,555 votes over Trump,

getting all of the state's electors and clinching the presidency. Biden won some states by even smaller margins, such as Arizona, where he bested Trump by just over 10,000 votes.

When are electors certified?

The electors meet in their respective states on Dec. 17 to cast their ballots for president and vice president. Their votes are recorded on a certificate of vote, which is then sent to Congress.

On Jan. 6, a joint session of Congress is held to certify the electoral votes. As president of the Senate, the vice president presides over the joint session and announces the official count. In 2021, Vice President Mike Pence served this role, despite Trump's objections and a mob that stormed the Capitol building in an attempt to disrupt the election certification.

The president-elect is inaugurated as president on Jan. 20.

Why do we have an electoral college?

When the Founding Fathers were drafting the Constitution, they created the electoral college process as a compromise between those who wanted Congress to pick the president and those who wanted to leave it to the people.

Some activist groups, like Making Every Vote Count, have been advocating to do away with the process by passing a constitutional amendment. Rachele Shong, one of the group's spokespeople, cited a 2023 Pew Research Center study that found 63% of U.S. adults want the presidency to be decided by the popular vote.

"The way a democracy works should be one person, one vote, right?" she said.

A promise on 'SNL' to 'end the dramala'

BY MATT BRENNAN

At the tail end of an arduous, hotly contested presidential election campaign, Vice President Kamala Harris managed to have the last laugh. On "Saturday Night Live," that is.

Appearing in the episode's cold open as the mirror image of Maya Rudolph's Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee reassured herself: "You can do something your opponent cannot do. You can open doors."

The sketch, which focused on dueling rallies by Harris and former President Trump (James Austin Johnson), offered a comic compendium of recent events from the trail, with references to Trump's appearance riding in a garbage truck and President Biden's tendency to go off script in front of reporters.

After conferring with Biden (Dana Carvey), running mate Tim Walz (Jim Gaffigan) and husband Doug Emhoff (Andy Samberg) backstage, the vice president asked for a moment alone. "I wish I could talk to someone who's been in my shoes," Rudolph's character said, before turning to her reflection in the vanity. The real Harris, who emerged to an extended ovation from the live studio audience, replied in kind: "You and me both, sister."

In the exchange with Rudolph, Harris also promised to "end the dramala" of the campaign and "keep calm-ala and carry on-ala."

Coming out from behind the mirror to stand next to Rudolph — where she received yet another round of cheers from the audience — Harris made one more joke, asking her counterpart if she's registered in the swing state of Pennsylvania, before

the pair delivered the show's most famous line in unison: "Live from New York, it's Saturday night!"

Later in the episode — which was hosted by comedian John Mulaney and featured musical guest Chappell Roan — Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.), Hillary Clinton's 2016 running mate, provided the second political cameo of the night. Kaine, poking fun at his lack of memorability on a game show called "What's My Name?" stumped contestants who were challenged to identify him — just eight years after he was involved in another "most important election in American history."

With her surprise visit Saturday to New York's 30 Rockefeller Plaza, Harris joined a roster of White House hopefuls who have appeared on the long-running sketch show, including Trump, Clinton and Barack Obama.

In a statement posted to social media in the lead-up to Saturday's episode, Brendan Carr, a Republican on the Federal Communications Commission, criticized Harris' appearance as a "clear and blatant effort to evade" the commission's equal-time rule, which provides for political candidates to receive equivalent opportunities on broadcast networks. A source with knowledge of the network's practices said NBC will comply with any regulatory obligations.

News of Harris' guest spot broke shortly before 5 p.m. Pacific time when Harris added an unannounced stop to her schedule, which was reportedly announced to the press pool while in flight on Air Force Two. She had previously been expected to travel between campaign events in North Carolina and Michigan.

THE WORLD

Israel says it carried out ground raid into Syria

The military also said it seized a citizen there involved with Iranian networks.

BY MELANIE LIDMAN AND SAMY MAGDY

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military said Sunday that it has carried out a ground raid into Syria, seizing a Syrian citizen involved in Iranian networks. It was the first time in the current war that Israel announced its troops operated in Syrian territory.

Israel has carried out airstrikes in Syria multiple times over the last year, targeting members of Lebanon's Hezbollah and officials from Iran, the close ally of both Hezbollah and Syria. But it has not previously made public any ground forays into Syria.

The Israeli military said the seizure was part of a special operation "that took place in recent months," though it did not say exactly when it occurred. Syria did not immediately confirm the announcement, but a pro-government Syrian radio station, Sham FM, reported Sunday that Israeli forces carried out a "kidnapping operation" over the summer targeting a man in the south of the country.

The disclosure of the raid comes as Israel has waged an escalated campaign of bombardment in Lebanon for the last six weeks, as well as a ground invasion along the countries' shared border, vowing to cripple Hezbollah. On Saturday, an Israeli military official said naval forces carried out a raid in a northern Lebanese town, seizing a man they called a senior Hezbollah operative.

The army identified the man it seized as Ali Soleiman al-Assi, saying he lives in the southern Syrian region of Saïda. It said the



OMAR SANADIKI Associated Press

A MAN ON his motorcycle passes by a bridge that links to Lebanon in Qusair, Syria. The bridge was wrecked on Oct. 24 by an Israeli airstrike. Israel has carried out airstrikes in Syria multiple times over the last year.

man had been under military surveillance for many months and was involved in Iranian initiatives targeting areas of the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights near the border with Syria. Body camera video of the raid released by the army showed soldiers seizing a man in a white tank top inside a building. The man was brought to Israel for interrogation, the military said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the border with Lebanon on Sunday, saying his focus was trying to keep Hezbollah from rearming itself through the "oxygen lifeline" of Iranian weapons transferred to Lebanon via Syria. Israel says its campaign in Lebanon aims to push Hezbollah away from the border and put an end to more than a year of fire by the group into Israel.

Israel's strikes in Lebanon have killed more than 2,500 people over the last

year. In Israel, 69 people have been killed by Hezbollah projectiles.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces continued an offensive in the northern Gaza Strip, where the military has said it is battling Hamas fighters who regrouped there.

Shell fire hit Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza, injuring patients, including children, the hospital's director Hossam Abu Safiya said in a statement to the media. He said the shells hit the hospital's nursery, dormitory and water tanks, just after a delegation from the World Health Organization ended a visit.

Kamal Adwan and two other nearby hospitals have been hit by Israel several times amid the fighting. Recently, Israeli troops stormed Kamal Adwan, detaining a large number of people, including much of the staff, Abu Safiya said at the time of the raid. The military said those detained in-

cluded members of Hamas, without providing evidence, and said weapons were found in the facility.

In southern Gaza, an Israeli strike hit a group of people gathered outside in an eastern district of Khan Yunis, killing at least eight Palestinians, including four children and a woman, the territory's Health Ministry's emergency services said. The city's Nasser Hospital confirmed the figures.

Palestinian officials said an Israeli drone strike on Saturday hit a clinic in northern Gaza where children were being vaccinated for polio, wounding six people, including four children. The Israeli military denied responsibility.

Dr. Munir al-Boursh, director general of the Gaza Health Ministry, told the Associated Press that a quadcopter struck the Sheikh Radwan clinic in Gaza City early Saturday afternoon, just a few minutes after a

United Nations delegation left the facility.

The WHO and the U.N. children's agency, known as UNICEF, which are jointly carrying out the polio vaccination campaign, expressed concern over the reported strike. Rosalia Bollen, a spokesperson for UNICEF, said the strike occurred during a "humanitarian pause" agreed to by Israel to allow vaccinations.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesman, said that "contrary to the claims, an initial review determined that the [Israeli military] did not strike in the area at the specified time."

It was not possible to resolve the conflicting accounts. Israeli forces have repeatedly raided hospitals in Gaza over the course of the war, saying Hamas uses them for militant purposes, allegations denied by Palestinian health officials. Hamas fighters are also operating in the north, battling

Israeli forces.

Northern Gaza has been encircled by Israeli forces and largely isolated for the last year. Israel has been carrying out another offensive there in recent weeks that has killed hundreds and displaced tens of thousands.

A scaled-down campaign to administer a second dose of the polio vaccine began Saturday in parts of northern Gaza. It had been postponed from Oct. 23 due to lack of access, Israeli bombings and mass evacuation orders, and the lack of assurances for humanitarian pauses, a U.N. statement said.

Administration of the first dose was carried out in September across the Gaza Strip, including the north.

At least 100,000 people have been forced to evacuate from areas of north Gaza toward Gaza City in the last few weeks, but around 15,000 children under the age of 10 remain in northern towns, including Jabaliya, Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun, which are inaccessible, according to the U.N.

The final phase of the polio vaccination campaign had aimed to reach an estimated 119,000 children in the north with a second dose of the oral polio vaccine, the agencies said, but "achieving this target is now unlikely due to access constraints."

They say 90% of children in every community must be vaccinated to prevent the spread of the disease.

The campaign was launched after the first polio case was reported in Gaza in 25 years — a 10-month-old boy, now paralyzed in the leg. The World Health Organization said the presence of a paralysis case indicates there could be hundreds more who have been infected but aren't showing symptoms.

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

U.S. says Iranian American journalist being held in Iran

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI — An Iranian American journalist who once worked for a U.S. government-funded broadcaster is believed to have been detained by Iran for months now, authorities said Sunday, further raising the stakes as Tehran threatens to retaliate over an Israeli attack on the country.

The imprisonment of Reza Valizadeh, acknowledged to the Associated Press by the U.S. State Department, came as Iran marked the 45th anniversary of the U.S. Embassy takeover and hostage crisis on Sunday. It also followed Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei threatening Israel and the U.S. the day before with "a crushing response" as long-range B-52 bombers reached the Middle East in an attempt to deter Tehran.

Valizadeh had worked for Radio Farda, an outlet under Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that's overseen by the U.S. Agency for Global Media. In February, he wrote on the social platform X that his family members had been detained in an effort to see him return to Iran.

In August, Valizadeh apparently posted two messages suggesting he had returned to Iran despite Radio Farda being viewed by Iran's theocracy as a hostile outlet.

"I arrived in Tehran on March 6, 2024. Before that, I had unfinished negotiations with the [Revolutionary Guard's] intelligence department," the message read in part. "Eventually I came back to my country after 13 years without any security guarantee, even a verbal one."

Valizadeh added the name of a man who he claimed belonged to Iran's Intelligence Ministry. The AP could not verify whether the person worked for the ministry.

Rumors have been circulating for weeks that Valizadeh had been detained. The Human Rights Activ-



VAHID SALEMI Associated Press

DEMONSTRATORS chant slogans at a rally in front of the former U.S. Embassy in Tehran on Sunday.

ists News Agency, which monitors cases in Iran, said that he had been detained on arrival in the country this year, but later released.

He was then rearrested and sent to Evin Prison, where he now faces a case in Iran's Revolutionary Court, which routinely holds closed-door hearings in which defendants face secret evidence, the agency reported. Valizadeh had faced arrest in 2007 as well, it said.

The State Department told the AP that it was "aware of reports that this dual U.S.-Iranian citizen has been arrested in Iran" when asked about Valizadeh.

"We are working with our Swiss partners who serve as the protecting power for the United States in Iran to gather more information about this case," the State Department said. "Iran routinely imprisons U.S. citizens and other countries' citizens unjustly for political purposes. This practice is cruel and contrary to international law."

Iran has not acknowledged detaining Valizadeh. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Voice of America, another U.S. government-funded media outlet overseen by the Agency for Global Media, first reported the State Department was acknowledging Valizadeh's detention in Iran.

Since the 1979 U.S. Em-

bassy crisis, which saw dozens of hostages released after 444 days in captivity, Iran has used prisoners with Western ties as bargaining chips in negotiations with the world. In September 2023, five Americans detained for years in Iran were freed in exchange for five Iranians in U.S. custody and for \$6 billion in frozen Iranian assets to be released by South Korea.

Valizadeh is the first American known to be detained by Iran in the time since.

Meanwhile, state television aired video Sunday of cities across the country marking the anniversary of the embassy takeover.

Gen. Hossein Salami, the head of the Revolutionary Guard, also spoke in Tehran, where he repeated a pledge made the day before by Khamenei.

"The resistance front and Iran will equip itself with whatever necessary to confront and defeat the enemy," he said, referring to militant groups such as Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah that are backed by Tehran.

In Tehran, thousands at the gate of the former U.S. Embassy chanted, "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."

Some burned flags of the countries and effigies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. They also bore images of slain leaders of Iran's allied militant groups.

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In China, U.S. election is 'high political drama'

Close race is source of fascination in a nation without an outlet for political participation.

By **STEPHANIE YANG**

TAIPEI, Taiwan — It's one of the rare points of agreement between the U.S. presidential candidates: China is a major threat to the United States.

Both Kamala Harris and Donald Trump have campaigned with a hard stance against Chinese competition. And little wonder: Surveys show that U.S. opinions of China have sunk to an all-time low.

But how do people in China see the U.S. election?

The Times spoke with Yawei Liu, founding editor of the U.S.-China Perception Monitor. Based in Atlanta, where Liu is a senior advisor on China at the Carter Center, the organization collects information from Chinese scholars and opinion leaders, opinion surveys and Chinese media reports.

The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

What do Chinese people think about this presidential election?

The Chinese are literally fascinated by this election.

They're intrigued by the rise and fall of President Biden. They are excited by the prospect that a woman of color may be, for the first time, the president of the United States. And certainly they try to figure out why someone like Trump can have such a long political life, despite all the scandals, despite that half of the country hates him, despite all the problems that would disqualify any other politician.

In China, there's no outlet for any sort of political participation. So to read [about] — and to comment on this American election — does satisfy some of those urges for them to engage.

What has been surprising about this election compared with previous ones?

In 2000, we had Chinese government officials and scholars here in the U.S. to observe the election. And when they got up the next day, there was still no president. From that point on, American elections became a very fascinating subject for the Chinese elite. Then in 2016 there was the surprise winner, Donald Trump.

This election, because of the assassination attempts, because of Biden's abrupt departure from the race, because of [the] quick rise of Kamala Harris, there are just so many of these things that usually are not associated with mature democracies. It's high political drama.

Chinese media portray the chaos of the candidates and the campaign cycle as a symbol of the failings of American democracy. Do Chinese people see it that way?

They're divided into two camps.

One says the American election is all about money and people like Elon Musk. And also that if Trump loses, he's going to say the election was stolen. So that camp believes this is a sign of democracy not working. It's a sign the U.S. has declined as a superpower.

But then there's the other camp that says the fact that a few days before the election, we still don't know who is going to be the winner, that highlights the strength of American democracy. These are real, competitive, transparent elections.

So depending on where you are on the ideological spectrum, you can find things to help your own argument.

Does China believe that one candidate would be better than the other for its own interests?

There is a bipartisan consensus that China poses an existential threat to the U.S. — one much bigger than Russia does.

If Harris wins, then it's probably going to be repeat-



THE CHINESE are excited by the prospect that a woman of color may become U.S. president. Above, Democratic nominee Kamala Harris with Barack Obama.



DONALD Trump's political longevity — despite his scandals and legal woes — has baffled many Chinese. Above, he meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2019.

ing President Biden's current policy toward China.

But the Chinese probably should be ready for surprises if Trump [wins]. If he says the U.S. doesn't want to defend Taiwan, that probably is something China would like to hear.

The personality, the character of the president — that probably has the biggest impact.

How have Chinese perceptions of Trump changed since he was last elected in 2016?

The majority of the well-informed Chinese elite probably didn't believe he could be elected. It was a bigger surprise that he was the first candidate who turned his campaign rhetoric

into policies. You look at Clinton, back in 1992 [he] said he was going to bring down dictators from Baghdad to Beijing. You look at George W. Bush say the U.S. and China are rivals, we're going to compete. But once they were elected, then they quickly forgot what they talked about, particularly in the case of China. Trump was the one that put [his tough talk] to work.

Then the Capitol riot was a big surprise to many Chinese, because American democracy was known for the peaceful transfer of power.

But then Trump defied it and tried to overturn the election outcome. Then many did not believe he could really become this

year's candidate, because he was convicted. Now, they're just holding their breath to see who is going to emerge victorious on Nov. 5.

Traditionally, informed opinion of the U.S. political system is that free press and mature political institutions — checks and balances and rule of law — will foster cleaner, more efficient and decent political leaders. The rise of Trump has certainly dashed such beliefs and makes people more doubtful of the utility of [the] Western democratic system.

What do people in China think of Harris?

They're keenly aware that if she wins, that's a sign of the vibrancy of American democracy. In 2008, Obama

was elected, that was very inspiring. In 2024, if she wins, that certainly is a miracle and probably will again be a story of inspiration, that any dream can become a reality in this country called the United States. It's easier to associate Trump with weakening of American institutions.

Her vice presidential pick Tim Walz has experience teaching in China. What do Chinese think about that?

Making trips to China, understanding Chinese culture, having friends in China, doesn't mean that as VP, if he wins, he's going to be more friendly towards China.

You have Kevin Rudd from Australia. Initially, there was a lot of excitement that Australians elected a Chinese-speaking prime minister in 2007. But he actually had a very tough policy on China.

Then you have Gary Locke as the first Chinese American U.S. ambassador to China in 2011. He does not have a particularly friendly attitude, at least as was reported by Chinese media.

And now, you have Katherine Tai as the current U.S. trade representative, and she's tougher on China than anybody else.

How have Chinese media covered this election?

The Chinese media are going all-out to report this election.

There's very little censorship on what can be reported. They don't like to cover how they talk about China. Other than that, it's just an open game in terms of how you can cover this election.

There's also a new phenomenon: More people are getting their information from social media.

Remember in 2020, a blog I wrote [on the Chinese site Baidu] could have over millions of views in a matter of 24 hours. That's how interested the reading public in China is.

The Chinese official media outlets tend to portray the U.S. in serious decline as seen from the Jan. 6 riots, unpreparedness in responding to the pandemic, deteriorating race relations and political process dominated by money.

Many in China also believe the U.S. is doing everything possible to contain the rise of China. While some of these perceptions are supported by carefully selected evidence, the overall Chinese perception of the U.S. cannot be described as objective and fair.

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Spain flood survivors hurl mud at the royals and top government officials

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PAIPORTA, Spain — A crowd of enraged flood survivors hurled clods of mud left by storm-spawned flooding at the Spanish royal couple on Sunday during their first visit to the epicenter of their nation's deadliest natural disaster in living memory.

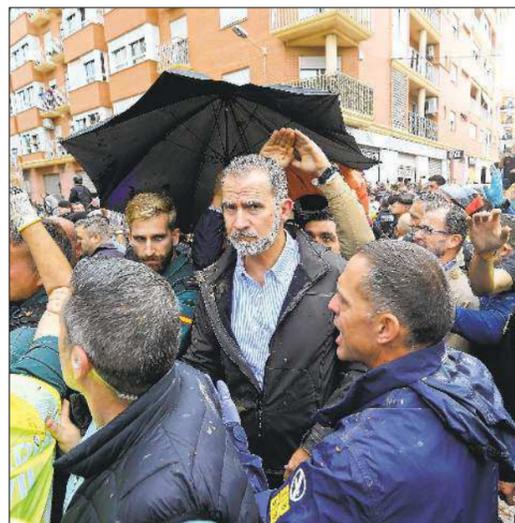
Spain's national broadcaster reported that the barrage included a few rocks and other objects and that two bodyguards were treated for injuries. One could be seen with a bloody wound on his forehead.

It was an unprecedented incident for a royal house that carefully crafts the image of monarchs adored by their country of more than 48 million people.

Officials also rushed Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez from the scene soon after his contingent started to walk the mud-covered streets of one of the hardest-hit areas, where over 60 people perished and thousands of lives were shattered. The disaster fueled by climate change killed at least 205 people in eastern Spain.

"Get out! Get out!" and "Killers!" the crowd in the town of Paiporta shouted, among other insults. Bodyguards opened umbrellas to protect the royals and other officials from the tossed muck.

Police had to step in, some officers on horseback, to keep back the crowd of several dozen, some wielding shovels and poles.



SPAIN'S KING Felipe VI is protected after a crowd of survivors of Spain's floods tossed mud clods at him.

Queen Letizia broke into tears sympathetically after speaking to several people, including one woman who wept in her arms. Later, one of the queen's bodyguards had a bloody wound on his forehead and there was a hole in the back window of the prime minister's official car.

But even after being forced to seek protection, King Felipe VI, with flecks of mud on his face, remained calm and made several efforts to speak to individual residents. He insisted on trying to speak with people as he tried to continue his visit. He spoke to several others, patting two young men on their backs and sharing a quick embrace, with mud

stains on his black raincoat. Still, one woman smacked an official car with an umbrella and another kicked it before it sped off.

While far from awakening the passion that the British hold for their royals, Felipe and Letizia's public events are usually greeted by crowds of fans.

The king later told regional authorities at the command post of emergency response efforts that they had to give "hope to those affected by the flood and attend to their needs, guaranteeing that the state is there for them."

Public rage over the haphazard management of the crisis has been building. Felipe heard some jeers when

he took part in a tribute to the dead of a deadly 2017 terror attack in Barcelona, but that was nothing comparable to Sunday's reception.

The queen had small globs of mud on her hands and arms as she spoke to women.

"We don't have any water," one woman told her.

Many people still don't have drinking water five days after the floods struck. Internet and mobile phone coverage remains patchy. Most people only got power back on Saturday. Stores and supermarkets are in ruins and Paiporta, population 30,000, still has many city blocks completely clogged with piles of detritus, countless totaled cars and a ubiquitous layer of mud.

Thousands have had their homes destroyed by a tsunami-like wave of muck.

The floods had already hit Paiporta when the regional officials issued an alert to mobile phones. It sounded two hours too late.

More anger has been fueled by the inability of officials to respond quickly to the aftermath. Most of the cleanup of the layers and layers of mud and debris that has invaded countless homes has been done by residents and thousands of volunteers.

"We have lost everything!" someone shouted.

Shouts Sunday included demands aimed at regional Valencia's President Carlo Mazón, whose administration is in charge of civil protection, to step down, as well as "Where is Pedro Sánchez?"



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Los Angeles Times

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THE NATION

Democrats in Georgia worry for election day

Predictions remain elusive after 4 million residents vote early in the battleground state.

BY JENNY JARVIE

ATLANTA — Four years ago, Deborah Scott played a key role in helping President Biden win Georgia, leading a band of mostly Black women to canvass, phone bank, even dance outside polling stations as part of a movement that helped flip this historically conservative Southern state blue.

But even as the grassroots organizing dynamo hustles to get out the vote this year, she is not sure she and other Black and brown organizers can coax and inspire enough voters to the polls to deliver another win for Democrats.

"I don't feel confident of anything," the chief executive of Georgia STAND-UP said as she took a break Friday from bopping to Southern trap outside a polling station in a historic Black neighborhood of southwest Atlanta and waving a sign that said "YOU have the POWER."

Scott's team has 200 people calling and knocking on doors and has sent out more than 1.5 million text messages. On the last day of early voting, they had a DJ cranking out rap from Young Jeezy and Waka Flocka Flame, and a line of food trucks serving free French fries, Philly cheese-steaks and shaved ice.

"We know that early voting is up all the way around, which is good," Scott said. "We just want to make sure it's good votes — progressive votes."

Early voter turnout in Georgia has been historic. But after early voting wrapped up Friday with more than 4 million Georgians casting a ballot — 3% higher than in 2020 — it is still hard to predict who will win: GOP strategists point to the fact that early voters in this election skew white

and older, demographics that typically vote Republican, while Democrats emphasize the high turnout of women and Democratic-leaning voters who did not vote in 2020.

Some voters in Atlanta are confident of a Harris victory even as polls show Trump ahead in Georgia by about 1.5 percentage points, well within the margin of error.

"It should not be this close," Teddy Woodson, a 30-year-old student, said after he cast his ballot for Harris at a library in Southwest Atlanta. "She should be winning by a landslide, but I know she's going to win. ... I can't wait for Tuesday, when we get to victory."

Others said they were concerned that Trump had won over a large number of voters across rural Georgia.

"I'm hopeful, but I'm also trepidatious and scared about what the possible outcome is going to be," Maisha Baucham, 50, said as she exited the polling station.

The judicial administrator, who lives in Atlanta's historic West End, said whenever she left the city to drive out to neighboring counties for her son's soccer games, she saw a growing number of Trump signs.

Most experts agree that early voting data cannot be compared to 2020, an outlier year because of the pandemic.

After Biden won in Georgia by fewer than 12,000 votes in 2020, Republicans realized they made a tactical error by pushing their supporters away from early voting. This year, the strongest surge in voter turnout in Georgia isn't in the Democratic bastions of metro Atlanta, but in rural red counties, such as Pickens County, a North Georgia county that voted 82% for Trump in 2020 and has seen 157% more early voters this year.

With turnout among Black voters, who make up a third of Georgia's population and form the backbone of the state's Democratic Party, making up just 26% of the early vote, some Repub-



BRYNN ANDERSON Associated Press

SUPPORTERS WATCH Vice President Kamala Harris speak Saturday outside the Atlanta Civic Center, where Spike Lee also took the stage. Elsewhere, prominent GOP women rallied for Republican Donald Trump.

licans are confident Trump will prevail on election day.

"Trump's on a pathway to winning Georgia," said Brian Robinson, a GOP strategist and former communications director for former Gov. Nathan Deal. "Democrats have to have a really incredible election day to win, because the Black vote is nowhere near where it needs to be for Democrats to win statewide."

But Democrats counter that Black voter turnout is not as low as it appears.

Tom Bonier, chief executive of TargetSmart, a Democratic firm that specializes in political data, said part of the lag in Black voter turnout is because Georgia recently changed its rules, allowing registered voters to register as "other" for their race. His modeling assumes a portion of the 9.5% of "other" early voters are Black and estimates Black turnout at 29% — about 2 percentage points lower than 2020.

"There's no doubt there's a lag there," Bonier said. "But that's driven primarily by the fact that you just have white voters pivoting from election day to early voting. It's not new votes."

In a promising sign for Democrats, women have voted early in greater numbers than men: Nearly 56% of those who cast ballots were

women, compared with 44% men.

Although women have gravitated away from Trump after his Supreme Court appointees helped overturn Roe vs. Wade in 2022, the Trump campaign is trying to make a last-ditch appeal to Georgia women.

On Saturday evening, Lara Trump joined South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, Arkansas Gov. Sarah Sanders, former Rep. Tulsi Gabbard and other female Trump supporters in Atlanta for a "Team Trump Women's Tour."

Democrats are outpacing Republicans in new voters: 11% of likely Democratic votes were those who didn't vote in 2020, Bonier noted, compared to less than 10% on the Republican side.

"The fact that Democrats have generated more new voters than Republicans is really a good sign for Democratic intensity," Bonier said. "Otherwise, it's just Republicans shifting votes around and they're losing election day votes."

Touching down in Atlanta on Saturday for a rally with film director Spike Lee and rapper 2 Chainz, Harris told her supporters they had hard work ahead.

"Atlanta, we have three days to get this thing done, and no one can sit on the sidelines," she said. "Let's

knock on doors, let's text, let's call voters. Let's reach out to family and friends and classmates and neighbors and co-workers and new play cousins."

Harris described Trump, who will hold a rally Sunday in Macon, Ga., as "increasingly unstable" and "out for unchecked power."

"We have an opportunity in this election to finally turn the page on a decade of Donald Trump," Harris said. "He's trying to keep us divided and afraid of each other. We're done with that. We're exhausted."

"We're not going back!" the crowd chanted.

The trajectory of Georgia's political realignment has been dramatic over the last decade and a half as its population has swelled from 9.6 million to 10.7 million and a growing number of Asians and Latinos have moved to the state as Black people have migrated from northern cities. Nearly 12% of its population is now foreign born.

In 2012, GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney won Georgia by 8 percentage points; in 2016, Trump won by 5 percentage points. In 2020, Biden won by fewer than 12,000 votes.

But that doesn't mean Democratic victories in Georgia are inevitable. Republicans scored key victo-

ries in 2022, with GOP Gov. Brian Kemp beating Democrat Stacey Abrams by more than 7 percentage points.

"We lean red, and and that only applies when we have a good candidate and the Democrats don't," Robinson said. "A really good Democrat and a bad Republican, the Democrat can win."

Asked if voters consider Trump a better candidate than they did in 2020, Robinson said he thought many white college-educated Republicans in Georgia who had abandoned the GOP in the Trump era had drifted back at the same time as Republicans were attracting more Black and Latino men.

He acknowledged not knowing how many of the 58% white early voters had cast a ballot for Harris.

"I just have a hunch that she ain't winning enough of them," Robinson said.

Even if Harris won Georgia this year, Scott said, strong voter outreach and engagement would be necessary in the coming years.

"We can't say, 'Black and brown people and progressive people have decided on who the president's going to be, and now we can go back to normal,'" she said. "This is the new normal — that Georgia will continue to be the battleground state."

Final polling before election paints an uncertain picture

Unexpected positive news for Harris in Iowa causes buzz amid final days of tight race.

BY KEVIN RECTOR

The final round of polling ahead of Tuesday's presidential election continued to show an incredibly close race across seven battleground states — but also included a shocker out of the solidly red Midwest state of Iowa.

The political world was abuzz this weekend after the latest Des Moines Register/Mediacom Iowa Poll, from respected pollster J. Ann Selzer, showed Vice President Kamala Harris winning the support of 47% of likely voters in the state, compared to 44% for former President Trump.

The same poll had Trump with a 4-point lead over Harris in September, and an 18-point lead over President Biden in June.

A final set of polls out Sunday from the New York Times and Siena College, meanwhile, showed Harris and Trump within striking distance of each other — even within the polls' margin of sampling error as to who is ahead — in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

The Iowa Poll added to widespread hand-wringing over the degree to which polling this cycle is accurately reflecting public sentiment, or missing important trends. Several experts said they still expect Trump to win Iowa, but that there were important takeaways in the Iowa Poll findings that could bode well for Harris if they hold up across the Blue

Wall swing states — including greater-than-expected support for her among white voters.

The poll found women, including those who are older and politically independent, breaking hard toward Harris. Independent women backed Harris by a 28-point margin, the poll showed. Women aged 65 and older favored her by a 2-to-1 margin, 63% to 28%.

Kyle Kondik, a political analyst at the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia, called the Iowa Poll "one final polling curveball" that "just adds even more mystery" to a campaign where polling overall has failed to provide a consistent picture of where the American electorate stands in a monumental race.

"This one is really off the wall," Kondik said of the Iowa Poll. "I don't think Harris is going to win Iowa, but I do think it could be directionally picking up on something, and could be helpful in interpreting other places in the Midwest."

Cornell Belcher, a pollster who worked for both Obama campaigns, said polls can't predict who is going to win a race, but the Iowa Poll does provide a "signal in the noise" that Trump is "not closing strong" and is not capturing voters beyond his existing base — which won't be enough for him to win an election with high voter turnout, as this one may have.

"Trump is not performing well, even in places where he should be performing well," Belcher said. "Has he been able to grow beyond his ceiling? There is very little evidence out there."

For his part, Trump blasted Selzer's poll as unreliable in a post on his social



CHARLIE NEIBERGALL Associated Press

JOHN OLSEN, from left, his daughter Alice and his wife Ruby, of Ankeny, Iowa, cast their ballots during early voting at the Polk County Election Office on Oct. 16.

media platform Truth Social.

"No President has done more for FARMERS, and the Great State of Iowa, than Donald J. Trump. In fact, it's not even close! All polls, except for one heavily skewed toward the Democrats by a Trump hater who called it totally wrong the last time, have me up, BY A LOT," he wrote.

Selzer is highly respected nationally, and responded to Trump's remarks by saying that the latest poll was conducted using the same methodology as was used in the last two presidential races, which both showed Trump winning the state, as he went on to do.

The polling comes as both Harris and Trump barnstorm across the swing states. Both candidates

have cast this election as wildly important, and their opponent as a threat to America's future — which has driven up anxiety among the electorate.

Harris recently held a rally on the National Mall near the place where Trump helped incite the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, warning he would threaten the nation's security again were he to win. Over the weekend, she appeared on "Saturday Night Live," where she tried to put a more humorous spin on the idea that Trump should be left in the past.

Trump, whose campaign has blamed Harris for inflation and poor border security, has also drawn attention for a string of bizarre and threatening remarks from the campaign trail, includ-

ing toward his political rivals. At a rally in Milwaukee on Friday, he appeared to mime oral sex on a microphone. At a rally in Pennsylvania on Sunday, he suggested that if someone was going to take another shot at him, he wouldn't mind if they did so through the section of news media in front of him.

Trump also repeated the lie that he won the 2020 election, and the baseless claim that Democrats are already cheating in this election.

Meanwhile, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who dropped his own long-shot bid for the White House to back Trump, and who Trump has said he would bring into his administration to lead health initiatives, suggested another Trump administration would call for an end to fluoride in drinking water —

which Trump said was "possible." Fluoride protects teeth and its inclusion in small amounts in drinking water is considered one of the greatest public health achievements of the last century.

Belcher said Trump's bizarre and at times racist antics on the trail — and his campaign's intense focus on issues that don't directly affect many Americans, such as transgender healthcare — are contributing to his poor or stagnant performance in recent polling.

"How is that really speaking to that suburban mom who didn't vote for him last time, which was the problem?" Belcher said. "How does that make her vote for him this time?"

Belcher said he doesn't see Trump building support beyond his base, and believes Harris is going to win thanks to large turnout that gives her the votes that are out of Trump's reach. He is more concerned, he said, about political violence when Harris wins, because of Trump's efforts to undermine trust in the election with baseless claims of voter fraud.

Kondik said Harris' position "does seem a little bit better than it was a week or two ago," and it will be interesting to see whether the trends highlighted by the Iowa Poll hold up nationally. Some other polling has suggested a similar shift in places such as Kansas, Nebraska and Ohio, he said, but the trend has not necessarily been showing up in swing state polling.

Kondik said his advice until all the votes are counted is for people to "treat the race as though it's a toss-up" — because that's really the only thing polling has been showing.



KRISTIAN THACKER

NICHOLE THOMPSON holds the remains of her daughter, Alicia Upton. She sued the Riverside County Sheriff's Department last year, saying it failed to monitor and protect her daughter.

A COUNTY'S LETHAL JAIL SYSTEM REPORTS ITS DEADLIEST YEAR

[Riverside, from A1]

She was found, limp, 20 minutes later. In the interim, the camera recorded the young woman preparing to end her life. But no guards, who were tasked with monitoring the video feed, noticed until it was too late.

Upton was the first of 19 detainees at Riverside County jails to die in 2022. That total, the highest the department had reported in at least three decades, ranked the jail system among the most lethal in the nation that year.

The deaths, attributed to homicide, overdose, natural causes or suicide, reflected troubling patterns: neglect by jail employees, access to illicit drugs, and cell assignments that put detainees at increased risk of violence or did not allow for close oversight.

The suicides — at least three of the deaths, but most likely four — offer particular insight into some of those institutional problems and lapses, an investigation by the New York Times and the Desert Sun found.

The county Sheriff's Department failed at times to adequately monitor detainees and intervene when they attempted suicide. Guards did not always enforce rules prohibiting detainees with mental illnesses from blocking cell windows and cameras, which hinders the required safety monitoring. The department has often isolated detainees with severe mental illness, which can exacerbate suicidal intentions.

And, the investigation found, the department has omitted pertinent facts about the deaths in communications to the families of the dead and to the public.

The department has assumed no responsibility for these deaths. California's attorney general last year opened an ongoing civil rights investigation into the increase in deaths in custody, and Riverside County agreed to pay more than \$12 million to settle lawsuits linked to detainee deaths going back to 2020. At least a dozen cases are still pending.

The county sheriff, Chad Bianco, did not respond to interview requests or comment on detailed questions about the news organizations' findings. But on an episode of his podcast this summer devoted to inmate deaths, he said that it can be extremely difficult at times to prevent suicides, and falsely claimed that there had never been any allegation that the department had "somehow done something wrong, or mishandled inmates, or mistreated inmates, or caused their death."

The president of the deputies union declined to comment.

To understand how the suicides occurred, the New York Times and the Desert Sun interviewed dozens of people including current and former jail employees, relatives of the dead, independent medical examiners and civil rights lawyers. The news organizations also reviewed court documents, including arrest records, detainee medical and mental health records, and department notes on jail housing decisions.

Many of the details in this article have never been publicly reported, including the jail security camera footage reviewed by a reporter — material that is rarely seen by outsiders. The department has not released that footage or a dozen other videos requested by the news organizations under the California Public Records Act.

The suicides strongly suggest that, despite a federal class-action suit a decade ago that exposed deficiencies in mental health treatment in Riverside County jails and resulted in new court-ordered requirements, problems persist.

One detainee in 2022, who told guards that he was suicidal, was cleared after a medical check to return to his cell without any suicide-watch protocol. He was found dead about an hour later. He had been in custody for one day.

Another man, who suffered from schizoaffective disorder, had been mostly segregated from other detainees for two years when he was found hanging, and later died. To conceal his actions, he had covered his cell window and camera without any intervention from guards.

There were 14 deaths in Riverside County jails in 2023. No suicides were reported, though the cause of death in five of those cases is still "pending investigation," according to the California Department of Justice. Earlier this year, a

man hanged himself while another detainee tried to alert jail guards but couldn't get their attention.

That suicide and a separate drug overdose prompted Capt. Alyssa Vernal, then the head of the jail, to warn staff members that they were failing to maintain basic jail operating standards — including some of the same lapses identified years ago by the federal court.

Vernal, who did not respond to requests for comment for this article, wrote in an internal email reviewed by the news organizations, "It has become obvious we are not keeping house or following the rules we should be."

'Kept saying she was fine'

When she was 19, Alicia Upton hit the road and left everything behind. She piled into a friend's car in

West Virginia and embarked on what would become a cross-country trip.

In an interview, her mother, Nichole Thompson, recalled believing that she was going on a fleeting adventure before settling back home. "She was resolute when she fixed her mind on something," said Thompson, a librarian who raised Alicia and her older sister in the Appalachian town of Lost Creek.

From a young age, Alicia was an animal lover who would bring home rabbits and raccoons she hoped to keep as pets. At 14, she sold the Xbox she had gotten for Christmas to buy a horse, which she trained herself. To raise money for the road trip, she sold her four-wheeler and some goats, but not the horse, which she left in the care of a friend.

Upton had shown no signs of mental health problems when she

left home, her mother said. She had gone to counseling years earlier after the suicide of a close friend, and her mother felt that she was resilient.

The road trip took Upton to Florida, Texas, and across the country through New Mexico and Arizona. Finally, she called home from Hemet, a former farming town now sprouting strip malls and tract houses. It is near the western end of Riverside, one of the state's fastest-growing counties, which extends from the Arizona border almost to Los Angeles.

She sounded happy, her mother recalled. She said California was beautiful. As the weeks wore on, though, she mentioned that the car needed costly repairs and that she was often looking for places to sleep.

"I walked a fine line, trying to coax her to come back, but also let

her have her freedom," Thompson said. While some companions left for new destinations, Upton stayed put.

As the months turned into a year, it became clear to Thompson that her daughter was living on the streets. "She always knew coming home was an option," Thompson said. "If I pushed her, I felt she would disconnect. She just kept saying she was fine."

Soon, Thompson became concerned that her daughter might be struggling with drugs. She recalled Upton saying irrational things on the phone, like describing seeing relatives who were thousands of miles away.

Eventually, Upton was arrested twice for minor offenses — shoplifting and trespassing. Both times, she was released. But a third arrest was different.

On April 19, 2022, a woman found Upton on her land in San Jacinto. She later told deputies the young woman appeared to be looking for something. When the landowner found a knife on the ground, the two had a confrontation. Upton left and no one was injured. But she was arrested nearby and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and making criminal threats, both misdemeanors.

The paper trail of Upton's incarceration describes her as distraught and combative on arrival at the Robert Presley Detention Center in the city of Riverside. Of the five jails in the county, it is the facility where detainees who need mental health care are most often sent. Reports from the booking note that she did not sign several required documents. One jailer wrote on the signature line that she could not be trusted with a pen.

She was given a mental health rating of "severe" and placed in the women's mental health housing unit, where each cell was monitored by camera. She was not prescribed any medication. When asked if she had ever attempted suicide, she would not answer.

But, deputies wrote in her file, she said she had "multiple personality disorder" and "stated that she 'always kinda wanted to die.'"

A surge in jail deaths

Long before Upton was sent to the jail, the Sheriff's Department had struggled to treat mental illnesses among the nearly 3,700 detainees it housed on any given day.

In jail and prison systems across the country, the population of people with mental health needs has surged in recent decades. More than half the detainees in California's jails have such problems, a 2023 study found. As Riverside County's jails began to operate as de facto mental health facilities, some detainees who claimed mistreatment took action.

Four sued the county in federal court in 2013, in what would become a class action, claiming the department was not providing adequate care.

When a judge ordered experts to inspect the claims, Dr. Bruce Gage, then chief of psychiatry for the Washington State Department of Corrections, found multiple problems. Some detainees were not receiving prescribed medications. Others were being medicated indefinitely on mere suppositions of mental illness. It was unclear whether the call buttons in the cells even worked.

Gage reported that the jails didn't monitor suicidal detainees who were awaiting transfer to psychiatric facilities. The jails had no protocol in place to transition someone who was no longer considered suicidal into less-restrictive living conditions. Detainees either were in a general population and could be outside their cells for hours a day, or confined for all but 15 to 45 minutes.

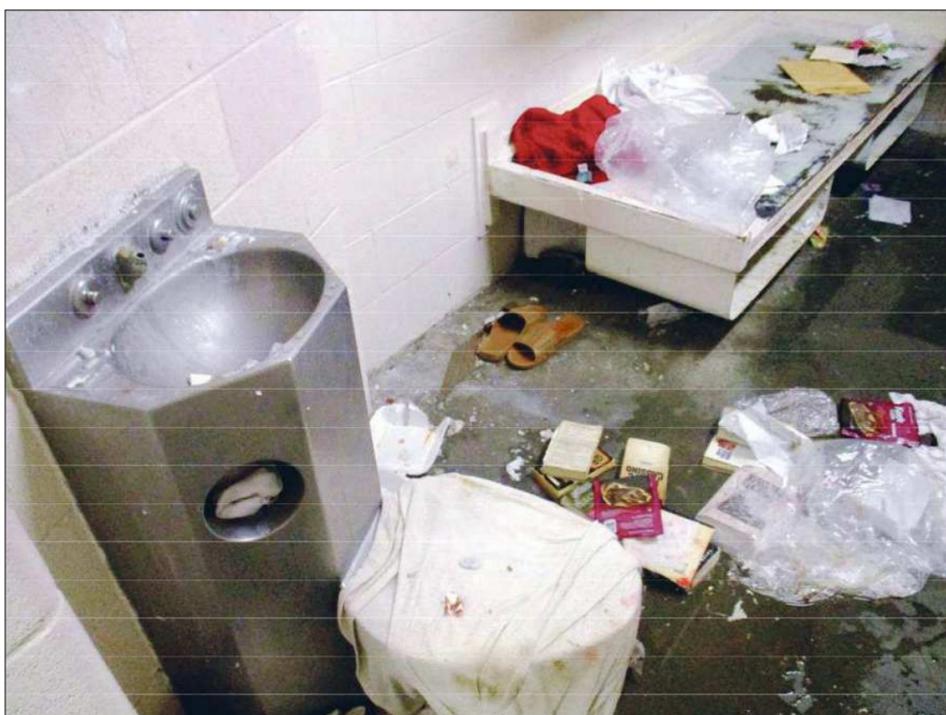
"Riverside County jail system is amongst the most restrictive correctional settings I have visited," Gage wrote. Those struggling with mental illness, he added, are "placed at greater risk of harming themselves under these conditions."

Based on the reports, in 2016 a judge ordered a remedial plan that included ongoing inspections of the facilities and the threat of court intervention. Gage noted that the department had faced a staffing shortage since the 2009 recession, but emphasized that basic standards of care were required by law.

Sara Norman, one of the plaintiffs lawyers in the case, said that the jail had made progress in improving medical care, but less so

'This is not someone who accidentally died. He killed himself in despair. And the sheriff knows that.'

— HUGO SOLIS, whose brother Mario died in custody



CHRISTINA MEDINA Riverside County Sheriff's Department

MARIO SOLIS, who had a history of mental illness, was found dead in his cell at the Murrieta jail. An autopsy report found two pencils, a toothbrush and other objects inside his mouth and throat.

‘We have been concerned for years about the dearth of programming and group and individual therapy for people struggling with mental illness in the jails.’

— SARA NORMAN,
plaintiffs lawyer in a suit against Riverside County

with mental health care. “We have been concerned for years about the dearth of programming and group and individual therapy for people struggling with mental illness in the jails,” she said.

Meanwhile, the county system experienced an increase in jail deaths over the past decade. Among them was a man in 2020 who had been arrested for drug possession and was to be released with a citation for a later court appearance. Instead, he died after being violently extracted from his jail cell by guards while experiencing symptoms of psychosis. His relatives received \$7.5 million this year to settle a lawsuit.

The surge of 19 deaths in 2022 made Riverside’s rate the second-highest in the state, behind Kern County, which had a much smaller jail population. Among the nation’s 15 largest jail systems, Riverside was the second-most deadly, with a rate more than twice that of Chicago, Philadelphia and Dallas.

While some people at the Riverside jails were serving criminal sentences, most — including those who died by suicide — were detainees awaiting trial or other resolution of their cases.

Robert Robinson, 41, was arrested in September 2022 for trying to cash a fraudulent check at a casino. Because he was a gang dropout, he was considered a likely target of violence and was housed alone.

He told jailers while being booked that he was having suicidal thoughts, according to a lawsuit filed by his relatives. He was placed in a cell without a camera and was not put on suicide watch, records show.

The next day, he told deputies he was suicidal, and he met with a medical provider and a mental health nurse, according to court documents. Both cleared him to return to his cell alone. About an hour later, a deputy discovered that he had hanged himself.

Riverside County settled the civil suit with his relatives this past August for \$1.8 million, with no admission of wrongdoing. His family did not respond to requests for comment.

Aaron Aubrey, 28, had an extensive history of mental illness and violence. During his three-year incarceration awaiting trial on a murder charge, he was housed in a mental health unit. He spent significant time in isolation after he was charged with killing another detainee in 2020.

In December 2022 a guard saw that Aubrey had blocked his window and covered his camera, but took no action, according to the coroner’s report. During another security check 40 minutes later, the detainee was found hanging. He died six days later at a hospital.

And this year, Reynaldo Ramos, 55, hanged himself even as a cell neighbor twice tried to alert guards over the intercom, according to a complaint filed with the county by the man’s relatives. The guards didn’t respond, the complaint said.

The claim attributed that account to an anonymous letter sent to the family’s lawyer and separately to a reporter for the Times and the Desert Sun, containing those closely guarded details. A person who had reviewed jail surveillance video of the unit also described the failed alert efforts.

Ramos, who had been given a mental health rating of severe when admitted to the jail on drug charges, was discovered unresponsive during a routine safety check, according to an internal incident report provided to the Times.

‘Man down!’

In the days after Upton’s arrest, her mind continued to fray.

On April 28, 2022, a judge ordered her to undergo a mental competency evaluation. Her criminal case was suspended, and with it the possibility of bail, until the findings were reported. When she was admitted to the jail, she had briefly been placed in a safety cell, without items that could be used for self-harm. Soon after, she was placed in the mental health unit.

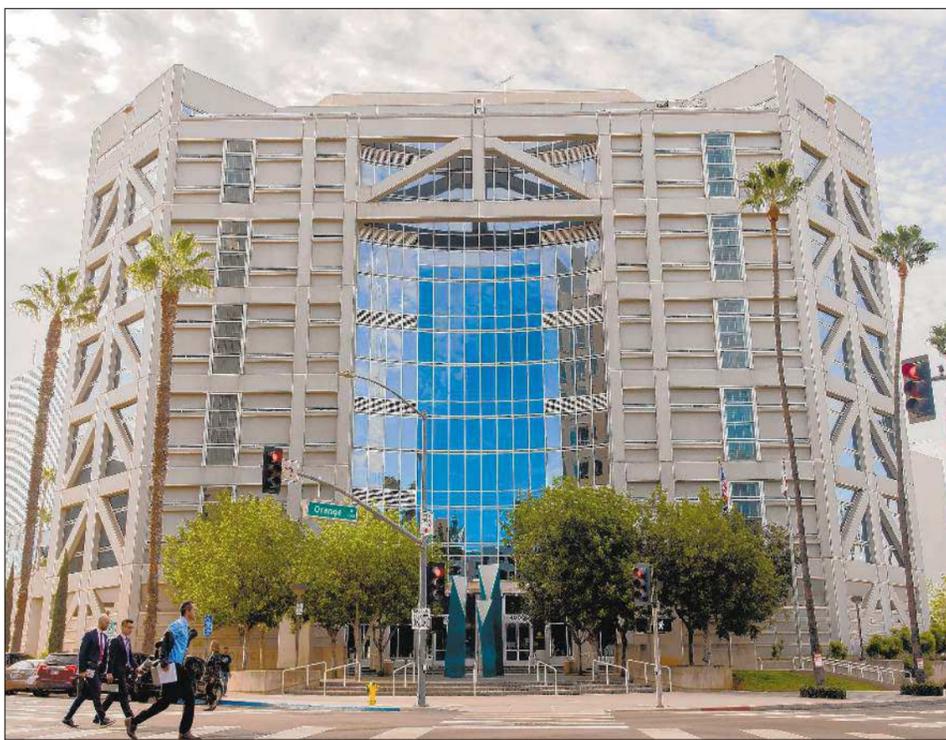
That evening, the surveillance video showed, she was restless. Her cellmate was asleep on the top bunk as Upton paced and looked out of the cell door’s window. Meal trays were stacked at the foot of the bed and clothes were scattered nearby.

At 8:13 p.m., she pressed the intercom button, but got only a few



KRISTIAN THACKER

PICTURES of Alicia Upton cover a folder beneath a letter that her mother wrote to her in jail, but Upton died before receiving it, so it was stamped “Return to sender.” Upton’s mother said she struggled for weeks to learn even basic details of what had happened.



ALEX WELSH

OF THE FIVE jails in Riverside County, the Robert Presley Detention Center, where Upton was found dead, is the facility where detainees who need mental health care are most often sent.

words out before the deputy hung up. Moments later, Upton can be heard in the video saying she intends to hang herself.

She looped the bedsheet around her neck and, for a few minutes, tried anchoring it. She smacked her head three times. She looked toward the camera. At one point, it sounded as if she was weeping.

Sitting on the bottom bunk, she tied the sheet above her and tightened it around her neck.

At 8:18 p.m., Upton raised a middle finger to the cell camera. Over the next few minutes, the video captured her final movements. By 8:22, she was still.

It all unfolded in view of the deputies who were supposed to monitor the feed from her cell. A guard at a workstation near the control room was responsible for constantly tracking the video footage of the unit, according to three former jail employees speaking on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals from the department.

Meanwhile, a deputy in the control room reminded a trainee to occasionally scan the images. They looked up at the feeds from the roughly 40 cameras, two of the former employees said. Spotting Upton, the deputy shouted over the radio, “Man down!”

She had been hanging by the bedsheet for 16 minutes before guards flashed lights signaling an emergency, video footage shows. Two deputies and a jail nurse entered her cell and began resuscitation efforts, but it was futile.

The next morning, back in West Virginia, Upton’s mother was pounding on her door, she recalled in an interview. It was a local deputy, who told her to call the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department.

She remembers asking, “Does this mean she’s dead?”

Yes.

“I thought my heart would stop,” she said.

Sheriff is the coroner

In Riverside County, the final

accounting of how people die depends to a large extent on Sheriff Bianco.

A veteran of the department, Bianco was first elected sheriff in 2018. He has cast himself as a right-wing firebrand at odds with the state’s left-leaning Legislature and governor. He has also criticized Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta’s investigation of jail deaths as a “political stunt.”

California is one of just three states that allow elected law enforcement officials to oversee coroners’ offices. Until recently in Riverside County, that meant the Sheriff’s Department typically investigated deaths at its jails while also supervising the pathologists conducting the autopsies. (This year, the department began outsourcing those autopsies.) The final report about the cause of death is signed by the sheriff, who also serves as the coroner.

The state Legislature has considered bills to separate the offices but none has passed. The California Medical Assn. has long advocated a separation, saying that the consolidation of the responsibilities of sheriff and coroner is an “immense conflict of interest.”

The New York Times and the Desert Sun found discrepancies when comparing the department’s public death summaries of the 2022 suicides against jail records turned over in civil suits, the video of Upton’s death and information provided by current and former employees.

Mario Solis, who had a history of mental illness, was jailed after a scuffle with a grocery store security guard over a stolen bag of Skittles, according to court records. In September 2022, his mother, Sara Solis, was told that he had died alone in a cell — but not much else. About six months later, she received the department’s summary report.

It included findings from an autopsy conducted days after Solis, 31, died in the mental health unit of the jail in Murrieta. Inside his

mouth and throat were two pencils, a toothbrush, a plastic cap and bars of soap, the report said. It also noted cut marks on his arms.

A deputy coroner wrote that Solis had “an unspecified mental health history” and had been prescribed two psychiatric medications.

Sheriff Bianco attributed Solis’ death to suffocation and blood loss after his jugular vein was punctured. He certified the death as an accident.

More than a year later, a lawyer representing the Solis family in a suit against the county received a trove of information the Sheriff’s Department had not previously disclosed. Jail medical staff had treated Solis for schizophrenia, including with antipsychotic medication. On three occasions, he said he was suicidal and talked about stabbing himself with a pencil.

During a chaotic five-month incarceration, he was transferred 10 times among four county jails and did two stints in intensive psychiatric treatment.

From the start, Solis had pleaded for help and medication, his scribbled notes show. “I am not well. Please help me before things worsen,” one read. In another, he requested a psychiatric visit, which was arranged but later canceled.

On Sept. 2, 2022, Solis was ruled incompetent to stand trial and ordered to a hospital for treatment. The next day, he was found unconscious in his cell. He had lacerations on his wrist and neck, a nurse wrote. His neck was red and bruised. His mouth and nose were bloody.

Photos of the cell show flooding from the toilet that soaked books and trash. One wall was filled with erratic writing.

The department’s reports do not explain why Sheriff Bianco determined that the death was accidental.

Bianco has accused media outlets and advocacy groups of mis-

representing the jail deaths to the public, including on his podcast episode on the topic, which was promoted on the department’s social media channels. Without naming names, the sheriff said that a detainee who had died after swallowing objects, including a pencil, had a “propensity to eat things.”

“They suffocated themselves, basically,” Mr. Bianco said. “But we don’t believe it was a suicide.”

In 1,600 pages of jail medical notes, there is no mention of Solis habitually swallowing harmful objects, as the sheriff claimed.

“This is not someone who accidentally died,” Hugo Solis, one of Solis’ brothers, said in an interview. “He killed himself in despair. And the sheriff knows that.”

A forensic pathologist and a medical anthropologist reviewed the coroner’s report for this article. Both said that, aside from the mention of Solis’ psychiatric history and prescriptions, it was unclear whether the coroner staff had reviewed his extensive mental health records or knew about his suicide threats. Both said that information was crucial for determining whether the death was a suicide.

Dr. Judy Melinek, a board-certified forensic pathologist, asked, “Why was he left alone and unsupervised after showing severe signs of mental health deterioration?”

‘It was their job’

Thompson, Alicia Upton’s mother, said she was stunned at how little information the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department would share about her daughter’s death.

For weeks, she said, she struggled to learn even basic details about the events leading up to the suicide. She asked to see any reports and obtain any surveillance video, though she wasn’t sure if she could bear to watch it. But the department declined to provide much of the material she requested.

Thompson sued the Sheriff’s Department last year, saying that it had failed to monitor and protect her daughter. In its response, the county denied that deputies had failed to monitor Upton at the time of her suicide. However, according to two former employees, two jail workers faced discipline for lapses.

When a reporter described to Thompson the footage from the jail cell, she said she had long suspected that her daughter had been desperate for help — but had been ignored.

“It was their job to keep her safe,” Thompson said. “It was their job to monitor her. They didn’t care to do it.”

Christopher Damien is a reporter with the Desert Sun, reporting about law enforcement in Southern California’s inland and desert communities. He is part of The New York Times’ Local Investigations Fellowship. This article is co-published with the Los Angeles Times. Justin Mayo and Ana Facio-Krajcer contributed reporting. Julie Tate contributed research. This article was reported in partnership with Big Local News at Stanford University.

If you are having thoughts of suicide, call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline or go to SpeakingOfSuicide.com/resources for a list of additional resources.

Trump's culture of retribution spreads in U.S.

[Revenge, from A1] coming from out of town. They have had that farm for five generations. A worker in Arizona had her dogs poisoned."

Trump's increasingly dark vision of America as evidenced by his recent hate-inflected rally at Madison Square Garden is less of unity and promise than of suspicion and grievance directed at those who cross him and his white, working-class base. He has so normalized outrageousness with coarse language and cutting asides that his pronouncements and well-documented lies — which years ago would have doomed a candidate — have lost their capacity to shock even some of the conservative Christians who back him.

"He's speaking to anger and fear and giving voice to it," said William Howell, a politics professor at the University of Chicago and co-author of "Presidents, Populism, and the Crisis of Democracy." "He didn't invent divisive rhetoric. We have a long history with that. But he's taken it to new heights. He stands apart from any American president in history for what he's doing to the country. He's a destructive, corrosive force."

A recent study by the Chicago Project on Security and Threats suggests how Trump has incited extremes and increased the potential for political violence: Six percent of Americans — the equivalent of 15 million adults — believe force is justified to return Trump to the White House. Eight percent — about 21 million adults — agree that force could be used to prevent Trump from returning as president.

Trump has said that "sometimes revenge can be justified." He's called for vengeance against political opponents, including President Biden, and suggested that retired Gen. Mark A. Milley, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, deserved to be executed.

Republicans have sought to soften such sentiment by describing it more as campaign rhapsodizing than actual intent. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) told CNN in July that "Donald Trump has been the one that's been very clear: that his vengeance is going to be by winning and making America great again. Not going after his political opponents."

Trump has been described as a fascist by John F. Kelly, his former chief of staff. He at times sounds like a newsreel from 1930s Germany, calling his enemies



AMANDA JONES, a Louisiana school librarian, was harassed and threatened by right-wing elements after she spoke out against censorship. She said she fears the vindictive atmosphere Donald Trump has created.

"vermin" and "sick people" and claims immigrants are "poisoning the blood of our country." He invokes gangster Al Capone and speaks fondly of authoritarians including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who Trump called "a friend of mine." The CIA concluded that while Trump was in office in 2018, Salman ordered the killing of opposition journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Impeached twice and a convicted felon who faces more trials, Trump has said that he, and by extension his loyalists, have been persecuted by a "wacko" and unfair state. He is, according to the rambling narratives at his campaign stops, the antidote and protector of the working class. "In the end they're not coming after me," he tells his supporters, "they're coming after you, and I'm just standing in the way."

Since his campaign in 2016, Trump has inflamed American culture wars and played on the politics of the other. That strategy, which later propelled the deadly Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, has been amplified of late by his calls that if reelected he would summon the military and Justice Department to put down the "enemy from within."

Moved by his messaging, his followers and other hard-right conservatives have rallied against COVID-19 re-

strictions, threatened teachers and librarians opposed to book banning and, in a radical case, plotted to kidnap Democratic Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. Some of those convicted of crimes connected to the Jan. 6 assault on the Capitol have said they were motivated by Trump.

Amanda Jones has felt that wrath. A Louisiana school librarian, she was harassed and threatened by right-wing elements after she spoke out against the censorship. She said she fears the vindictive atmosphere Trump has created.

"Our presidential election will determine how far it goes," she said, adding that if Trump wins "it will ramp up hate. We'll see a large flight of educators and librarians from their jobs. Trump's made it OK for people to hate and attack. I noticed it right after the George Floyd protests. People started saying the quiet part out loud."

Tucson Mayor Regina Romero said Trump's repetition of hate speech against migrants over the years has added dangerous overtones to the nation's immigration debate. "If you repeat lies long enough people believe them," said Romero, a Democrat and daughter of immigrant farmworkers from Mexico. "It's a very scary type of language.... It's not an invasion [of migrants]. It's racist rhetoric."

Trump and his loyalists have taken particular aim at

discrediting the nation's election system. Republicans have filed dozens of lawsuits to preemptively challenge the Tuesday election if Trump loses.

Increasing pressure has been directed at election workers and officials on the front lines. After facing attacks and threats four years ago, some are now wearing Kevlar vests to protect them from would-be gunmen. A number are renting cars because their vehicles are being followed. Panic buttons and bulletproof glass have been installed at election offices, which are also monitoring mail for envelopes laced with fentanyl.

The trouble, said Patrick, is coming from a "vocal minority that wants to suck the oxygen out of the room and sow chaos." She added that election officials have received ominous texts and phone calls, including one in which a voice said, "I know your son's window is on the second floor by the oak tree."

Trump sought retribution against those who opposed him during his presidency, including former FBI Director James B. Comey, and has vowed to do so again if reelected.

"This is how fascism comes to America, not with jackboots and salutes," Robert Kagan, a political commentator and former editor-at-large for the Washington Post, wrote in 2016, "but with a television hustler, a phony billionaire, a

textbook egomaniac."

By the time Trump had glided down his golden escalator to announce his candidacy a year earlier, the nation was accustomed to rancor and sharpening divisions. The rise of Christian nationalism in the 1980s, the government shutdowns in the 1990s, the emergence of the tea party in the 2000s, along with an atomized and increasingly partisan media, fueled a politics of recrimination and discontent. An unabashed showman, Trump plugged into the digital age, connecting the vitriol of social media to the insecurities and fears of a working class that felt angry and betrayed by liberalism and a changing global economic order.

"It's a populist, anti-establishment era. It's about defining who you're against and undermining that at a time when life is very transformative," said Mike Madrid, a longtime political consultant and co-founder of the anti-Trump Lincoln Project. "By pitting people against one another, if you are shameless enough, you will ultimately win. Trump is a product and articulator of his time. He's treating the presidency like a social media influencer, not a presidential candidate."

Right-wing political activist Charlie Kirk is playing on a desire for retaliation in working to turn out his social media following to vote for Trump. The co-founder of

Turning Point USA, a student political movement, Kirk, who has 4 million Instagram followers and was once too radical for the Republican Party, named one of his podcasts "Retribution Tour 2024?" He asked his listeners, "The left warns that if Donald Trump wins the presidency again in 2024, he will use it to seek revenge on the federal government. But the question is: Is that even bad?"

In another podcast in April, Kirk said a number of Trump allies and advisors, including Peter Navarro and Stephen K. Bannon, have been imprisoned unfairly by a Justice Department weaponized by Democrats. "If the other side is willing to put you in jail and put leg irons on you and put handcuffs on you and our side is only willing to write op-eds, we will lose," he said. "It's time for us to start to use handcuffs and leg irons too."

Such is the fierce tenor of the Trump campaign.

"What will it look like if Trump is elected?" asked Howell, the politics professor. "He has promised retribution. This isn't about comprehensive policy. It will be an all-out assault on the administrative state." He'll lay claim to the Justice Department, Howell said, and seek vengeance against those who he believes have done him wrong.

Strong, the teacher from Texas, said he has been struck over the last two years by right-wing vehemence directed at educators opposed to banning certain books on race and sexuality. His Texas Freedom to Read Project monitors censorship attempts in school districts.

"What astounded me," said Strong, who lives in Austin, "was the organization, amount of money and the vitriol behind book banning campaigns. It's been incredibly nasty."

He said conservatives with large Instagram and X accounts "hunt for people to target" and bring those people to their followers. One person posted on social media last year: "You [Strong] will regret your pedophilia when we get power back. You will be in prison for life. Honestly, I want death penalty for people like you pedo boy." Another post read, "Maybe I should reach out to local sexual predators and tell them frank strong's kid is fair game."

Such vitriol, Strong said, is part of the atmosphere of the times. "Trump rode into power with a sense that it was culturally permissible to be horrible to other people in public."

Georgia judge rejects GOP attempt to block hand-returned mail ballots

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — A Georgia judge on Saturday rejected a Republican lawsuit trying to block counties from opening election offices on Saturday and Sunday to let voters hand in their mail ballots in person.

The lawsuit only named Fulton County, a Democratic stronghold that includes most of the city of Atlanta and is home to 11% of the state's voters. But at least five other populous counties that tend to vote for Democrats also announced election offices would open over the weekend to allow hand return of absentee ballots.

The lawsuit was filed late Friday and cited a section of Georgia law that says ballot drop boxes cannot be open past the end of advance voting, which ended Friday. But state law says voters can deliver their absentee ballots in person to county election offices until the close of polls at 7 p.m. on election day. Despite that clear wording, lawyer Alex Kaufman initially claimed in an emergency hearing Saturday that voters aren't allowed to hand-deliver absentee ballots that were mailed to them.

Kaufman then argued that voters should be blocked from hand-delivering their ballots between the close of early in-person voting on Friday and the beginning of election day on Tuesday, even though he said it was fine for ballots to arrive by mail during that



A WORKER at the Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections works to process absentee ballots at the State Farm Arena on Nov. 2, 2020, in Atlanta.

period. It has long been the practice for Georgia election offices to accept mail ballots over the counter.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Kevin Farmer, in an online hearing, repeatedly rejected Kaufman's arguments before orally ruling against him.

"I find that it is not a violation of those two code sections for a voter to hand-return their absentee ballots," Farmer said.

Republicans have been focused on the conduct of elections in Fulton County for years, after then-President Trump falsely blamed Fulton County workers for defrauding him in the 2020

election in Georgia.

State GOP Chairman Josh McKoon accused counties controlled by Democrats of "illegally accepting ballots." The issue quickly gained traction online Saturday among Republican activists, particularly after a Fulton County election official sent an email to election workers saying that observers would not be allowed to sit inside election offices while ballots were turned in.

Fulton County elections director Nadine Williams said during the hearing that these were county offices and not polling places, and thus partisan poll watchers

have never been allowed to observe those spaces.

But hours later, Williams sent out an email clarifying that the process should be open to the public and no credentials or badges were needed. She noted that members of the independent monitoring team that is observing Fulton County's election processes were also on site and that investigators from the secretary of state's office might also be present.

Fulton County spokesperson Jessica Corbitt-Dominguez said that as of just before 5 p.m. Saturday, 105 ballots had been received at the four locations.

In hometown, Biden slams 'macho guys'

BY MATT BROWN AND WILL WEISSERT

SCRANTON, Pa. — President Biden made a final campaign stop for Vice President Kamala Harris and again let loose, saying he'd like to hit back — literally — at faux "macho guys."

Biden first slammed Harris' rival, former President Trump, and his supporters on policy issues during a speech here Saturday in the city of his birth.

"There's one more thing Trump and his Republican friends want to do. They want to have a giant tax cut for the wealthy," Biden told the local chapter of the carpenters union. Then, apparently referencing people backing Trump, he added, "Now, I know some of you guys are tempted to think it's macho guys."

"I tell you what, man, when I was in Scranton, we used to have a little trouble going down the plot once in a while," Biden continued. "These are the kind of guys you'd like to smack in the ass."

During a rally Saturday in North Carolina, Trump poked fun at Biden, asking the crowd, "I don't even know, is he still around?"

Biden's comment in Scranton drew laughs from the crowd. But it was another moment of his veering off the political script, something that's now happening frequently with the president — even though he has played a limited role in promoting Harris, making few campaign stops for his one-time running mate.

Last week, Biden

sparked an uproar by responding to racist comments at a recent Trump rally made by the comedian Tony Hinchcliff, who referred to the U.S. island territory of Puerto Rico as a "floating island of garbage."

"The only garbage I see floating out there is his supporters — his, his demonization of Latinos is unconscionable, and it's un-American," Biden said in response.

White House press officials altered the official transcript of Biden's remarks to "his supporter's," drawing objections from federal workers who transcribe what the president says for posterity, according to two government officials and an internal email obtained by the Associated Press.

And Biden, during a recent stop in New Hampshire, said of Trump, "We've got to lock him up." Biden quickly amended his comments to note he meant that Democrats need to "politically lock him up."

During Saturday's remarks in Scranton, Biden also offered traditional exhortations that those in attendance vote, saying they should do it "for yourself and your families, people you grew up with, the people you come from."

"Don't forget where you come from," Biden thundered at one point to shouts and applause. "Don't leave behind the people you grew up with."

Associated Press writers Brown and Weissert reported from Scranton and Washington, respectively. Times staff contributed to this report.

Restaurant wants 'everybody to be welcome'

[Arellano, from A1] to eat and rest in the comfy booths before the final stretch to Los Angeles.

Glen Bell, a World War II veteran who opened a hamburger stand across the street in the early 1950s, would eat at Mitla in the evenings, then go back to his own spot and try to reverse engineer those delicious tacos.

Mitla's owners eventually wised up and invited him to learn how to properly prepare them.

Bell eventually lost his hamburger stand in a divorce — but not his dream to become a millionaire off Mexican food. He opened a string of taco chains before landing on the one that made him rich: Taco Bell.

Mitla Cafe, meanwhile, became an Inland Empire institution, hosting the likes of Cesar Chavez and other Mexican American leaders. Generations of families lined up every weekend; employees stayed on for decades. The restaurant sponsored Little League teams and hosted community groups almost weekly.

They stayed in the West Side barrio even as the city weathered an economic downturn. The opening of what's now Interstate 215 in the 1960s siphoned away Route 66 traffic. Small businesses and major employers closed; longtime residents moved away. San Bernardino leaders focused their redevelopment efforts on downtown.

Irene Montaño, a daughter-in-law of the founders, was thinking of selling or closing when I told the Mitla story in my 2012 book, "Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America."

That same year, Montaño's son Michael and his cousin Steven Oquendo took over the family business. It has undergone a renaissance ever since.

The two refurbished a banquet hall next door that's now booked most of the year. They introduced new specials and tweaked recipes. Instead of canned tomatoes for salsas, for instance, they're roasting them like in the old days.

Mitla won over a new generation of fans after being featured on the likes of Netflix, the New York Times and "CBS Sunday Morning," often with me offering praise. I was glad to do it, not just because the food is amazing but also because they're emblematic of how we Latinos really don't know much about ourselves.

Unless you were from the Inland Empire, you probably had never heard of Mitla Cafe — and shame on you and me for not knowing. If you don't know your own past, I tell students in my classes, how are you supposed to confront the present and future?

Visions of combo platters and those glorious tacos filled my mind as I barreled down the 15. The trip was uneventful save for a small red sign on a wire fence outside Victorville that proclaimed "Viva Trump."

Oh, yeah, I thought. The presidential election.

The last few years have been tough for Mitla, and



COUSINS Steven Oquendo, from left, and Michael Montaño of Mitla Cafe meet with columnist Gustavo Arellano. The pair feel that favoring national brands over local business is emblematic of today's partisan politics.



BRIDGE construction on Mount Vernon Avenue has cut into Mitla Cafe's business. The restaurant is now closed on Mondays and Tuesdays to save money.

not just because of COVID-19. A bridge construction project cut off traffic from the 215. After that finished in 2019, more bridge construction on Mount Vernon Avenue — the old Route 66 — blocked off vehicles from the south.

To save money, Montaño and Oquendo now close Mitla on Mondays and Tuesdays. There would be no historic tacos for me on the last day of my Southwest road trip.

Instead, the cousins suggested we meet at Chubzies Burgers, owned by a former street vendor who recently opened the brick-and-mortar.

"You want symmetry?" said the deep-voiced Montaño, 48. He pointed to a row of chairs near the cash register as we began to chow down. "They bought those from an old Taco Bell."

A line formed out the door, even as the shopping plaza around the small restaurant was desolate. A security guard made the rounds outside.

I asked how San Bernar-

dino was doing.

"It's a mess, man. It's a mess here," said the burly Oquendo, 51.

For decades, San Bernardino has stood as a metaphor for the decline of the California dream. A Times series nine years ago labeled it a "Broken City," drawing heated pushback from residents — but also shrugs of acknowledgment. It exited bankruptcy two years ago, and two City Council members have been censured by their colleagues in the last four years.

More than anything, Montaño and Oquendo fault city officials for a lack of vision. San Bernardino isn't the only city in the Inland Empire that has suffered economic disinvestment over the last 30 years — but Montaño pointed out that many of them did something about it.

"There was a big downturn in Redlands," he said while munching on tater tots. "Their mall was emptied out. Their downtown was pretty sparse. And if

you go there now, it's bars, restaurants, mom-and-pop shops."

Montaño contrasted that with San Bernardino, where some council members have bragged about bringing in chain restaurants near the Cal State campus.

"It's going to be packed," they say — "It's going to be lines of people trying to get in it," he said. "I don't want that."

He pointed at the tater tots and our smashburgers, then around Chubzies. "I want this."

The cousins feel that favoring national brands over local business is emblematic of today's partisan politics and its disregard for what really matters — something they experienced after Gov. Gavin Newsom stopped by Mitla Cafe in 2022.

Over chips, salsa and guacamole, the cousins grilled Newsom about the Mount Vernon bridge project. The governor immediately told a staffer to look into why a large mound of

dirt that was polluting the neighborhood was still there, according to Montaño.

A day later, the mound was gone.

"Newsom sat down and asked real questions and just was great," Montaño said. "No media, no press."

Then, the cousins posted photos of Newsom's visit on Instagram.

Soon, longtime customers accused them of being Newsom stooges, even though neither Montaño nor Oquendo is a Democrat. Many vowed to never return. Other politicians have visited Mitla since, but the cousins have learned their lesson.

"That's why I'm afraid to talk politics" publicly, Oquendo confessed. "Because it's so divisive now that it's unbelievable."

"Everything's a national issue now," Montaño replied. "Some of the things that people talk about nationally are the first topics out of people's mouths, not like, 'Oh, did you see what's going on in the 5th Ward of San Bernardino? Do you see what's going on in the 3rd Ward?'"

"And when it affects people locally, they blame the national side," Oquendo added.

"I never knew if the mayor was Republican or not, or the City Council. Now, they put that at forefront, because they need to be identified with that to get that audience."

"I want people to hear the local voice and apply that to the local condition," Montaño said, "versus applying everything to the national narrative."

The easiest way for me to shut someone up about the presidential race is by asking them to name all their City Council members. Few can. I then challenge them to care about local politics, which I tell them affects their day-to-day lives far more than Beltway bull.

Great tacos weren't the

only reason I wanted to visit Mitla. Oquendo is a Republican who has never voted for Trump; Montaño is an independent who leans liberal. Neither would disclose the presidential candidate he's supporting, lest Mitla suffer another customer backlash. I asked instead how they manage to set aside their political differences.

"I'm way more opinionated than him," admitted Oquendo, who differs with his cousin mostly on how to reform local government. "But I'll rant and yell and tell him s—, and then he'll go, 'OK, now listen. This, this, this and this.' And then it makes sense."

Montaño laughed. Oquendo continued. "And that's what today's people are lacking. They can't sit there, listen to the other side and go, 'OK, you know what? That makes sense. Let's put two together and find an answer.'"

"If we're small-business owners, we have to be flexible and nimble," Montaño added.

"I have certain political beliefs," Oquendo said. "But you want everybody to be welcome."

I ended by asking whether they're hopeful for the future.

"Always got to be," Oquendo said.

"There's been times in the last 12 years where we've had more confidence than cash," Montaño responded. "But we've always remained committed to always stay true to what we've always been doing, and that things are going to take care of itself."

I drove down the 215, which turned into the 91, which turned into the 55, which led back home. Nearly 3,000 miles through seven states in seven days — from the border to the desert, valleys to mountains, casinos to small restaurants — to solve the riddle of the Latino vote in this election year.

I didn't find the answer. Anyone who says they have it is a liar. But I can tell you this: My faith in this country and its future is stronger than ever because of the Latinos I met.

Montaño and Oquendo, Clifton town Councilmember Janeene Carrillo and Española farmer Don Bustos, La Mutua in Colorado, the Latino Youth Leadership Conference and all the other folks I talked to — they make this country better.

They are the Americans the Harris and Trump campaigns need to win over, the Americans this country needs to stay great as Latinos become a bigger and bigger share of the population.

And they're ready to decide this election. Is this country ready for them?

CAMINOS DEL SOUTHWEST

Seven days. Seven states. Nearly 3,000 miles. Gustavo Arellano talks to Latinos across the Southwest about their hopes, fears and dreams in this election year.

Kennedy says Trump would push to remove fluoride from water

The idea 'sounds OK to me. You know it's possible,' the former president told a news program later.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHOENIX — Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a prominent proponent of debunked public health claims whom Donald Trump has promised to put in charge of health initiatives, said that Trump would push to remove fluoride from drinking water on his first day in office if elected president.

Fluoride strengthens teeth and reduces cavities by replacing minerals lost during normal wear and tear, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The addition of low levels of fluoride to drinking water has long been considered one of the greatest public health achievements of the last century.

Kennedy made the

declaration Saturday on the social media platform X alongside a variety of claims about the health effects of fluoride.

"On January 20, the Trump White House will advise all U.S. water systems to remove fluoride from public water," Kennedy wrote. Trump and his wife, Melania Trump, "want to Make America Healthy Again," he added, repeating a phrase Trump often uses and links to Kennedy.

Trump told NBC News on Sunday that he had not spoken to Kennedy about fluoride yet, "but it sounds OK to me. You know it's possible."

The former president declined to say whether he would seek a Cabinet role for Kennedy, a job that would require Senate confirmation, but added, "He's going to have a big role in the administration."

Asked whether banning certain vaccines would be on the table, Trump said he would talk to Kennedy and others about that. Trump described Kennedy as "a very talented guy and has



ALEX BRANDON Associated Press

FORMER President Trump has said he'd put Robert F. Kennedy Jr., left, in charge of health initiatives.

strong views."

The sudden and unexpected weekend social media post evoked the chaotic policymaking that defined Trump's White House tenure, when he would issue policy declarations on Twitter at virtually all hours. It also underscored the concerns many experts have about Kennedy, who has long promoted debunked

theories about vaccine safety, having influence over U.S. public health.

In 1950, federal officials endorsed water fluoridation to prevent tooth decay, and continued to promote it even after fluoride toothpaste brands hit the market several years later. Though fluoride can come from a number of sources, drinking water is the main source for

Americans, researchers say.

Officials lowered their recommendation for drinking water fluoride levels in 2015 to address a tooth condition called fluorosis, which can cause spots on teeth and was becoming more common in U.S. kids.

In August, a federal agency determined "with moderate confidence" that there is a link between higher levels of fluoride exposure and lower IQ in kids. The National Toxicology Program based its conclusion on studies involving fluoride levels at about twice the recommended limit for drinking water.

A federal judge later cited that study in ordering the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to further regulate fluoride in drinking water.

U.S. District Judge Edward Chen cautioned that it's not certain that the amount of fluoride typically added to water is causing lower IQ in children, but he concluded that mounting research points to an unreasonable risk that it could be. He ordered the EPA to take

steps to lower that risk, but didn't say what those measures should be.

In his X post Saturday, Kennedy tagged Michael Connett, the lead attorney representing the plaintiff in that lawsuit, the environmental advocacy group Food & Water Watch.

Kennedy's anti-vaccine organization has a lawsuit pending against news organizations including the Associated Press, accusing them of violating antitrust laws by taking action to identify misinformation, including about COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines.

Kennedy is on leave from the group but is listed as one of its attorneys in the lawsuit.

What role Kennedy might hold if Trump wins on Tuesday remains unclear. Kennedy recently told NewsNation that Trump asked him to "reorganize" agencies including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration and some agencies under the Department of Agriculture.

BUSINESS



Los Angeles Times photo illustration; Rich Pedroncelli / Associated Press

THE WIDE SHOT

Weighing Newsom's film and TV tax credit boost

Governor's new proposal signals a significant attempt to address a key factor that has driven much of Hollywood production elsewhere

BY RYAN FAUGHNDER

Gov. Gavin Newsom's proposal to more than double the size of California's film and television tax credit program won't fix all of the Golden State's problems when it comes to the stunning decline in entertainment production here.

But it does signal a significant — albeit belated — attempt to address one of the key factors that has driven much of Hollywood's economy to regions with more generous government incentives.

Newsom on Oct. 27 announced his intention to expand the annual tax credit amount to \$750 million, compared with the current total of \$330 million, my colleagues Samantha Masunaga and Christi Carras reported. That would top the yearly cap for New York, where the incentive program is limited to \$700 million. Crucially, though, Georgia, another huge production hub, has no cap.

It's not exactly an immediate fix for California's production crisis. If approved by the Legislature, the boost would take effect as early as July 2025 and span five years. But it is action that industry leaders have been calling for with increasing intensity as Los Angeles continues to lose ground to other locales around the nation and internationally.

Industry leaders and experts who spoke to The Times generally welcomed the proposal as a much-needed step, while cautioning that more remains to be done.

FilmLA, the organization that handles film permits and tracks on-location production in the Los Angeles area, said in a recent study that California's share of the global production market for movies and TV shows fell to 18% in 2023 from 22% the year before, measured in terms of projects released during that period. Production activity in Greater Los Angeles is at near-historic lows, falling 5% in the third quarter, according to the nonprofit's latest report.

It's an issue that can't be fully illustrated with data. People come to Los Angeles to build a career but end up having to leave their families for weeks at a time to take a job in New Mexico or Hungary or wherever. It's not ideal.

The reasons for the pullback in production in recent years have been many and varied. Much of this has been driven by studios' at-

tempts to stop financial losses after overspending to compete with Netflix in the streaming wars. During and after the writers' and actors' strikes of 2023, the entertainment and media conglomerates took advantage of the opportunity to pare back spending, resulting in canceled shows and tens of thousands of layoffs.

The U.S., and California in particular, has taken a disproportionate share of the pain. Global production activity dropped 17% in the third quarter compared with the same period in the pre-strikes year of 2022, according to tracking firm ProdPro. However, the U.S. suffered a much steeper decline, with volume plummeting 35%. In contrast, Canada saw a 1% increase during that period.

Why is California falling behind? Many cite the high costs of doing business in Los Angeles, as well as the allure of government incentives in such filming hot

spots as Georgia, New York, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Some studio executives have begun to place blame on the new contracts forged by the entertainment industry unions. Outgoing Sony Pictures Entertainment Chief Executive Tony Vinciguerra, speaking last week at international TV market Mipcom in Cannes, France, warned that the higher costs of last year's deals are part of what's forcing studios to seek cheaper locations.

Vinciguerra also criticized California for not responding to "what's going on in the world of incentives."

"The cost of doing business in California is so high that it's very difficult to price out a film," he said.

Duncan Crabtree-Ireland, national executive director of the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, strongly pushed back in a statement, accus-

ing Vinciguerra of peddling a "false narrative" about the guild contracts. "Threatening the offshoring of American jobs is a cynical attempt to manipulate workers while masking the industry's own business failures," Crabtree-Ireland said.

In any event, Newsom's action may help improve California's competitive footing.

The state's film and TV tax credit program was established in 2009 as a way to prevent film and TV production from fleeing.

At that time, the credit was restricted to \$100 million annually, a limit that was raised to \$330 million a few years later, awarding studios tax credits covering up to 25% of qualified production costs. Last year, Newsom extended the program for five years. Starting in 2025, awards will be "refundable," meaning studios are entitled to cash payments when their credits exceed their tax liabilities.

But in its announcement last week, the governor's office basically acknowledged that the shortcomings of its incentive program have resulted in productions leaving for other places. Projects that couldn't secure California's tax credits moved elsewhere, with "an estimated 71% of rejected projects subsequently filming out-of-state," Newsom's office said.

There's been ample debate about the usefulness and effectiveness of state film and tax incentives. Industry-funded studies and reports from organizations such as the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp. have touted tax credit programs for creating jobs and boosting economic activity in their respective states. Production supports jobs directly and indirectly — by keeping prop houses, caterers and other businesses busy.

However, others question the ultimate return from such programs, saying

that their benefits are exaggerated and that they amount to a race to the bottom between the states. A report commissioned by New York's Department of Taxation and Finance said that the state's film production credit program "does not provide a positive return to the state" in terms of taxes, generating 15 cents in direct tax revenue for every \$1 invested. The same report argued that some of the productions that received tax benefits probably would have filmed in New York anyway.

Similarly, a Georgia State University study estimated a fiscal return of less than 20 cents on the dollar for Georgia's program.

Critics of these programs also suggest that tax dollars would be better spent on housing, education and other pressing issues, rather than in effect subsidizing entertainment studios.

Fair enough, but if California wants to maintain its status as the home of the entertainment industry, it has little choice but to increase its giveaways for productions. What's more, much has changed since 2009. Other states and countries have established film-making infrastructure and crews, reducing what was once L.A.'s competitive advantage. The movie and TV business is nomadic and will go wherever it can get the best deal.

"Some of the intrinsic advantages of L.A. have been eviscerated," Jody Simon, a partner at Fox Rothschild, told The Times. "I believe there's still an underlying preference to shooting in L.A., so hopefully this brings more production back."

And the state's program still has key limitations. Others cover a bigger percentage of qualified spending. For example, unlike rival programs elsewhere, California's incentive does not cover costs for paying actors, directors and other "above-the-line" personnel, a major contributor to movie and television budgets. Newsom's latest proposal does not change that. Yes, in California, giving a studio a tax break for Tom Cruise's salary remains a bridge too far.

This article is taken from the Oct. 29 edition of The Wide Shot, a weekly newsletter about the business of entertainment. Sign up at latimes.com/newsletters.

Apple team shows AI bots can't think — and may never

The systems were given math problems schoolchildren can solve. They flunked.

MICHAEL HILTZIK

See if you can solve this arithmetic problem:

Oliver picks 44 kiwis on Friday. Then he picks 58 kiwis on Saturday. On Sunday, he picks double the number of kiwis he did on Friday, but five of them were a bit smaller than average. How many kiwis does Oliver have?



If you answered "190," congratulations: You did as well as the average grade school kid by getting it right. (Friday's 44 plus Saturday's 58 plus Sunday's 44 multiplied by 2, or 88, equals 190.)

You also did better than more than 20 state-of-the-art artificial intelligence models tested by an AI research team at Apple. The AI bots, they found, consistently got it wrong.

The Apple team found "catastrophic performance drops" by those models when they tried to parse simple mathematical problems written in essay form. In this example, the systems tasked with the question often didn't understand that the size of the kiwis have nothing to do with the number of kiwis Oliver has. Some, consequently, subtracted the five undersized

kiwis from the total and answered "185."

Human schoolchildren, the researchers posited, are much better at detecting the difference between relevant information and inconsequential curveballs.

The Apple findings were published in October in a technical paper that has attracted widespread attention in AI labs and the lay press, not only because the results are well-documented, but also because the researchers work for the nation's leading high-tech consumer company — and one that has just rolled out a suite of purported AI features for iPhone users.

"The fact that Apple did this has gotten a lot of attention, but nobody should be surprised at the results," says Gary Marcus, a critic of how AI systems have been marketed as reliably, well, "intelligent."

Indeed, Apple's conclusion matches earlier studies that have found that large language models, or LLMs, don't actually "think" so much as match language patterns in materials they've been fed as part of their "training." When it comes to abstract reasoning — "a key aspect of human intelligence," in the words of Melanie Mitchell, an expert in cognition and intelligence at the Santa Fe Institute — the models fall short.

"Even very young children are adept at learning abstract rules from just a few examples," Mitchell and colleagues wrote last year after subjecting GPT bots to a series of analogy puzzles. Their conclusion was that "a

large gap in basic abstract reasoning still remains between humans and state-of-the-art AI systems."

That's important because LLMs such as GPT undergird the AI products that have captured the public's attention. But the LLMs tested by the Apple team were consistently misled by the language patterns they were trained on.

The Apple researchers set out to answer the question, "Do these models truly understand mathematical concepts?" as one of the lead authors, Mehrdad Farajtabar, put it in a thread on X. Their answer is no. They also pondered whether the shortcomings they identified can be easily fixed, and their answer is also no: "Can scaling data, models, or compute fundamentally solve this?" Farajtabar asked in his thread. "We don't think so!"

The Apple research, along with other findings about the limitations of AI bots' cognitive limitations, is a much-needed corrective to the sales pitches coming from companies hawking their AI models and systems, including OpenAI and Google's DeepMind lab.

The promoters generally depict their products as dependable and their output as trustworthy. In fact, their output is consistently suspect, posing a clear danger when they're used in contexts where the need for rigorous accuracy is absolute, say in healthcare applications.

That's not always the case. "There are some prob-

lems which you can make a bunch of money on without having a perfect solution," Marcus told me. Recommendation engines powered by AI — those that steer buyers on Amazon to products they might also like, for example. If those systems get a recommendation wrong, it's no big deal; a customer might spend a few dollars on a book he or she didn't like.

"But a calculator that's right only 85% of the time is garbage," Marcus says. "You wouldn't use it."

The potential for damagingly inaccurate outputs is heightened by AI bots' natural language capabilities, with which they offer even absurdly inaccurate answers with convincingly cocksure elan. Often they double down on their errors when challenged.

These errors are typically described by AI researchers as "hallucinations." The term may make the mistakes seem almost innocuous, but in some applications, even a minuscule error rate can have severe ramifications.

That's what academic researchers concluded in a recently published analysis of Whisper, an AI-powered speech-to-text tool developed by OpenAI, which can be used to transcribe medical consultations or jailhouse conversations monitored by correction officials.

The researchers found that about 14% of Whisper-transcribed audio segments in their sample contained hallucinations, including the addition of transcribed conversation of wholly fabri-

cated statements including portrayals of "physical violence or death ... [or] sexual innuendo," and demographic stereotyping.

The researchers observed that the errors could be incorporated in official records such as transcriptions of court testimony or prison phone calls — which could lead to official decisions based on "phrases or claims that a defendant never said."

That brings us to the Apple study.

The team plied their subject AI models with questions drawn from a popular collection of more than 8,000 grade school arithmetic problems testing schoolchildren's understanding of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. When the problems incorporated clauses that might seem relevant but weren't, the models' performance plummeted.

That was true of all the models, including versions of the GPT bots developed by OpenAI, Meta's Llama, Microsoft's Phi-3, Google's Gemma and several models developed by the French lab Mistral AI.

Some did better than others, but all showed a decline in performance as the problems became more complex.

Why did this happen? The answer is that LLMs are developed, or trained, by feeding them huge quantities of written material scraped from published works or the internet — not by trying to teach them mathematical principles. LLMs function by gleaning

patterns in the data and trying to match a pattern to the question at hand.

But they become "overfitted to their training data," Farajtabar explained via X. "They memorized what is out there on the web and do pattern matching and answer according to the examples they have seen."

That's likely to impose boundaries on what AI can be used for. In mission-critical applications, humans will almost always have to be "in the loop," as AI developers say — vetting answers for obvious or dangerous inaccuracies or providing guidance to keep the bots from misinterpreting their data, misstating what they know, or filling gaps in their knowledge with fabrications.

To some extent, that's comforting, for it means that AI systems can't accomplish much without having human partners at hand. But it also means that we humans need to be aware of the tendency of AI promoters to overstate their products' capabilities and conceal their limitations.

"These systems are always going to make mistakes because hallucinations are inherent," Marcus says. "The ways in which they approach reasoning are an approximation and not the real thing. And none of this is going away until we have some new technology."

Hiltzik writes a blog on latimes.com. Follow him on Facebook or on X, formerly Twitter, @hiltzikm or email michael.hiltzik@latimes.com.

OPINION

OP-ED

What do women want? Not Donald Trump

JACKIE CALMES

WOMEN OF America, how do you feel about a man who says he'll be your protector "like it or not"? Another question: Do you even believe you need a protector?



The fact that Donald Trump thinks you do, and believes that he's the one to safeguard us damsels like it or not, is why he might well fail to win back the White House (please!).

Most women are voting against Trump, pollsters tell us, and they include at least two daughters of former Republican presidents, Barbara Pierce Bush and Susan Ford Bales. Women constitute 53% of the electorate, and so far they've dominated early voting returns. According to Rutgers University's Center for American Women and Politics, "Women have registered and voted at higher rates than men in every presidential election since 1980," and the gap has grown every four years.

If Trump loses, it will be women who proved to be the protectors — of Lady Liberty.

Right now she is a damsel in distress, threatened by a presidential candidate who's not only a wannabe autocrat but a convicted felon, adjudicated sexual abuser, philanderer, admitted sexual assaulter, former club-hopper with the late pedophile Jeffrey Epstein and, not least, proud architect of the end of abortion rights.

With that last claim to fame, Trump has subjected women to danger and even doom, as doctors have withheld lifesaving care to pregnant women for fear of running afoul of state abortion bans enacted after the Supreme Court, packed with Trump's far-right appointees, struck down



BILL PUGLIANO Getty Images

DONALD TRUMP'S remark that he'll "protect" women "like it or not" has angered female voters.

Roe vs. Wade. Several have died. On Wednesday, ProPublica reported on the death of a wife and mother in Texas denied timely treatment as she miscarried a much-wanted baby.

The transphobic Trump thinks women should worry about imaginary medical threats he's conjured: "Your child goes to school and they don't even call you, and they change the sex of your child," he recently said in Arizona. But women are concerned instead about real threats: abortion care, a reelected Trump putting anti-vaxxer Robert F. Kennedy Jr. "to work on health, and women's health," and a Trump vice president, JD Vance, who denigrates "childless cat ladies" and says procreators should have more votes.

Trump is rightly unnerved by the female blowback. After all, he won't be protected — from prison — unless he's reelected and able to wield the presidential seal as a legal shield. Hence his insistence in the final days of the 2024 election that he'd be women's savior — a pledge so patronizing that he admits he's making it over his aides' advice.

"They said, 'Sir, please don't say that,'" Trump told a rally near Green Bay, Wis.,

on Wednesday. "I said 'Why?' They said, 'We think it's, we think it's very inappropriate for you to say.' I said 'Why? I'm president — I want to protect the women of our country.'" By his manly telling, Trump stood firm: "Well, I'm going to do it whether the women like it or not."

As usual, this is a man who doesn't take no for an answer.

Since 2016, more than two dozen women have alleged sexual misconduct by Trump. A 27th woman went public last week, saying that Trump groped her in 1993 while Epstein watched: "He put his hands all over my breasts," she told the Washington Post, choking up. The woman said she was speaking out now not to influence the election, as Trump's camp claimed, but because she was interviewed in 2022 for a documentary just released in October.

Trump's inane Sir Galahad claim has renewed attention to the 2005 "Access Hollywood" tape, which was an October surprise before the 2016 election. Unfortunately, its electoral toxicity was offset weeks later by then-FBI Director James Comey's announcement of a revived, and ultimately dropped,

investigation of Hillary Clinton's private emails. Now, women voters too young to have been aware of the tape are seeing it for the first time, and TikTok is crackling with their outrage at "just how depraved it is," as one Gen Z-er said. Here's the would-be protector of American women, speaking to "Access Hollywood" anchor Billy Bush as they spied a young actress they were about to meet:

"You know, I'm automatically attracted to beautiful — I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait. And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab 'em by the pussy."

That describes a T for Trump his earlier sexual assault of writer E. Jean Carroll in the dressing room of a Manhattan department store, as she alleged and a jury found last year. Which is why the "Access Hollywood" tape was introduced as evidence in Carroll's 2023 defamation lawsuit.

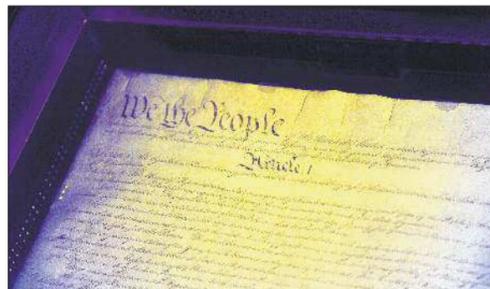
We got to see Trump in his taped deposition, oozing smugness and condescension, saying to Carroll's attorney that he was only telling the truth — stars do have license to grab women's private parts. "If you look over the last million years, I guess that's been largely true," he said. "Not always, but largely true. Unfortunately or fortunately."

Although the Carroll jury found that Trump was liable under New York law for sexual abuse, not rape, the judge clarified that "as many people commonly understand the word 'rape' ... Mr. Trump in fact did exactly that."

It shouldn't need to be said, but here goes: A rapist should not be president. Women and men, you can protect us all from Trump. Vote against him, if you haven't already.

@jackiecalmes

LETTERS



JEFF OVERS BBC News & Current Affairs

THE ORIGINAL U.S. Constitution is seen on display at the National Archives in Washington.

The Constitution has a democracy problem

Re "Why the U.S. is saddled with an electoral college," Opinion, Oct. 29

THE MAJORITY WINS until it loses. With its electoral college, the United States no longer responds to the will of the people.

When any issue polls two-thirds support among the electorate, it should be acted upon. For example, the elimination of the electoral college, protecting abortion rights, passing gun safety laws and enacting comprehensive immigration reform enjoy significant majority support. But nothing is done.

Though improbable, it is possible that Vice President Kamala Harris will win the electoral college tally while former President Trump wins the popular vote. Republican outrage would likely exceed the frustrations Democrats felt in 2000 and 2016.

"Get over it" is not a phrase that mitigates anger. With the shoe on the other foot, constitutional reform would assuredly be expedited and passed.

Otherwise, continuing on this path results in ugly resentment and polarization. Tyranny of the minority is just that — tyranny.

DAVE SANDERSON, La Cañada Flintridge

Real reason for long ER waits

Re "ER patients still being hurt by racial and gender biases," editorial, Oct. 31

A photo of MLK Community Hospital was used with your editorial, implying that our patients face long wait times and racial and gender bias.

The opposite is true. MLK Community Hospital has some of the shortest wait times in L.A. County despite having a very high volume of patients. Our patient care staff — more than 90% people of color — do a magnificent job serving our diverse community, as our "Grade A" rating for patient safety shows.

The editorial also missed a larger point: Disadvantaged people experience longer wait times in emergency departments because hospitals that serve a high percentage of Medicaid patients (government insurance that covers low-income individuals) are often overcrowded. Medicaid underpays providers, contributing to doctor shortages that force residents of low-income communities to use emergency departments for needs as simple as medicine refills and care for the flu.

Lack of access to care, not personal bias, is a major reason EDs are crowded and wait times are long. Until our separate and unequal health-care system pays providers adequately to treat all Americans, the biggest obstacle to equity will be the system itself.

ELAINE BATCHLOR, MD
Los Angeles

The writer is chief executive of MLK Community Healthcare.

So, Jan. 6 just didn't matter?

Re "Why Donald Trump is getting my vote," Opinion, Nov. 1

Thank you for running Scott Jennings' piece outlining his — and I assume many others' — rationale for voting for former President Trump.

Jennings acknowledges and yet cartoonishly glosses over the single biggest reason why Trump's candidacy should be doomed: the fomenting of a televised riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Someone like that should never again be

trusted with sensitive intelligence, let alone the nuclear launch codes. Vice President Kamala Harris is the much better choice, and it's not a close call.

BLAISE JACKSON
Escondido

::

Thanks for publishing Jennings' piece. Every so often, The Times publishes thoughts from the right for readers to consider.

I have grown so tired of wading through the heavily left-slanted articles and columnists just to get to the Sports section.

Jennings' article will be one of my last reads in The Times. After 50-plus years of reading (beginning at age 12, ending at 64), I canceled my subscription last week. I do not want to support this liberal rag any longer.

GENE GEDNOV
Cypress

::

Jennings appears to have reality cataracts clouding his eyes, as he is either unwilling or unable to see the hypocrisy of the Republican Party.

Jennings professes to worry about restrictions on free speech under Harris. Meanwhile, Trump has called those who challenge his positions the "enemy." He has mused about a firing squad being pointed at former Rep. Liz Cheney.

Trump tried to institute a Muslim ban upon taking office in 2017. Now he is pandering for their votes.

Listen to how Trump, his vice presidential nominee, Sen. JD Vance, and their supporters speak about women, ethnic groups and those coming to American shores as many of our ancestors did for the opportunity this country promises.

A president should sound like a president: mature, informed, respectful to his constituents and a role model to children and young people who look up to "their" president. Would you want those kids listening to all those offensive comments at Madison Square Garden?

Please, get some political cataract surgery.

JOY ROCKPORT
Valley Glen

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.

Trump would gut Medicare just when it's needed most

His backers want tax cuts at the expense of Social Security and other safety nets.

LZ GRANDERSON

DONALD Trump was already in the classroom when Brown vs. Board of Education desegregated schools in 1954. He was about 30 before women were able to obtain their own credit cards, in his 40s before a Black man led a Fortune 500 company, and in his 60s before the election of President Obama.



Trump is among the eldest of the baby boomers, born in 1946. By 2030, every person from his generation will officially be a senior citizen. That's more than 70 million Americans who lived through the civil rights movement and women's liberation and witnessed the last vestiges of Jim Crow die off. That's also more than 70 million eligible for Medicare and Social Security.

These two data points might appear unrelated, but in their own ways they are driving Trump's supporters: Many don't like the changes America has seen in Trump's lifetime and would love to turn back the clock to 1946. A handful of his wealthiest supporters,

meanwhile, are more interested in ensuring that the needs of 70 million baby boomers don't get in the way of tax cuts.

During Trump's presidency, a bloc of conservatives was focused on "making America great again" by attacking diversity and vilifying drag queens. While his base was distracted by his constant chaos and scapegoating, Trump was busy trying to cut entitlements such as Social Security each year he was in the White House.

Now he's back at it: Asylum seekers and migrants are a favorite bogeyman for Trump this election cycle, and his followers are in a frenzy over diversity. While he has MAGA focused on Haitians and Puerto Ricans, his sights are set on cutting the very programs that baby boomers need. Make no mistake: Under Trump, the working class and middle class would suffer again as they did during his first administration.

One of the former president's most prominent supporters, Elon Musk, reportedly would lead a "government efficiency commission" if Trump were elected — and you can bet he would find "inefficiency" wherever the government is using tax dollars in the interests of average Americans.

Acknowledging that Trumponomics would hurt most people, Musk used the phrase "temporary hardships" to describe what Americans can expect

should Trump get back in the White House. And he gave the former president more than \$70 million to get there.

Like Trump, Musk grew up in a segregated society — in his case, apartheid South Africa. The world's richest man spent his formative years in a country in which white men received preferential treatment and in which white people were largely shielded from seeing how Black people were treated by the government. Like Trump, Musk despises diversity efforts. Both are prone to promote misinformation, conspiracy theories and racism.

Oh, and they both pay a much lower tax rate than the average American — the people Musk warns should brace for "temporary hardships."

On the campaign trail, Trump is promising to eliminate taxes on overtime pay. What he doesn't tell you is that Project 2025, the blueprint for the next Republican administration to reshape the federal government, would eliminate overtime pay. Both he and Musk are anti-union and talk lovingly about finding ways to pay employees less. Trump has a reputation for not paying contractors at all.

What exactly about this candidate screams "compassionate conservative"?

For nearly five decades that phrase, along with "socially liberal, fiscally conservative" and "Reagan Democrats," has provided cover for white voters who

want all of the tax cuts promised on the campaign trail and none of the racism those cuts are wrapped in. Charismatic boomers like Trump have long pitched policies in America under the guise that such a dynamic was possible — but it's a thin veil, when they use rhetoric such as "welfare queens" and "they're eating the dogs." It's no different from when white Southerners try to defend displaying the Confederate flag as "heritage not hate" while electing officials who want to ban books that paint a realistic portrait of that heritage. Inventing "welfare queens" was never just about saving tax dollars, and the Confederate flag has never been a simple symbol of anything noble.

Millennials have displaced boomers as the largest adult generation, and yet the needs of boomers are guaranteed to be among the nation's top priorities for years to come, because they'll be straining the social safety net.

We have got to find a way to have conversations about the future of Medicare, Social Security and other programs without charlatans like Trump and Musk mucking up policy discussions with yesteryear's racism.

It's tiresome and counterproductive, and the stakes are too high: 70 million Americans are depending on the rest of us to get our act together.

The nation is not only getting more diverse; it's also getting older. The solutions will not come in the form of prejudice disguised as policy. That's the world Trump and Musk grew up in, and that's what they're offering more of.

Threads: @LZGranderson



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Political battles could reshape the Eastside

[Eastside, from A1]

Latino opponents to replace Carrillo in the 52nd Assembly District and Santiago in the 54th. Meanwhile, in the 34th Congressional District, Rep. Jimmy Gomez, a son of Mexican immigrants, is facing off against attorney David Kim, who is Korean American.

Like the 14th Council District, those three districts are majority Latino and cover parts of the Eastside, which includes such communities as Boyle Heights, Lincoln Heights and East Los Angeles.

If De León loses, Latinos will occupy just four of the council's 15 seats — roughly 26% — while Latinos make up about half of L.A.'s population. That outcome would carry a special irony, since De León lamented Latinos' lack of political clout on the leaked audio.

The potential for losing so many Latino representatives in so many majority-Latino districts worries Nilza Serrano, president of the Avance Democratic Club, which supports candidates who favor a "progressive Latino agenda."

"I do think Latinos need to come out and vote for their candidates, and that representation is key for access to services," said Serrano, who supports De León.

Jurado, who lives in Highland Park, called De León's text message "racially divisive," saying he learned little from the audio scandal.

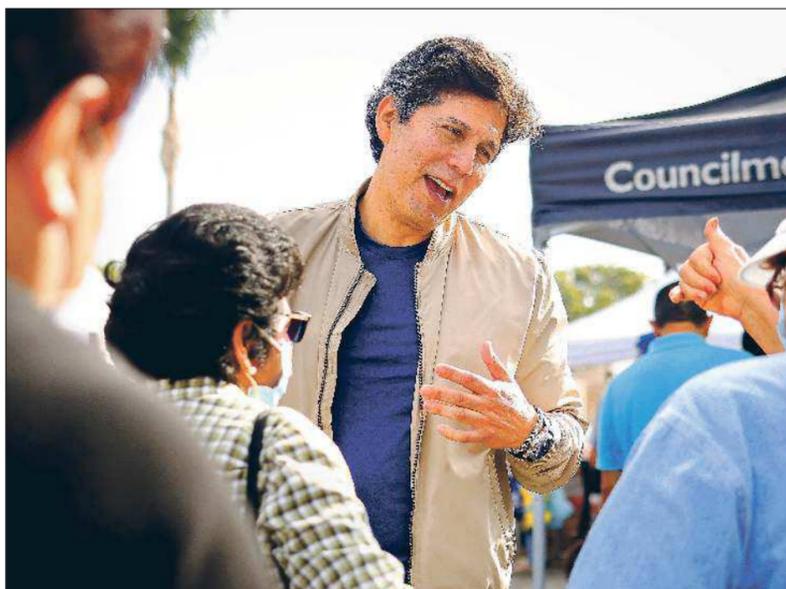
"For him to make this assertion that only Latinos can govern Latinos is contrary to the reality that I know, growing up in a diverse city and a very diverse neighborhood and being able to cross those divides," she said.

The 2022 audio leak upended City Hall, with community leaders voicing outrage over the racist and disparaging remarks on the hourlong recording. De León issued apologies but ignored widespread calls to step down.

With De León politically isolated, Carrillo and Santiago launched campaigns to unseat him instead of seeking reelection to the Assembly. Jurado, a political newcomer, finished first in the primary, with De León second.

De León's reelection fight comes at a time of major losses for the Latino political establishment. Former L.A. County Supervisor Gloria Molina, viewed as a legendary figure in many circles, died of cancer last year. Former City Councilmember Richard Alatorre, who represented De León's district from 1985 to 1999 and was known for his deft use of power, died in August.

Mark Gonzalez, now facing off against John Yi in the 54th Assembly District, said he is grateful to those who fought for Latino representation. He said he would not



COUNCILMAN Kevin de León defeated March primary challenges from Assemblymembers Wendy Carrillo and Miguel Santiago, whose seats are up for grabs.



IF ELECTED, tenant rights attorney Ysabel Jurado would be the 14th District's first non-Latino council member since 1985. The 34-year-old is Filipino American.

be where he is without their successes.

At the same time, he called the De León text message "distasteful."

"It's pitting groups against each other," said Gonzalez, who is Mexican American and a former president of the Los Angeles County Democratic Party.

Fernando Guerra, a political science professor at Loyola Marymount University, said residents in L.A.'s majority-Latino districts have shown a willingness to cross racial or ethnic lines when voting.

Councilmember Curren Price, who is Black, has won repeatedly in a South L.A. district that's nearly 80% Latino. Former Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who is Latino, represented an Eastside Assembly district for six years, only to be replaced by Councilmember Jackie Goldberg in 2000, once he was termed out.

"The idea that a Latino district went with an older, white LGBT representative is pretty phenomenal," said

Guerra, referring to Goldberg. "It shows the openness of that electorate."

Wendy Carrillo, who steps down from her Assembly seat later this year, said she finds younger Latino voters are much more invested in a candidate's positions than their racial or ethnic identity.

"There's a newer Latino voting bloc that looks beyond ethnic politics and wants to see values-driven leadership," she said.

Boyle Heights resident Derek Mejia, 28, echoed that view. Mejia, who lives at home with his mother, said he is more focused on the high cost of rent than a candidate's race.

"I'm more interested in policy and results," he said.

City Controller Kenneth Mejia, L.A.'s first Filipino American elected official, has been campaigning for Jurado in recent weeks. He's also backing Yi, the former head of Los Angeles Walks, in the 54th Assembly and Kim in the 34th Congressional District race. Both Yi

and Kim are Korean Americans.

Speaking at a campaign rally last month, Mejia said Jurado is on track to make history. At the same time, he warned against focusing too heavily on a candidate's ethnic background.

Mejia said a Jurado victory would expand the bloc of council members willing to push back against Mayor Karen Bass' budget — and police spending.

"Identity politics is cool," he told the crowd. "But it's not what makes change."

Hoang Nguyen, who chairs the Asian Pacific Islander caucus of the California Young Democrats, also has been tracking the Eastside contests. In his personal capacity, he has volunteered for the campaigns of Yi, Kim and Jessica Caloza, who is Filipino American and running in the 52nd Assembly District. He also attended a comedy fundraiser for Jurado.

Nguyen, who lives in Koreatown, said he is backing those candidates not

simply because they are API but because of their values and, in some cases, because he knows them personally. All four would work hard to represent Latino constituents, he said.

"They're not going to be serving Asian Americans only. That's not how this works," he said. "All of them have done outreach to the Latino community and have done it intentionally."

Yi, who is running to replace Santiago, said he's been talking to voters in English, Spanish, Korean and — when speaking with Armenians — a bit of Russian. "I canvass 80% of the time in Spanish," he said.

The council currently has three members with Asian heritage, including De León, who has described his father as a mix of Chinese, Guatemalan and Mexican. L.A.'s population is about 12% Asian, which includes Filipino communities near downtown.

Behind the scenes, state Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta's legal team has raised concerns about whether the way the city's 15 council districts are drawn provides sufficient representation for Latinos. Bonta's team has pressed the city to create new maps, a demand that may be taken up by the council after the election.

Despite weeks of vitriolic campaigning, De León and Jurado have much in common. Both were raised by immigrants and are allies of organized labor. Both have promised to fight the displacement of low-income renters.

Jurado said her life experiences are universal to the district. She had a child at 18, relied on food stamps and lives with her father, in part because of high housing costs.

Her campaign has posted Spanish-language videos featuring prominent Latino leaders, including L.A. County Supervisor Hilda Solis. The campaign also has staged events with Filipino civic groups in the district, which is 61% Latino and nearly 15% Asian.

Jurado, in an interview, said the district's last two Latino representatives — De León and Jose Huizar, now serving a 13-year sentence on corruption charges — "betrayed" their constituents.

"I'm not here to pretend I'm Latino. I'm here to be a true ally," she said. "I'm not going to sell out this district and these historically Latino communities."

De León, 57, stood by his record and his campaign text message, saying it's important for the district to have a representative who speaks fluent Spanish and shares cultural ties with a majority of its residents.

That connection, he said, is why he fought in the state Legislature to designate California as a "sanctuary state" and make driver's licenses available to un-

authorized immigrants.

"Representation is not just about checking boxes. It's about lived experiences, and a deep understanding of a community's needs and struggles," said De León, whose mother was from Guatemala and cleaned houses.

At a recent bilingual candidate debate, De León spoke mostly in rapid-fire Spanish, while Jurado, relying on an interpreter and a discreetly hidden earpiece, gave all but her final remarks in English.

In the race to replace Carrillo, Caloza has scooped up endorsements from dozens of labor unions and filled voters' mailboxes with campaign ads.

The Asian Pacific Islander Leadership PAC also has sent multiple mailers on her behalf, including one featuring a woman holding a sign with the message "Stop Asian Hate."

When she was 4, Caloza moved with her family to the U.S. from the Philippines. Her parents worked low-wage jobs. The youngest of six children, she became the first in her family to get a college degree.

"My story of growing up in an immigrant, working-class family resonates with this district because that is this district," said Caloza, a former public works commissioner.

Caloza's opponent, Franky Carrillo — no relation to Wendy — has sent a single piece of campaign mail so far.

His endorsements include U.S. Rep. Tony Cardenas (D-Pacoima), state Sen. Maria Elena Durazo (D-Los Angeles) and Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez.

Franky Carrillo was wrongfully convicted of murder and imprisoned for two decades. Now an advisor to the Los Angeles Innocence Project, he said a candidate's "lived experience" and character are more important than their ethnic background.

Franky Carrillo, who speaks Spanish, said some residents have told him they want a Latino representative.

"But more often I hear from voters that they or a family member identifies with my experience of injustice in the justice system," he said in an email. "They tell me that they, too, had a parent who suffered without health insurance and passed away."

Thomas A. Saenz, president and general counsel of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, said he is not worried about non-Latino candidates prevailing in the Eastside contests. Given the demographics, whoever wins will need to serve their Latino constituents — or else find themselves in trouble politically.

"At the end of the day, this is what diversity means," he said.

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MARCUS UBUNGEN Los Angeles Times

LOOKING UP TO A LEGEND

Dodgers fans gather Sunday in Boyle Heights to see Robert Vargas' mural of late pitcher Fernando Valenzuela doing his signature windup in his prime. Valenzuela, who helped L.A. win the 1981 World Series against the Yankees, would have turned 64 on Nov. 1.

Newsom back in state for end of campaign

After crossing U.S. to boost Democrats, the governor was in O.C. helping candidates.

BY TARYN LUNA

Throughout this election cycle, California Gov. Gavin Newsom traveled the country campaigning for the Democratic presidential ticket, making stops in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Michigan, New Hampshire, Georgia, South Carolina, Oregon, Idaho, Washington and Nevada.

He ran his own campaign to raise money for Democrats in red states, became the party's fighter on conservative television shows and acted as a proxy for President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

After crisscrossing America, the Democratic governor is spending the final days of the 2024 election in a place where he hasn't campaigned very much this year: his home state.

"You can do anything. You can't do everything," Newsom said about his effort to balance his responsibilities to campaign nationally and in California during an interview. "I mean, if there was an eighth day I'd use it."

Newsom's appearances this weekend in Orange County highlighted an irony of his strategy: As the governor wooed donors in Boise, Idaho, and defended Biden in Atlanta, Democrats in California have waged a fierce fight in key congressional races largely without the state's most powerful politician by their side.

California has several battleground House races that will help determine which party controls Congress next year. The closest contests are in regions of the state where polls show Newsom is most unpopular with voters. The governor's decision to spend more time campaigning outside California than in its most competitive districts may actually help his Golden State allies — and his own political career.

"He's not only working on the presidential campaign for Vice President Harris, but there's no doubt that he's also working on his own potential presidential campaign, and he doesn't need to do that in California," said Matt Rexroad, a Republican [See Newsom, B6]

Girl who raised goat to receive \$300,000 settlement

Shasta County pays out as family pursues answers in seizure, slaughter of animal.

BY SALVADOR HERNANDEZ

A 9-year-old girl who fell in love with the goat she raised for the Shasta District Fair was heartbroken when deputies, wielding a search warrant, confiscated the furry livestock, taking him away to be butchered.

Two years after the scandal erupted, Shasta County has agreed to pay \$300,000 to the girl's family to settle the legal dispute over the floppy-eared brown-and-white goat named Cedar.

The girl had raised the goat for the 2022 fair, as part of a program intended to teach youngsters how to care for farm animals. But when it came time to sell Cedar and turn him over to be butchered, Jessica Long's 9-year-old daughter couldn't do it.

Long took the goat from the fair, offered to pay for the costs and pleaded with fair officials to let her daughter keep Cedar. Instead, the Shasta County Sheriff's Office deployed deputies, search warrant in hand, to drive hundreds of miles across Northern California to find and take the goat from Billy's Mini Farm, where Long had taken him until the dispute was resolved.

It is not clear who contacted and instructed the sheriff's office to get involved.

The case caused an uproar and, in a federal lawsuit, Long and her daughter alleged deputies wrongfully took out a search warrant, seized Cedar, and turned the [See Goat, B6]



Advancing Law For Animals

ATTORNEYS sought to learn who killed Cedar.

CAPITOL JOURNAL

Sure, Harris isn't ideal, but Trump is a disgrace to America

I get misgivings about lefty excesses. However, the ex-president's despicable character far outweighs them.

GEORGE SKELTON
IN SACRAMENTO

Here's my take on the painful 2024 presidential race. And I'll keep it simple.

OK, call it simplistic. This absurd election season does lend itself to simple-minded thinking.

Mainly, what I don't fully fathom is why any American could vote for an uncivil creep like Donald Trump.

Many may think they're voting for a strongman, even though he is weak mentally.

Many clearly hate Democrats more than they love traditional American values involving decency.

Many — perhaps most — undoubtedly agree with Scott Jennings, a former top aide to President George W. Bush and now a conservative CNN political commentator.

Jennings wrote in a Los Angeles Times opinion piece Friday that he "nearly upchucked a time or two" riding "the Republican Party's roller coaster" with Trump. But he'll "vote for him one more time as a bulwark [See Skelton, B2]



MATT ROURKE Associated Press

FORMER President Trump is reflected in bulletproof glass Sunday as he finishes speaking at one of his final campaign rallies in Lititz, Pa.

Repeat arrests raise ankle monitor questions

BY MATTHEW ORMSETH

After Nhazel Warren was charged in the summer with carrying a gun in public, a judge released the 19-year-old on the condition that the Los Angeles County Probation Department track his movements with a GPS device.

When Warren was arrested three weeks later on

suspicion of robbing an elderly couple, a different judge let him out again with another provision for GPS tracking.

But even with the court doubling down on Warren's ankle monitor, prosecutors allege, he went on to rob two more people in September and October.

In an attempt to track his whereabouts, Los Angeles Police Department detect-

ives served a search warrant on the contractor that operates Warren's GPS monitor. The company, which officials said is paid around \$350,000 a month by the county to operate the GPS system, could not determine where he was at the time of the robberies or attest to the reliability of its tracking data.

Detectives apprehended Warren on Oct. 24 — his fifth

arrest in five months, court records show. He has pleaded not guilty to charges of evading police, resisting arrest, carrying concealed guns in public, assault with a firearm and four counts of robbery. His attorney declined to comment.

Warren's case raises questions about how effectively the Probation Department is supervising pretrial defendants at a time when

judges increasingly turn to GPS tracking as an alternative to jail.

In an emailed statement, probation officials said the department interviews defendants and conducts a risk assessment before outfitting them with ankle monitors.

In August, the most recent month for which the Probation Department pro- [See Arrests, B5]

O.C. teenager alleges assault by his football teammates

BY HANNAH FRY

The 15-year-old Santa Margarita Catholic High School student wasn't sure what to expect when he heard loud cheering and banging sounds coming from the locker room that houses the varsity football team.

As he walked toward the lockers, a player shouted,

"Get him!" The lights were shut off and several team members slammed him against a locker, pinned him to the ground and took turns "touching, yanking, grabbing, pulling, and twisting his genitals," according to a lawsuit filed in Orange County Superior Court on Tuesday.

The lawsuit, first reported by the Orange County Register, details a

disturbing assault against a sophomore football player that triggered a police investigation and has left the boy with post-traumatic stress disorder, severe depression and anxiety. At least eight other student athletes at the high school have also been assaulted by teammates, according to the lawsuit.

"This kind of stuff shouldn't happen at any school. It shouldn't happen

in any locker room. It shouldn't happen to any child," said Greenberg Gross partner Brian Williams, who is representing the boy's family. "The adults in charge of programs like this clearly need to do better. They need to do a better job of protecting student athletes and preventing what appears to be a systemic problem within the culture of that team."

The Orange County

Sheriff's Department confirmed Wednesday that it launched an investigation into the incident after the boy went to the emergency room and alleged he had been sexually assaulted. More than 15 students were interviewed as part of the investigation. The student and parent told deputies that they did not want to pursue criminal prosecution [See High school, B4]

Students to vote in Alameda County school races

In a first for the state, those ages 16 and 17 in Berkeley and Oakland may cast ballots.

By MEG TANAKA

OAKLAND — Candidates seeking to lead the Oakland Unified School District faced a barrage of tough questions one recent evening — an interrogation led by an enthusiastic group of new voters suddenly endowed with political power: 16- and 17-year-old high school students.

In a first for California, teens in two Alameda County school districts, Berkeley and Oakland, were granted suffrage in school board races for the first time this November.

About 1,000 Oakland students had registered as of Oct. 22. And to court their newest and youngest constituents, several Oakland candidates assembled before a packed auditorium in East Oakland for a grilling.

“What ideas do you bring to the table to improve school safety for the schools in your district?” Ojiugo Egeonu, 16, a junior at Oakland Technical High School, asked the candidates.

There had already been “several school shootings in the last year” on high school campuses, she added.

Fremont High School, the site of the Oct. 22 candidate forum, was placed on lockdown in 2023 after two people were shot near campus.

The school board candidates tried to reassure the students, saying they were committed to improving safety, while also protecting students’ rights. The district’s newest voters listened carefully.

In a district facing a massive budget crisis and often abysmal test scores, students also had questions about school funding, campus safety, mental health, and college and career preparation support.

Many students said it was about time school board candidates paid more heed to them.

“We’re not at the kids’ table anymore,” said Maximus Simmons, a junior at Oakland High. “This is the first time young people have had a real voice in school board elections in a major city. This is only the beginning.”

Across the country, a few small cities have made it possible for young people to cast votes in local elections.

The first place in Califor-



MEG TANAKA For The Times

TOMMY LEMASNEY, center, and other students celebrate their ability to vote in two Alameda County districts. “Youth voices should be heard, especially when it comes to who represents us,” said Lemasney, 17. As of Oct. 22, about 1,000 Oakland students had registered to vote.

nia to authorize youth suffrage was Berkeley, where in 2016 more than 70% of voters approved a measure allowing students to have a voice in school board races.

Voters in Oakland followed suit in 2020 with Measure QQ. But because it took several years to work out the mechanics, officials said, youth voting will happen for the first time in both cities this month.

“This has never been done before in California, and we had to make sure that it was done properly,” Alameda County Registrar of Voters Tim Dupuis said in a statement.

The push is expanding to more cities. In the Bay Area, voters in Albany will vote Tuesday on a measure to grant suffrage to 16- and 17-year-olds.

In Southern California, Culver City voters narrowly defeated a similar measure in 2022, while San Francisco voters also shot down such measures in 2016 and 2020.

Sixteen- and 17-year-olds must register to vote and are sent a ballot with only the school board candidates in their district, preventing them from voting in other

races.

At the candidates’ forum at Fremont High, school board candidates took notice of their newest constituents. Seven of the eight candidates running for four open seats in Oakland attended.

“I’m here to listen to all of you, because that is what you deserve,” Ben Salop, 20, a 2022 graduate of Oakland Technical High School, told the students. “Let’s make Oakland a truly student-led district.”

“It’s a big deal that 16- and 17-year-olds can vote in Oakland and Berkeley school board elections, as they now influence who represents their interests,” said Laura Wray-Lake, a professor of social welfare at UCLA, who has conducted research on youth civic engagement.

She emphasized that these students see school inequities firsthand and will probably vote for candidates prioritizing equity and student support, and who will “listen to their views.”

Oakland and Berkeley could set an example for other cities, she said, by showing young people can vote responsibly. As the larg-

est, most diverse city with a lower voting age, she says that Oakland may inspire similar movements in other cities such as Newark, N.J., and a youth-led movement in Minnesota aiming to lower the voting age for school board elections.

The Oakland district, which enrolls about 34,000 students, many of whom live in poverty, has been beset by troubles in recent years.

It faces a \$95-million budget gap and shrinking enrollment, and has closed campuses amid allegations that it is failing students.

It has also struggled with low test scores, particularly among Black and Latino students.

“We started this movement because we saw our school board directors making decisions without considering student perspectives,” said Natalie Gallegos Chavez, a sophomore at UC Berkeley who was a student at Oakland High School when she first became involved in the Oakland Youth Vote Coalition at its inception in 2019.

Gallegos said that the movement to implement Measure QQ was inspired by

the school program closures, which she viewed as against the interests of students. In 2019, the Oakland School Board cut \$20.2 million from its budget, including 100 jobs and several schools.

Many students said the chance to vote on school board races has made them more engaged in politics in general.

“I became more interested once I knew we actually might have an opportunity to have our voices heard,” said Anne Diby, 16, a junior at Skyline High School in Oakland. “It’s opened my eyes to how government decisions are being viewed by youth.”

Diby’s classmate Autumn Weems, 16, added that the ability to vote has motivated her to become more informed about the issues affecting her school.

“We basically are now put in a position to control our education, which is something we should have been able to do in the first place,” she said.

Tommy Lemasney, 17, a senior at Skyline, said voting has made him more aware of the need for youth voices to

be heard in politics.

“I want students to have more of a say, not just adults who think they know everything,” Lemasney said. “Youth voices should be heard, especially when it comes to who represents us.”

At the event at Fremont High, many candidates rushed to agree with the students on the value of youth voting.

Candidate Dwayne Aikens Jr. told the students he had grown up in poverty and as a victim of gun violence in Oakland. He was running to improve schools, he said, and also to “put hope and aspiration on the ballot.”

VanCedric Williams, who is running for reelection against Aikens, encouraged students to remain vocal and continue to push for student involvement in budgeting decisions.

“We’re gonna need to hear your voice,” he said. In response, the students showered him with loud snaps of approval and applause.

Tanaka is a special correspondent.

Harris outshines Trump on U.S. ideals, morals, decency

[Skelton, from B1] against the cultural and governance excesses of the American left.”

“Simply put, I’m more worried about the country’s future than any problems I’ve had with Trump in the past.”

I get the misgivings about lefty excesses. But I don’t understand why anyone would rate them worse than Trump’s despicable character and reward him with a second term as our president.

Reinstall him as the leader of this great country? A greatness he refuses to recognize and, instead, refers to the United States as the “garbage can for the world.”

Someone who habitually spews hate and insults at Latinos, Puerto Ricans, Haitians ... women and Californians.

A vengeful bully who threatens to cut off federal disaster aid for California wildfires if the state doesn’t support his policies.

A wannabe authoritarian who says he’ll deploy the military against “the enemy from within,” a term he uses for political opponents.

I lost all respect for the guy when he mocked a New York Times reporter with a disability while running for president in 2016. Standing before TV cameras, Trump shuffled and stuttered, as if afflicted with palsy, making fun of the journalist whose articles he disliked. And he gets elected to be the nation’s role model for kids.

Here’s a pathological liar who speaks falsely about practically everything. Trump knows he lost the 2020 election but still can’t admit it — or that he incited



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

ALTHOUGH SHE had a late start on her campaign, Vice President Kamala Harris has exceeded the expectations of many skeptics. Above, Harris accepts the Democratic nomination at the party’s convention in August.

an insurrectionist mob to storm the nation’s Capitol in a deadly effort to block Congress’ certification of the people’s vote.

If Trump truly believed he won that election, it would be even worse — the screw emperor with no clothes.

This is unprecedented: A presidential candidate juries found to be liable for sexual abuse and guilty on 34 felony counts of falsifying business records involving hush money to a porn star. Yet evangelical Christians worship him.

Someone who begins a campaign speech by glorifying the size of a famous

golfer’s penis.

He brags about being buddies with communist dictators — including Russian President Vladimir Putin — and we’re going to elect him leader of the Free World?

An unhinged 78-year-old man who daily shows signs of losing mental agility. And he’s to be entrusted with our nuclear codes?

But mention these character and cognitive flaws to his supporters and they rationalize that life was better when Trump occupied the White House than it has been under President Biden.

There wasn’t inflation,

they note. And that’s true. But the pandemic hadn’t yet taken its full toll on the economy. Biden and Congress did help fuel inflation by spending too much on giveaway incentives and infrastructure. But that actually started under Trump.

Russia hadn’t yet invaded Ukraine, crunching global supply lines and creating gasoline shortages that raised pump prices.

Illegal immigration was significantly reduced under Trump, but at the price of inhumanely yanking small children from their mothers’ arms and caging them.

Trump supporters tag

Vice President Kamala Harris with partial blame for Biden’s mistakes, whether real or rubbish — the “Biden-Harris administration.” Never mind that a vice president has little responsibility or power over anything.

Unfortunately for Democrats and Harris, she has been awkwardly slow in distancing herself from Biden’s errors, particularly on border security.

She initially was handed an expanded role on illegal immigration and botched it. But she correctly notes that Senate negotiators reached a bipartisan agreement on immigration reform — and

Trump persuaded congressional toadies to block the bill so he could run on the divisive issue. He selfishly put himself above the country. No surprise.

But regardless of any issue — foreign or domestic — none justifies placing a narcissistic, prevaricating con man in the Oval Office. Patriotic Americans shouldn’t lower themselves to that. Trump is unfit to lead.

Harris isn’t ideal. But she operates within the normal parameters of decency.

Democrats probably could have found a more salable candidate — one distanced from Biden who had built a national base by winning votes in primaries. But the 81-year-old president stubbornly refused to acknowledge his physical and cognitive decline and didn’t bow out of the race until it was too late for the party to conduct a healthy replacement process.

Although a very late-starting candidate, Harris has exceeded many skeptics’ expectations — including mine — and has grown in the role.

The “San Francisco liberal” has run a good, energetic campaign, veering toward the ideological middle.

Sure, Harris muddles her responses to reporters’ questions she’s apparently afraid to answer directly. I wince.

But she out-debated Trump in the one face-off that he had the courage to allow.

I’ll vote for Harris because she projects hope and is a normal human. Trump is a disgrace to America and the true enemy from within.

CITY & STATE

Rancho Santa Margarita mayor accepts a plea deal

BY ANDREW J. CAMPA

Rancho Santa Margarita Mayor Carol Gamble, a founding member of the city's first council in 2000, will plead guilty to making a false affidavit on paperwork she filed to get on the ballot, according to Orange County Dist. Atty. Todd Spitzer.

Last week's announcement came a week after Fullerton City Council candidate Scott Markowitz agreed to a plea deal after being charged with falsifying nomination paperwork.

"American democracy relies on the absolute integrity of the electoral process," Spitzer said in a statement. "Voters must have total confidence that every election is being carried out in a fair and unbiased manner."

Gamble, who dropped out of the council race two weeks ago, was charged with a misdemeanor. Her plea allows her to avoid jail time with 160 hours of community service, one year of probation and an unknown amount of restitution based on the outcome of the election.

Spitzer said Gamble was expected to officially enter her plea in court last Friday.

Gamble has lived in Rancho Santa Margarita for over 30 years, according to her bio page, and was a member of the inaugural City Council in 2000. The second mayor in the city's history, she served on council from 2000 to 2004 before starting her current tenure in 2011.

She has rotated into the mayor's seat in 2001, 2014, 2017 and this year.

She was a no-show for the latest City Council meeting on Oct. 23.

Paul S. Meyer, attorney for Gamble, said his client voluntarily contacted the district attorney's office through representatives and quickly took responsibility for her error, which included suspending her campaign and returning all contributions.

"Her good faith actions were communicated to the district attorney," Meyer said. "Ms. Gamble apologized to her supporters and has acknowledged her responsibility. As a good citizen, she stepped forward long before a case was filed, and did the right thing."

Under penalty of perjury, Gamble signed nomination paperwork on Aug. 7 that stated she personally collected and witnessed 30 signatures. To run for office, a candidate needs a minimum of 20 signatures.

However, Rancho Santa Margarita residents led by Shawn Gordon, a former council candidate, sent a letter to Orange County Registrar Bob Page alerting him



City of Rancho Santa Margarita

CAROL GAMBLE agreed to plead guilty to falsifying records to put her name on the ballot.

to potential fraud.

The TimesOC recently reviewed Gordon's letter and a notarized complaint from a resident that stated, "Ms. Gamble was not present at that time and did not witness my signature."

The letter was forwarded to Spitzer's office, according to Gordon.

"I'm hoping Spitzer does the right thing," he said in late October. "This is absolutely cut and dry."

Gamble released a statement on Oct. 20 that she "signed [her] nomination paperwork attesting to an inaccurate statement."

She said then that she was "deeply embarrassed" and suspended her campaign.

Her name is still on the ballot, however, along with Kerli Lynn Baert.

Gamble stated that she would resign immediately if she won. Since she didn't file enough legal signatures, she is ineligible to run and can't win.

Should she be the top vote-getter in her race, however, the city would likely hold a special election, according to Spitzer.

Gamble's announcement follows that of Markowitz, who ran for Fullerton City Council and pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor for falsifying nomination paperwork.

Markowitz also submitted 30 signatures, claimed to have witnessed them all in person under the penalty of perjury, and was also turned in by residents who claimed he had not watched them sign.

The admission led to a dismissal of one felony count of perjury by declaration and one felony count of record of forged or false instrument.

Avoiding imprisonment, Markowitz was sentenced to 160 hours of community service and ordered to pay restitution.

Should he win, Markowitz would be ineligible to serve, according to Spitzer. The city would host a special election to fill his seat.



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

TAGGED OUT FOR THE DODGERS?

A Los Angeles Police Department officer keeps an eye on a group of people posing for a photo Friday next to a Waymo car that was tagged on Flower Street after the Dodgers parade in downtown L.A.

Bird flu virus found in local wastewater

BY SUSANNE RUST

L.A. County health officials said they have detected H5N1 bird flu virus in wastewater collected from the A.K. Warren Water Resource Facility in Carson.

The viral "hit" was detected Oct. 28 by WastewaterSCAN, an infectious disease monitoring network run by researchers at Stanford, Emory University and Verily, Alphabet Inc.'s life sciences organization.

Hits were also seen during the last week in San José, Redwood City, San Francisco, Palo Alto, Sacramento, Santa Cruz, Marina and Turlock.

The Carson plant processes wastewater from roughly 50% of L.A. County's population, said Annabelle de St. Maurice, the county Department of Public Health's director of community outbreak and syndromic surveillance.

Officials said they had not identified the virus' source, but suggested a few possibilities, including discarded contaminated animal products and infected wild bird droppings. They were also "actively engaging key risk groups," including dairy and meat-processing sites nearby. "The likely sources more likely appear to be from animal products, rather than wild birds," De St. Maurice said, adding that the risk to the public remained low.

H5N1 bird flu has been detected in 203 California dairy herds since August; 17 dairy workers have also been infected. Across the nation, 41 people have been infected — 21 from dairy cows, 19 from poultry and one unknown. The USDA has reported 404 positive dairy herds in 14 states. This number does not include eight herds detected last week in Utah. It's also been conclusively detected in a pig from Oregon.

De St. Maurice said the county routinely monitors and tests symptomatic birds, pets and wild mammals. In addition, she said, the county is working to subtype flu specimens collected in health clinics and hospitals specimens "to see if there are potential H5N1 human cases."

She noted that the county's public health department is also doing "outreach and education to communities that are at risk," but said that so far, there have been no human cases.

De St. Maurice added that it was this kind of work — subtyping flu specimens — that enabled Missouri health officials to identify an H5N1 human case that had no reported dairy or poultry contact. The source of that person's infection has still not been determined.

The wastewater findings come as the virus spreads in California's dairy cows, which now make up more

than half the nation's reported cattle infections, and as fall migration of wild birds from the Arctic moves south along the Pacific Flyway.

There are now two strains of H5N1 bird flu in California, one in dairy cows and a new wild bird one. H5 viruses are of bird origin; they are not human viruses.

Genetic sequencing of the H5 virus found in Los Angeles County wastewater has not been conducted. According to De St. Maurice, the way the samples are captured and identified does not allow for sequencing.

Officials said people could reduce infection risk by avoiding raw milk, raw cheese and undercooked meats. Pasteurization and adequate cooking inactivate the virus. They also recommend avoiding unprotected contact with sick or dead animals, and avoid materials contaminated with bird feces. Pets can also be infected in these ways.

D.A.: Man killed girlfriend, then watched TV

BY CLARA HARTER

Gory and disturbing details have emerged in the case against a Costa Mesa man who is charged with murdering his girlfriend and dumping her body in a trash can.

Daniel Allen Aldrich, 49, allegedly strangled his girlfriend, Julie Anne Sanetra, 38, after they got into an argument following a night of drinking on Oct. 20, according to the Orange County district attorney's office.

He slit her wrist with a folding knife, according to the office, and then proceeded to watch television and go to bed while her dead body lay on the couch. Prosecutors say he woke up the following day and stuffed her body in the trash before packing his bags and heading to his mother's house in Glendale.

On Oct. 28, he was charged with one felony count of murder and one felony enhancement of the personal use of a weapon in the death, according to the dis-

trict attorney's office. If convicted as charged, he faces a maximum sentence of 26 years to life in prison.

"Julie Sanetra did not deserve to be strangled and stuffed into a trashcan like a piece of garbage," said Dist. Atty. Todd Spitzer in a statement. "The callousness of this crime shocks the conscience, and we will do everything to get justice for Julie and her loved ones."

On Oct. 22, landscapers who were hired to mow Aldrich's lawn discovered Sanetra's body partially

hanging out of the trash by the side of his house in the 1900 block of Maple Avenue and contacted the Costa Mesa Police Department, according to the department and the district attorney's office.

Aldrich was arrested by Costa Mesa police that evening at his mother's house in Glendale in the 3700 block of El Lado Drive, according to police and the office.

He is being held in lieu of \$1-million bail and is scheduled to be arraigned on Nov. 19, according to the office.

Invasive mussel found in N. America for first time

Tiny mollusks have ravaged ecosystems, posing serious threat to California's Delta.

BY ROSANNA XIA

A particularly worrisome mussel species has entered North America for the first time through the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta — sparking what many are calling an immediate threat to California's most significant watersheds.

Golden mussels, invasive freshwater bivalves that have devastated ecosystems and critical water infrastructure in other parts of the world, were recently discovered near the Port of Stockton. *Limnoperna fortunei* appear to have also found their way many miles downstream into O'Neill Forebay of the San Luis Reservoir, where officials in Merced County have been rapidly conducting genetic testing.

"The species poses a significant immediate threat to the ecological health of the Delta and all waters of the

state, water conveyance systems, infrastructure and water quality," according to a public alert by the California Department of Water Resources and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. "This discovery is the first known occurrence of golden mussels in North America."

These mussels probably infiltrated California by a ship traveling from an international port and are likely to spread throughout the Delta and through the water infrastructure associated with the Delta, officials said in a statement. "Without containment, golden mussels are likely to spread to other freshwater bodies in California, and to other ports and inland waters of North America, and abroad."

These tiny dark-yellowish mollusks, native to rivers in China and Southeast Asia, have already wreaked havoc in South America, and for years have kept officials and ecologists across the United States on high alert. In each country where the mussels have taken over, the initial introduction also appeared to be from ships — on the hulls or from ballast wa-



California Department of Water Resources

THE GOLDEN mussel probably infiltrated the state through a ship traveling from an international port.

ter release.

And in most of these cases elsewhere, the golden mussel's range rapidly expanded up or downstream from the point of introduction — usually at a port and then through local, human-mediated pathways, officials said.

Both a freshwater and brackish species, the golden

mussel can tolerate wide ranges in salinity, temperature and pH levels, and can travel much farther than people might think. Shortly after fertilization, the larvae become mobile and are capable of coordinated swimming as they disperse in the water column.

Golden mussel takeovers in other countries have

shown that the species can grow in clumps or colonies containing as many as 80,000 to 200,000 organisms per square meter.

Wildlife officials have noted that the golden mussel can survive in considerably lower-calcium waters than either the quagga or zebra mussel, which have caused quite a few problems across lakes and reservoirs in California, as well as in the Great Lakes region and in many other lakes across the United States.

In addition to disrupting the ecological balance of an entire fresh body of water, golden mussels pose a significant threat to California's water infrastructure. These mussels can clog critical water intakes and fish screens and also foul major pipes relied on for water supply.

Agricultural irrigation and power plant operations could also be significantly impeded, and if past mussel infestations are any indication, golden mussels could also severely affect boating and recreation by encrusting docks, engines and steering equipment.

In California, a team of state, local and federal agen-

cies has been actively monitoring and coordinating the next steps to contain the species from spreading further in California and beyond. Officials have called upon anyone working and recreating in California lakes and rivers to clean, drain and dry their watercraft and equipment every time they are removed from a body of water. (The California State Parks' Division of Boating and Waterways has a webpage detailing how to "clean, drain and dry" a boat.)

"This simple measure has served to prevent spreading quagga and zebra mussels and is equally effective in stopping the overland spread of golden mussels," officials said.

Those who observe any suspected golden mussels in California are asked to file a report through CDFW's Invasive Species Program, either by filling out the form online, emailing invasives@wildlife.ca.gov or calling (866) 440-9530. Please note that officials are asking for these citizen reports to include the specific location of the observation and at least one clear close-up photograph of the mussel.

Newsom returns to state to support candidates

[Newsom, from B1] strategist. "He knows all those people."

With two years left before term limits force Newsom out of the governor's office, traveling the nation for Biden and Harris allowed him to showcase himself as a seasoned politician and a prolific fundraiser while building up his list of supporters outside California. The pilgrimages into GOP territory branded the governor as a pugilist capable of landing shots on the Republican Party and former President Trump.

Though Newsom endorsed just a handful of Democrats running for Congress and declined to take an official stance on seven of the 10 measures on the statewide ballot, the governor said he's put in work as California's top Democrat.

He raised nearly \$2 million for eight Democratic candidates in California congressional contests, his aides said, and has made appearances in several districts throughout the long campaign season.

"We've been doing a lot of fundraising for the congressional folks for almost two years," Newsom said.

On Sunday, Newsom joined a lineup that included Senate candidate Rep. Adam B. Schiff (D-Burbank), California Democratic Party



REP. Katie Porter (D-Irvine) and Gov. Gavin Newsom campaign in Orange on Sunday for Joe Kerr, right, a retired firefighter who is running for a House seat.

Chairman Rusty Hicks, state Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta and several others rallying for Democrat Derek Tran at a United Food and Commercial Workers union hall in Buena Park.

He told the crowd he was there for two main reasons: to thank the volunteers can-

vassing and making calls for Democrats and to support Tran in his effort to oust Republican Rep. Michelle Steel (R-Seal Beach) — a contest considered one of the most important congressional races in the country.

"That's how important you are to the fate and fu-

ture, not just of this district, but in many respects, the fate and future of this country," Newsom said to campaign workers in the room.

Though Newsom wasn't physically present in Orange County and Palm Springs for most of the election, he became a central figure in

some of the races.

Republican incumbents have been tying their Democratic challengers to Newsom in an effort to scare off moderate voters and stoke their base.

In an ad by GOP Rep. Ken Calvert's campaign in Congressional District 41, the governor's face transforms into that of Calvert's Democratic opponent, Will Rollins. "He's slick, loves taxes, and more liberal than Gavin Newsom," the narrator says as Newsom's image blends with Rollins'.

The ad claims that Rollins, "just like Newsom," will drive up gas prices, property and income taxes for residents of the Riverside County district that stretches from Corona to the Coachella Valley and includes Palm Springs.

Newsom brushed off the ad as "politics," but Rexroad said the governor's approval ratings in swing districts in California make him an easy foil for the GOP.

A statewide poll conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California, or PPIC, in October found that a majority of voters disapprove of Newsom's performance as governor. His ratings were worse in the Central Valley, Orange County, San Diego and the Inland Empire, where about 6 in 10 voters disapprove.

Those are the regions where Democrats are working to flip several GOP-held House seats.

"For [Republican Rep.] David Valadao, he would like nothing more than for [Democrat] Rudy Salas and Gavin Newsom to be on the front page of the Bakersfield Californian and all of the other news there for the rest of the election," Rexroad said. "The governor is extremely unpopular in the Central Valley."

Newsom didn't appear over the weekend in the Kern County district where Salas is seeking to oust Valadao (R-Hanford).

The governor pushed back on the idea that Democrats were concerned about appearing with him. "Folks are looking for all the support they can get consistently and have throughout this campaign," he said.

In Orange County, Republicans seized on Newsom's appearance days before he even appeared with Tran.

In a news release, Steel, Tran's opponent, called out Newsom's role as his campaign "closer."

"Bringing Newsom to town tells voters everything they need to know about where Derek Tran's loyalties lie: With the Sacramento crew that wants to take their tax raising, zero-bail policies to Washington," Steel said in a statement.

Despite the numbers, former U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer said Democratic campaigns are using the governor because they believe he can help. Newsom, she said, is good at "delivering messages that cross over."

"They are in the closing days, and they know who they want," Boxer said of the campaigns. "But I really think he's an asset everywhere because I think he's an excellent campaigner."

The last few days of an election are largely about increasing turnout and less so about changing minds, or flipping votes, when many voters have already decided on their candidate and turned in ballots.

PPIC pollster Mark Baldassare said it makes sense for congressional campaigns to use Newsom in the waning days of the election to drive Democrats to the polls.

Newsom's late appearances in the congressional districts give him an opportunity to later say he played a part, even if minor, if Democrats win the House. It also limits the potential damage and time GOP campaigns have to use his visits to their advantage.

Despite the critics of Newsom's election priorities and potential motivations, it's smart for politicians to campaign in a way that boosts others and themselves, said Thad Kousser, a professor of political science at UC San Diego.

"Politicians do things in their own self-interest," Kousser said. "But successful politicians do things that help them and their allies, and the savviest politicians do those things very visibly."

Obituaries

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Caitlin Amanda McGee

February 23, 1989 - October 16, 2024

Caitlin Amanda McGee, 35, of Austin, Texas died Wednesday, October 16th, 2024 at her home.

Caitlin was born on February 23, 1989 to John W. (Jay) McGee, Jr. and Kathy L. McGee at St. David's Hospital in Austin, Texas. She spent most of her life in Austin, Texas, graduating from Lake Travis High School in the class of 2007. She went on to attend Hollins University in Virginia, Columbia College in Chicago, and Antioch University in Los Angeles.

Caitlin trained rigorously from an early age in gymnastics and dance. She was blessed with talent that allowed her to compete and receive awards and recognition at the national level. Her dance style was strongly influenced by her gymnastic training, and that athletic ability led her to train in unique disciplines such as contortion, stilts, and silks in the style of Cirque du Soleil. Her family and mentors were incredibly proud to watch her perform on national television at the American Music Awards.

It will come as no surprise that Caitlin was an avid lover of music, a voracious reader, a student of psychology and a knowledgeable follower of current events. Her core values included a deep belief in civil and social justice. She was absolutely intolerant of discrimination of any kind and demonstrated this in consciously living a life of inclusion.

Fashion was also a passion of Caitlin's. Her niece, Eden, remembers vividly being in awe as a child of Caitlin's unique and dramatic style. She was certainly gifted with "flair."

She was a true animal lover, with a particular affinity to feline companions. She is preceded in death by beloved cat Neville Furbottom, and leaves behind Albus Fluffedore and Raven Lovegood, who will be well cared for in the future.

Caitlin is survived by her parents, Jay and Kathy McGee, sister Meredith McGee, nieces Eden Eckstrom and Lucy Clauss, and an extensive family network of uncles, aunts, cousins, and one surviving grandparent.

Caitlin McGee was beautiful, intelligent, talented, compassionate, and kind. Her wit and sense of humor were a joy to those around her. She will be deeply missed forever by her loved ones, who will always wish that there had been more time.



Donald M. McInnes

Donald M. McInnes passed away peacefully on October 23, 2024 at the age of 85 in Rancho Mirage, CA. Beyond his deep love for family, he leaves behind a legacy of music as a violinist. Donald appeared as a soloist with major orchestras, performed thousands of recitals, and can be heard on numerous studio recordings. As an educator, Donald shared his immense knowledge with countless students at some of the finest music institutions throughout the world.

Donald is survived by his husband, three children and their spouses, and seven grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Donald M. McInnes Memorial Fund at the Music Academy of the West, www.musicacademy.org/donate. A Celebration of Life will occur 1/10/25 at the Music Academy of the West at 1:30pm and 1/11/25 at Wiefels Mortuary in Palm Springs at 1pm.



Theresa Marie MARCHLEWSKI

March 21, 1953 - October 24, 2024

It is with deep sadness that the family of Theresa Marie Marchlewski (Terri) announces her passing at the age of 71 after a brave and hard-fought battle with breast cancer. Terri passed away peacefully on Thursday, October 24, 2024, at UCLA/Santa Monica Medical Center in Santa Monica, California, surrounded by her family.

Terri was born on March 21, 1953, in Tacoma, Washington. She was one of ten children to parents Dr. Eugene and Mrs. Vita Marchlewski. She obtained a law degree in 1978 from Georgetown Law School and had a successful 46-year career practicing employment law, most recently as a partner at Jackson Lewis, P.C. Terri retired in January, 2023. Terri married Tom Antony Nunziato in 1983 and raised two sons, Carl and Adam.

Beyond the respect she earned during her legal career, Terri will be remembered for her devotion to her family and friends; her love of cooking, including growing her own vegetables in her second-to-none garden and harvesting eggs from her own chickens; her joy in bringing family and friends together over amazing Sunday dinners; her beautiful knitted works; her generous chocolates on Halloween; her mouth-watering home-made breads, cheeses, pickled peppers, and brownies; her zest for traveling the world; her generous mentoring of countless young lawyers; and her pro bono legal work with many organizations, including most recently her work with Living Beyond Breast Cancer, a non-profit organization connecting people with trusted information and a community of support, and her advocacy work to increase federal funding for metastatic breast cancer through the Susan G. Komen Foundation Center for Public Policy.

Terri's beautiful and joyous life forever will be cherished in the hearts of her husband, Tom; her sons Carl and Adam; her daughter-in-law Katie; her grandson Johnny; her eagerly anticipated soon-to-arrive granddaughter Eve Theresa, her siblings Mary (late Marty) Rooney, Frank (late Mary) Marchlewski, Anna (Mike) Murphy, Aida (Ken) Jacoby, Anthony (Maria) Marchlewski, Lisa March (Shawn Skriver), David Marchlewski, the late Honorable Betina Bettina (the late Honorable Francis) Geambala, the late Christopher Marchlewski; and her many nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

Private celebrations of Terri's life will be held in Los Angeles and Chicago, and Youngstown. Details will be communicated to family and friends as they are finalized.

In lieu of flowers, tribute donations can be made in Terri's name to Living Beyond Breast Cancer at lbcc.org or 40 Monument Road, Suite 104, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004.

The family extends its deep thanks to Dr. Ron Sue and Dr. Dennis Slamon, David Geffen School of Medicine, UCLA, and all of the staff at UCLA/Santa Monica Medical Center for their loving care.

Before her passing, Terri told a friend that she had lived a plentiful and beautiful life. "As is a tale, so is a life: not how long it is, but how good it is, is what matters." ~ Seneca

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Los Angeles Times

Girl who raised goat to receive \$300,000 payout from county

[Goat, from B1] animal over to fair officials. Attorneys also accused county and fair officials of using law enforcement to intervene in what they said was a legal civil dispute over who owned the goat.

Cedar, who was bought at the county fair for \$902, was butchered, but it remains unclear who did it.

On Friday, U.S. District Judge Dale A. Drozd approved the settlement that requires Shasta County to pay \$300,000 to Long and her daughter to settle the federal suit out of court.

"Unfortunately, this litigation cannot bring Cedar home," said Vanessa Shakib, an attorney representing Long. "But the \$300,000 settlement with the County of Shasta and Shasta County Sheriff's Office is the first step forward."

The settlement brings about a partial end to what has been two years of litigation between Long and Shasta County and fair officials.

During the last two years, Shakib said fair and county officials have engaged in "obstructionist discovery tactics" to avoid answering key questions about happened to the goat, and what role officials played in seizing and destroying the animal.

"Years later this case still has several unanswered questions," she said.

After two years of reviewing texts, emails, phone records and depositions, Shakib said county and fair officials have yet to make clear who butchered Cedar, what happened to his meat and who got sheriff's deputies involved in the dispute.

Text messages uncovered during the federal lawsuit suggest that fair officials wanted to keep secret what happened to Cedar and who was involved.

"Kathy said ok but no one needs to know about this," B.J. Macfarlane, livestock manager for the Shasta Fair

Assn., wrote in a text message on July 22, 2022, to Shasta Fair Chief Executive Melanie Silva.

In the message, he referenced Kathie Muse, a volunteer for the 4-H program and an organizer for the county's barbecue. "U me and Kathy are only ones. It got killed and donated to non profit if anyone asks."

"We are a non profit," Silva responded, adding emojis for surprise and laughter.

Long's attorneys have argued in court that finding out who killed Cedar, and who contacted law enforcement, is key to their case. Long and her attorney reached out before the goat was butchered and told sheriff, fair and county officials they were disputing ownership of the goat.

Still, someone decided to order that Cedar be seized and killed despite knowing a lawsuit was incoming, Shakib said.

County officials deny any wrongdoing.

"The County did nothing wrong, but we recognize the risk and cost involved in going to trial, and so we agreed to settle the case," Christopher Pisano, an attorney for Shasta County, said in an email. "We are happy to be moving on and putting this case behind us."

A spokesperson for Shasta County did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Silva, chief executive of the Shasta District Fair, also did not respond to a request for comment.

Despite the partial settlement with Shasta County and the Sheriff's Office, the lawsuit continues. Long and her daughter have claims against Shasta District Fair employees and a 4-H volunteer.

Shakib said attorneys are still reviewing discovery, including phone records, to try to find out what happened to Cedar.

SPORTS

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/SPORTS

MLB's best rivalry on West Coast

Dodgers-Padres battle remains competitive as it supplants the Yankees-Red Sox duel.

BILL SHAIKIN
ON BASEBALL

In the days preceding the World Series, we were pummeled with references to the rivalry between the Dodgers and New York Yankees.

The Dodgers and Yankees are all about history, about tradition, about the rare chances to charge outrageous prices to see baseball's two biggest brands on the same field.

Today, however, the Dodgers and Yankees are not a rivalry. Jackie Robinson and Mickey Mantle are not walking through that door.

In the Dodgers' last decade in Brooklyn, the teams met six times in the World Series. When the teams met this October, they had not clashed in the World Series in 43 years. Movies in black and white and stories from Bob Costas get old after a while.

Rivalries — at least the few that attract national interest — are born in October. We enjoyed what is now the best rivalry in baseball this October, just not in the World Series.

The Yankees and Boston Red Sox shattered the bounds of a regional rivalry largely because of the 2003 and 2004 playoffs, when the teams met twice in the American League Championship Series, each of which amplified the drama by lasting the maximum seven games.

In 2003, Boston's Pedro Martinez flung Yankees coach Don Zimmer to the

[See Rivalry, D3]



ROBERT GAUTHIER L.A. Times

TEOSCAR Hernández (37) and Donovan Solano clash in new No. 1 rivalry.

Late goal-line stand foils USC

Marks is stopped short and Washington hangs on to hand the Trojans a fourth road loss in a row. **D4**

USC, UCLA tip off Monday

The schools' men's and women's basketball teams begin their Big Ten journeys. **D4-5**

Monarchs No. 1 in Division 1

Unbeaten Mater Dei is top seed in a tough bracket chock-full of Trinity League football teams. **D6**

NFL :: WEEK 9

TONIGHT'S GAME: TAMPA BAY AT KANSAS CITY | TV: CHANNEL 7, ESPN, 5:15 P.M.



RIO GHANCARLO Getty Images

DEMARCUS ROBINSON makes the game-winning catch in front of the Seahawks' Riq Woolen for a 26-20 win Sunday in Seattle.

Going extra mile for the win

Rams win their third straight as Stafford hits Robinson in overtime

BY GARY KLEIN

SEATTLE — Sluggishly streaking in Seattle.

That's what the Rams did on Sunday, winning their third game in a row with a 26-20 overtime victory over the Seahawks before 68,632 at Lumen Field.

Unlike in their season-opening defeat at Detroit, the Rams defense stopped an opponent from scoring a touchdown in the first possession of overtime.

Quarterback Matthew Stafford capitalized, throwing a 39-yard touchdown pass to receiver Demarcus Robinson for a victory that im-

proved the Rams record to 4-4.

Stafford and Robinson also connected for another touchdown pass, and rookie safety Kamren Kinchens returned a fourth-quarter interception 103 yards (a franchise record) for a touchdown as the Rams' defense scored for the fourth game in a row.

Safety Jaylen McCollough also intercepted a pass — his fourth of the season — and the Rams amassed seven sacks to send the Seahawks to their fifth loss in six games.

On a day when star receiver Puka Nacua was ejected in the second quarter for punching a player after an interception, Stafford com-

pleted 25 of 44 passes for 298 yards and two touchdowns, with an interception.

Cooper Kupp had 11 receptions for 104 yards.

Seahawks quarterback Geno Smith completed 21 of 34 passes for 363 yards and three touchdowns, with three interceptions.

The Rams trailed 13-3 at halftime after giving up two touchdown passes in the final 51 seconds of the second quarter.

Nacua was ejected for punching Seahawks linebacker Tyrel Dodson after cornerback Riq Woolen intercepted a pass with 27 seconds remaining in the second quarter.

Stafford's touchdown pass to

Robinson midway through the third quarter pulled the Rams to within three points, and Joshua Karty's field goal tied the score.

The Seahawks threatened early in the fourth quarter, but Smith's pass from the six-yard line landed in Kinchens' hands, and Kinchens broke several tackles before sprinting to the end zone.

The Seahawks had a chance to tie the score after they blocked a punt midway through the fourth quarter.

But Smith threw another poor pass, and Kinchens grabbed it.

Smith's 14-yard touchdown pass to Jaxon Smith-Njigba with 51 seconds left tied the score.

Chargers put their halves together

Offense provides an early lead, then the defense keeps the Browns at bay.

BY THUC NHI NGUYEN

CLEVELAND — The offense dominated in the first half. The defense made the flashy plays in the second.

The Chargers added it up to a 27-10 win over the Cleveland Browns on Sunday at Huntington Bank Field to approach the middle of the season with three wins in their last four games.

Instead of maintaining sustained dominance on both sides, the Chargers (5-3) passed the baton between the offense and defense. They built a 17-point halftime lead and then went cold, punting three straight times in the third quarter.

The defense then arrived with three second-half interceptions and came 44 seconds away from a second consecutive game without allowing a touchdown until Cedric Tillman tapped his toes in-bounds for a late 17-yard score.

The list of key contributors sent coach Jim Harbaugh on a winding news conference that reminisced about his childhood growing up in Ohio, celebrated cornerback Tarheeb Still's "one and a half" in-

[See Chargers, D3]



SUE OGRICKI Associated Press

CHARGERS linebacker Khalil Mack, left, sacks Cleveland quarterback Jameis Winston for a six-yard loss during the first half of L.A.'s 27-10 win over the Browns. The Chargers improved to 5-3.



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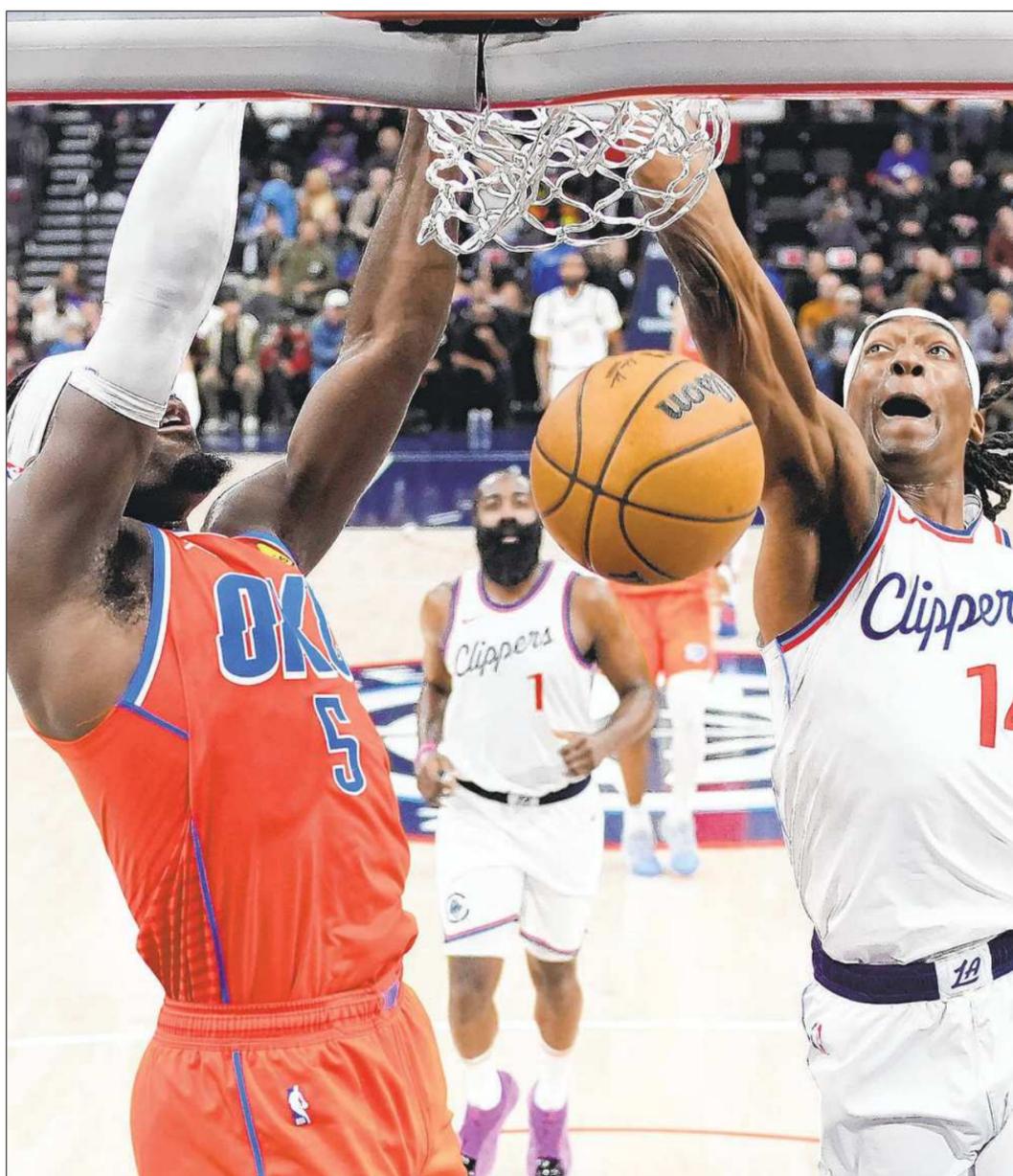
PRO CALENDAR

	MON 4	TUE 5	WED 6	THU 7	FRI 8
RAMS	NEXT: MONDAY VS. MIAMI, 5:15 P.M., ESPN				
CHARGERS	NEXT: SUNDAY VS. TENNESSEE, 1 P.M., CHANNEL 11				
LAKERS	at Detroit 4:30 SpecSN		at Memphis 5 SpecSN		PHILA. 7 SpecSN
CLIPPERS	SAN ANTONIO 7:30 Ch. 5		PHILA. 7 FDSC, ESPN		at Sac. 7 FDSC
KINGS	at Nashville 5 FDW	at Minnesota 5 FDW		VANCOUVER 7:30 FDW	
DUCKS		VANCOUVER 7 Ch. 13, Victory+			MINN. 7 Ch. 13, Victory+
GALAXY	NEXT: MLS PLAYOFFS SEMIFINALS VS. MINNESOTA, TBA				
LAFC					VAN. ^A 8 Apple TV+

Shade denotes home game # MLS playoffs, best of three ^ if necessary

TODAY ON THE AIR

TIME	EVENT	ON THE AIR
BASKETBALL		
4:30 p.m.	Lakers at Detroit	TV: SpecSN R: 710, 1330
7:30 p.m.	San Antonio at Clippers	TV: 5 R: 1150, 1330
MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL		
3 p.m.	Texas A&M-Corpus Christi at Purdue	TV: Big Ten
4 p.m.	Maine at Duke	TV: ACC
4 p.m.	Wright State at Kentucky	TV: ESPNU
4 p.m.	Cal State Northridge at St. Bonaventure	TV: ESPN+
5 p.m.	Wichita State at Western Kentucky	TV: CBSN
5 p.m.	Cleveland State at Michigan	TV: Big Ten
5:30 p.m.	South Florida at Florida	TV: SEC
6 p.m.	North Carolina Asheville at Alabama	TV: ESPNU
6 p.m.	Elon at North Carolina	TV: ACC
6 p.m.	Cal State Fullerton at Grand Canyon	TV: ESPN+
7 p.m.	Tennessee Chattanooga at USC	TV: Big Ten R: 710
7 p.m.	Texas vs. Ohio State	TV: TNT, truTV
7 p.m.	Life Pacific at Loyola Marymount	TV: ESPN+
7 p.m.	San Francisco State at UC Santa Barbara	TV: ESPN+
7 p.m.	La Verne at Long Beach State	TV: ESPN+
7:30 p.m.	Rider at UCLA	TV: FS1 R: 1150
7:30 p.m.	UC Riverside at Oregon	TV: Big Ten+
8 p.m.	Chapman at UC Irvine	TV: ESPN+
8:30 p.m.	Baylor at Gonzaga	TV: ESPN2
WOMEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL		
9 a.m.	Mississippi vs. USC	TV: ESPN
11:30 a.m.	Louisville vs. UCLA	TV: ESPN2
2 p.m.	Mercyhurst at Notre Dame	TV: ACC
4:30 p.m.	Michigan at South Carolina	TV: TNT, truTV
6 p.m.	UC Riverside at Santa Clara	TV: ESPN+
6 p.m.	La Sierra at Cal State Northridge	TV: ESPN+
6 p.m.	Cal State Fullerton at Pepperdine	TV: ESPN+
7 p.m.	Occidental at UC San Diego	TV: ESPN+
COLLEGE SOCCER		
10 a.m.	Women's Big Ten tournament, USC vs. Ohio State	TV: Big Ten+
1 p.m.	Women's Big Ten tournament, UCLA vs. Penn State	TV: Big Ten+
HOCKEY		
5 p.m.	Kings at Nashville	TV: FDW R: ESPNLA stream
5:30 p.m.	New Jersey at Edmonton	TV: NHL
HORSE RACING		
6:30 p.m.	Melbourne Cup	TV: FS2
PRO FOOTBALL		
5:15 p.m.	Tampa Bay at Kansas City	TV: 7, ESPN, ESPN2, ESPND
SOCCER		
9:30 a.m.	Italy, Parma vs. Genoa	TV: Paramount+, FOXD
9:30 a.m.	Italy, Empoli vs. Como	TV: Paramount+
11:45 a.m.	Italy, Lazio vs. Cagliari	TV: Paramount+
Noon	England, Fulham vs. Brentford	TV: USA, Universo
Noon	Spain, Celta de Vigo vs. Getafe	TV: ESPN+, ESPND
TENNIS		
6 a.m.	WTA Finals, round robin; Belgrade, Metz (ATP), early rounds	TV: Tennis
2 a.m. (Tues.)	WTA Finals, round robin; Belgrade, Metz (ATP), early rounds	TV: Tennis
VOLLEYBALL		
4 p.m.	Athletes Unlimited, Team Drews vs. Team Kingdon Rishel	TV: FDSC
6:30 p.m.	Athletes Unlimited, Team De La Cruz Mejia vs. Team Abercrombie	TV: FDSC



MARK J. TERRILL Associated Press

THE THUNDER'S Luguentz Dort, left, dunks as the Clippers' Terance Mann defends in the second half. The Clippers lost their third in a row and fell to 2-4. "It's nasty right now," the Clippers' Norman Powell says.

Clippers 'got to figure it out' as they fall to 0-4 at Intuit Dome

Powell scores 24 points but his team fades in the second half against Thunder.

BY BRODERICK TURNER

The Clippers' locker room was mostly empty and quiet Saturday night, a sense of dread appearing to envelop the team after its third consecutive loss.

After a 105-92 loss to the Oklahoma City Thunder dropped them to 0-4 at the Intuit Dome — their new home in Inglewood — few players were in a mood to talk about the team's struggles.

Norman Powell stood at his locker, however, and answered questions. He was asked about the mood of a team that has started 2-4 with star player Kawhi Leonard out because of right knee inflammation.

"What it feel like when you're standing in here?" Powell asked the reporter. He paused for a moment and repeated the question to the reporter: "What it feel like?"

Not very good, the reporter responded. "It's nasty right now," Powell, who had 24 points, said. "We just got to figure it out. I think we are playing good 28, 32 minutes of basketball. But we just got to

stay with it." James Harden had talked all season, but he wasn't around when the media entered the locker room. He had another double-double with 12 points and 13 rebounds, along with seven assists. But he was four for 13 from the field, two for nine from three-point range and minus-nine in his 32 minutes and 36 seconds of playing time.

Ivica Zubac was getting dressed when the media arrived, but he also left without speaking. He had nine points, 12 rebounds and also was minus-nine during his 28:24.

"Zu, I think, got ran down a little bit today, a little tired, and he wasn't his usual self around the basket, finishing," Clippers coach Tyrone Lue said. "So, that kind of hurt us."

It was the Clippers' fourth game in seven days, and it tested their endurance. Did fatigue play a role in the loss, especially considering that the Clippers have played games so poorly in the second half?

"I ask myself the same thing every night," Lue said. "Is it fatigue? Can we do something different?"

But Oklahoma City didn't let up despite playing on the second night of a back-to-back, improving to 6-0 behind 25 points from Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. Nevertheless, Lue con-

SATURDAY'S BOX

THUNDER 105, CLIPPERS 92

	OKLAHOMA CITY				
	Min	FG-A	FFA	OR-T	A P T
Dort	29	6-12	3-4	1-4	3 4 16
Jal. Williams	34	5-16	2-2	0-7	4 4 15
Holmgren	29	3-9	3-4	1-14	4 0 10
Gilgeous-Alexandr.	31	7-14	9-9	0-3	9 2 25
Wiggins	30	5-12	0-0	0-5	2 1 12
Wallace	24	3-4	0-0	0-4	1 2 7
Joe	22	4-8	0-0	1-2	1 0 12
Caruso	15	2-6	0-0	0-2	0 4 5
Dieng	8	1-1	0-0	0-0	0 3 3
Mitchell	7	0-0	0-0	0-0	0 4 0
D.Jones	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	1 0 0
Leons	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0 1 0
Totals	36-84	17-19	3-41	25	22 105

Shooting: Field goals, 42.9%; free throws, 89.5%. Three-point goals: 16-39 (Joe 4-8, Jal. Williams 3-5, Gilgeous-Alexander 2-4, Wiggins 2-4, Dieng 1-1, Wallace 1-2, Dort 1-4, Holmgren 1-4, Caruso 1-5, D.Jones 0-1, Leons 0-1). Team Rebounds: 4. Team Turnovers: None. Blocked Shots: 3 (Gilgeous-Alexander, Holmgren, Wallace). Turnovers: 12 (Jal. Williams 4, Gilgeous-Alexander 3, Holmgren 3, Mitchell 2). Steals: 11 (Wiggins 3, Caruso 2, Dieng 2, Jal. Williams 2, Holmgren, Joe). Technical Fouls: None.

CLIPPERS

	CLIPPERS				
	Min	FG-A	FFA	OR-T	A P T
Jones Jr.	22	1-9	0-0	1-3	0 4 2
Mann	24	2-6	6-6	2-6	2 2 11
Zubac	28	4-10	1-5	3-12	0 2 9
Harden	32	4-13	2-2	0-13	7 2 12
Powell	31	9-14	3-3	0-2	2 1 24
Coffey	20	1-2	2-2	0-1	0 1 4
Dunn	19	4-8	1-3	1-4	4 3 11
Batum	19	1-5	1-2	0-2	2 0 4
Porter Jr.	18	3-7	0-1	1-4	4 1 7
K.Jones	9	2-2	0-0	2-2	1 1 4
Brown	4	0-0	0-0	0-1	1 0 0
Hyland	4	1-3	0-0	0-0	0 3 1
Miller	4	0-0	1-2	0-0	0 0 1
Totals	32-79	17-26	10-50	23	17 92

Shooting: Field goals, 40.5%; free throws, 65.4%. Three-point goals: 11-35 (Powell 3-6, Dunn 2-5, Harden 2-9, Porter Jr. 1-1, Hyland 1-2, Mann 1-2, Batum 1-4, Coffey 0-1, Jones Jr. 0-5). Team Rebounds: 11. Team Turnovers: 2. Blocked Shots: 7 (Harden 3, Batum, Hyland, K.Jones, Zubac). Turnovers: 20 (Coffey 4, Powell 4, Dunn 2, Harden 2, Jones Jr. 2, Porter Jr. 2, K.Jones, Mann, Miller, Zubac). Steals: 10 (Harden 3, Coffey 2, Powell 2, Dunn, Mann, Zubac). Technical Fouls: None.

Oklahoma City	19	34	28	24	105
Clippers	28	29	21	14	92

A-16, B27.

continued to encourage his team.

"Stay with it," Lue said. "We played some tough teams. The biggest message tonight is stay the course."

The Clippers started strong in the first quarter, building a 13-point lead. They went six for 16 from three-point range, tying a franchise record for three-point attempts in the first quarter.

But they struggled with turnovers in the second quarter, giving the ball away eight times for 11 points. For the game, the Clippers had 20 turnovers.

Lue said before the game he wanted the Clippers to take care of the basketball. The Clippers entered averaging 16.4 turnovers per game, the sixth-worst in the NBA. They failed to cut down on the turnovers against the Thunder, who led the league in steals entering Saturday, averaging 13.8 per game.

By halftime, the Thunder cut the Clippers' lead to 57-53. The Clippers were outscored 12-2 to start the fourth quarter, falling into a 13-point hole and failing to get any closer.

"It's a multitude of things," Powell said. "The first thing I do is I look at myself in the mirror and see what I can do better, see how I can rally the guys, try to be vocal and encouraging, on the bench, watching the game, telling guys to shoot, telling guys to attack, play aggressive, get the ball out in transition. Hopefully we can generate some easy baskets that way."

THE DAY IN SPORTS

NBA reopens Hayes investigation after new video surfaces

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

After video was released early Saturday morning on TMZ's website, the NBA is reopening an investigation into a 2021 incident in which Lakers big man Jaxson Hayes was arrested and charged with 12 misdemeanors, including domestic battery and resisting arrest.

Hayes later pleaded no contest to two of the charges — false imprisonment and resisting arrest. He was sentenced to community service and probation. The NBA did not penalize him.

Security camera footage obtained by TMZ showed Hayes, then a member of the New Orleans Pelicans, and then-girlfriend Sofia Jamora in an argument. In the footage, Hayes shoves Jamora and spits at her.

"As a result of the media report and video posted [Saturday] morning, we are

reopening our investigation," NBA spokesperson Mike Bass said.

Speaking to reporters Sunday in Toronto, Lakers coach JJ Redick said the team is aware of and cooperating with the league's investigation but will not comment.

—DAN WOIKE

A visibly angry Joel Embiid shouted at and eventually shoved a Philadelphia newspaper columnist in a locker room altercation after the struggling 76ers lost to the Memphis Grizzlies on Saturday night. The NBA quickly said it has opened an investigation into the matter. Embiid took issue with Philadelphia Inquirer columnist Marcus Hayes, who mentioned the All-Star center's late brother and his son — both named Arthur — in columns questioning Embiid's professionalism and effort not being in shape after

playing in the Paris Olympics. ... Indiana Pacers forward Isaiah Jackson will miss the rest of this season after tearing his right Achilles tendon in Friday night's 125-118 loss at New Orleans.

ETC.

Championship 4 set for Phoenix

Ryan Blaney earned a chance to defend his NASCAR championship with a victory at Martinsville (Va.) Speedway that pushed the Team Penske driver into the winner-take-all season finale at Phoenix.

The ending of the race was marred by a lengthy NASCAR review in which scoring officials had to determine if Christopher Bell had violated a safety rule in his last-lap pass of William Byron. Bell hit the wall and

rode a portion of it for momentum — the same thing Ross Chastain did two years ago in a move that has since been banned.

Bell's pass of Byron left the two tied in points for the final spot in next week's title-decider. After a long delay, Bell's move was deemed illegal and Byron was given the final spot. Blaney also will be joined Joey Logano and Tyler Reddick.

Red Bull driver Max Verstappen took a major step toward securing his fourth straight Formula One title by winning the Brazilian Grand Prix. The two Alpine drivers, Esteban Ocon and Pierre Gasly, completed the podium.

In Shiga, Japan, Rio Takeda won the LPGA's Toto Japan Classic in a playoff that lasted six sudden-death holes, defeating Marina Alex of the U.S.

The Kansas City Royals are bringing back right-hander Michael Wacha on a three-year, \$51-million contract that includes a club option for the 2028 season, according to the Associated Press. ... Joey Gallo's \$8-million mutual option was declined by the Washington Nationals, making the first baseman/outfielder a free agent.

Alexander Zverev swept past Ugo Humbert 6-2, 6-2 to win the Paris Masters. ... In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Coco Gauff beat Jessica Pegula 6-3, 6-2 in an American matchup in an early-round match at the WTA Finals.

Abdi Nageeye and Sheila Chepkirui used strong kicks in the final mile to pull away from their nearest competitors and win the New York City Marathon for the first time.

College football AP Top 25

School	WL	Pts	Pvs
1. Oregon (62)	9-0	1550	1
2. Georgia	7-1	1449	2
3. Ohio St.	7-1	1442	4
4. Miami	9-0	1348	5
5. Texas	7-1	1310	6
6. Penn St.	7-1	1158	3
7. Tennessee	7-1	1150	7
8. Indiana	9-0	1123	13
9. Brigham Young	8-0	1084	9
10. Notre Dame	7-1	1066	8
11. Alabama	6-2	867	14
12. Boise St.	7-1	853	15
13. Southern Methodist	8-1	752	20
14. Louisiana State	6-2	707	16
15. Texas A&M	7-2	662	10
16. Mississippi	7-2	653	19
17. Iowa St.	7-1	592	11
18. Army	8-0	468	21
19. Clemson	6-2	447	11
20. Washington St.	7-2	351	22
21. Colorado	6-2	234	23
22. Kansas St.	7-2	227	17
23. Pittsburgh	7-1	203	18
24. Vanderbilt	6-3	130	-
25. Louisville	6-3	115	-

Others receiving votes: Missouri 81, South Carolina 58, Tulane 41, UNLV 9, Louisiana-Lafayette 9, Washington 4, Arizona St. 3, Iowa 2, Texas Tech 2.



DAVID RICHARD Associated Press

CHARGERS quarterback Justin Herbert passes over Browns defensive end Myles Garrett. Herbert threw for 282 yards and two touchdowns; since the team's early off week, he has averaged 274 yards passing per game.

Offense, defense meet halfway

[Chargers, from D1] interceptions and praised receiver Quentin Johnston's career-best 118 yards receiving.

"It was a wonderful feeling of winning," Harbaugh said with a dreamy smile. "A wonderful victory."

Quarterback Justin Herbert threw for 282 yards and two touchdowns while completing 18 of 27 passes. After a two-game absence because of an ankle injury, Johnston recorded his first 100-yard receiving performance, catching four passes including a 66-yard touchdown that was the Chargers' longest play from scrimmage this year.

"I just know when I came back, I had to show up for my team and make up for the two weeks I lost," Johnston said.

The Chargers have scored touchdowns of 60 or more yards in consecutive games after rookie Ladd McConkey notched a 60-yard touchdown catch last week. It's an explosive turn for an offense that spent the first part of the season dragging from injuries.

The Chargers averaged 136 yards passing per game during the first four games. Herbert suffered a high-ankle sprain in Week 2, limping through the next two games against the Pittsburgh Steelers and Kansas City Chiefs.

But since the Chargers' early off week, Herbert has averaged 274 yards passing per game.

"When everyone's on the same page, we're able to do things like that," Herbert said. "That's our whole emphasis and point of the of-



SUE OGROCKI Associated Press

ROOKIE cornerback Tarheeb Still (29) is escorted by teammates after making his first professional interception early in the fourth quarter against the Browns.

CHARGERS 27, BROWNS 10

Chargers	7	13	0	7-27
Cleveland	0	3	0	7-10

First Quarter

CHARGERS — Palmer 28 pass from Herbert (Dicker kick), 6:49.

Second Quarter

Cle — FG Hopkins 38, 9:30.

CHARGERS — Johnston 66 pass from Herbert (kick failed), 8:01.

CHARGERS — Dobbins 16 run (Dicker kick), 3:30.

Fourth Quarter

CHARGERS — Dobbins 7 run (Dicker kick), 4:16.

Cle — Tillman 17 pass from Winston (Hopkins kick), 4:44.

TEAM STATISTICS

	LAC	CLE
First downs.....	13	21
Total Net Yards.....	342	291
Rushes-yards.....	23-96	24-78
Passing.....	246	213
Punt Returns.....	2-64	5-50
Kickoff Returns.....	0-0	2-47
Interceptions Ret.....	3-19	0-0
Comp-Att-Int.....	18-27-0	26-46-3
Sacked-Yards Lost.....	6-36	6-22
Punts.....	7-47-286	6-53-0
Fumbles-Lost.....	0-0	1-0
Penalties-Yards.....	5-35	4-25
Time of Possession.....	25:51	34:09

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

RUSHING: CHARGERS, Dobbins 14-85, Vidal 5-7, Johnston 1-2, Herbert 3-2. CLEVELAND, Chubb 15-39, Winston 5-26, Strong 2-8, J. Ford 2-5.

PASSING: CHARGERS, Herbert 18-27-0-282. CLEVELAND, Winston 26-46-3-235.

RECEIVING: CHARGERS, McConkey 5-64, Johnston 4-118, Palmer 2-63, Dobbins 2-20, Dissly 2-9, Hurst 1-6, Tillman 1-2, Reagor 1-0. CLEVELAND, Jedy 7-73, Tomlin 6-75, Njoku 5-29, Atkins 3-32, Moore 3-28, J. Ford 1-2, Chubb 1-(minus 4).

FIELD GOALS MISSED: CHARGERS, Dicker 44. CLEVELAND, Hopkins 51.

(plus-six) in the NFL, capitalized on mistakes from Browns quarterback Jameis Winston to force three take-aways.

Still, a fifth-round pick in last April's draft, sparked the defense in the third quarter by leaping to deflect a pass in the end zone and batting it to safety Elijah Molden.

The defensive back, who was traded to the Chargers in August for a seventh-round pick from the Tennessee Titans, cradled the ball for his team-leading third interception.

"That's all you," Molden told the rookie after the play. The interception shut down a promising start to the second half for the Browns, who went 66 yards in 14 plays on the drive after amassing just 57 yards in the first half.

The Chargers, who led 20-3 at halftime, were scoreless on their first five drives of the second half, which included a missed 44-yard field goal from Cameron Dicker. After he missed an extra point in the first half — his third of the season — Dicker missed a field goal from inside 50 yards for the first time in his career.

The defense overcame

the offensive lull as safety Alohi Gilman grabbed his first interception of the season and Still got his first professional interception early in the fourth quarter. The former Maryland Terrapin jumped in front of a pass intended for receiver Elijah Moore and ripped the ball away as Moore tried to wrestle it free.

Safety Derwin James Jr. escorted the rookie cornerback straight to the end zone to celebrate, fixing an imaginary crown to Still's head.

"Once he feels that one interception, it's going to be up for him from here," James said. "He's a baller."

When he caught the ball, Still said he was surprised by how silent the crowd got. Then he remembered he was playing on the road.

Some Browns fans started chanting "we want refunds" after defensive lineman Tear Tart blocked a 51-yard field goal in the fourth quarter. Minutes later on the sideline, James gestured toward the block of Chargers fans seated behind the bench.

Chants of "Let's Go Chargers" soon echoed toward the upper deck of the stadium.

NFL ROUNDUP

Bills slip past the Dolphins behind Bass' 61-yard kick

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tyler Bass kicked a career best and franchise record 61-yard field goal with five seconds left, Josh Allen threw three second-half touchdown passes in a back-and-forth duel with Miami's Tua Tagovailoa, and the Buffalo Bills thwarted the visiting Dolphins in a 30-27 victory Sunday.

The teams traded leads four times in a thrilling second half that included seven consecutive scoring drives — four by AFC East-leading Buffalo (7-2) and three by division rival Miami (2-6).

Buffalo's final drive stalled at the Miami 43 following a spike and two incompletions, and coach Sean McDermott put his faith in the inconsistent Bass, who had missed an extra point earlier. Bass not only split the uprights, but also had enough length to reach the first row of fans in the end zone.

at Falcons 27, Cowboys 21: Kirk Cousins threw three touchdown passes and Atlanta maintained its hold on first place in the NFC South with a win over struggling Dallas (3-5), which lost its third in a row and lost quarterback Dak Prescott to a hamstring injury.

Cousins completed 19 of 24 passes for 222 yards, including 13 in a row at one point for the Falcons, now 6-3. He had scoring plays of nine yards to Drake London, 36 yards to Darnell Mooney and 11 yards to Ray-Ray McClellan, the third three-touchdown game of the quarterback's debut season with Atlanta.

London suffered a hip injury and never returned to the game, finishing with two catches for 27 yards.

Commanders 27, at Giants 22: Sensational rookie Jayden Daniels threw two touchdown passes to Terry McLaurin, and Washington Commanders beat stumbling New York for its best start to a season in almost 30 years. Washington is 7-2 for the first time since 1996.

Daniels hit McLaurin on scoring passes of one and 18 yards in the first half, and Austin Ekeler, filling in for the injured Brian Robinson, scored on a one-yard run as the Commanders com-



GENE PUSKAR Associated Press

BILLS KICKER TYLER BASS (2) watches his 61-yard field goal that defeated the Dolphins.

pleted a season sweep of the NFC East rival Giants (2-7).

The Giants have lost four straight and fell to 0-5 at home.

at Ravens 41, Broncos 10: Lamar Jackson threw for 280 yards and three touchdowns to finish with a perfect passer rating, Derrick Henry surpassed a few more rushing milestones, and Baltimore had little difficulty with Denver's defense.

Baltimore's beleaguered defense didn't force a punt until the third quarter, but a couple early fourth-down stops helped the Ravens (6-3) build a lead.

Henry scored the 100th and 101st rushing touchdowns of his career, and surpassed 1,000 yards on the season for the sixth time. Henry has scored in every game this season, and is the third player to manage at least 10 rushing touchdowns in seven consecutive years, joining LaDainian Tomlinson (2001-09) and Adrian Peterson (2007-13).

at Bengals 41, Raiders 17: Joe Burrow tied a career high with five touchdown passes, Chase Brown rushed for a career-high 120 yards and Cincinnati got its first home win, a rout of Las Vegas.

Burrow was 27 for 39 for 251 yards. He threw touchdown passes to Brown, Andrei Iosivas, Drew Sample and the last two to Mike Gesicki.

at Titans 20, Patriots 17 (OT): Nick Folk kicked a 25-yard field goal in overtime and Tennessee beat New England, giving coach Brian Callahan his first victory at home this season.

The Titans (2-6) snapped both a three-game skid overall and at home.

New England (2-7) had a final chance — Maye had forced overtime earlier with a five-yard touchdown pass to Rhamondre Stevenson — but Amani Hooker's second interception of the game clinched the victory.

at Panthers 23, Saints 22: Chuba Hubbard scored on a 16-yard run with 2:18 left and Carolina (2-7) snapped a five-game losing streak. Alvin Kamara had 215 yards from scrimmage for the Saints (2-7), who have lost seven straight.

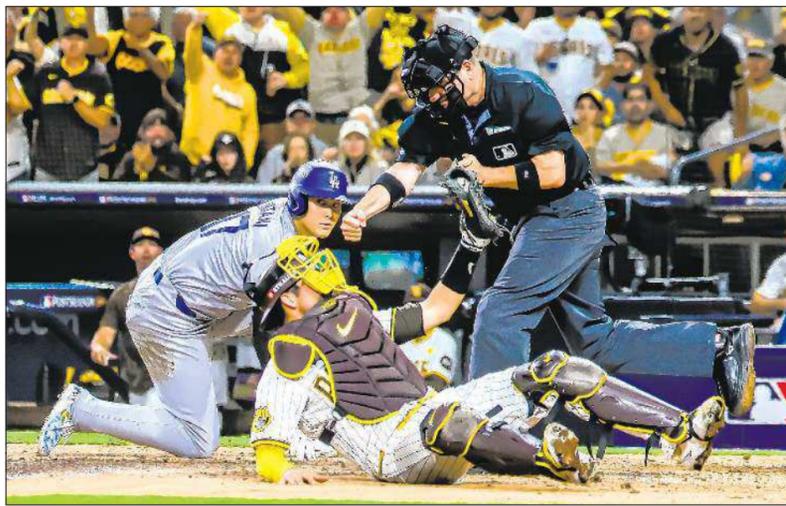
With deep pockets, Dodgers-Padres clash more intense

[Rivalry, from D1]

ground, two Yankees players jostled with a Fenway Park groundskeeper, Boston manager Grady Little left Martinez in the decisive game too long, and the Yankees won on a walk-off home run by third baseman Aaron Boone. Wonder what ever happened to him.

The 2004 series is best remembered for the Red Sox becoming the only team to win a seven-game post-season series after losing the first three games: The catalyst: the pinch-runner who stole second base and scored the tying run in the ninth inning of Game 4, Boston outfielder Dave Roberts. Wonder whatever happened to him too.

But that was 20 years ago. ESPN can air the Yankees and Red Sox every Sunday night — and the network would if it could, with good ratings to show for it — but the Red Sox have not been nationally relevant in years. In the five seasons since they traded Mookie Betts to the Dodgers, the Red Sox have



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

THE DODGERS' Shohei Ohtani and Padres catcher Kyle Higashioka figure to collide many times as their teams' rivalry grows and stretches into October often.

finished in last place in the AL East three times.

This year's World Series featured six players on contracts worth more than \$300 million apiece — three on the Dodgers, including Mookie Betts, and three on the

Yankees. That caught the attention of Zack Scott, who was Boston's assistant general manager when the Red Sox traded Betts.

"This triggers flashbacks to internal conversations about signing Mookie, and

our owner said he had no interest in doing mega deals," Scott tweeted this week. "I guess you can build around them."

The San Diego Padres have two players on contracts worth more than \$300

million and another on a contract worth \$280 million.

Dodgers co-owner Magic Johnson stood atop the Yankee Stadium grass late Wednesday night, surrounded by fallen confetti beneath him and a video board above him congratulating the Dodgers.

The Yankees had been vanquished, and before them the New York Mets.

But the only team this October to force the Dodgers into an elimination game: the Padres, in the division series.

"I really thought San Diego was the key for this," Johnson said. "They made us go to another level to beat them. I thought, once we beat them, we stayed on that level. They tested us. The Mets did a fantastic job. And then give the Yankees credit. They battled us."

"But I thought it was ours. Once we beat San Diego, I thought we were the best team standing."

When the Padres starting throwing money around, under late owner Peter Seidler, San Diego fans

declared a legitimate rivalry with the Dodgers was on.

It wasn't then, but it is now.

Rivalries are born in October: in 2022, when the Padres eliminated the Dodgers in the rain; in 2024, when the Dodgers eliminated the Padres with back-to-back shutouts, in a series in which the players chirped at one another and fans on both sides debated the greater meaning of a ball Manny Machado tossed in the general direction of the Dodgers' manager.

The World Series attracted a larger share of television viewers in San Diego than in New York.

The loudest crowds in baseball are at Dodger Stadium and Petco Park. The best rivalry in baseball is ours. The best two teams in the majors this season were the Dodgers and the Padres.

The World Series champions return to Petco Park next June, when the Padres once again will try to do what no team was able to do this October: Beat L.A.

Stonewalled and sitting in a familiar spot

Trojans stopped at the goal line in another tight loss as Riley says he still sees progress.

By RYAN KARTJE

SEATTLE — A long, cold night for USC had been leading here, to the doorstep of the Washington goal line, just a few familiar feet away from redemption.

For much of Saturday's 26-21 loss to Washington, as rain fell in sheets and a freezing wind blew off Lake Washington, Lincoln Riley stuck stubbornly with his gut, testing the nation's No. 1 pass defense by throwing into a downpour with a struggling quarterback. Riley has held tightly to his instincts in the face of criticism throughout USC's nightmare season, defiant to suggestions the Trojans weren't heading in the right direction, even as one close loss turned to another, and another, and another.

But after climbing back against Washington, taking a lead, then giving it away again, it was the ground game that carried the Trojans to that pivotal goal-line moment. And it was Riley who had dialed up 11 runs in 12 plays, grinding clock all the way to the one-yard-line, within just a few feet of exorcising USC's fourth-quarter demons.

The failure to bridge that oh-so-narrow gap had, to this point, been the story of USC's season, and Riley had distinctly chosen one side of that Rorschach test, pointing repeatedly to how close the Trojans had come. But here, just as Woody Marks was handed the ball on fourth down and a few feet away, the protection around him collapsed, and the walls closed in once again on USC.

"Just a blown assignment up front at the wrong time," Riley said.

It was just the latest missed opportunity at the least opportune time for the Trojans, who would get another chance with 1:36 left in the game. But after driving most of the field in less than a minute, USC was forced into another decisive fourth down.

Miller Moss, in the midst of another uneven performance, found himself immediately under pressure, as the Washington front broke through the USC line once again, wrapping up the Trojan quarterback, who could barely get off his final pass.

The two failed red zone trips would lead to a fourth loss in five weeks, leaving USC in an even more precarious position as it pertains to a possible bowl bid. But to



LINDSEY WASSON Associated Press

RUNNING BACK WOODY MARKS looks toward Miller Moss (7) after the Huskies stopped Marks on a goal-line stand in a 26-21 win over the Trojans, who have lost four of five games and four straight on the road.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

No. 10 Aggies upset by South Carolina

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LaNorris Sellers ran for 106 yards and threw for 244 more and South Carolina finally knocked off one of the Southeastern Conference's playoff contenders, beating No. 10 Texas A&M 44-20 on Saturday night in Columbia, S.C.

The Gamecocks (5-3, 3-3) took Louisiana State and Alabama to the wire this season before losing.

But this time their freshman quarterback and their senior transfer, Raheim Sanders, ran all over the Aggies (7-2, 5-1), who came into Saturday allowing just 104.5 yards a game.

Sanders, the all-SEC transfer from Arkansas, rushed for 144 yards and two

touchdowns.

Sellers threw for two touchdowns and ran for another score.

"He's special. He's just going to get better," Gamecocks coach Shane Beamer said about the quarterback who played only his fourth full game at the college level. "When he had those two losses against LSU and Alabama he was inexperienced."

Beamer said he felt like all he heard before the game was how powerful Texas A&M was on both lines.

He was proud they gained 286 yards on the ground and shut out the Aggies in the second half.

"We're a pretty freaking physical team around here too," Beamer said in a raspy voice, a thick black chain

with a Gamecock logo around his neck that was given to him by a student storming the field.

The Aggies ground their way through the SEC to be the last undefeated team in the league and worked their way back to a lead before halftime after falling behind 14-0 less than six minutes into the game.

at No. 7 Tennessee 28, Kentucky 18: Dylan Sampson rushed for 141 yards and two touchdowns to lead the Volunteers (7-1, 4-1 Southeastern Conference) past the Wildcats (3-5, 1-6).

Louisville 33, at No. 11 Clemson 21: Isaac Brown ran for a career-high 151 yards and a clinching touchdown in the fourth quarter

as the Cardinals (6-4, 4-2 Atlantic Coast Conference) beat the Tigers (6-2, 5-1).

The Cardinals seriously dented Clemson's hopes of playing for an ACC title and reaching the College Football Playoff.

The Tigers were among four undefeated ACC teams when the week began.

at No. 20 Southern Methodist 48, No. 18 Pittsburgh 25: Brashard Smith ran for 161 yards with a 71-yard sprint for the first of his two rushing touchdowns and made a nifty tip toe catch for another score as the Mustangs (8-1, 5-0 ACC) handed the Panthers (7-1, 3-1) their first loss to remain tied for the conference lead in their Atlantic Coast Conference debut.

Riley, the narrow margin was again evidence of how close USC is to the team he thought it could be.

"It's still the truth," Riley said. "We've been a good enough team to win every game. We've been a good enough team to put ourselves in position to win."

That message had worn thin weeks ago with frustrated USC faithful, but Riley went back to it Saturday. In spite of the losses, Riley said he sees "massive progress that will pay dividends" later.

"You go change five, six plays this season, and everyone is like, oh my God, they're friggin' unbelievable," Riley said.

Several of those plays Saturday belonged to Moss, who struggled even as Riley continued to go back to him.

Moss threw 50 passes — the third time he's met that threshold this season — but only managed to tally 293 yards (5.6 yards per at-

tempt), along with three interceptions.

Still, Riley complimented the quarterback's performance. When asked if USC would consider getting some snaps for his backup down the stretch this season, Riley made clear that wasn't in the plans.

"For us right now," Riley said, "what we're looking at is what's the best lineup, the best people to help us win every week, and we're going to keep our focus there."

USC didn't focus on establishing the run despite facing one of the worst run defenses in the Big Ten.

But USC's issues through the air didn't compel Riley to lean on USC's rushing attack until well into the second half.

At halftime, Marks had only eight carries for 17 yards. He finished with 22 for 123 yards and a touchdown after Riley finally turned to him.

Riley, after the game, re-

jected the notion that USC ignored the run early. Though the box score clearly insisted otherwise.

"We did try," Riley said. "We didn't run it great. It's always easy to say when you're not running it very good, and you feel the need to run the ball. But we needed to do it better. I needed to do a better job."

The pass-happy approach seemed destined to doom the Trojans until midway through the third quarter, when Moss dropped back on fourth and nine, in desperate need of a spark.

He found it in a streaking Makai Lemon, who caught a perfect pass in stride for a 37-yard score.

The touchdown would turn the game on its head, as USC's defense forced an immediate punt, giving the ball back to Moss, who needed just three plays to move the length of the field before finding a wide-open Kyle Ford for a go-ahead score.

But that lead wouldn't last. Not as Washington turned a Moss interception into the go-ahead scoring drive.

USC would still get two prime chances to close that gap. Both would fall short. But in the aftermath, the coach saw no reason to "go back to the drawing board," even with USC's expectations for the season falling further and further out of reach.

"It's not like we're getting our ass kicked," Riley said. "It's not that. This team has shown capability to do all the things you need to do. We just have to continue to keep our nose to the grindstone."

USC MEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

Plenty of holes to fill for Musselman heading into Year 1

By RYAN KARTJE

Eric Musselman is not one for sugarcoating. The new USC basketball coach knew what he was inheriting when he took the reins of an underperforming program last spring. He understood the limitations of rebuilding an entire roster on the fly. And now, on the doorstep of his first season with the Trojans, he's not trying to hide his team's perceived imperfections, either.

"We know we have some holes on our roster," Musselman said.

"We want our guys to understand what those areas of concern are, and how do we combat that by being honest about who we are."

Musselman, well into his third decade as a basketball coach, knows no other way. There is no generalizing with him. When players make mistakes in practice, Musselman will call them out, believing that it's his job to "put an address on it" with the source of his criticism.

So there was no hiding when USC was picked 14th out of 18 teams in the Big Ten preseason media poll. Expectations for them, from the outside world, were low. Proving them wrong meant being clear about who the Trojans are. And as Musselman saw it, that meant playing this season like "sewer rats," scratching and clawing their way through the Big Ten.

The truth is no one knows what USC will be in Year 1 under Musselman.

But with the Trojans' opener against Chattanooga on Monday, here's what we do know about what to expect at the start of a new era of Trojans basketball:

A lot on Claude's shoulders

The Big East's most improved player a year ago, Claude exploded onto the scene last season as a do-everything combo guard at Xavier, averaging 16.6 points, 4.2 rebounds and 3.2 assists per game.

But at USC, he'll be asked to take on even more workload to make the Trojans' offense go.

There aren't many other options for Musselman but to rely heavily on Claude, who is the only natural lead guard on the Trojans' roster. He has the requisite playmaking ability to excel in that role as a creator.

But while he has proven able to score, especially at the rim, Claude has yet to prove he can be a consistent outside shooter. He shot under 24% from long range last season at Xavier, which could be a problem on nights when the rest of USC's shooting is off-kilter.

That's been a point of emphasis from Musselman. Claude's command of USC's offense has certainly been impressive in the early going — he had five assists and zero turnovers in an exhibition win over Gonzaga.

The bigger question might be who takes those reins when he's not on the court.



RYAN SUN Associated Press

FIRST-YEAR TROJANS coach Eric Musselman doesn't have a lot of depth on his squad, but he does have versatile, lengthy wings who can defend well.

The center spot is still very uncertain

When Musselman was asked about how 6-foot-10 Massachusetts graduate transfer Josh Cohen might fit into his plans. He shrugged.

"I don't even know," the coach admitted.

Musselman had been pretty open about USC's glaring question marks at center, where the Trojans have just two players taller than 6-8 — Cohen and 6-10 senior returner Harrison Hornery, neither of whom

are really the physical, low-post type of big man.

Rashaun Agee, a 6-8 transfer from Bowling Green, offers a more physical presence in the paint — and especially on the glass, where he notched 18 games with double-digit rebounds last season.

But Musselman has made abundantly clear to Agee and the others where he believes USC is lacking down low.

"We don't block shots very well," Agee said. "That's something I need to work on."

Thomas is skeleton key to rotations

Two years ago, no one would've envisioned Saint Thomas as the focal point of a college offense. He was averaging only a few points per game at Loyola Chicago, barely scraping by in the Ramblers' rotation while also struggling with his mental health.

Then Thomas took a break from basketball, left for Northern Colorado, and everything clicked. He nearly averaged a double-double last season — 19.7

SATURDAY'S SUMMARY				
WASHINGTON 26, USC 21				
USC	0	7	14	0-21
Washington	10	10	0	6-26
First Quarter				
WASH—FG	Gross 39, 6:44.			
WASH—Coleman	19 run (Gross kick), :21.			
Second Quarter				
USC—Marks	1 run (Lantz kick), 10:02.			
WASH—Coleman	15 run (Gross kick), 8:11.			
WASH—FG	45, :35.			
Third Quarter				
USC—Lemon	37 pass from Moss (Lantz kick), 9:11.			
USC—Ford	9 pass from Moss (Lantz kick), 5:07.			
Fourth Quarter				
WASH—Reynolds	4 run (pass failed), 13:48.			
Attendance	71,251.			
STATISTICS				
TEAM	USC	WASH		
First downs	26	21		
Total Net Yards	459	375		
Rushes-yards	29-166	29-113		
Passing	293	262		
Punt Returns	2-20	0-0		
Kickoff Returns	5-115	2-74		
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	3-66		
Comp-Att-Int.	30-50-3	25-40-0		
Sacked-Yards Lost	0-0	0-0		
Fumbles-Lost	2-37.5	4-37.0		
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0		
Penalties-Yards	7-35	7-44		
Time of Possession	33:04	26:55		
Individual Leaders				
RUSHING: Southern Cal, Marks 22-123, Joyner 6-38, Moss 1-5, Washington, Coleman 23-104, Mohammed 2-5, Reynolds 1-4, C.Davis 1-4, (Team) 2-(minus 4).				
PASSING: Southern Cal, Moss 30-50-3-293, Washington, Rogers 25-39-0-262, D.Williams 0-1-0-0.				
RECEIVING: Southern Cal, Lemon 8-70, Marks 7-26, Za Branch 6-102, Lane 3-47, McRee 3-15, Hudson 1-19, Ford 1-9, Robinson 1-5, Washington, Boston 9-99, G.Jackson 6-44, Lantz 3-41, Coleman 2-17, C.Davis 2-7, DeGraaf 1-36, Hunter 1-15, D.Williams 1-3.				
MISSED FIELD GOALS—Southern Cal, Lantz 5/2.				

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UCLA MEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

Bruins' new cast: No stars, lots of talent

BY BEN BOLCH

One of the lead architects of four NBA championship teams wanted to see the modern blueprint for building a winner in the college game.

While coaching the U.S. men's basketball team inside UCLA's practice facility in the leadup to the Paris Olympics, Steve Kerr spotted something curious in Bruins counterpart Mick Cronin's hands and called him over for an unveiling.

It was a color-coded list of Cronin's free-agent targets and the team's name, image and likeness budget.

"He was blown away," Cronin said of Kerr, the Golden State Warriors coach who won titles in 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2022. "He goes, 'What is going on? What are you doing?'"

UCLA's coach was in the midst of securing enough high-end talent to vault his team back into national title contention for the 30th anniversary of the Bruins' last championship. The quest started with a flurry of expletives, Cronin telling his staff with some not-so-nice words that they needed to get better players after a rare losing season.

Six months later, the No. 22 Bruins will reveal the results of their free-agency haul Monday at Pauley Pavilion when they face Rider in their season opener.

A roster without one player on the preseason All-Big Ten team easily should be the deepest of Cronin's six seasons in Westwood. What UCLA lacks in star power it might make up for with an ensemble cast that includes six transfers and three freshmen who addressed the Bruins' needs for shooting, rebounding and veteran savvy.

In a throwback to the delightful days of John Wooden, UCLA's practices could be tougher than some of the



UCLA coach Mick Cronin gives instructions to guard Trent Perry during an exhibition game Wednesday.

games.

Dylan Andrews, UCLA's presumed starting point guard, goes up every day against transfer Skyy Clark, who led Louisville in scoring last season.

It's a similar story for Sebastian Mack. The sophomore guard must face transfer Dominick Harris, who ranked third in the nation in three-point accuracy at Loyola Marymount a year ago.

Amid the lively competition, there are days when freshman Trent Perry makes a case as the team's best player in the backcourt, adding to the intrigue over rotations and minutes allocation.

"It's not like you're just playing against a guy who's inferior to you," Cronin said of his practices.

A surplus of scorers — five transfers averaged double figures in points at their

previous stops — has led Cronin to predict that his team could have seven or eight different leading scorers in games this season. UCLA's newfound depth also will free its coach to get creative with lineups and employ liberal substitution patterns, allowing his team to apply relentless pressure.

"In my heart of hearts, my DNA," Cronin said, "I'm liking to dictate the tempo of the game with my defense."

A year after the Bruins failed to make a three-point shot in a game for the first time since February 2000 and finished the season shooting only 33.2% from long range, they will have plenty of options from beyond the arc.

The leading sharpshooter is likely to be Harris, who made 44.8% of his three-pointers last season, when Clark (35.3% at Louisville), forward Tyler Bilodeau

(34.5% at Oregon State) and Perry (47.1% at Harvard-Westlake High) also showed they can go on scoring binges from the perimeter.

"At any given moment," said forward Kobe Johnson, a transfer from USC who likely will take Lazar Stefanovic's place in the starting lineup, "any one of us can go off and score 20 points, 25 points. Whoever's feeling it one night, we're going to feed them the ball. We've just got to be unselfish and watch others succeed."

Roles will change for many of the returning players. Sophomore forward Brandon Williams, who started 13 of the final 14 games last season, offered to redshirt. Stefanovic, who started every game last season, could become the sixth man. Mack showed with his playmaking and relentlessness in an intrasquad scrim-

mage that he's going to fight to remain a regular part of the rotation.

Yet there are only so many minutes to go around. What might those spending more time on the bench than they would like be thinking?

"Win," forward Eric Dailley Jr., a transfer from Oklahoma State, said of his mindset in that situation. "That's it."

That's not something many of the transfers did last season. Five came from teams that posted losing records, leading to bad tendencies that need to be eradicated as quickly as possible. Cronin said he wanted to purge dumb fouls, risky passes, poor shot selection and getting beat on defense because of fatigue.

"All we focus on is building winning habits and players adjusting to the fact that they're there to please me,

I'm not there to please them," Cronin said. "I please you by giving you the UCLA jersey and the collective pleases you with pretty good NIL money, so now it's time to please me because me and my coaching staff, we understand what it takes to win, so you have to become a winner and do winning things."

As part of their instant bonding efforts, the Bruins held get-to-know-you events at Dodger Stadium, SoFi Stadium, the beach and their coach's house, where "Chef Cronin" piled freshly grilled burgers and hot dogs high on a plate.

The payoff could come during a schedule that includes nonconference games against No. 6 Gonzaga, No. 9 North Carolina and No. 10 Arizona. Cronin said it feels as if the whole season is one long nonconference schedule because the Bruins will play 14 of their 17 Big Ten opponents only one time, complicating their scouting efforts.

After last year's experiment with eight freshmen failed, Cronin told his transfers they needed to adopt a professional mentality so his team would be stocked with leaders. Cronin said he's slept better thanks to a roster that now includes three seniors, four juniors and five sophomores.

The only players who will run out of eligibility after this season are Johnson and Stefanovic, though Cronin knows he'll have to re-recruit everyone else on the roster next spring. Does Cronin need a general manager to help with the ceaseless cycle of turnover that has overtaken the college game?

"You're looking at him," he said. "I need help fundraising, but as far as picking players, you're looking at him, as long as I'm coaching."

If all goes well, the endeavor will be doubly satisfying.

USC WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

Bar set high with decorated Watkins as top star

BY BENJAMIN ROYER

When Cheryl Miller first touched the hardwood as a Trojan, she powered the women of Troy to a national championship.

Miller — a sophomore in 1983-84 — returned with everything to prove after winning it all. Expectations soared and fans flocked to the Sports Arena to watch the Trojans.

Enter sophomore guard JuJu Watkins and the USC women's basketball squad of 2024-25. Watkins couldn't get past the Elite Eight in Year 1, but expectations, like they were in 1983, are sky-high.

"We haven't shied away from the word expectations all summer," said USC coach Lindsay Gottlieb, entering her fourth season in charge of the Trojans. "I'm not trying to pretend that they're not there. It's a matter of using it as the standard and saying this is where we want to be, but not letting that put the weight of the world on our shoulders every day or steal our joy every day."

Big Ten media and coaches picked the Trojans to win the conference in their debut season.

Watkins — who averaged 27.1 points per game while taking 34.6% of the team's shots — is unanimously heralded as the Big Ten preseason player of the year.

And USC begins the year ranked No. 3 in the Associated Press Top 25, behind South Carolina and Connecticut.

Coming off a 29-6 record and their first Elite Eight appearance since 1994, the Trojans enter the season with a rare mix: returning veterans, seven freshmen, a bona fide star in Watkins and two graduate transfer stalwarts of the Pac-12's past: former Stanford forward Kiki Iriafen and Oregon State guard Talia von Oelhoffen.

Iriafen, the reigning Katrina McClain Award winner — which honors the top power forward in the nation — averaged a double-double (19.4 points and 11.0 rebounds) last season.

Von Oelhoffen, on the other hand, was an All-Pac-12 point guard who led Oregon State in assists with 5.0 per game — a mark that



JUJU WATKINS averaged 27.1 points per game for the No. 3 Trojans, who have more offensive options.



UCLA GUARD Londynn Jones knows that "every possession matters," says teammate Angela Dugalic.

would have led USC.

"I spent most of my time here literally watching film on how to stop [Iriafen and von Oelhoffen]," Gottlieb said about recruiting the graduate transfer duo. "Now, it's an unbelievable feeling."

For Iriafen, an AP preseason All-American alongside Watkins, playing at Galen Center is a return home.

She's a Los Angeles native, having played at Harvard-Westlake.

"Being home is the greatest gift I could ask for," Iriafen said. "I'm the oldest child, so being able to be around my siblings, my parents, it's super special for me. Everyone who has helped me get to this point — my high school coaches, my trainers and my family — can now finally see me shine on the college stage."

Senior center Rayah Marshall — one of two returning starters from last year — joins Watkins, Iriafen and von Oelhoffen on the Naismith Women's Player of the Year watch list. All four averaged double-digit points last season.

Outside of Marshall and Watkins, however, the Trojans return just slightly over a tenth of their minutes from last year, almost all of which came off the bench.

The entrance of offensive options playing big minutes through USC's former Pac-12 foes allows Watkins — who passed Miller for the program record of most 30-point games in a season — to improve as a facilitator instead of being relied upon as the go-to scorer at all times, Gottlieb said.

"[Her] game continues to evolve," Gottlieb said of Watkins. "She has it all. We never want to stifle her ability to be a bucket-getter — nobody is better at that than her — but she really has a complete game. As her skill set and her pace have evolved, I just want her to make the right play again and again."

Gottlieb added that some of the seven freshmen are set for immediate playing time when USC opens its campaign in Paris against No. 20 Mississippi on Monday morning — although she declined to specify who.

UCLA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

Bruins want a deeper tournament run

BY ANDRÉS SOTO

The UCLA women's basketball team was in the closing minutes of its practice on Tuesday when a loose ball was making its way out of bounds. Rather than the play go dead, Londynn Jones dove for it, launching herself headfirst into the empty chairs on the sideline.

For Angela Dugalic, the kind of tone that Jones set by diving for that ball in a pre-season scrimmage is exactly what the 2024-25 Bruins need to be about.

"Londynn's just a dawg," Dugalic said. "When I see her dive into the bleachers, that makes me want to do the same. I know she's willing to sacrifice herself just to get a loose ball. In reality that doesn't seem like a lot, but in that moment it's like the biggest thing for us because every possession matters. She knows that."

It's that edge that can be the difference come March, when UCLA has been eliminated in the Sweet 16 in back-to-back years, something Gabriela Jaquez is all too familiar with.

"I remember how I felt af-

ter the game," Jaquez said. "I think going into this season, remembering that, how you felt and how you don't want to feel again — losing like that — is just really important. When you come into practice, just trying to get better so you can be prepared for March."

This year's UCLA squad is younger, featuring four freshmen and seven total newcomers, but the expectations remain the same even in a new conference. They're the No. 2-ranked team in the Big Ten preseason media poll, and are ranked fifth nationally.

Two players, Kiki Rice and Lauren Betts, were named to both the coaches and media Preseason All-Big Ten teams.

There's no time to wait for the new faces to adjust, so Jaquez and the rest of the returners have made it a point to get everybody on the same page.

"It starts in practice, in the film room, in the weight room, how we do things here," she said. "It's really difficult playing two years, making it to the Sweet 16, haven't been farther than that, so I hope this year we

can change that and obviously having more experience is going to be very helpful, along with our team. We're majority upperclassmen, so just all of us leading the freshmen, leading everyone to that will be really important."

Dugalic is also bringing back some valuable experience for her team, having represented Serbia in the 2024 Paris Olympics.

She spent the summer with the national team, learning and adjusting to a more physical style of play from her older teammates and coaches.

The Olympic experience, Dugalic said, helped her mature as a player and as a person, which has been valuable as she's still actively trying to find her role on this team after coming off of a season in which she posted career highs in points, rebounds and assists while starting 29 of 30 games.

"I just take it day by day, honestly. There's always highs and lows," Dugalic said. "Every day [my role] sort of changes because one day Gabs [Jaquez] can have 20 points, the next day Kiki

[Rice] will, the next day I will, so it just always constantly moves. I'll literally do anything just to win and just to make my teammates better and myself better."

Dugalic gets to return to Paris as the Bruins open their season in the Aflac OUI-Play doubleheader against Louisville on Monday.

It will be the first time the women's basketball team plays their season opener on international soil, indicative of just how much the sport has boomed.

"There's a lot of momentum from a lot of different angles," said UCLA coach Cori Close, now in her 14th season. "Record viewing numbers, record corporate sponsorship, record attendance, and then that continuing on to the WNBA season and every record being broken there. And now coming in, having two top-five teams in Los Angeles, five a chance to do something. ...

"There's just so many reasons to be excited about women's basketball. It's not a matter of, 'Hey, come help us build it,' no, we're here. And you better not miss out."

Mater Dei and league rivals may have rerun

Monarchs top seed in 10-team Division 1 playoff bracket, which has six Trinity teams.

ERIC SONDHEIMER
ON HIGH SCHOOLS

There once was a rule that you couldn't play a league opponent in the first round of the football playoffs and everything should be done to avoid having league opponents meet before the semifinals.

Then came the competitive equity playoffs, where a computer algorithm ranks teams and ignores geography, league representation and head-to-head results. It means there could be plenty of rematches taking place throughout the Southern Section and City Section playoffs starting this week, and it's one of the most difficult challenges in football to beat a team twice.

Unbeaten Mater Dei (9-0) was seeded No. 1 on Sunday for the Southern Section Division 1 playoffs and will be trying to duplicate its 15-0 season of 2017 when it swept league rival St. John Bosco in what has become almost a yearly two-game series. With six Trinity League teams in the 10-team Division 1 bracket, there could be lots of rematches unless public school powers Mission Viejo (10-0), Inglewood (10-0) and Corona Centennial (8-2) intervene. Centennial has already faced Mater Dei this season, so beware if there's a rematch.

Retired coach Ed Croson was one of the best in figuring out how to win rematches when he was at Birmingham and Chaminade.

"It's hard to beat somebody twice because kids subconsciously are saying in the back of their mind, 'We're better,' where the others are saying, 'We have something to prove.'"

In 2002, Birmingham lost to Taft 30-6 in league play, then beat the Toreadors in the City final 35-7. In 2013, Chaminade lost to Gardena Serra 36-0, then beat Serra in the section final 38-35. But in 2012, Chaminade beat Serra 28-20 in league, then lost to Serra 30-28 in the section final.

Croson admits he saved plays for the expected final against Serra in 2013. "We knew we would be playing them at some point and we started working on a game plan and we didn't tell the kids," he said. "Every Sunday, part of the team meeting was Serra. We added a couple plays each week. The kids didn't know."

A rematch is happening in the opening round of the City Section Open Division playoffs, with Marine League rivals San Pedro and Banning facing off again after playing Oct. 18 at



CRAIG WESTON For The Times

QUARTERBACK DASH BEIERLY and unbeaten Mater Dei are trying to duplicate their 15-0 season in 2017. They face the winner of Sierra Canyon and Servite.

THE TIMES' PREP FOOTBALL RANKINGS

By Eric Sondheimer

Rk.	School (W-L)	Result	Next game (last week's ranking)
1	MATER DEI (9-0)	def. Orange Lutheran, 38-14	vs. Sierra Canyon-Servite winner, Nov. 15 (1)
2	MISSION VIEJO (10-0)	def. Los Alamitos, 40-14	vs. Corona Centennial, Nov. 15 (2)
3	ST. JOHN BOSCO (9-1)	def. JSerra, 44-24	vs. Inglewood-Santa Margarita winner, Nov. 15 (3)
4	ORANGE LUTHERAN (7-3)	lost to Mater Dei, 38-14	vs. JSerra, Nov. 15 (4)
5	CORONA CENTENNIAL (8-2)	def. Chaparral, 54-12	at Mission Viejo, Nov. 15 (5)
6	JSERRA (6-4)	lost to St. John Bosco, 44-24	at Orange Lutheran, Nov. 15 (7)
7	SANTA MARGARITA (4-6)	def. Servite, 44-8	vs. Inglewood, Friday (9)
8	SIERRA CANYON (7-3)	def. Gardena Serra, 21-20	vs. Servite, Friday (8)
9	SERVITE (6-4)	lost to Santa Margarita, 44-8	at Sierra Canyon, Friday (6)
10	MURRIETA VALLEY (8-2)	def. Eastvale Roosevelt, 56-3	vs. Rancho Cucamonga, Friday (11)
11	GARDENA SERRA (7-3)	lost to Sierra Canyon, 21-20	vs. Downey, Friday (12)
12	INGLEWOOD (9-0)	def. Culver City, 52-27	at Santa Margarita, Friday (13)
13	OAK HILLS (10-0)	def. Ridgecrest Burroughs, 49-0	at Oaks Christian, Friday (15)
14	NEWBURY PARK (10-0)	def. Rio Mesa, 41-2	vs. San Jacinto, Friday (16)
15	SIMI VALLEY (9-1)	def. Oaks Christian, 28-23	vs. Sherman Oaks Notre Dame, Friday (25)
16	CHAPARRAL (7-3)	lost to Corona Centennial, 54-12	vs. Yorba Linda, Friday (14)
17	SAN JUAN HILLS (9-1)	def. Tesoro, 42-7	vs. Beaumont, Friday (17)
18	DOWNEY (9-1)	def. Mayfair, 49-44	at Gardena Serra (18)
19	OAKS CHRISTIAN (7-3)	lost to Simi Valley, 28-23	vs. Oak Hills, Friday (10)
20	LEUZINGER (8-2)	def. Lawndale, 56-0	at Los Alamitos, Friday (19)
21	LONG BEACH MILLIKAN (8-2)	idle	vs. Crean Lutheran, Friday (21)
22	DAMIEN (8-2)	def. Rancho Cucamonga, 34-31	vs. San Clemente, Friday (22)
23	YORBA LINDA (9-1)	def. Corona del Mar, 21-14	at Chaparral, Friday (24)
24	EDISON (6-4)	lost to San Clemente, 21-17	vs. North Torrance, Friday (20)
25	LOS ALAMITOS (5-5)	lost to Mission Viejo, 40-14	vs. Leuzinger, Friday (23)

PREP FOOTBALL PLAYOFF PAIRINGS

CIF SOUTHERN SECTION

First Round
(All games Friday at 7 p.m. unless noted)

DIVISION 1
Mater Dei, bye; Servite at Sierra Canyon; Corona Centennial, bye; Mission Viejo, bye; Orange Lutheran, bye; JSerra, bye; Inglewood at Santa Margarita; St. John Bosco, bye

DIVISION 2
Rancho Cucamonga at Murrieta Valley; Leuzinger at Los Alamitos; Oak Hills at Oaks Christian; Beaumont at San Juan Hills; Downey at Gardena Serra; Yorba Linda at Chaparral; San Clemente at Damien; San Jacinto at Newbury Park

DIVISION 3
Sherman Oaks Notre Dame at Simi Valley; Mira Costa at La Habra; Crean Lutheran at Millikan; Loyola at Tustin; North Torrance at Edison; Bonita at Cathedral; Cajon at Chino Hills; Vista Murrieta at Villa Park

DIVISION 4
Orange Vista at St. Bonaventure; Aquinas at Redondo Union; Apple Valley at Charter Oak; Culver City at Capistrano Valley; Laguna Beach at Onond Pacifica; Northview at Long Beach Poly; Thousand Oaks at St. Paul; Santa Barbara at El Modena

DIVISION 5
Western at Huntington Beach; Torrance at Summit; Ventura at Rio Mesa; Troy at La Serna; Foothill at Moorpark; Lakewood at Valencia; Trabuco Hills at Mayfair; Brea Olinda at Palos Verdes

DIVISION 6
Schurr at Muir; St. Francis at Calabasas; Ayala at Northwood; Ontario Christian at Murrieta Mesa; Rancho Verde at Hart; Glendora at Agoura; Aliso Niguel at San Dimas; Barstow at Dana Hills

DIVISION 7
West Valley at West Torrance; Oak Park at Camarillo; Rio Hondo Prep at Ramona; Riverside King at Vista del Lago; Palm Desert at Warren; El Toro at Golden Valley; Yucaipa at Marina; Peninsula at Citrus Valley

DIVISION 8
Rancho Mirage at Beckman; Lancaster at La Quinta; Rancho Christian at Hemet; Norte Vista at Serrano; Irvine at Los Osos; Esperanza at Salesian; Cypress at St. Pius X; St. Matthias; Paramount at Segerstrom

DIVISION 9
Cerritos at Highland; Burbank at Monrovia; Alemany at Sonora; Kennedy at Quartz Hill; Victor Valley at Long Beach Wilson; Village Christian at Covina; St. Genevieve at Norwalk; Coachella Valley at Great Oak

DIVISION 10
South Hills at St. Anthony; El Segundo at Shadow Hills; La Canada at Garden Grove Pacifica; St. Monica Prep at Brentwood; Patriot at South Pasadena; Moreno Valley at Villa View; Linfield Christian at Silverado; Chino at San Marcos

DIVISION 11
Portola at Don Lugo; Santa Paula at Crespi; Capistrano Valley Christian Big Bear; Colton at Baldwin Park; Perris at Los Amigos; Bell Gardens at El Rancho; Grace at San Geronimo; Grand Terrace at Santa Fe

DIVISION 12
Fontana at Mary Star; Dos Pueblos at Crescenta Valley; Eisenhower at Chaffey; Woodbridge at Palmdale; Banning at Canyon Springs; Trinity Classical Academy at Carter; Hacienda Heights Wilson at Yucca Valley; Estancia at Rim of the World

DIVISION 13
La Puente at Gahr; Artesia at Desert Hot Springs; Nogales at Arrowhead Christian; AB Miller at Anaheim; South El Monte at Lynwood; El Monte at Santa Ana Calvary Chapel; Pasadena at Santa Rosa Academy; Hawthorne at San Marino

DIVISION 14



CRAIG WESTON For The Times

RICHARD WESLEY of Sierra Canyon defends against Gardena Serra.

Hamilton at Northford; Sierra Vista at Duarte; Desert Christian Academy at San Gabriel; Temecula Prep at Costa Mesa; Century at Arroyo; Ganesha at Bolsa Grande, Thursday; Saddleback at Westminster La Quinta; Vasquez at Pioneer
Note: Quarterfinals Nov. 15; Semifinals Nov. 22; Finals Nov. 29-30.

CITY SECTION

All games at 7 p.m. unless noted

OPEN DIVISION Quarterfinals, Nov. 15
No. 8 Dorsey at No. 1 Narbonne; No. 5 Gardena at No. 4 Birmingham; No. 6 Banning at No. 3 San Pedro; No. 7 Garfield at No. 2 Carson

DIVISION I First round, Friday
No. 16 Crenshaw at No. 1 Eagle Rock; No. 9 Cleveland at No. 8 Bell; No. 12 South East at No. 5 Palisades; No. 13 Granada Hills at No. 4 North Hollywood; No. 14 Franklin at No. 3 Venice; No. 11 Marquez at No. 6 King/Drew; No. 10 Huntington Park at No. 7 Westchester; No. 15 Roosevelt at No. 2 Kennedy

DIVISION II First round, Friday
No. 16 Jordan at No. 1 Arleta; No. 9 Angelou at No. 8 Grant; No. 13 Wilson at No. 4 Fairfax; No. 12 Bernstein at No. 5 South Gate; No. 15 Hamilton at No. 2 El Camino Real; No. 10 Sylmar at No. 7 Legacy; No. 14 San Fernando at No. 3 Chatsworth; No. 11 Lincoln at No. 6 Verdugo Hills

DIVISION III First round, Friday
No. 16 Washington Prep at No. 1 Sun Valley Poly; No. 9 Panorama at No. 8 Santee; No. 13 Fremont at No. 4 Manual Arts; No. 12 Rancho Dominguez at No. 5 Los Angeles; No. 15 Dynamal at No. 2 Taft; No. 10 Contreras at No. 7 Van Nuys; No. 14 Jefferson at No. 3 Chavez; No. 11 University at No. 6 Fullton
Note: Quarterfinals, Nov. 15; Semifinals, Nov. 22; Championships, Nov. 28-29.

8-MAN Quarterfinals, Friday
No. 8 Discovery at No. 1 Animo Jackie Robinson; No. 5 New Designs University Park at No. 4 East Valley; No. 7 USC Hybrid at No. 2 Sherman Oaks CES; No. 6 Valley Oaks CES at No. 3 New Designs Watts
Note: Semifinals, Nov. 15; Championship, Nov. 23

the Coliseum in a game won by San Pedro 34-33.

"I've been around the City a long time," said San Pedro coach Corey Walsh, the son of legendary coach Mike Walsh. "When I was growing up, people really had a tough time beating a team twice, whether it was Taft-Birmingham, Crenshaw-Dorsey, San Pedro-Banning. It was like a spell. I don't think that's held quite as true lately."

Mater Dei will face the winner of Sierra Canyon-Servite. No. 2-seeded St. John Bosco will face the winner of Santa Margarita-Inglewood. The other openers set for Nov. 15 are JSerra vs. No. 3 Orange Lutheran and Corona Centennial at No. 4 Mission Viejo in what could be called the public school championship game.

Asked if he saved any plays for the Division 1 playoffs when he faces another Trinity League opponent, St. John Bosco coach Jason Negro said, "We definitely didn't prepare ahead

of time. We think the karma gods would get us."

Murrieta Valley received the No. 1 seed in Division 2 and will be tough to stop now that quarterback Bear Bachmeier has returned from an injury. The Stanford-bound senior has played in the last two games in which Murrieta Valley scored 57 and 56 points.

Simi Valley is seeded No. 1 in Division 3 after earning a share of the Marmonte League title by upsetting Oaks Christian, where Simi Valley coach Jim Benkert used to coach. The Pioneers host Sherman Oaks Notre Dame, which received an at-large berth out of the Mission League after missing out last season.

There are 14 Southern Section divisions, with the Division 1 championship ending at Veterans Stadium in Long Beach later this month.

Let's see if teams that lost the first time will win the rematch. That could be the story line for 2024.

Orange Lutheran and Newport Harbor will run it back

Lancers and Sailors get a rematch to decide Open Division flag football crown.

By Steve Galluzzo

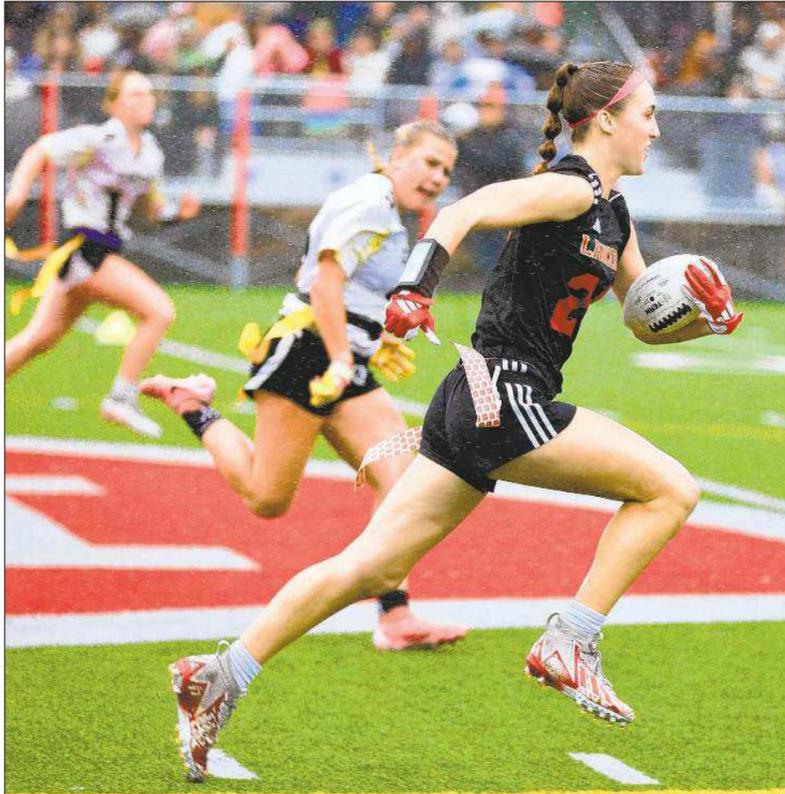
When the brackets were released for the inaugural Southern Section flag football playoffs, Orange Lutheran coach Kristen Sherman said she would have preferred her team be in the underdog role.

Instead, the Lancers were seeded No. 1 in the 16-team Open Division and thus far they have handled the pressure just fine. Riding the accurate arm of sophomore quarterback Makena Cook, Orange Lutheran took care of Anaheim Canyon 19-6 in the rain Saturday evening to reach the championship game next Saturday at El Modena High's Fred Kelly Stadium.

Cook tossed five touchdown passes against Roosevelt in the Lancers' playoff opener, threw six in Tuesday's quarterfinal victory over Corona del Mar and added three more Saturday to offset two interceptions.

"I didn't pay too much attention to it," Cook said, referring to the seedings. "I just focus on each game but we proved we're No. 1 for a reason."

Orange Lutheran (22-2) will face second-seeded



STEVE GALLUZZO For The Times

JULIA OBERHOLTZER of Orange Lutheran sprints through the secondary in a semifinal win against Anaheim Canyon. The inaugural championship is Saturday.

Newport Harbor (25-2) for the title after the Sailors downed Sunset League rival Huntington Beach 12-7 in the other semifinal for their 24th straight win. Cook

threw for four touchdowns in a 28-12 triumph over Newport Harbor at the Chargers Invitational in late August and it was that head-to-head win that ultimately

earned Orange Lutheran the No. 1 seed.

"We were both different teams then," said Sherman, whose husband Rod is the head coach of the Lancers'

PREP FLAG FOOTBALL PLAYOFF PAIRINGS

CITY SECTION

Games at 3 p.m. unless noted

OPEN DIVISION Quarterfinals, Nov. 13
No. 8 Crenshaw at No. 1 San Pedro; No. 5 Birmingham at No. 4 Verdugo Hills; No. 7 Banning at No. 2 Marshall; No. 6 Eagle Rock at No. 3 Garfield

DIVISION I First round, Wednesday
No. 16 South East at No. 1 Jefferson; No. 9 Girls Academic Leadership at No. 8 Sylmar; No. 13 King/Drew at No. 4 Bell; No. 12 Carson at No. 5 Sherman Oaks CES; No. 15

Venice at No. 2 Narbonne; No. 10 Legacy at No. 7 Franklin; No. 14 Roosevelt at No. 3 Sun Valley Magnet; No. 11 Foshay at No. 5 Panorama

DIVISION II First round, Wednesday
No. 16 Rise Kolyang at No. 1 El Camino Real; No. 9 Stern Charter at No. 8 Westchester; No. 13 Angelou at No. 4 San Fernando; No. 12 Bernstein at No. 5 Wilson; No. 15 WISH Academy at No. 2 Locke; No. 10 Arleta at No. 7 University; No. 14 Santee at No. 3 Cleveland; No. 11 Fairfax at No. 6 Elizabeth
Note: quarterfinals, Nov. 13; semifinals, Nov. 20; championships, Nov. 23, at Crenshaw High.

football team (currently ranked No. 4 by The Times). "I don't put a lot of stock in that game."

Freeway League champion Canyon (18-3) was confident it could pull off another upset after knocking out two other Trinity League teams in No. 4 JSerra (which split its two meetings with Orange Lutheran to earn a share of first place) and Santa Margarita in the first two playoff rounds. The Comanches also sought to avenge a 35-12 nonleague defeat Aug. 30.

Cook threw touchdown passes of two and seven yards to Josie Anderson to give Orange Lutheran a 12-0 lead but Canyon pulled to within 12-6 on a two-yard pass from Ella Feldhaus to Caroline Hicks on the last play of the first half.

Five completions and a short run by Cook set up her six-yard scoring strike to Brooklyn Vanderkallen and Capri Cuneo caught the one-point conversion from the five-yard line to make it 19-6 with 14:30 left.

Orange Lutheran picked

off three passes, Cuneo making the last on a tumbling interception in the end zone for a touchback with 4:10 left. The home team picked up two first downs to run out the clock.

As time expired, Cook turned to her teammates and yelled, "One more! One more!"

"It's going to be a great game," Cook said of the matchup with Newport Harbor, winner of the Sunset League. "We have film on them and we'll be studying it. Only one team can say it's the very first [CIF champion]. That would be super special to make history."

Top-seeded Long Beach Poly, which scored 18 consecutive points in the second half to stun Esperanza in the quarterfinals, will face Northwood while Edison hosts Trabuco Hills in the Division 2 semifinals Monday. The Division 3 final will pit San Clemente against Troy, the Division 4 final features Santa Monica and Fullerton while Antelope Valley will battle Northview for the Division 5 title.

SPORTS EXTRA

A TIMES E-NEWSPAPER EXCLUSIVE :: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2024



FRANK GUNN Associated Press

D'ANGELO RUSSELL, left, has worked with third-year player Max Christie (12) on his game. Here they and Anthony Davis defend against Toronto's Grady Dick.

Russell helps Christie get back on track

BY DAN WOIKE

The play was set in motion more than an hour before tip off Friday night in Canada. Lakers guards D'Angelo Russell and Max Christie strategizing on one side of the team's locker room as they got ready for the Raptors.

Through the first two weeks of the season, Christie had struggled. "I'm just playing robotically," he told people.

In his third season, now with a real role as the first player consistently off the bench, a lot of the momentum he had built over the summer and preseason was slipping

away under a pile of missed shots and defensive uncertainty.

Russell saw a window to do a little something about it.

The two players talked about how when Christie checked in later that night, Russell would try to break down a defender off the dribble, allowing for Christie to quickly cut backdoor for a layup.

It was prophetic.

On the first possession after Christie checked in midway through the first quarter, Russell dribbled with his left toward Christie in the corner. And just like they spoke about, Christie cut hard toward the rim. Russell fired a pinpoint bounce pass that found his

teammate, who exploded toward the rim for the layup and a foul.

"Crazy, right?" Russell said with a huge smile after the game.

Christie finished the game with seven points, his best offensive output of the young year season. He finished a plus-7, the first time the Lakers outscored their opponents during Christie's minutes.

"I just find ways to make the game easier for our younger guys, try to simplify it, help them think less, help them be in a position where they can be the best in," Russell said. "For me, I know Max is a confidence guy, so trying to instill confidence in him and keep him there no matter how the storm

goes and adversity. Just keep that confidence high, you'll be all right."

For the Lakers, moments like this are crucial as the team tries to build trust with one another under a new coaching staff and system.

It's specifically encouraging for Russell, whom JJ Redick pushed this summer to be a consistent vocal leader bought into winning above all else.

"It's one of the challenges that I gave him the first day he came to the gym, and he was using his voice. He was energetic and we talked about it afterwards. And I said, that's what I want, that's gotta be your standard," Redick said.

"That's gotta be who you are every day, regardless if shots are going in or not, or if you get subbed out at the end of a game. And look, he played really well tonight. He's going to have a lot of good games where he plays well. His spirit has not diminished at all with any sort of whatever you want to call it, shooting struggles, to start the season. He's been fantastic.

"And I think for all our guys, it's a great example. ... It's something that we've talked about with a number of our older players. It's you gotta be a leader with these young guys and help pick them up. Give, give them some confidence and it's great to hear DLo did that."

LAFc commits two own goals in loss that forces decisive game

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vancouver got an early goal from a red-hot Ryan Gauld and two own goals from Western Conference top seed LAFc and Yohei Takaoka posted his third clean sheet in five postseason starts as the host Whitecaps breezed to a 3-0 victory on Sunday night to even their best-of-three first-round series.

LAFc will host the rubber match of the series on Friday.

Vancouver, the eighth seed in the West, jumped to a 2-0 lead 13 minutes into the match and carried it into halftime on a goal by Gauld and an own goal by LAFc defender Ryan Hollingshead.

Gauld gave the Whitecaps the lead with an unassisted goal off a deflection in the 10th minute. Gauld has five goals this postseason after not scoring in his first three playoff appearances. He had a hat trick in a 5-0 victory at home over the Portland Timbers in the wild-card round and scored the only goal for Vancouver in a 2-1 loss to LAFc in the series opener.

The only scoring in the second half came courtesy of an own goal from LAFc defender Eddie Segura in the 68th minute, four minutes after he subbed in for Maxime Chanut.

Takaoka finished with three

saves for the Whitecaps.

Hugo Lloris saved one shot in his second postseason start for LAFc, which beat the Whitecaps in Vancouver to finish off a sweep in the same round last season on its way to the conference championship.

LAFc entered having won seven in a row across all competitions, outscoring its opponents 16-5.

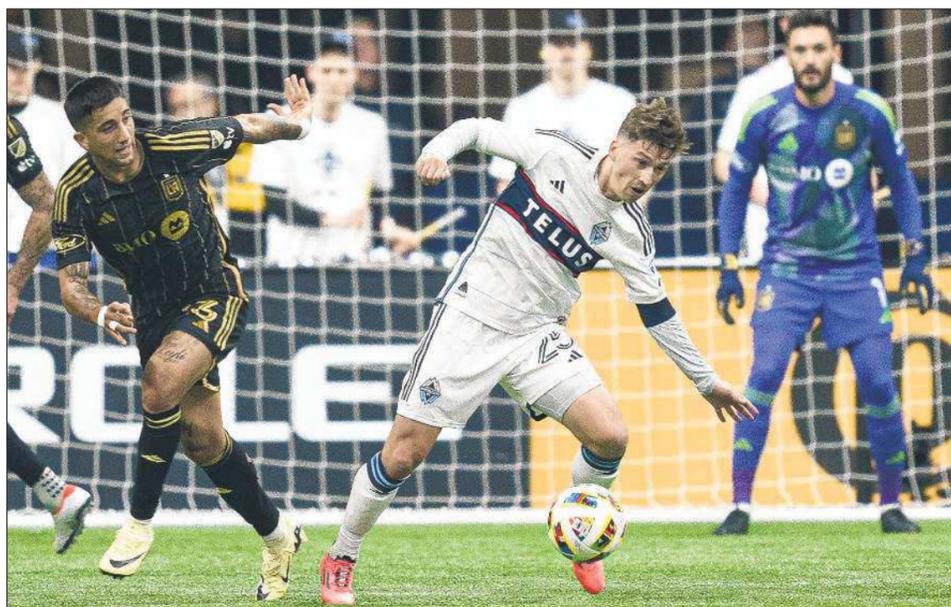
Vancouver held LAFc's Denis Bouanga in check after he scored four goals in his first three playoff matches against the Whitecaps.

NFL

Darnold's three TD passes lead Vikings

Sam Darnold overcame four sacks and three turnovers by throwing three second-half touchdown passes, and the Minnesota defense made Indianapolis quarterback Joe Flacco's return to the back corner of the end zone to get Minnesota on the board after a sloppy and scoreless first half, and Jalen Nailor had the tiebreaking

touchdown reception to help the Vikings (6-2) stop a two-game skid. Kenny Moore II had a 38-yard fumble return in the second quarter, the only touchdown for the Colts (4-5).



RICH LAM Getty Images

RYAN GAULD controls the ball near Cristian Olivera of top-seeded LAFc, which was shut out 3-0 in Game 2 of its best-of-three playoff series. Gauld scored in the 10th minute for No. 8 Vancouver.

touchdown reception to help the Vikings (6-2) stop a two-game skid.

Kenny Moore II had a 38-yard fumble return in the second quarter, the only touchdown for the Colts (4-5).

In other late Sunday games, Kerby Joseph scored on a 27-yard interception return and the Detroit Lions converted two fourth downs into touchdowns in a 24-14 victory over the Green Bay Packers. The NFC North-leading Lions are 7-1 for the first time since 1956 and won at Lambeau Field for a third straight year — the first time they've done that since a run of six straight at Lambeau from 1986 to

1991. ... Saquon Barkley made a dazzling backward hurdle during a stellar performance and Nakobe Dean had a game-saving interception to help the host Philadelphia Eagles (6-2) to their fourth straight win, 28-23 over the Jacksonville Jaguars (2-7). Barkley had 27 carries for 159 yards and a touchdown. ... Emari Demercado ran 53 yards for a touchdown just before halftime and James Conner added 107 yards on the ground as the surging Arizona Cardinals put together a dominant 29-9 victory over the visiting Chicago Bears (4-4). The Cardinals (5-4) have won three in a row for the first time in three seasons.

NHL

Ducks fall to Bedard and Blackhawks

Connor Bedard had three assists and Teuvo Teravainen got his first goal in 10 games as the Chicago Blackhawks completed a Southland sweep with a 4-2 defeat of the Ducks at Honda Center.

Brock McGinn and Mason McTavish had goals for Anaheim, which is 1-3-1 in its last five. Lukas Dostal made 25 saves.

The Blackhawks beat the Kings in a shootout on Saturday.

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Go to our website for takeaways from The Times' staff on your favorite home teams at latimes.com/sports.



THE SPORTS REPORT

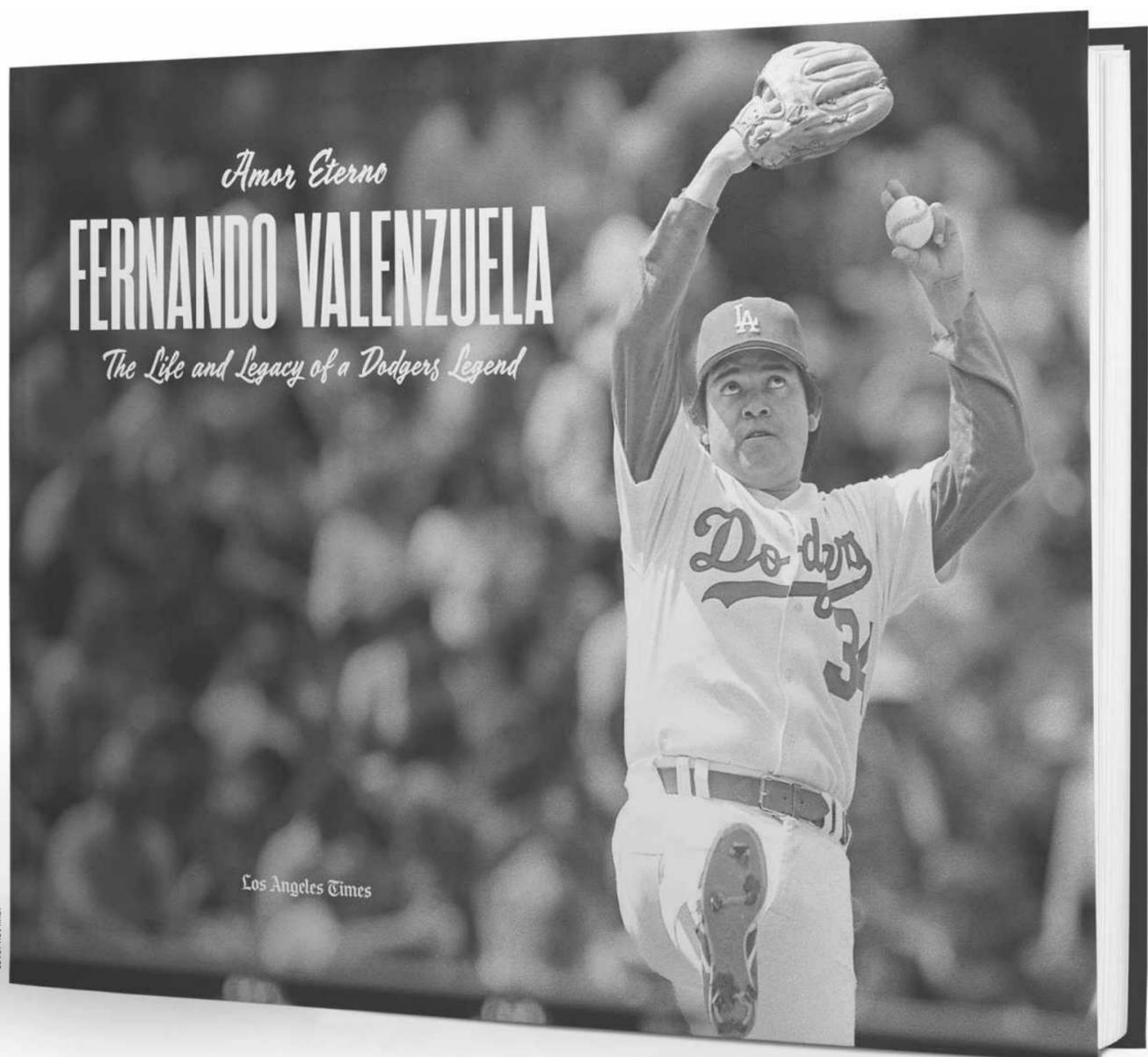
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In the wake of the passing of the incomparable Fernando Valenzuela, we invite you to celebrate the life and legacy of this Dodgers icon with this hardcover commemorative book. This beautifully crafted, 160-page coffee-table book, brought to you by the Los Angeles Times, is a heartfelt tribute to the man who forever changed the fabric of the Dodgers and Major League Baseball. With captivating stories and stunning photographs, this book showcases the remarkable journey of a 20-year-old from a small town in Mexico who became MLB's only Cy Young Award-winning rookie pitcher, igniting "Fernandomania" and inspiring generations of fans. It's more than a collection of memories; it's a testament to the quiet pride and dignity that defined Valenzuela's career and life. Let "Amor Eterno: Fernando Valenzuela: The Life and Legacy of a Dodgers Legend" be your way to honor an icon and cherish the enduring impact he had on the game and its fans. Order your copy today and keep the spirit of Fernando Valenzuela alive.



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ENTERTAINMENT

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ELECTION 2024

Letting data lead the way

It's not about being first at Decision Desk HQ — but it's ready to make a call.

BY JOSH ROTTENBERG

In the days that followed the 2020 election, as the nation waited with bated breath and twisted stomach for the final call on who had won, the team at the election-tracking organization Decision Desk HQ barely slept. Running on adrenaline and continuous infusions of caffeine, its analysts and data scientists were glued to their monitors around the clock, watching the slow trickle of results from Pennsylvania that ultimately decided the race.

"In those few days, I think I got four or five hours of sleep," says Decision Desk HQ President Drew McCoy.

Finally, on early Friday morning, the numbers were conclusive: At 8:50 a.m., Decision Desk HQ became the first organization to call the 2020 presidential race for Joe Biden — a full day before major television networks followed suit.

The early call brought Decision Desk HQ into the national spotlight, a significant moment for a firm that only entered the election-calling space in 2012, joining the Associated Press and Edison Media Research in collecting and analyzing publicly available voting data for media organizations. Yet McCoy insists that being first was never the objective. In an election year marked by unprecedented challenges, from a historic pandemic to intense political polarization, the data were all that mattered.

"With that call and every call we make, it's not about being first," McCoy says. "It's about looking at the data and coming to the right conclusion."

While most modern U.S. presidential elections have been called on election night or in the early hours of the following day, the 2020 race took place under extraordinary circumstances, with the pandemic pushing a record number of voters to cast mail-in ballots. This shift had been particularly evident in the crucial battle-

[See Data, E3]



Photo illustration by JIM COOKE Los Angeles Times; photo from Getty Images

HOW TO SURVIVE THE WEEK AHEAD

Times staffers explore the lessons of 2020, from the rise of the 'chartthrobs' to the Four Seasons Total Landscaping debacle

No matter who Americans cast a ballot for, election anxiety seems inescapable this year, exacerbated by razor-thin races in key swing states, the specter of another Donald Trump campaign effort to overturn the results and increasingly violent political rhetoric. Based on conversations among Times staffers, though, at least one contributing factor has been underappreciated: time.

Meaning, the amount of time it took for Joe Biden to be declared the winner in 2020. The amount of time we spent glued to TV news and social media watching the results trickle in. The amount of time we spent on

tenterhooks, uncertain what might happen next.

If there's one silver lining to a repeat performance, it's that election night turning into election *week* won't be quite so "unprecedented." (Good news for those who've come to hate that word in recent years.) To help you navigate the 2024 edition, we asked a group of writers and editors from The Times to look back on each day of election week 2020, from the rise of the "chartthrobs" to Four Seasons Total Landscaping, and try to identify what lessons we might apply this time around.

So, here's the L.A. Times guide to surviving election week 2024. Godspeed. — Matt Brennan

TV news braces for a few jolts

Networks hope the takeaways from 2020 election coverage aid in uncharted territory.

BY STEPHEN BATTAGLIO

Ever since network television started covering presidential election nights in 1948, there have been only two occasions when viewers had to wait more than a day to learn the outcome.

The first was in 2000, when the country was on hold for five weeks before the U.S. Supreme Court put an end to the vote recounts in Florida and gave George W. Bush the White House over Al Gore.

Twenty years later, viewers sweated it out for four days before the networks put 270 electoral votes in President Biden's column on Nov. 7, 2020. Pandemic restrictions led to officials counting an unprecedented number of mail-in ballots, slowing the process. Former President Trump's legal challenges to the results and his attempts to block the certification of the vote became a saga that culminated in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection.

The bumpy ride of 2020 has TV news operations preparing for more uncharted territory when ballot counting begins Tuesday night in the tight race between Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris. The 2024 election could be decided by narrow margins in as many as seven states, and Trump already is making accusa-

[See TV news, E2]

There's little 'Here' to enjoy

Pointless tale stars Tom Hanks, Robin Wright. Review, E4

The limits of justice in U.S.

"Juror #2" faces a dilemma in probing drama. Review, E8

Comics E6-7
Puzzles E7

The Big Lie 2.0: Brace yourself for a repeat of 2020 playbook

MARY McNAMARA

In 1948, beset by labor issues and changing technology, the Chicago Daily Tribune was forced to print its first presidential election night issue with only a small percentage of ballots counted. Relying on polls and the prognosticating reputation of their Washington correspondent, editors announced the victory of Republican New York Gov. Thomas Dewey over the incumbent president, Democrat Harry S. Truman.

After Truman's landslide victory, he was photographed holding up the mistaken front page in what would become an

[See Big Lie 2.0, E3]



THEN-PRESIDENT TRUMP claims victory at a news conference early Nov. 4, 2020, even with the election still not decided. Joe Biden went on to win.

COMMENTARY

Giuliani's bizarre press event was really a warning

Though Harris' 'We did it, Joe!' went viral, it's the Trump lawyer's move that still echoes.

BY MEREDITH BLAKE

Until the morning of Nov. 7, 2020, Four Seasons Total Landscaping was just another small business off Interstate 95 in the far northeastern reaches of Philadelphia. If not for the incompetence of then-President Trump's campaign staff, it would have remained as anonymous as the neighboring auto body shops and check-cashing stores.

But the business earned an unlikely place in the history books when Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani staged a bizarre news conference on

the property — just as TV networks began to call the election for Joe Biden.

Standing in front of a green cinder block garage papered with Trump-Pence signs, a bright yellow garden hose within arm's reach, the once-revered mayor of New York announced plans to file lawsuits in multiple states and painted Philadelphia, a Democratic stronghold in a key swing state, as a den of corruption where the election was being stolen from Trump in broad daylight.

He claimed, among other things, that long-dead people, like boxing great Joe Frazier — who died in 2011 — continued to vote in the city. In reality, the pandemic had led to a surge in voting by mail, particularly by Democrats. So as millions of those ballots were tallied, what

[See Conference, E2]

ELECTION 2024

Bizarre Philly press event in 2020 echoes today

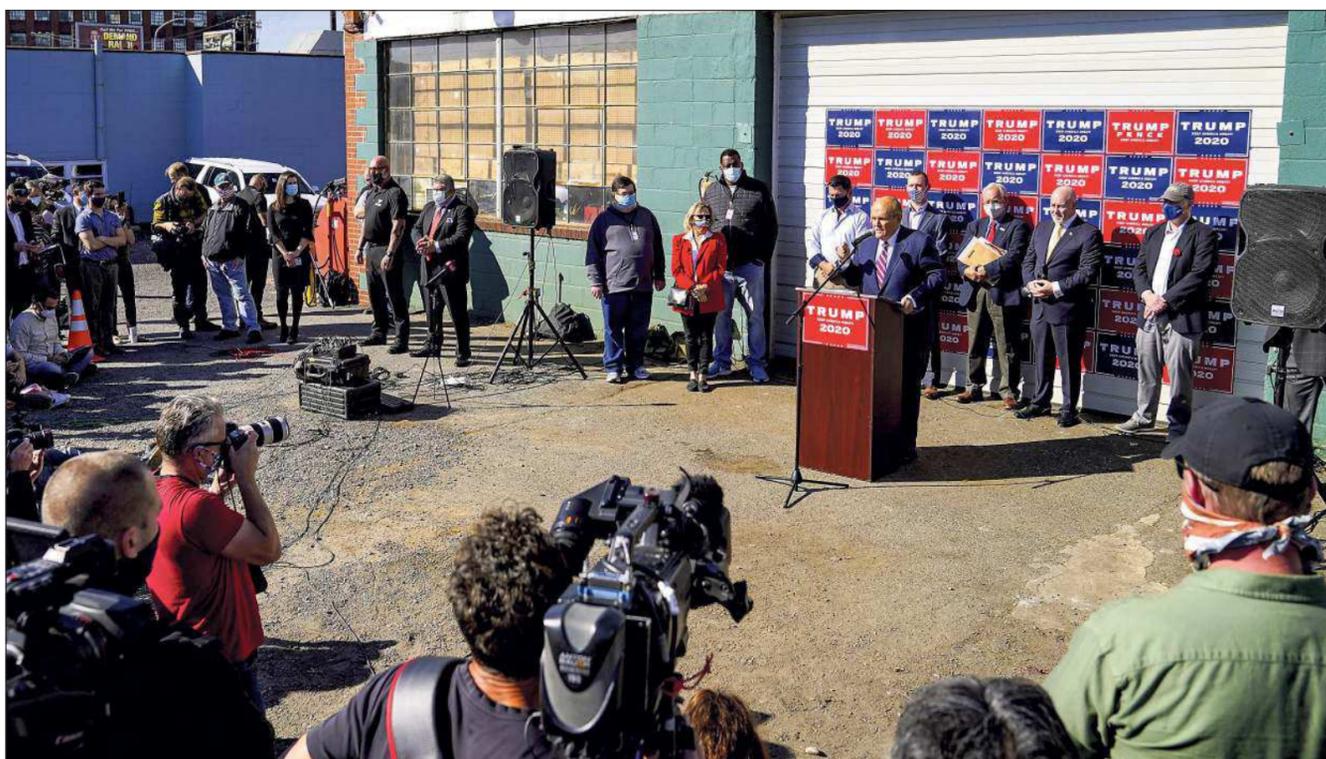
[Conference, from E1] had appeared to be a lead for Trump steadily eroded. Roughly 30 minutes into his rambling, Giuliani was informed that the race had been called for Biden.

Everything about the event was hard to believe — most especially the location. Why had the Trump campaign chosen a dusty industrial lot in a grimy corner of Philly for this grave announcement? Surely, this was supposed to take place at the Four Seasons? As in, the hotel?

The evidence pointed to miscommunication in the campaign. Earlier that day, Trump had tweeted, “Lawyers Press Conference at Four Seasons, Philadelphia. 11 AM,” seemingly referring to the luxury accommodation in Center City.

But he quickly deleted the message and posted a revised tweet at 9:45 am: “Big press conference today in Philadelphia at Four Seasons Total Landscaping — 11:30am!” The confusion triggered a flurry of jokes on social media and even prompted the Four Seasons Hotel to issue a tweet: “To clarify, President Trump’s press conference will NOT be held at Four Seasons Hotel Philadelphia. It will be held at Four Seasons Total Landscaping — no relation with the hotel.”

To this day, the question of how the news conference wound up where it did, a stone’s throw from the Fantasy Island Adult Bookstore and the Delaware Valley Crematorium, remains one of the great mysteries of American history, along with the whereabouts of Jimmy Hoffa. (Might I suggest searching northeastern



JOHN MINCHILLO Associated Press

RUDY GIULIANI, a lawyer for then-President Trump, speaks to press at Four Seasons Total Landscaping in Philadelphia on Nov. 7, 2020.

Philly, just off I-95?) Many assumed the booking was a mistake made by a frazzled advance staffer who called the wrong Four Seasons. But according to reports at the time, the campaign intentionally booked Four Seasons Total Landscaping because of its proximity to I-95. Trump heard the words “Four Seasons” and assumed it was the hotel — which, to be fair, was a logical conclusion.

Over the coming days, the owners of Four Seasons Total Landscaping did their

patriotic duty and cashed in on their temporary notoriety, selling souvenirs to commemorate the fiasco; to Trump’s detractors, the debacle epitomized the clownish incompetence that had defined his presidency.

With time, though, the event has grown less funny. As a viral phenomenon, it has been eclipsed by another moment from that day — the phone call in which Vice President Kamala Harris, wearing workout gear, sunglasses and a messy ponytail, proclaimed: “We did it,

Joe!” her voice straining with excitement and exhaustion, after the election was called for Biden.

But it’s the delusion and mendacity on display at Giuliani’s news conference that have more powerfully shaped American political culture. The calls to “stop the count” ultimately led to the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, and the doubts Trump planted in the minds of his followers have since hardened into belief: Nearly 70% of Republicans believe Biden’s 2020

win was illegitimate.

In retrospect, that Saturday was when the timelines of the two Americas truly began to diverge.

The video, filmed by Harris’ husband, Doug Emhoff, was striking because of its normalcy. Here was a middle-age woman, fresh off a run, casually clutching a pair of earphones in her hand while she placed an important work call. It inspired a slew of TikTok parodies, souvenir mugs and jokey posts commemorating accomplishments far less im-

pressive than winning the White House. By contrast, the Four Seasons Total Landscaping news conference felt like a portal to a bizarre dimension where Frazier was still alive and Trump had won.

Sometime this week — one hopes — we will know which side can proclaim victory in 2024. Barring another mishap by the Trump campaign, Four Seasons Total Landscaping is unlikely to play a key role. But we are no doubt still living through the fever dream it unleashed.

Networks are expecting the unexpected

[TV news, from E1] tions of voter fraud, as he did four years ago.

“If the polls are accurate, we’re in for a real doozy,” said Chris Stirewalt, political director for cable network NewsNation and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank.

Executives across the network news divisions say they will deploy a greater number of correspondents throughout the swing states, some assigned specifically to deal with election security and protests. Attorneys with experience in election issues have become a very hot commodity in TV newsrooms.

“We really bolstered up our state election law expertise,” said Catherine Kim, executive vice president for editorial at NBC News. “They’re going to be working around the clock.”

NBC News and MSNBC will have a “reading room” at its Rockefeller Center headquarters where its team of legal correspondents and analysts will be ready to break down court cases if they come in.

CNN has hired Benjamin Ginsberg, the election lawyer who represented the Bush campaign in 2000. Fox News has added Thomas Dupree, an assistant district attorney during the Obama administration, to its team of legal experts.

CBS News will have a “Democracy Desk” to analyze voting-related matters and its CBS News Confirmed unit to fact-check reports. ABC has a “Ballot Watch” unit that will monitor election integrity.

Networks once prided themselves on being the first to declare the election results. Not anymore.

“Calling the election is



CHARLIE NEIBERGALL Associated Press; STEPHEN B. MORTON Associated Press

TV NEWS operations are preparing for yet more uncharted territory when ballot counting begins in the tight race between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris.

treacherous territory,” said Rick Klein, vice president and Washington bureau chief for ABC News. “I think very few viewers know or care who projects a state first, but every viewer should care that they are projected right.”

Being first and right can even have its drawbacks in the current hyper-partisan environment.

In 2020, Fox News, which teams with the Associated

Press and research organization NORC at the University of Chicago to analyze the results, correctly called Arizona for Biden at 11:20 (Eastern) on election night with roughly 80% of the vote counted.

The decision, which shifted the unfolding narrative of the race, angered the Trump campaign and caused consternation internally at the network. The conservative-leaning channel even saw an exodus of angry viewers in the months that followed.

Fox News never wavered in its decision to award Arizona’s 11 electoral votes to Biden days before its competitors. But this time around, viewers should be prepared to wait.

“There may not be projections at all on election night,” Klein said. “I think we just need to be honest about the extent of the uncertainty out there even as polls close and the results start to roll in.”

“We’ve come to expect the unexpected along the way, and that will be our approach on election night,” said Doug Rohrbeck, senior vice president, Washington news and politics, for Fox News.

While the process in 2020 was influenced by the tens of millions of people who had voted early, a group that leaned Democratic, no one is sure what the impact will be this time around.

“Republicans, smarting from their loss in 2020, have embraced early and absentee voting,” Stirewalt said. “And former President Trump no longer talks about the problem of mail-in ballots, or certainly not as

much. So I think we had better proceed into election night with a lot of humility and a real openness to the possibility that assumptions we’ve had in the past might be wrong.”

As charges of irregularities in the voting are likely to pop up, news organizations are expected to be transparent.

In previous elections, the political scientists, analysts and statisticians who make up the teams that call the races appeared on camera only when absolutely necessary. This time CBS News plans to give viewers a closer look at the process of calling states. NewsNation is partnering with Decision Desk HQ to handle its vote counting and will have a camera fixed on the room where the counting happens.

There will be more correspondents and producers deployed in key counties inside the swing states showing the official process.

“I think we’re going to see more live counting of ballots than ever before,” said Mary Hager, executive editor for politics at CBS News.

There is also another possible scenario for election night 2024: The prognostications could be off, as they have been in the last three presidential election cycles, with the possibility of a winner declared after the polls close on the West Coast.

It happened in 2012 when President Obama was running neck and neck with his Republican opponent, Mitt Romney, in the final weeks of the campaign. Obama ended up winning the popular vote by four points and swamped Romney in the electoral vote count 332 to 206.

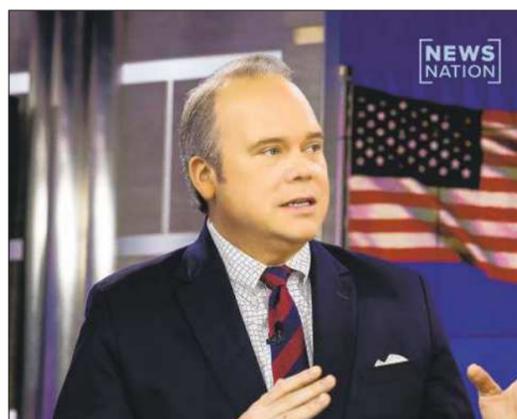
“It could be an electoral landslide in either direction,” Klein said. “No one should be surprised by either outcome.”

Stirewalt believes viewers will get some guidance from the results in North Carolina and Georgia, where polls close before 8 p.m. (Eastern) and which have a reputation for counting votes quickly.

“We will get an immediate core sample of what the electorate looks like, and we’ll start to figure out between 7:30 [and] 9:30 which way the polls were wrong, or maybe they were right and it’s just a very close race,” Stirewalt said. “If the polls are wrong, they tend to be in the same direction everywhere.”

Stirewalt’s hope is that whatever the outcome, it doesn’t replicate the drawn-out battle of 2000 between Bush and Gore, which happened during a comparatively more civil time in the nation’s politics.

“I do not think we have the institutional strength and confidence in our leaders to go through an ordeal like that,” he said.



NewsNation

“IF THE polls are accurate, we’re in for a real doozy,” says Chris Stirewalt, political editor for NewsNation.

LAEMMLE logo and subtitle information. A grid of TV listings for various stations including ROYAL, TOWN CENTER, GLENDALE, NoHo 7, MONICA, NEW HALL, CLAREMONT, and UNION, listing program titles and times.

ELECTION 2024

This time, he's skipping 'chartthrobs'

Take it from guy who helped term go viral: Counterprogram with occasional check-ins.

By **MATT BRENNAN**

I cannot profess to much success in the way of viral fame. On my social media, you will find no thirst traps, no meme-inspired Halloween costumes, vanishingly few "dunks," "prompts" or other indicators of broad audience appeal; outside of the occasional full-length takedown (Ellen DeGeneres, "Bros"), my vibe online tends to be more "live-tweeting my latest 'Love Is Blind' binge." But I have had one bright and shining moment on Twitter, back when the platform still went by that name.

The day I popularized the term "chartthrobs."

Laid up in a frigid L.A. apartment with a nasty case of bronchitis, glued to cable news from sunup to midnight, I spent countless hours before, during and after election day 2020 watching

work like MSNBC's Steve Kornacki and CNN's John King and Phil Mat-

tingly dissect turnout: early and day-of, in-person and mail-in, not only in the swing states that decided the outcome but also the swing districts, the swing precincts.

By the time I fired off my portmanteau replacement for the uninspired "map kings," I possessed a granular understanding of the vote, batch by batch, that surpassed even my fanatical attention to the 2000 election in eighth grade.

Reader, I am not going back. And neither should you.

I say this not because I distrust the analysis on offer or dislike the personalities onscreen. In fact, it is because I know how easily I could be lulled into another glazed-eyed week fretting over outstanding ballots in Philadelphia or Phoenix that I am staking out my position early, and publicly. I have simply come to the conclusion that there is such a thing as having too much information at one's fingertips — or at least too much to be able to see the forest for the trees.

After all, what I remember most about election week 2020 is not the knowledge I gleaned about the

partisan valence of certain forms of voting or the suburban counties that represented the electorate's split, knowledge that appears to be outdated just one cycle later.

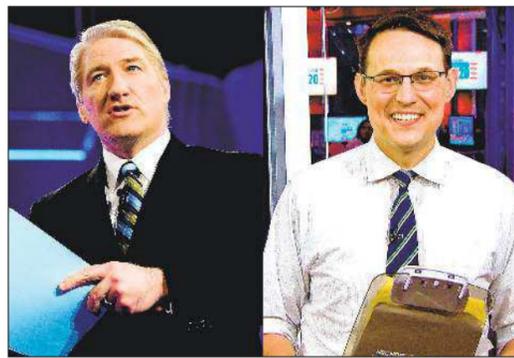
It is the feeling of anxiety stoked by the constant throws to Kornacki or King at each incremental release of results, close in effect to compulsively refreshing social media during a mass shooting or natural disaster.

What in the aggregate would have been a way of following the story, keeping abreast of events, doing my part as a well-informed citizen tipped over into addictive, unhealthy behavior.

It might even have been counterproductive: As an editor, I regularly caution writers about the pitfalls of over-reporting, in which the proliferation of detail can cloud understanding as opposed to create it.

This is not, mind you, the fault of the chartthrobs themselves. They are tasked with reporting and analyzing the data, and I have no doubt they will do it with the same aplomb this cycle as they did the last.

The problem is the incentivization mechanism that



Photographs by **ETHAN MILLER** Getty Images; **NBCUniversal** via Getty Images
NETWORKS plan to lean on "chartthrobs" John King of CNN, left, and MSNBC's Steve Kornacki.

leads media platforms, whether Instagram, Netflix or CNN, to serve users only that which they are algorithmically likely to want, in quantities that far exceed what is necessary for entertainment or enlightenment.

This time around, the networks are actively leaning into the chartthrobs phenomenon in an attempt to attract, or perhaps entrap, audiences: MSNBC's "Kornacki Cam" will form a dedicated election night livestream on Peacock as part of the platform's Olympics-inspired "multi-

view" programming, while King's "magic wall" will be available to users of CNN's news app.

Arguably, most viewers of real-time election coverage are the age of majority and can be trusted to choose for themselves in prime time as well as at the ballot box.

In actuality, if the hyperpolarization of American politics and the growing discourse around social media's habit-forming tendencies are any indication, we politics nerds are no more prepared to set limits without structural support

than the teenagers attached to the smartphones in the recent docuseries "Social Studies." The chartthrob fixation, in 2020 and now, is just TikTok for people on the cusp of a midlife crisis: an obsession that seems harmless until you find yourself at the bottom of the rabbit hole somewhere around 3 a.m.

If we, the media, are to break our own habitual preference for horse-race narratives over policy analysis, for predicting the outcome instead of reporting what it will mean for our communities, we will first need to stop the gamification of elections that we've trained consumers of media to expect.

And though it may not be traumatizing, like the New York Times' needle, or misleading, like election-betting markets, the chartthrobs' increasing prominence in election coverage nonetheless reflects similar propensities. Which is why, this election week, I'm considering my counterprogramming options — with periodic check-ins on Kornacki, King, et al., to see where the count stands.

Theirs may be a horse race of inches, but it is a horse race nonetheless.

Big Lie 2.0: Prepare for repeat of '20 playbook

[**Big Lie 2.0**, from E1] iconic reminder of the frailty of polls and the perils of calling an election before a majority of the ballots had been counted.

No one in their right mind could have foreseen a U.S. president replicating the most famous journalistic error in this country's history as a political tactic.

Yet four years ago this week, that is precisely what Donald Trump did.

Early on election day 2020, then-President Trump led former Vice President Joe Biden in several key states. As more ballots — many of them mailed in or dropped off due to COVID-19 concerns — were counted, those leads began to vanish.

By midnight, there was no clear winner: Georgia, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Nevada and Pennsylvania remained too close to call. (Fox had called Arizona for Biden earlier but not every outlet agreed.)

Based on voting trends, and the demographics of areas where ballots remained uncounted, networks and pundits began cautiously predicting a Biden win — after midnight, Biden gave a speech in which he expressed confidence that he would prevail — but neither candidate had enough electoral votes to declare victory.

And yet, at 2:21 a.m. Nov. 4, that is precisely what Donald Trump did.

Dismissing the protests of all his top aides, with the exception of a reportedly drunk Rudy Giuliani, Trump called the press to the East Wing of the White House, where he stood in front of a bank of American flags and attempted to steal the election.

In a matter of minutes, he claimed that he had won the election (he hadn't), that he had won Georgia, Pennsylvania and Michigan (he hadn't and didn't), that Democrats had perpetrated fraud (they didn't), that voting needed to stop (it had, hours before) and that "we don't want them to find any ballots at 4 o'clock in the morning and add them to the list" (in some states, ballot counting would, by necessity, go on for several days).

The country, and the world, had never seen anything like it.

Historically, various news outlets "call" election results after the majority of the ballots have been counted, and the winner typically waits for his or her opponent to concede before delivering victory remarks.

Twenty years ago, that pattern of protocol was interrupted by then-Vice President Al Gore after his race against Texas Gov.

George W. Bush came down to an election-night seesaw in Florida. First called for Gore, it later was called for Bush. Gore first conceded, then, as continued counting narrowed Bush's apparent victory, withdrew his concession. For a month, we watched the "hanging chad" convulsions of the Florida recount and related court cases until a highly controversial 5-4 Supreme Court decision allowed Bush to win Florida and the presidency.

Which Bush had not claimed until it was official. Yes, he had been, not surprisingly, a bit testy when Gore called to withdraw his concession, and many questioned, and continue to question, the legitimacy of the final outcome.

But neither man claimed to have won the presidency while ballots were still being counted or recounted.

Yet here was Trump, mere hours after polls had closed in the middle of a global plague, implying that his brief, early lead in certain states equaled victory; that Biden's growing gains constituted fraud; and that any ballot that had not been counted before 2:21 a.m. had been "found" and was somehow suspect.

It was lunacy, attempted larceny, an attack on democracy. And it was only the beginning.

Trump apparently believed that he could win simply by saying that he had won. And that if he hadn't won, it was because his opponent cheated. A case of massive opposition mendacity that borders on the hilarious — except that many people believed and continue to believe him, all evidence to the contrary.

Which is astonishing, infuriating, horrifying and queasily understandable.

During the 2020 campaign, as polls began to lean in Biden's favor, Trump had gone to great lengths to undermine his supporters' trust in the increased use of mail-in and drop-box ballots. Trump voters, who already mistrusted any media outlet that wasn't Fox (and then Fox too, after it called Arizona for Biden), expected Trump to defy predictions as he had in 2016. (Heading into that election day, most polls had Hillary Clinton leading; she won the popular vote but Trump took the Electoral College.)

Still, on Nov. 4, 2020, the fact that he was president of the United States made it very difficult, even for those who did not vote for or admire him, to take in what we were seeing and hearing: that Trump was attempting to call the election, by himself and for himself,

before millions of ballots had been counted.

It was the kind of transparent lie associated with authoritarian nations, not the world's largest democracy. While news outlets rushed to provide "fact-checking," which boiled down to "none of this is true," the country, already exhausted and traumatized by a pandemic, tried to contextualize the enormity of Trump's actions.

Many Trump supporters heard a president vowing to fight a conspiracy that he had been describing to them for years. The rest of us experienced an emotional tsunami that went from dumbfounded disbelief — "Surely this was one last bit of rhetorical self-aggrandizement that would lead to concession if he lost" — to hideous apocalyptic foreboding — "This is how democracy ends, not with a bang but with a 2 a.m. news conference."

Even in our shock, we knew there had been signs. While campaigning against Clinton, Trump had positioned his victory as a litmus test for democracy. If he won, justice had prevailed. If he didn't, the system was corrupt and the Democrats were cheats.

This is, of course, the "logic" of authoritarianism, and Trump continued to espouse it throughout his presidency and the 2020 campaign. So when, in the early hours of Nov. 4, even many members of his own campaign had begun agreeing that Biden seemed the likely winner, Trump took that twisted "logic" to its unnatural conclusion. In his mind, he *should* have won, therefore he *did* win. And anyone who said otherwise was a cheater.

Many hoped that night's statement was the last gasp of Trumpian lies and hyperbole. As results proved Biden to be the winner, there were a few moments when it was hoped that Trump would remember his oath to uphold the Constitution and, after legally contesting the results in certain states, accept the courts' conclusions and concede that he lost.

We all know how that turned out. After the armed mob he sent to the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, failed to keep Congress from certifying the election results, Trump finally conceded that Biden would become our 46th president, though not that he, Trump, had lost the election.

Instead, for almost four years, Trump has incessantly repeated the lie he first told in that infamous news conference — that the only votes that matter, the only votes that should count, are the ones cast for him.



CHARLIE RIEDEL Associated Press

THE 2020 election saw a big increase in mail-in and dropbox ballot submissions.

Decision Desk HQ lets data lead the way as it prepares for 2024 vote

[**Data**, from E1]

ground of Pennsylvania, where absentee ballots continued to arrive for days after election day. With President Trump's early lead eroding, Decision Desk HQ's team focused on key Democratic strongholds, such as Philadelphia and Allegheny County, where Biden was picking up large margins of the vote.

"We knew the margin that Trump was leading by, we knew how many ballots were left to count and we knew how they were breaking," McCoy says. By Friday morning, as the last votes rolled in from Philadelphia, splitting roughly 80-20 in Biden's favor, it was clear that Trump's lead had evaporated and could not be regained. "There was nothing magical about the remaining ballots," McCoy says, calling the calculation "a simple algebra problem."

"The Republican areas had already fully reported." After Decision Desk HQ and its media clients Vox and Business Insider declared that the Scranton-born Biden had won Pennsylvania and thus the White House, famed polling guru Nate Silver praised the call on Twitter, writing, "Good for them. The outcome has been apparent for a while. No reason other sources shouldn't follow."

Still, other media organizations, looking at the very same data, held off until Saturday morning before officially declaring Biden the winner, haunted by the memory of past missteps. The most infamous of these had occurred in 2000, when several networks prematurely called Florida for Al Gore, only to retract the call and later declare George W.

Bush the winner, as the state plunged into a protracted recount. With political tensions at a peak in 2020 and misinformation spreading like wildfire, the pressure to avoid another high-profile error loomed large.

Speaking to The Times shortly after the election, as viewers remained racked with anxiety over the yet-to-be-announced result, Susan Zirinsky, then president of CBS News, explained the network was determined to avoid a rush to call the winner. "We have a motto: Slow is not a problem," she said.

Though McCoy is hesitant to speculate on the cause for other news organizations' hesitation, his team was uniquely positioned to pull the trigger quickly, without the corporate or political pressures that might weigh on legacy networks. "I wouldn't want to speak for them," he says. "I'm sure they had their reasons. They're very experienced at doing this. ... Our call team is as insulated from everything as possible. We make calls based on the data we have."

Building on the success of their pivotal 2020 call, as Decision Desk HQ prepares for the upcoming election under an even more white-hot spotlight, McCoy emphasizes that the firm is focusing on staying up to date with changes to how voting will be conducted in key states. "For us, it's about the rules and legislation that has been passed in the last four years," he says, noting that several states have changed their voting processes since 2020, including Pennsylvania and Georgia.

Managing the flow of misinformation will be one of the biggest challenges facing news organizations in 2024.

In an age of viral social media posts, rumors and falsehoods — whether pushed by campaigns, supporters or foreign adversaries — can easily overshadow the facts. McCoy says his team's approach remains grounded in real-time data from election officials, insulating them from speculation and unverified reports. "We don't care if somebody tweets out an election result or if they put a photo up — that's not a source," he says.

For those hoping for a call on Tuesday night, technology and improved reporting processes could help speed things up in some areas. Still, McCoy cautions that the 2024 election may again take several days to resolve, noting that in battleground states like Arizona and Georgia, razor-thin margins could slow the final call. "I think people expect this to be a close election," he says. "In 2020, we saw exceedingly close margins of 12,000 or 16,000 votes in states like Arizona and Georgia. That's always going to take more time than traditional margins of 2% or 3%."

As Decision Desk HQ gears up for another high-stakes election, McCoy's team, which will be tracking some 40,000 federal, state and local races for clients including the Hill, NewsNation and Scripps TV stations, remains guided by the same principles that brought them into the spotlight in 2020: Trust the data, ignore the noise and make the call when the math is clear.

"I always say we don't necessarily call winners — we identify the loser," McCoy says. "When the polls close and all the ballots are counted, the result is there. We're just discovering it."

MOVIE REVIEW

‘Here’ flattens a house full of many lives

Tom Hanks, Robin Wright and Robert Zemeckis reunite for a drama of time passing.

BY KATIE WALSH

Lately, filmmaker Robert Zemeckis has been a somewhat confounding figure.

The director of such beloved movies as the “Back to the Future” series, “Forrest Gump,” “Cast Away,” “Death Becomes Her” and “Who Framed Roger Rabbit” has delivered almost as many duds as hits, if you also take in “The Polar Express,” “Beowulf,” “Welcome to Marwen” and “Pinocchio.” An experimenter obsessed with special effects and the dramatic power they can exert in cinema, Zemeckis is always trying something new, especially with motion-capture technology. It doesn’t always work: Many of these projects drift into an unappealing uncanny valley. Despite his multiple attempts, he hasn’t quite nailed it yet.

In his new intergenerational family drama “Here,” based on a 2014 graphic novel by Richard McGuire (expanded from a six-page comic strip published in the comics anthology “Raw” in 1989), the experiment is the narrative itself, a family history spanning generations — and centuries — all told from one fixed point of view. In his formally inventive graphic novel, McGuire used frames within frames to visually represent different time periods within one panel.

Zemeckis maintains the frames-within-frames con-



Sony Pictures Entertainment

“HERE,” focused on Richard (Tom Hanks) and Margaret (Robin Wright), center, is relatable but predictable.

ceit as a transitional flourish in the film version of “Here,” but the plot itself is more about jumping around in time while maintaining the stationary camera. There are many inhabitants of this space, from a Native American couple (Joel Oulette and Dannie McCallum) in pre-Columbian times, to a young family in the Victorian era (Michelle Dockery and Gwilym Lee) who move into their modest Colonial home, and then later, the inventor of the La-Z-Boy recliner (David Fynn) and his ebullient wife (Ophelia Lovibond), who take the home.

There’s also a present-day Black family (Nicholas Pinnoch, Nikki Amuka-Bird and Cache Vandeputte) navigating the COVID-19 pandemic

and the Black Lives Matter movement.

But the story focuses predominantly on a family that occupies the house for most of the 20th century: a World War II veteran, Al (Paul Bettany), his wife, Rose (Kelly Reilly), and then their son, Richard (Tom Hanks), and his wife, Margaret (Robin Wright). And yes, Hanks and Wright have been digitally de-aged — we see them for the first time as teens — and no, it does not work at all (there’s something very strange happening around Hanks’ de-aged mouth). Sure, the Hanks, Wright and Zemeckis trio supplies the gimmick of a “Forrest Gump” reunion, but why do we have to de-age Hanks when there are his real-life

sons Colin and Truman at home? Even Wright has a look-alike actor daughter, Dylan Penn.

“Here” also has that Gumpian quality of major historical events lining up with personal stories: Benjamin Franklin (Keith Bartlett) and his son William (Daniel Betts) occupy the Colonial manor across the street; a pregnancy is announced as the Beatles take the stage on “The Ed Sullivan Show”; and seemingly everything relevant happens in this godforsaken living room, including weddings, births and breakups.

The story of “Here” surrounding Richard and Margaret is relatable, entirely predictable and utterly dull. They get pregnant as teens

and move in with his family, he gives up art to get a real job, she wants her own space, etc. Ostensibly, their story is about navigating the ups and downs of life, but ultimately it turns into a rather dispiriting tale about two people taking too long to pursue the things that make them happy, and for her, it’s getting out of that damn house, though if she ever left, there would be no “Here” here.

Changing hands over the years means real estate agents coming in and out throughout the film, and by the time the credits roll, you half expect the logo for a home insurance company to come up, because that’s what this whisper of a film feels like: a commercial for

‘Here’

Rated: PG-13, for thematic material, some suggestive material, brief strong language and smoking
Running time: 1 hour, 44 minutes
Playing: In wide release

homeowners insurance. To be frank, there are 30-second spots that have inspired more tears and emotion than the flat, pointless “Here.”

Richard and Margaret’s daughter Vanessa (Zsa Zsa Zemeckis) disappears around age 16 and never reappears, which is a shame, because the more interesting story isn’t the parents’ baby boomer tale but perhaps how their Gen X daughter or zoomer grandchildren might benefit from their generational wealth. “Here” doesn’t want to dig into any of the nuances surrounding that. But perhaps property values are just where the mind wanders when the story playing out is so treacly and stale.

This year has seen other daring projects from aging filmmakers who have experimented with cinematic form and function on their own terms — including Francis Ford Coppola’s “Megalopolis” and Kevin Costner’s “Horizon.” While the efforts have been laudable, unfortunately the results have all been flops, and “Here” is no exception.

Walsh is a Tribune News Service film critic.



Willia

CHEF Raúl Briones is the restaurant’s emotional center. Anna Díaz also stars.

MOVIE REVIEW

A restaurant is its own universe in ‘La Cocina’

Mexican director Alonso Ruizpalacios finds moments of grace in the kitchen.

BY MARK OLSEN

Opening with a quotation from Henry David Thoreau’s 1863 essay “Life Without Principle” including the lines “Let us consider the way in which we spend our lives/ This world is a place of business / What an infinite bustle,” the film “La Cocina” sets out to fully examine those concepts, and how work can take over one’s life and sweep away all too many other concerns.

Directed by Mexico’s Alonso Ruizpalacios, who adapted Arnold Wesker’s 1957 play “The Kitchen,” the film is a blast of furious energy that also knows when to let up, with a few moments of gentle lyricism as punctuation. This is Ruizpalacios’ fourth feature film in roughly a decade and feels like a big step forward, a move from being a promising talent to someone truly coming into their own as a storyteller. Even while what is depicted onscreen veers wildly out of control, there is a sense of surety to the filmmaking that makes this one of the freshest movies of the year.

“La Cocina” is set at a large restaurant in Manhattan known as the Grill, which pumps out food to tourists at an alarming volume. The story begins with young Estela (Anna Díaz) making her way through the side door sometime before opening to ever-so-slightly scam her way into a position as an assistant cook. From there things just keep happening, as one event unfolds into another in a headlong rush

‘La Cocina’

In English and Spanish with subtitles

Rated: R, for pervasive language, sexual content and graphic nudity

Running time: 2 hours, 19 minutes

Playing: Laemmle Monica and AMC Burbank Town Center 8

amid the incessant clatter of plates and pans and the machine spitting out endless order tickets.

The action soon pivots to Pedro (a remarkable Raúl Briones), a burnt-out chef who comes from the same small Mexican town as Estela and is the kitchen’s charismatic, chaotic center. He has been having a not totally secret affair with one of the waitresses, Julia (Rooney Mara), who has gotten pregnant and has an appointment for an abortion later in the day between shifts.

The employees represent a mini-United Nations, with some workers referring to each other by their nation of origin as nicknames. (One new waitress repeatedly corrects people that she is Dominican, not Mexican.) Their lives outside the restaurant are of little consequence, with a break in the alley out back the only time for meaningful connection.

There remains a strict sense of territory and hierarchy as the waitresses do their work and the chefs do theirs, all with an anxious intensity. The owner often dangles a never-fulfilled promise of helping his undocumented staffers get their papers as a way to keep them working. Management is anxious to recover the \$800 missing from the night be-

fore, with staff members being interviewed to see if anyone stole it.

Far from a well-oiled machine, the kitchen is a zone of dysfunction rife with petty squabbles and minor fiefdoms; it feels like a minor miracle that anything gets served to anyone at all. A broken soda machine creates a near-apocalyptic flood. Eventually the discord in the kitchen spills out into the dining room, and that is when everyone knows things have gone too far.

It says something about her talents that, even though Julia forms the emotional core of the story, Mara does not stand out as the Hollywood star among the rest of the cast. With her stringy, bleached-out hair and weary demeanor, she fits right in, while her antics such as a trick with a lighter or burping after chugging beer too fast are adorable and endearing but also mask something troubled and struggling underneath.

Working with cinematographer Juan Pablo Ramírez and editor Yibrán Asuad — and shooting in black-and-white with meaningful splashes of color — Ruizpalacios creates a visual style that continues to reinvent itself right up to the end, crafting an unpredictable feeling that matches the volatile plotting.

Comparisons to the hit television series “The Bear,” also about the behind-the-scenes goings-on at a restaurant, will be inevitable. But “La Cocina” has essentially no interest in the food itself — the only thing lovingly shot is a simple sandwich — because Ruizpalacios keeps the focus tightly on the infinite hustle of the work itself and the people just trying to make it to the end of the day so they can come back to do it all over again.

MOVIE REVIEW

Bickering cousins explore heritage in ‘A Real Pain’

Jesse Eisenberg and Kieran Culkin evince some of the year’s best family dysfunction.

BY GARY GOLDSTEIN

As the saying goes, you can pick your friends, but you can’t pick your family. But what happens when a family member is also a friend, albeit one who is as loving and magnetic as he is exasperating and inappropriate?

“A Real Pain,” writer-director-star Jesse Eisenberg’s loosely autobiographical, beautifully observed dramedy, takes an affecting look at this familial dynamic as mismatched cousins David (Eisenberg) and Benji (Kieran Culkin) travel to Poland to visit the childhood home of their beloved, recently deceased grandmother Dory, a Holocaust survivor.

The cousins’ journey — which starts with a guided Jewish heritage tour of Warsaw and Lublin, after which they splinter off to Dory’s rural birthplace — covers as much emotional territory as it does physical. Though the sightseeing may, at first, seem like a device to throw the estranged David and Benji together for a much needed if inevitably fraught reunion, Eisenberg deftly blends the story’s strands in darkly amusing, moving and combustible ways.

But it’s the creation of Benji that proves the film’s secret sauce; he’s one of the most vivid and compelling characters you’ll see on-screen this year. Culkin, in a career-best turn, tears into the role with a remarkable mix of exuberance and pathos.

A rudderless, sporadically volatile guy who hit bottom after his grandma’s death (and reacted in drastic form), the unfiltered Benji is also the life of the party: an F-bombing, rules-be-damned whirling dervish who can charm the pants off a TSA agent, blithely mail himself a brick of weed (to Poland, no less) or turn a sober photo op into a buoyant theatrical experience.

But at times, there’s a defensive, slightly cruel streak to his patter that can eclipse his better angels (of which there are many) and test the goodwill of those around him.

In this case, that mainly includes the earnest David, a digital ad salesman and



Sundance Institute

EISENBERG, right, with Culkin, also wrote and directed the dramedy.

‘A Real Pain’

Rated: R, for language throughout and some drug use

Running time: 1 hour, 30 minutes

Playing: In limited release

devoted family man with controlled obsessive-compulsive disorder and a low threshold for embarrassment, the latter of which Benji repeatedly tests. Benji may think David is too tightly wound — and he may be — but so is Benji, just in different, less overt ways.

The cousins’ complementary natures may have bonded them in their youth, and a genuine and abiding love clearly remains. But as adult traveling companions, their longtime dynamic too often creates more stress than camaraderie. When, in one of the film’s many fine exchanges, David succinctly tells Benji, “You light up a room and then, like, s— on everything inside of it,” you wonder how long he’s been waiting to say that.

Also subjected to Benji’s highs and lows are the other members of the tour group: wistful divorcee Marcia (Jennifer Grey, a pleasure); Rwandan genocide survivor and Jewish convert Elogé (a poignant Kurt Egyiawan); middle-aged marrieds Mark (Daniel Oreskes) and Diane (Liza Sadovy); and their bookish guide James (Will Sharpe, in a lovely U-turn from his enigmatic role in “The White Lotus”), a British non-Jew fascinated by Jewish history.

The genial bunch can’t help but be drawn to the warmly ebullient Benji — Marcia, in particular, finds in him a ready ear — until he has some hairpin meltdown about Jews riding first-class on a Polish train (“Eighty years ago we would have been herded into the backs of these

things like cattle”) or what he deems James’ invasive fact-sharing at a hallowed cemetery. He leaves the others stunned and David mortified until the storm cloud passes and he’s his jaunty, loquacious self again. But we can see the increasing chinks in Benji’s armor with each passing setback.

For all the vivid historical spots the tourists explore (enhanced by Michal Dymek’s vibrant cinematography), nothing proves as much of a gut-punch as the group’s visit to the Majdanek concentration camp on the outskirts of Lublin. With a hushed reverence (the film’s splendid, Chopin-heavy soundtrack goes pin-drop silent here), James escorts them through the stark, gruesome chambers of the compound, accompanied by the ghosts of its countless victims.

The sequence crystallizes James’ early-on warning that this would be a tour about pain and, although Eisenberg as a filmmaker doesn’t linger at the heart-breaking site, it has an outsized effect on the action, as well as on everyone’s emotions, especially Benji’s.

The cousins’ eventual arrival at the home Grandma Dory left behind to escape the Nazis is handled in a way that’s unsentimental yet also credible and thoroughly touching, with a gentle twist that nicely serves the arc of David and Benji’s roller-coaster relationship.

If you know (and now you do) that the humble house seen here is the same one Eisenberg’s great-aunt fled in 1939, it adds an eerie touch of verisimilitude to the already resonant scene.

Although Culkin walks away with the film, Eisenberg gives one of his best, most heartfelt performances (his famously urgent speech pattern is largely intact) as a man who has come to appreciate life’s responsibilities but has maybe lost a piece of himself in the process. The restaurant scene in which David, in Benji’s brief absence, tearfully reveals a profound array of feelings about his troubled cousin to their concerned tour mates is a knockout.

In a step up from his feature writing-directing debut, 2022’s “When You Finish Saving the World,” Eisenberg furthers himself here as a distinctive voice, one with a keen visual sense, a masterful ability to juggle tones and an innate feel for timing and pacing.



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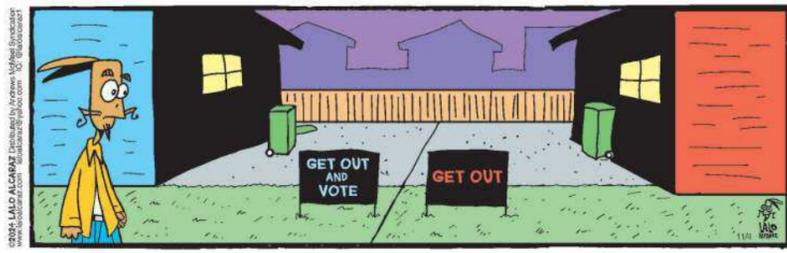
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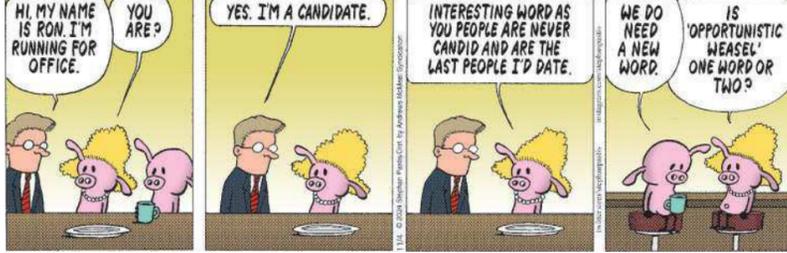
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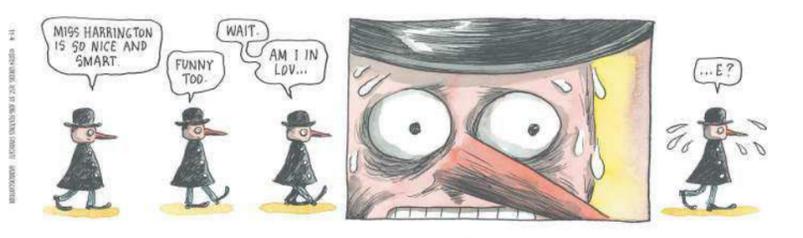
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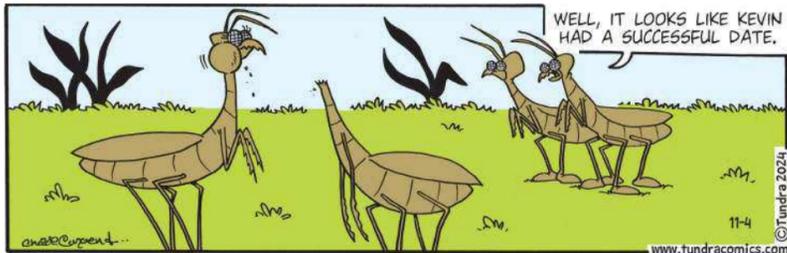
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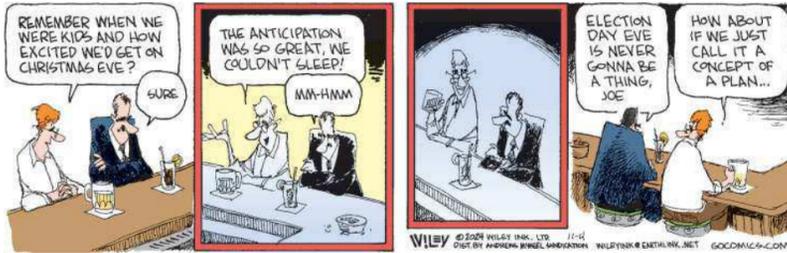
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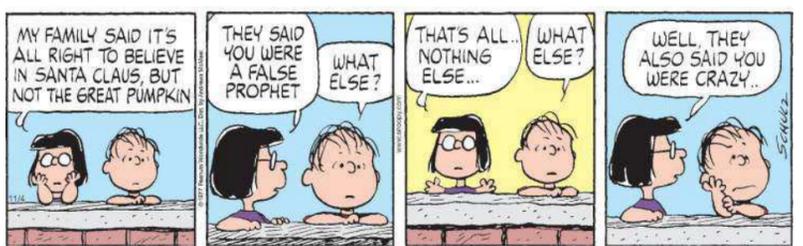
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CLAIRE FOLGER Warner Bros.

NICHOLAS Hoult, center, is conflicted "Juror #2" on a case involving a man accused of killing his girlfriend.

MOVIE REVIEW

Civic duty leads to moral quagmire

A fine Nicholas Hoult anchors Clint Eastwood's serious take on justice system.

BY ROBERT ABELE

Does a small-scale human drama now qualify as an eccentric, unclassifiable studio release? Even if it's directed by Hollywood icon and Oscar-winning filmmaker Clint Eastwood?

Taking in the nonagenarian's latest film, "Juror #2," starring a no-slouch cast including Nicholas Hoult, J.K. Simmons and Toni Collette (but unceremoniously dumped into a fistful of theaters over the weekend), one is struck by what's not in it: star mugging, superheroes (or even regular heroes), physics-defying brawls, branded messaging and CGI.

Indeed, the movie is an anomaly in our IP-driven universe. What's very much on offer, however, is a gently probing tale of moral seriousness about responsibility and guilt, developed from Jonathan Abrams' patient screenplay and Eastwood's reliably unfussy, character-driven stewardship. And no,

not set in a postapocalyptic world caused by catastrophic events but in the recognizable wilds of everyday lives, and in that quotidian arena of judgment familiar to citizens everywhere: a city courthouse.

Ah, so a juicy whodunit! OK, calm down. While homicide is the charge being adjudicated in this handsome, midsize Georgia town by a gung-ho prosecutor (Collette, quite good) who also happens to be angling to win an election, the case against James (Gabriel Basso) — a tattooed bruiser accused of killing his girlfriend one rainy night on a country road — isn't so obvious, according to his capable lawyer (Chris Messina).

The movie isn't a conspiracy thriller. But dishonesty is on tap, and there's slipperiness to the pool it creates.

The defendant's situation does become clearer to one person, the impaneled juror of the title, Justin (Hoult), a soft-spoken young man whose jury stint initially seems like a pesky obligation to evade while he and his wife (Zoey Deutch) nervously await their first child.

Things quickly turn complicated, though, when the

facts in the case privately remind Justin of a driving incident in his recent past, one with a potentially devastating impact on his own life. (I'm being vague to preserve the film's modest revelations.)

So while "Juror #2" is no white-knuckle movie, it is a slow-squeeze conscience trap, as well as a keen prism through which to stress-test our own ethics. The position Justin finds himself in — which sends him to his AA sponsor (Kiefer Sutherland) for advice, but not to his spouse — is treated as a rolling dilemma of the soul.

There are ripple effects across all the story's players, touching on many aspects of our justice system, from substandard investigations that seed confirmation bias to trials driven by political expediency and our need for good stories over the truth.

On TV, juries usually are made up of stock archetypes, but here we get a room of believably well-intentioned, diverse citizens who may want justice but also have lives that define their outlook, ones they want to get back to. (Don't expect the theatrical histrionics of "12 Angry Men," either.)

Anchored by performances that refuse to tell us

'Juror #2'

Rated: PG-13, for some violent images and strong language

Running time: 1 hour, 54 minutes

Playing: In limited release

what to think (especially Hoult's cagey calm), "Juror #2" skillfully depicts how, in practice, the ideal of blind justice too easily becomes the shortsighted, look-the-other-way kind. And while race and class aren't explicitly addressed, it's impossible not to view our protagonist's actions through a ready-made privilege that Eastwood doesn't disabuse us of pondering.

If "Juror #2" is this all-time-great filmmaker's last effort, it may come across like a quiet goodbye, measured conversations replacing his oeuvre's well-known violence and death. But in its relaxed professionalism, it's still a worthy closing argument for what Eastwood has always cared about most — how we live as much as how we die, and in the final count, what condemns us all.

Film academy lays off staff at archive and library as part of restructuring

16 positions are cut as preservation efforts are consolidated in a new department.

BY JOSH ROTTENBERG

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has laid off 16 staff members from its archive and library as part of a broader restructuring that will bring all of the organization's collecting, restoration and preservation efforts together under a newly formed Academy Collection and Preservation Department.

In an internal email to staff obtained by The Times, academy CEO Bill Kramer, who took the reins of the organization in 2022, framed the changes as part of a broader strategic initiative over the past two years aimed at streamlining operations to align with the academy's evolving mission.

"We are working hard to bring teams together that share roles and responsibilities — and with this we have some colleagues who have left the organization while others have moved into new roles," Kramer wrote. "While these moments can be challenging, they are designed to align our operations by combining functions with shared purposes and priorities."

Dedicated to the preservation, restoration and study of motion pictures, the Academy Film Archive holds one of the largest and most diverse collections of movies in the world, including every best picture nominee as well as the personal collections of filmmakers ranging from Cecil B. DeMille and Alfred Hitchcock to Jim Jarmusch and Penelope Spheeris. The Academy Library, also known as the Margaret Herrick Library, is one of the world's foremost research fa-

cilities for motion picture preservation and study, with more than 52 million items, including books, photographs, scripts and costume design drawings.

In May, as part of a larger executive reorganization, Matt Severson was named executive vice president of academy collection and preservation, overseeing all archival, preservation, registration, conservation and cataloging work of the library, archive and Academy Museum.

The latest restructuring follows a handful of smaller staffing cuts earlier this year in other parts of the academy, including the shuttering of the Oscars' digital magazine, A.frame, as the organization continues to navigate an increasingly challenging landscape for the film industry and the Oscar telecast alike.

The 96th Academy Awards ceremony in March drew an average audience of 19.5 million viewers on ABC, a 4% increase over 2023 but still far below the show's peak in 1998, when more than 55 million tuned in to watch "Titanic" win best picture. Meanwhile, the academy's ranks have swelled in recent years to more than 10,000 members as the organization has looked to broaden its diversity and expand its reach around the world.

"The Academy is part of two worlds that are rapidly evolving — the film industry and the non-profit arts community," Kramer wrote in his email, concluding on a note of optimism. "We are working hard to stay focused on our mission while addressing this pivotal moment. And while we know how difficult these moments can be, we are confident in our steps to shape a sustainable organization that is well-suited to meet our goals now and in the future."

The Envelope by The Los Angeles Times was proud to be the Primary Media Partner of AFI FEST 2024 in Hollywood last week



Executive Producer Jennifer Lawrence attends the ZURAWSKI V TEXAS screening



Actor Ryan Destiny, director Rachel Morrison and filmmaker Ryan Coogler at THE FIRE INSIDE screening



Director RaMell Ross at the screening of NICKEL BOYS



Actor Jennifer Lopez speaks at the UNSTOPPABLE screening



Actor Angelina Jolie attends the Red Carpet Premiere of MARIA



Actors Tom Hanks and Robin Wright with director Robert Zemeckis at the World Premiere of HERE

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World Series

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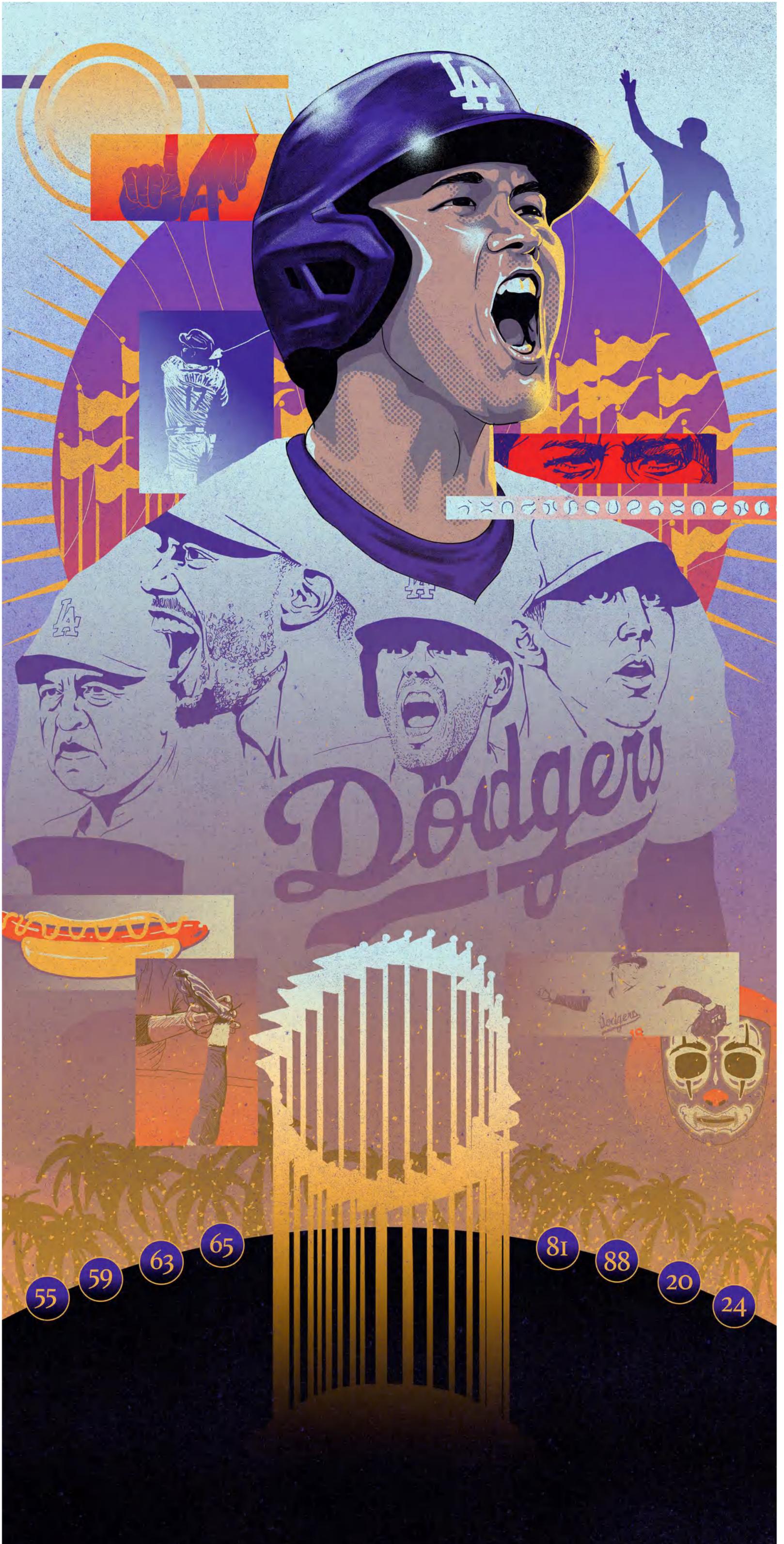
WHAT A RIDE!

After a season filled with injuries and issues, both on and off the field, Dodgers emerge with another title, a journey that was hardly a cruise



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THEY'RE WORTH THEIR WAIT IN 'GOLDEN ERA'

BILL PLASCHKE

REPORTING FROM NEW YORK :: ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED FRIDAY

The silent, somber Bronx suddenly was bathed in joyous dancing blue, a screaming scrum leaping and bouncing and hugging into history.

The Dodgers did it. They really did it.

The hallowed New York Yankees stood frozen in their dugout, stripped of their aura and bludgeoned at their essence, painfully demolished pinstripe by pinstripe.

The Dodgers did it. They really did it.

The team that chokes swallowed swords. The team that crumbles spit fire. The most teeth-grinding great team in baseball chomped through a legacy of frustration on the sort of October night that, while once forgettable, now will live forever.

The Dodgers won the World Series. They really won the World Series.

They didn't just win it, they dominated it, they debilitated it, they freaking owned it, finishing a five-game beating of the disintegrating Yankees on Wednesday at Yankee Stadium with a five-run comeback and a 7-6 victory to clinch the title four games to one.

"It really doesn't make sense to me right now," reliever Blake Treinen said, looking dazed while standing on a field filled with gold streamers and thick-throated teammates. "What a cool moment. This is amazing."

While it ended here with the Dodgers joyfully engaging in a group hug that transformed this weathered urban field into blue heaven on Earth, all hell was breaking loose on the other side of the country, the celebration of a connection that 2,792 miles could not fray.

Go ahead, Los Angeles, dance with your Dodgers. Hug your Koufax-jerseyed neighbor, scream up to Fernando and Scully and Lasorda, maybe even cry a little. It's OK, you deserve it, you earned it. You weren't here for the finish, but you were here for the journey, best fans in baseball, filling Chavez Ravine all summer, shaking the ancient stadium with your unconditional support, your lingering roars, your love.

"The Dodgers are the most important franchise in town right now," said Magic Johnson, part owner. "We needed a championship. The Dodgers needed to make this happen for the city of Los Angeles, bring back that championship feeling, show our fan base that we'll do what it takes to win."

And now? Johnson smiled as only he can smile.

"Now we get a parade," he said. "The city deserves it; the last time [2020] we didn't get one. Now they get one."

The Dodgers have waited so long for that parade, they're rushing it into reality Friday in downtown Los Angeles, perfectly timed with what would have been Fernando Valenzuela's 64th birthday. The legendary pitcher died three days before the Series, yet his inspiration lived on, on the team's uniform patch and in its fight.

"This is the toughest team I've ever seen," Treinen said. "You can't measure the heart on this team."

Yeah, the Dodgers really did it, and in a manner in which no Dodgers team from Jackie to Bulldog to Kershaw had done before.

This was the greatest team in Los Angeles Dodgers history, soaring through the greatest postseason in Dodgers history, cementing the greatest Dodgers dynasty ever.

This was World Series most valuable player Freddie Freeman slugging, and Mookie Betts scampering, and Teoscar Hernández spraying, and Tommy Edman scouting, and sore-shouldered Shohei Ohtani making a difference just by standing.

This was a shaky rotation that turned to gold and a bullpen that turned to steel, with Yoshinobu Yamamoto strong early in the Series, Treinen dealing late, and Walker Buehler providing the finishing touch Wednesday with a strikeout of Alex Verdugo on one day's rest.

The 1988 champions had Bulldog; the 2024 champions had Buehler.

"It was all adrenaline," said Buehler, who epitomized this team's grit with his first relief appearance in six years. "I was getting worked on so I could play catch tomorrow, then I'm coming into the game."

This was traditional Dodgers talent mixed with new-found Dodgers tough, the combustible combination exploding across the baseball world, leaving teams in tatters from the Pacific Ocean to the Hudson River.

This was the seventh championship in Los Angeles and eighth in franchise history, the first since the abbreviated season in 2020 and first full-season title since 1988.

"I'm sure there's no asterisk on this one," manager Dave Roberts said.

Most gratifying, because COVID-19 emptied the stadiums in 2020, so this is the Dodgers' first title with home fans since that Orel Hershiser-led group of 36 years ago.

In all, the 2024 Dodgers season was a vision met and a promise kept, finally fully fulfilling the expectation inherent in 12 consecutive playoff berths that included 11 National League West titles.

All that hardware and only one freaking crown until now, when Wednesday's emotional ending completed a crazy, compelling trip through their best autumn ever.

They were down to their last outs against the San Diego



Padres, then won two straight games to capture the National League Division Series.

They outscored the New York Mets 46-22 to win the National League Championship Series in six games, which included the Dodgers pitching staff completing a 33-inning scoreless streak.

They defeated the Yankees in Game 1 of the World Series with a walk-off grand slam by Freeman and never looked back, gave away Game 4 to ruin a sweep, but rebounded to pull off the greatest clinching-game comeback in World Series history.

They trailed 5-0 after three innings with home runs by Aaron Judge, Jazz Chisholm Jr. and Giancarlo Stanton. But the Yankees imploded with three awful fielding plays in the fifth that allowed the Dodgers to tie the game.

The Yankees took the lead again in the sixth, but the Dodgers scored twice in the eighth on a couple of sacrifice flies — typical of a team that would unselfishly do anything to win — and Treinen and Buehler shut down the Yankees to finish it.

"Tonight was basically the epitome of our season," Max Muncy said. "We got dealt a couple blows, came back, got dealt another blow, came back. It's just guy after guy coming out, doing the job, grinding away, Walker coming in in the ninth. ... It's just, literally, the epitome of our season."

Whew. Gasp. Screams. Tears. The Dodgers never have had four weeks like this.

"It seems like we hit every speed bump possible over the course of this year," Freeman said. "And to overcome what we did as a group of guys, it's special."

The title of greatest Los Angeles Dodgers team and greatest Dodgers postseason thus cemented, their two championships and four pennants in the last eight years also establish them as the greatest of Dodgers dynasties.

"My ultimate, kind of big-picture goal is that, when we are done, that we're able to look back and say that was the golden era of Dodger baseball," baseball president Andrew Friedman said.

No need to look back. It's true now. This is the golden era of Dodgers baseball.

It reached that peak this fall appropriately with major contributions from the three leaders who have spent the last decade trying to win this thing.

It starts with Mark Walter, the understated chairman and controlling owner of the Dodgers as the chief executive of Guggenheim Partners.

Walter is not around much — he didn't attend Wednesday's game — but the wallet he controls never leaves, and with his approval the Dodgers annually have one of baseball's highest payrolls. Over the winter he signed off on more than \$1 billion in contracts for the likes of Ohtani and Yamamoto, and you know what happened next.

Ohtani was the National League's best player and the biggest difference between this successful playoff team and failures of the past; witness his NLDS Game 1 home run that got this party started.

Yamamoto was injured for much of the summer, but he beat the Padres in the NLDS elimination game and was an October revelation.

"We came here understanding what this organization was about," said president and co-owner Stan Kasten, who was part of the Guggenheim group that bought the bankrupt team in 2012. "We knew about the legacy we were privileged enough to continue. It's Jackie and Sandy and Fernando and on and on. We took that responsibility seriously."

Compounding Guggenheim's investment has been the renowned acumen of Friedman, baseball's best executive who had a stellar season that far exceeded even the signings of Ohtani and Yamamoto.

Don't forget, last winter Friedman also signed Hernández, the team's second MVP. Then, at the summer trading deadline, he hit the trifecta by dealing for Edman, Michael Kopech and Jack Flaherty, all three giant October contributors.

Finally, bringing the gifts of Walter and Friedman together was Roberts, who went from the hot seat to a possible spot in the Baseball Hall of Fame by deftly managing this diverse group to his second title in nine seasons.

Throughout a summer filled with pitching injuries and Betts position intrigue, Roberts was a steady force, consistently positive, unflinchingly steady, ultimately steering the team through waters that occasionally have troubled him.

Translated, he did a terrific job managing his October bullpen, pushing all the right buttons and smartly leading them through four bullpen-only games necessitated by starting pitching injuries.

"This is something I really wanted, I wanted this one," said Roberts, who never has received the credit from the fans that he deserves.

He wanted it, and his players wanted it, and their connection combined to get the best out everybody in blue. After a month that used to be hell and suddenly became heaven, their best was more than enough to finally give them the title of baseball's best.

The Dodgers won the World Series. They really won the World Series.

'We came here understanding what this organization was about. ... It's Jackie and Sandy and Fernando and on and on. We took that responsibility seriously.'

— STAN KASTEN,
Dodgers president

LOS ANGELES DODGERS WORLD SERIES CHAMPIONS



DODGERS PLAYERS and their families ride a double-decker bus while fans celebrate a World Series championship, the team's eighth crown in franchise history.

Much like Gibson's, Freeman's name enters the championship lore

DYLAN HERNÁNDEZ

Freddie Freeman was welcomed on Friday to the rest of his life.

From the second level of the double-decker bus he rode with teammates, Freeman looked out at a world that wasn't the same as it was before.

Before the Dodgers won the World Series. Before he hit that home run.

Dodger Stadium was rocking when players walked onto the field for a post-parade celebration. The decibel level increased by several orders of magnitude when the video scoreboards displayed the image of Freeman with his son in his arms.

Fred-die! Fred-die!

Freeman later addressed the crowd, and he couldn't finish his remarks without being interrupted.

Fred-die! Fred-die!

For Angelenos who aren't old enough to have watched Kirk Gibson or Orel Hershiser, to whom the pandemic championship four years earlier felt as if it might as well have been won on another planet, Freeman is their first postseason hero.

Whenever they hear the name Freddie, they won't think of Freddie Mercury or Freddy Krueger, even on Halloween.

Now, there's only one Freddie in Los Angeles.

"I did everything I could to get on this field for you guys," Freeman told the Dodger Stadium audience. "I'm glad I did because we got a championship now."

The legend of Freeman's World Series MVP performance figures to grow with time. In the wake of a championship-clinching Game 5 victory over the New York Yankees, Freeman revealed to ESPN that he played in the postseason with more than a sprained right ankle.

The day before the Dodgers' playoff opener, Freeman dropped to the ground while taking batting practice. Tests later revealed he broke the costal cartilage of his sixth rib.

Recovering from the injury typically takes months.

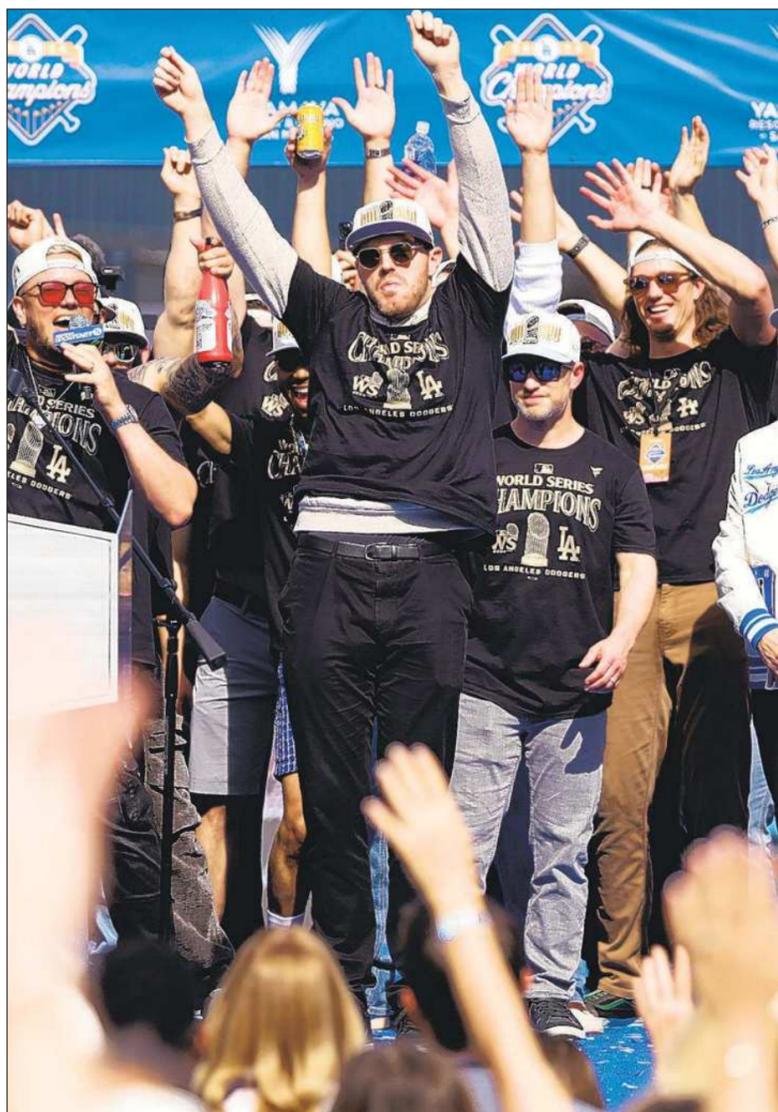
Freeman looked compromised in the National League Division Series against the San Diego Padres, as well as the NL Championship Series against the New York Mets.

"He wasn't nearly close to 100% when he was standing in the box," manager Dave Roberts said.

The World Series was a different story, with Freeman delivering a performance for the ages. He drove in 12



After his feats in this World Series, the first baseman will be in the hearts of fans forever



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

WORLD SERIES MVP Freddie Freeman shows off the Freddie dance while Dodgers teammates join him during the victory celebration at Dodger Stadium.

runs in the five games against the Yankees. The total matched a World Series record first set in 1960 by Bobby Richardson.

"I thought it was pretty fitting to see what Freddie did in this World Series," third baseman Max Muncy said. "The whole postseason we kept going up to Freddie and saying, 'Hey, we got you, we know you're grinding, we got you.' In this World Series, Freddie told us, 'Hey, I got you guys. You covered me, and now I got you.'"

"And that's exactly what happened."

In time, details of this World Series gradually will fade from the city's collective memory. But people remember how they feel, and they always will remember how they felt when Freeman crushed the walk-off grand slam in Game 1 that sent the Dodgers from a certain defeat to a momentum-stealing victory — just as the previous generation did with Gibson's homer in the 1988 Series against the Oakland Athletics.

"People," manager Roberts said, "remember moments."

Roberts knows from firsthand experience, as he remains revered in Boston to this day for a stolen base that started a historic comeback for the Red Sox in the 2004 American League Championship Series.

The day after the grand slam, Freeman was offered a glimpse of his future. The Dodger Stadium crowd frequently has chanted his name in his three years with the team, sometimes as he's stepping into the batter's box, sometimes after he's come up with an important hit. In Game 2, the fans chanted his name after every pitch in every one of his at-bats.

Freeman said after that game, "Walking up to the plate, my first-at bat today, hard not to have a smile on the inside."

As a former MVP and eight-time All-Star, Freeman already was a popular player. And to think the Orange County native would never have signed with the Dodgers if he had been offered a six-year contract by his former team, the Atlanta Braves.

"It does feel like he's a Dodger now," said his father, Fred. "He feels like he's a Dodger, he looks like a Dodger and he is a Dodger."

At the Dodger Stadium rally, Freeman once again thanked the fans for how they supported him while his 3-year-old son, Max, temporarily was paralyzed because of a rare neurological condition.

The fans thanked him back with a roaring ovation, and they will continue to thank him by chanting his name, by naming their children after him and by paying for his meals in these parts for as long as he lives.



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

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LOS ANGELES DODGERS WORLD SERIES CHAMPIONS

The final outs were 'epitome of our season'

Game 5 was a perfect reflection of the Dodgers' journey on which adversity and despair eventually gave way to triumph

By Jack Harris

Dave Roberts loitered on the top step of the dugout, his best-laid plans once again not sticking to the script.

In the eighth inning of Game 5 of the World Series on Wednesday night, a season-defining moment had found the Dodgers' longtime, and often-ridiculed, manager.

Having just told reliever Blake Treinen he had only one more at-bat, Roberts changed course in the moment, letting instinct and intrinsic trust in his team guide a critical October decision.

On the night the Dodgers won the World Series against the New York Yankees, little went as Roberts and the club expected.

Starting pitching Jack Flaherty was knocked out of the game early. An aggressive decision to chase a comeback win by using high-leverage relievers had paid off in a stunning fifth-inning turnaround.

Now, the Dodgers were ahead, on the cusp of a legacy-cementing title. Four more outs, and all those years of postseason heartbreak suddenly would be overcome.

Roberts had two pitchers throwing in the bullpen, veteran right-hander Daniel Hudson and Game 3 starter Walker Buehler. Roberts knew that Treinen, by then in his third inning of work and one pitch shy of matching his season high, already had surpassed most reasonable workload limits.

Sticking to the plan, though, would have meant taking the ball away from his best reliever in the World Series' biggest moment. It would have been playing things by the book, in a year the Dodgers successfully improvised at every other step.

"We did go through a lot," Roberts said of this season. "It wasn't easy, but our guys fought and played every day the right way."

So, Roberts banked on the character of his team to prevail once again, staying in the dugout as the club completed its championship ascent.

After a 7-6 defeat of the Yankees on Wednesday, in a victory that clinched the World Series four games to one, the Dodgers struck one common theme in their celebratory postgame comments, comparing the back-and-forth, come-from-behind triumph to the bouts of adversity they'd overcome the previous six months.

"Tonight was basically the epitome of our season," veteran third baseman Max Muncy said. "We got dealt a couple blows, came back. Got dealt another blow, came back. It's just guy after guy coming out, doing the job, grinding away."

"That's who we are," catcher Will Smith added. "We're a bunch of fighters."

Echoed utility man Chris Taylor: "It's what we did all playoffs. We fought every pitch."

In many ways, it made Wednesday a fitting culmination. The Dodgers erased an early five-run deficit. They turned a one-run hole into a one-run lead in the eighth. And they relied on almost every name on the roster to do it, burning through their whole bullpen in a game that ended with Buehler collecting the save.

"This is what we [set] out to do every single spring training, is to win a championship," World Series most valuable player Freddie Freeman said afterward. "I think it's the hardest thing to do in sports, because you just never know what's going to happen."

::

A little less than two months before — in one of several pivotal late-season wins that guided the Dodgers to a National League West title and springboarded them into the playoffs as the NL's top seed — Roberts and his staff encountered a similarly fraught situation.

On Aug. 30, in the first of a four-game series against the second-place Arizona Diamondbacks, the Dodgers suffered an early, unexpected plot twist.

In what proved to be his final start of the season, Clayton Kershaw had to leave the game after recording just three outs, compromised by a toe injury that forced him off the mound at the start of the second inning.

The Dodgers won the game but needed the bullpen to cover eight innings.

"The way that these guys banded together, came together and persevered was huge," Roberts said that night.

However, when asked the next day if it felt like a trial run for a potential postseason pitching plan, Roberts emphatically shook his head, calling it a "catastrophic scenario."

"That is something," he said, "I hope we don't have to revisit again."

Nearly two months later, Roberts was forced to revisit it.

Ready to be aggressive with his bullpen in Game 5 on Wednesday, after saving his top relief arms in a Game 4 loss the night before, Roberts knew Flaherty would be on a short leash. But what he couldn't have anticipated was how quickly the Yankees would ambush his de facto No. 1 starter.

Four batters into the game, the Yankees had two home runs and a 3-0 lead. After Flaherty yielded another run with one out in the second, Roberts went to the mound to take the ball from him. Then, he huddled with pitching coach Mark Prior and bench coach Danny Lehmann, brainstorming how to cover the remaining eight innings.

"You just start counting [outs]," Prior said. "You were gonna have to use everybody, we knew that. So we just started trotting guys out there."

The Dodgers began the night with some contingency plans. As Lehmann noted, the staff tries "to cover as many scenarios as we can, good and bad," in its pregame prep.

But, Roberts later acknowledged, there was no game plan that included only four outs from Flaherty. No predetermined script to follow for what came next.

"Obviously if I have to use the potential Game 7 starter in the ninth inning," Roberts said of a plan that culminated with Buehler, "that just speaks to, we didn't have enough pitching."

The hope was to hold the deficit as long as they could, and wait for the offense to manufacture a rally. In similar situations this postseason, including Game 4 of the World Series, they might have just punted. But on this night, they clung tightly to the hope of a comeback.

"I would say like the last month or so of the season, we started playing with a different kind of hunger," hitting coach Robert Van Scoyoc said, noting how despite the early deficit, his lineup's belief never dissipated. "We were just kind of waiting out opportunities. And when they present themselves, you're ready."

::

At some point between his second-inning exit, and the Dodgers' historic rally in the top of the fifth, a dispirited Flaherty decided against any further self-pity.

Yes, the L.A. native and childhood Dodgers fan had squandered a dream opportunity to pitch the club to a championship. But, after briefly retreating to the clubhouse in the wake of his four-run clunker, Flaherty trekked back to the dugout.

"I got over me sucking and decided to come outside and watch the boys," Flaherty said. "I didn't throw the ball particularly well tonight. But everybody else picked me up."

Such had been a defining characteristic of these Dodgers all season. They compensated when key players — and members of the starting rotation, in particular — got hurt. They filled in the cracks when veteran players slumped, or when the bullpen wore thin.

In Buehler's Game 3 start, for example, he ran into trouble in the fourth inning, giving up a leadoff double to Giancarlo Stanton. His outfield, however, bailed him out, with Mookie Betts making a diving catch in right, and Teoscar Hernández throwing out Stanton at the plate to end the inning.

"There's this bond that's kind of different," Buehler said that night. "We play for each other. Like, OK, I slipped a little. I gave up a couple

hits. And we cover it. I haven't been on that many teams that we cover each other the way this team does."

To cover for Flaherty, however, the Dodgers needed help. After four innings against Yankees ace Gerrit Cole, they not only were trailing 5-0, but still looking for their first hit.

Then a turning point finally arrived in the fifth.

Kiké Hernández provided the initial spark, going the other way on a 97-mph sinker for a leadoff single. From there, the Yankees handed the Dodgers a golden chance, erring defensively all around the diamond.

Aaron Judge dropped a line drive from Tommy Edman in center field, seemingly peaking at Hernández before the ball was in his mitt. Smith sent a chopper to shortstop Anthony Volpe in the next at-bat, then watched as Volpe spiked a throw to third base.

"I know they gave Volpe an error on that play, but if you slow it down and you see how Kiké ran to third base, that's what set up that play," Freeman said, noting that Hernández — who already made one heads-up play on Judge's dropped

ball by racing to second ahead of his throw — veered his path to third ever so slightly, giving Jazz Chisholm Jr. no chance to make a one-hop pick.

"That's him having an unbelievable baserunning IQ there," Freeman said.

Three batters later, the Yankees failed to match such bang-bang decision-making.

With two outs, Betts hit a soft ground ball up the first base line. The inning appeared over.

But as Betts ran up the baseline, there was no one covering first. Anthony Rizzo, the Yankees' first baseman, had stayed back on Betts' awkwardly spinning ball. On the mound, Cole began to break to the bag. But then, he suddenly stopped, committing what became a game-changing mental blunder.

Cole later explained he initially was planning to try to field the ball himself. But once it got past him, he failed to keep running to cover first. Even the man closest to the play, first base coach Clayton McCullough, hardly could believe it.

"I saw it hit and I'm looking at Rizzo go to field it," McCullough said. "And then I look back up, and

Mookie is already past Cole, and Anthony is not going to get there in time. I'm like, 'Holy cow. That's kind of a gift.'"

Indeed, the Yankees' third defensive mistake of the inning proved fatal. Hernández scored from third. Everyone was safe to load the bases. And as Yankee Stadium fell quiet, the Dodgers seized the moment — with Freeman and Teoscar Hernández tying the score with consecutive two-RBI hits.

"That was really the thing that propelled guys," Lehmann said of Betts' infield single. "We were like, 'All right, this is gonna happen.'"

All the Dodgers had to do now: Figure out how to cover the rest of the game with their quickly thinning pitching options.

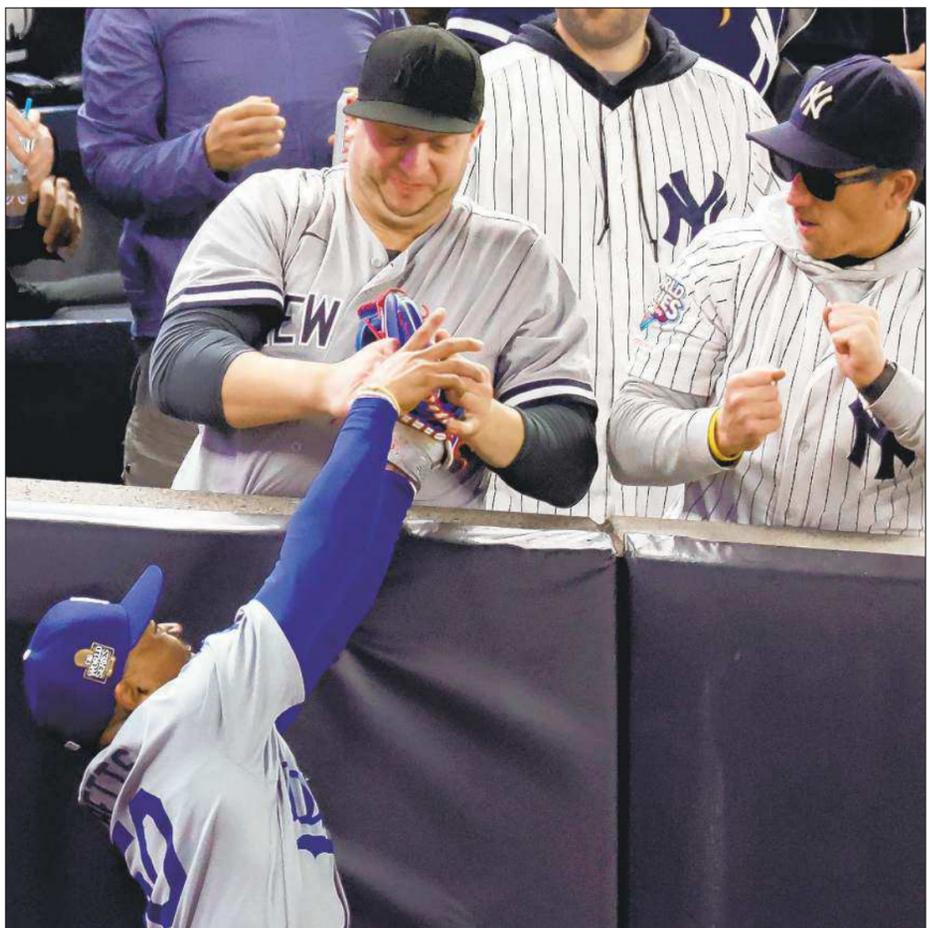
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Roughly six hours before Cole failed to cover first base, Buehler decided he was capable of helping the Dodgers cover an inning.

On the 3 p.m. bus from the team's Manhattan hotel to Yankee Stadium, Buehler approached general manager Brandon Gomes with a not-so-subtle suggestion.



DODGERS first baseman Freddie Freeman roars as he holds his MVP trophy aloft while teammates celebrate.



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

A YANKEES FAN rips the ball out of Dodgers right fielder Mookie Betts' glove in the first inning of Game 4 of the World Series. The play was ruled an out because of fan interference.

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ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

celebrate winning the World Series. "You just never know what's going to happen," Freeman says of trying to win a title each season.



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

JACK FLAHERTY sits alone with his thoughts after exiting Game 5. He lasted 1 1/3 innings after giving up four hits and four runs, leaving most of the game to the bullpen. "So we just started trotting guys out there," Dodgers pitching coach Mark Prior says.

"Hey, I feel good today," Buehler said, despite being just two days removed from a five-inning start in Game 3. "If you need me, I'll be ready."

While appreciative, Gomes initially laughed off the suggestion. President of baseball operations Andrew Friedman did the same when Buehler broached the topic at the ballpark.

"Yeah, yeah, Walker, that's awesome, but thanks," Friedman told Buehler before the game.

Buehler didn't give in.

"What if things get wonky?" the cocksure 30-year-old asked.

"If things get wonky," Friedman relented, "sure."

By the start of the sixth inning, the idea was inching toward reality.

Once the Dodgers tied the game, Buehler started to do the math in his head. Already, the team had burned high-leverage arms Anthony Banda (who limited the damage Flaherty left behind in the second), Ryan Brasier (who gave up a home run to Stanton in the third), Michael Kopech (who put the Dodgers' first zero on the board in the fourth) and Alex Vesia (who escaped a jam to keep the score

knotted in the fifth).

With Brusdar Graterol warming for the sixth, the only trusted arms left in the bullpen were Treinen and Hudson.

So, sensing the opportunity actually might arise, Buehler headed to the clubhouse to put on his cleats. When he walked in the room, he again bumped into Friedman — who had ventured to the clubhouse before the fifth-inning rally to work with the team's travel staff to find an earlier flight back to Los Angeles for Game 6 starter Yoshinobu Yamamoto.

"We were talking about how to get Yamamoto home," Friedman said, "and what we were going to do to make sure he could lay flat and get sleep."

Friedman remained in the clubhouse as the Dodgers mounted their comeback. And when Buehler popped in, he called over to the club's top executive.

"Is *this* wonky?" Buehler asked Friedman, as he dug through his locker and quickly changed shoes.

"Yeah," Friedman answered, suddenly taking Buehler's pregame offer much more seriously. "This is the definition of

wonky."

Minutes later, Buehler was jogging out to the bullpen.

Closing a playoff game, let alone a World Series championship, always had been on Buehler's bucket list. Simply running to the bullpen in such situations, he said, is "the coolest feeling, outside of starting games, that a starting pitcher will ever have."

"I largely do it for the glory," he jokingly added. "And then sometimes they say you got to go in the game. And then it's kind of real."

Still, there was a long way to go before the ninth, especially after Graterol gave up a go-ahead sacrifice fly to Stanton in the sixth and was replaced by Treinen with two outs.

At one point, Buehler stepped atop the bullpen mound, threw a couple of pitches then disappeared from sight, confirming with the coaching staff he still felt ready less than 48 hours after his Game 3 start.

"I had to throw a few to see kind of where I was at," he said.

Then, Buehler watched and waited, hoping the Dodgers could jump in front — and that more Oc-

tober glory would find him.

"We were like, 'If we tie it, we're gonna have to push Blake [deeper into the game],' Lehmann said. 'And then after that, it was like, 'All right, if we get in position, [Walker] is our best bullet in the end.'"

Two innings later, the Dodgers were indeed in position.

In the eighth, they took the lead on sacrifice flies from Gavin Lux and Betts — the Dodgers unselfishly cashing in again after loading the bases against Yankees reliever Tommy Kahnle.

Then, in the bottom of the eighth, they sent Treinen back to the mound to protect it.

That's when Roberts faced his most critical decision.

By that point, Treinen had thrown 21 pitches in the sixth and seventh innings. He also was making his 11th appearance of the post-season, only days removed from a rocky Game 2 in which he looked gassed.

The Dodgers had Buehler and Hudson (who pitched in Games 3 and 4) warming at the start of the

inning. But throughout the playoffs, Treinen had been the team's best reliever. So, for the first time since 2018, he kept pitching into a third inning.

Trouble arose with one out, when a double from Judge was followed by a walk to Chisholm. Roberts emerged from the dugout. The infield gathered on the mound. But the bullpen door never swung open.

Instead, the manager placed his hands on Treinen's chest as he posed a simple question.

"Do you have one more?" Roberts asked, as Stanton stepped to the plate.

"Absolutely," Treinen answered.

"OK," Roberts said. "This is your last guy."

As the manager headed back to the dugout, Treinen turned to his teammates.

"This is my guy," he said, before quickly upping the ante: "I got this inning," he declared, as Muncy later recounted.

"What a guy," Muncy said of Treinen. "What he did for us all postseason, man, special."

Lo and behold, despite Roberts' plan to give Treinen only one more batter, circumstances changed when Stanton popped up on the first pitch.

Treinen quickly received the ball and never even glanced toward the dugout. "If he wants to come get me, then come get me," Treinen later explained. Despite standing near the dugout steps, Roberts never did.

It was the kind of decision built upon trust between a coaching staff and its roster; backed up by a season of the Dodgers defying expectations.

With all the starting pitchers they lost and all the hurdles in their path, they had gotten here by doing all they were asked to do, and then some.

And after Treinen struck out Rizzo to end the inning, there was one more player who needed to rise to the occasion.

"We needed somebody to step up," Smith said. "We needed Walker to finish it out."

::

When the Dodgers suffered their most debilitating pitching injury in mid-September, losing marquee offseason addition and regular-season ace Tyler Glasnow to a season-ending elbow injury, Roberts decided to call a team meeting during a trip in Atlanta.

As he went around the room challenging his players to maintain belief, he singled out Buehler in particular.

"I felt that for us to win 11 games in October, we needed him," Roberts later recalled. "So I wanted to have that meeting, with him on the mound that night, and challenge him a little bit."

In the six weeks that followed, Buehler responded time and again.

Despite a woeful season in his return from a second Tommy John surgery, Buehler showed signs of life at the end of the campaign. The night of Roberts' meeting, Buehler yielded just two runs in six innings, helping the Dodgers secure another key late-season win. On the night they clinched the division, he held the San Diego Padres to one run in five innings.

In three postseason starts, the six runs he gave up came in an error-filled second inning in the division series.

"As kind of brutal as it is to say, it takes that adrenaline and stuff to kind of really get me going mentally," Buehler said after his Game 3 World Series win. "I wish I would have felt that all year. I could tell you I'm excited to pitch every single game I've ever gone out there. But there is something different in the playoffs."

Especially a ninth-inning, title-clinching save opportunity.

As Buehler warmed up in the top half of the ninth, Hudson was throwing alongside him.

"We weren't talking at all," Hudson said. "Walker was locked in."

Hudson was no stranger to the moment, having closed out the 2019 World Series for the Washington Nationals in Game 7. But this night, he knew, belonged to Buehler.

"There's certain people that, when they get that look in their eye, and they get that confidence in them, there's nobody else I would bet against," Hudson said. And as Buehler took the mound, Hudson thought only one thing:

"Walker's gonna finish this f— game."

Finish the game, Buehler did, needing just 16 pitches to retire the side, lock up a championship and confidently spread his arms wide in a triumphant pose as the rest of the team ran and mobbed him on the mound.

It was the fitting end to a fitting clincher, with a once-doubted piece of the roster sealing a once-unlikely World Series title.

"There were 30 other guys on this team that would have taken that inning," Buehler said. "I was just in the right spot ... It's the best feeling in the world."

LOS ANGELES DODGERS WORLD SERIES CHAMPIONS

THE ROAD THROUGH THE POSTSEASON

CAPSULES BY JACK HARRIS

NATIONAL LEAGUE DIVISION SERIES

DODGERS DEFEAT SAN DIEGO IN BEST-OF-FIVE SERIES, 3-2



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

BLAKE TREINEN of the Dodgers points to the sky while celebrating a 2-0 win over the Padres in Game 5. “We want to change the narrative,” Gavin Lux said.

NATIONAL LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

DODGERS DEFEAT N.Y. METS IN BEST-OF-SEVEN SERIES, 4-2



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

TOMMY EDMAN of the Dodgers looks up after hitting a two-run home run in Game 6. Edman, who was acquired at the trade deadline, won MVP honors.

Dodgers roar back, exorcise maddening playoff demons

Blake Treinen threw his hands in the sky. His teammates poured out of the dugout and swallowed him up near the mound.

Around them, the collective force of 53,000 fans all too accustomed to October frustration and heartbreak roared in delirious unison.

And not for the last time this fall, either. Not after a nearly flawless performance from their ballclub on Oct. 11.

With a 2-0 defeat of the San Diego Padres in Game 5 of the National League Division Series, the Dodgers did more than just eliminate their Southern California rivals and advance to the NL Championship Series. Starting down a third straight potential NLDS exit, they banded together, shut down the Padres’ powerhouse lineup and exorcised some maddening postseason demons in the process.

“It’s relief,” manager Dave Roberts said, cigar in hand, during his postgame news conference. “It’s redemption.”

“I think we’re all sick of it,” infielder Gavin Lux added. “We want to change the narrative.”

In 2019, 2022 and 2023, they watched division-winning, 100-win ballclubs crash out of

the playoffs in the best-of-five division series round.

This year, however, was different. The Dodgers’ second straight win facing elimination after falling behind two games to one, was pure catharsis.

Yoshinobu Yamamoto retired the side in the first inning. Then, when the Padres mounted their biggest threat in third, with two runners on and one out, he threw a 3-and-1 slider below the zone that Fernando Tatis Jr. rolled into a double play.

In the bottom of second, Kiké Hernández went hunting for a first-pitch fastball from Padres starter Yu Darvish. When he got it, he connected on a solo home run to the upper reaches of the left-field pavilion.

From there, Darvish was dominant — until he wasn’t.

In a 2-and-1 count, Teoscar Hernández got a slider over the plate. After depositing it in the left-field seats with a line drive, the ensuing pandemonium caused Chavez Ravine to shake.

Meanwhile, the Dodgers’ pitching staff completed the series with back-to-back shutouts and a streak of 24 consecutive scoreless innings, a team playoff record.

Edman erupts with 11 RBIs and patchwork bullpen thrives

With a 10-5 defeat of the New York Mets in Game 6 of the National League Championship Series, the Dodgers won the 25th pennant in their storied franchise history. It propelled them to play for the championship for the fourth time in eight years, and the first time since their 2020 title.

“I just felt we had enough talent in the room to do that,” manager Dave Roberts said, reflecting on a rare September team meeting. “But the most important thing was that those guys responded amongst themselves.”

And respond the Dodgers did.

To the litany of starting pitching absences that left their October rotation thin and unsettled. To an ever-changing cast of characters amid their injury-plagued season.

In Game 6, they had to go with a bullpen game. They didn’t have Freddie Freeman in the starting lineup either, electing to rest him amid a one-for-15 slump in which his sprained ankle had hampered his swing and limited his defensive range.

Of course, the Dodgers also had Mookie Betts, Shohei Ohtani and Tommy Edman, the NLCS most valuable player who tied a

franchise record with 11 RBIs in the series.

They had a lockdown bullpen that escaped jam after jam in Game 6, leaving 13 runners stranded by holding the Mets to two for nine with runners in scoring position.

Despite the triumphant ending, Game 6 was yet another nervy contest for the Dodgers — who jumped to a quick 6-1 lead, flirted with disaster on several occasions, then finally pulled away down the stretch.

Edman supplied the early offense. Then, Mets reliever Phil Maton threw a hanging slider that Will Smith launched over the center-field wall, giving him a home run in each of the team’s series clinchers.

After reliever Michael Kopech worked the first inning, rookie Ben Casparius, who made only three regular-season appearances, faced a critical early sequence in the second.

Stuck in a two-on, two-out jam after a walk to Francisco Alvarez and single by Francisco Lindor, Casparius got away with a down-the-middle fastball that Brandon Nimmo popped up.

From there, Roberts was able to string together the final seven innings with nothing but trusted high-leverage relief arms.



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

FREDDIE FREEMAN, right, and Mookie Betts celebrate during the Dodgers’ five-run fifth inning in Game 5. The Dodgers rallied to erase a 5-0 deficit and tie the score in the clinching victory, as they later overcame another deficit to win 7-6.

WORLD SERIES

DODGERS DEFEAT
N.Y. YANKEES IN
BEST-OF-SEVEN SERIES, 4-1

A shocking rally propels Dodgers to immortality

Despite falling behind the New York Yankees by five runs in the first three innings of Game 5 of the World Series, the Dodgers mounted a championship-clinching comeback. They scored five times in a fifth-inning rally fueled by shockingly poor New York Yankees defense and clutch hits from Freddie Freeman and Teoscar Hernández.

After falling behind again in the sixth inning, the Dodgers found yet another answer, manufacturing two eighth-inning runs off of two sacrifice flies to take a lead before a stunned Yankee Stadium crowd.

The final six outs were stressful, with top reliever Blake Treinen taking care of the eighth and — in another surprising turn — starting pitcher Walker Buehler emerging for the save in the ninth.

When the last out was recorded, a club so hungry to add to its 2020 title came pouring out of the dugout, mobbing Buehler on the mound before hoisting the commissioner’s trophy high into the New York night.

“I don’t think you would want to be any other organization than us,” Buehler said. “There’s nowhere else I’d rather be. And I think this kind of tops that off.”

They’d finally crossed the threshold of baseball immortality. They validated the golden era they had so long been chasing.

With a 7-6 defeat of the Yankees, securing a four-games-to-one World Series win, they were once again champions of baseball.

“I’m just so grateful to be in this chair, and of what our guys did; the resilience, the fight that they had,” manager Dave Roberts said.

Freeman was the World Series most valuable player, after following up his four home runs in the first four games — including his iconic walk-off grand slam in Game 1 — with a two-run single in the fifth inning of Game 5, tying a World Series record with 12 RBIs.

The Dodgers’ best performer of the entire postseason, meanwhile, was outfielder Mookie Betts, who was one of 12 players to have a hand in the 2020 and 2024 triumphs, and drove in the go-ahead run in Game 5 with the second of the eighth-inning sac flies.

By the end of the third inning, struggling starter Jack Flaherty was out of the game and New York had stretched the lead to 5-0. With the Dodgers still searching for a hit off Yankees ace Gerrit Cole, it seemed certain the series would return to Los Angeles.

Then, suddenly, the Yankees’ defense capitulated. And once they cracked the door open, the Dodgers came bursting through it.



Lifted straight up to top of the World

From a Brooklyn breakthrough to 'Bulldog' to Freeman's slam, a look at Dodgers' titles

1955

Regular-season record: 98-55

**Brooklyn Dodgers 4
New York Yankees 3**

- Game 1:** Yankees 6, Dodgers 5
- Game 2:** Yankees 4, Dodgers 2
- Game 3:** Dodgers 8, Yankees 3
- Game 4:** Dodgers 8, Yankees 5
- Game 5:** Dodgers 5, Yankees 3
- Game 6:** Yankees 5, Dodgers 1
- Game 7:** Dodgers 2, Yankees 0

In their sixth Series matchup in 15 years, the Dodgers finally beat the Yankees. The Dodgers dropped the first two games but won the next three in Brooklyn. In Game 3, Johnny Podres held the Yankees to three runs, one of them a homer by Mickey Mantle, who appeared in only three games because of a leg injury. Home runs by Roy Campanella, Gil Hodges and Duke Snider accounted for six of Brooklyn's eight runs in Game 4, and Snider had two homers in the Game 5 win. The Yankees took Game 6, scoring all five of their runs in the first inning. In Game 7, Hodges drove in runs with a single in the fourth and a sacrifice fly in the sixth and that was enough as Dodgers left fielder Sandy Amoroso stopped New York's only scoring threat with a spectacular running catch in the sixth that started a double play and preserved Podres' second win.

Memorable moment: The Boys of Summer finally win one.

Pitching stars: Podres, who was 2-0, gave up two runs in 18 innings. Clem Labine and Roger Craig had the other Dodgers victories. Whitey Ford was 2-0 for the Yankees.

Batting stars: Snider hit .320 with four homers and seven runs batted in. Hodges drove in five runs. Billy Martin led the Yankees, hitting .320 with four RBIs.

1959

Regular-season record: 88-68

**Dodgers 4
Chicago White Sox 2**

- Game 1:** White Sox 11, Dodgers 0
- Game 2:** Dodgers 4, White Sox 3
- Game 3:** Dodgers 3, White Sox 1
- Game 4:** Dodgers 5, White Sox 4
- Game 5:** White Sox 1, Dodgers 0
- Game 6:** Dodgers 9, White Sox 3

The Dodgers won the World Series in their second season in Los Angeles. Also, this was the only World Series between 1949 and 1964 in which no games were played in New York. It is also the first World Series in which neither side had a complete game from a pitcher. After the White Sox won in a rout in Game 1, the Dodgers' pitching took over, with the White Sox winning a 1-0 Game 5 squeaker with the only run coming on a double-play grounder against Sandy Koufax. Games 3, 4 and 5, played at the Coliseum, were the only World Series games to draw more than 90,000 fans.

Memorable moment: Chuck Essegian's two pinch-hit homers, a World Series record. He hit only one home run during the season.

Pitching star: Larry Sherry went 2-0 with two saves to lead the Dodgers.

Batting stars: Gil Hodges hit .391 and Charlie Neal hit .370 with two doubles, two homers and six RBIs for the Dodgers. Ted Kluszewski of the White Sox hit .391 with three homers and 10 RBIs.

1963

Regular-season record: 99-63

**Dodgers 4
New York Yankees 0**

- Game 1:** Dodgers 5, Yankees 2
- Game 2:** Dodgers 4, Yankees 1
- Game 3:** Dodgers 1, Yankees 0
- Game 4:** Dodgers 2, Yankees 1

Often voted among the top three moments in Dodgers history, this was the only time the Dodgers won the deciding World Series game at Dodger Stadium. The Dodgers used only four pitchers in the Series: Sandy Koufax, Don Drysdale, Johnny Podres and Ron Perranoski. They held the Yankees to four runs and a .171 team batting average. It was the first time the Yankees had been swept in a World Series. The Yankees never had the lead at any point in any game of the Series.

Memorable moment: Koufax strikes out 15 Yankees in Game 1, which was a World Series record at the time.

Pitching star: Koufax struck out 23 Yankees in two complete games.

Batting stars: Tommy Davis of the Dodgers hit .400 with two triples. Moose Skowron, John Roseboro and Willie Davis each had three RBIs.

1965

Regular-season record: 97-65

**Dodgers 4
Minnesota Twins 3**

- Game 1:** Twins 8, Dodgers 2



OREL HERSHISER is embraced by catcher Rick Dempsey after "Bulldog" clinched the 1988 title pitching Game 5.



CATCHER Roy Campanella (39) hoists Johnny Podres in 1955, when Brooklyn finally beat the Yankees for the crown.

- Game 2:** Twins 5, Dodgers 1
- Game 3:** Dodgers 4, Twins 0
- Game 4:** Dodgers 7, Twins 2
- Game 5:** Dodgers 7, Twins 0
- Game 6:** Twins 5, Dodgers 1
- Game 7:** Dodgers 2, Twins 0

Sandy Koufax did not pitch in Game 1 because of the Jewish holiday Yom Kippur. Don Drysdale started in his place and gave up seven runs in 2²/₃ innings. When manager Walter Alton came to the mound to replace him, Drysdale said, "I bet right now you wish I was Jewish too." After the Twins won the first two games, Dodgers pitching took over, holding Minnesota to seven runs over the last five games, with five of those coming in the Twins' Game 6 victory.

Memorable moment: Sandy Koufax comes back on two days' rest to shut out the Twins in Game 7.

Pitching star: In three starts, Koufax went 2-1 with an 0.38 ERA and 29 strikeouts in 24 innings.

Batting stars: Ron Fairly of the Dodgers hit .370 with two homers and six RBIs. Lou Johnson also had two homers and Maury Wills hit .367 with three stolen bases. For the Twins, Harmon Killebrew hit .286 with a homer.

1981

Regular-season record: 63-47

**Dodgers 4
New York Yankees 2**

- Game 1:** Yankees 5, Dodgers 3
- Game 2:** Yankees 3, Dodgers 0
- Game 3:** Dodgers 5, Yankees 4
- Game 4:** Dodgers 8, Yankees 7
- Game 5:** Dodgers 2, Yankees 1
- Game 6:** Dodgers 9, Yankees 2

The Steve Garvey-Davey Lopes-Bill Russell-Ron Cey infield finally won a World Series in their final year together. It marked the 11th time the Yankees and Dodgers played in the World Series, and the teams did not meet again

until 2024. The season was split into two halves because of a players strike, necessitating an extra round of playoffs to get to the World Series. There were three World Series most valuable players named for the first time, all Dodgers: Cey, Pedro Guerrero and Steve Yeager.

Memorable moment: In the year of Fernandomania, Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda just couldn't bring himself to take out Fernando Valenzuela in a game in which he was struggling. Valenzuela rewarded his manager by getting a complete-game victory despite giving up four runs and nine hits and walking seven.

Pitching stars: Burt Hooton had a 1.59 ERA in two starts for the Dodgers while closer Steve Howe went 1-0 with a save. Tommy John of the Yankees went 1-0 with an 0.69 ERA in two starts.

Batting stars: Garvey hit .417 for the Dodgers. Cey hit .350 with six RBIs, Guerrero hit .333 with two homers and seven RBIs and Yeager hit .286 with two homers.

1988

Regular-season record: 94-67

**Dodgers 4
Oakland Athletics 1**

- Game 1:** Dodgers 5, Athletics 4
- Game 2:** Dodgers 6, Athletics 0
- Game 3:** Athletics 2, Dodgers 1
- Game 4:** Dodgers 4, Athletics 3
- Game 5:** Dodgers 5, Athletics 2

Much like the 2018 Dodgers against the Boston Red Sox, the 1988 Dodgers were matched up against a team that was considered the class of baseball, a team that was supposed to steamroll them. Instead, Game 1 featured Kirk Gibson, hobbled on two injured legs, dramatically pinch-hitting in the ninth inning to hit a game-winning, two-run homer. Game 2 featured Cy Young winner



SANDY KOUFAX, left, and John Roseboro rejoice over the only World Series championship won at Dodger Stadium.

Orel Hershiser holding the A's to three hits in a shutout. It was all downhill from there for the A's, who were defeated in five games in one of the biggest upsets in baseball history.

Memorable moment: "In a year that has been so improbable ... the impossible has happened!" — Vin Scully after Gibson's homer. Or, if you want to ignore the Gibson homer, how about Mickey Hatcher sprinting around the bases after his two homers, as if he were afraid they were going to call him out before he got to home plate.

Pitching star: Hershiser went 2-0 with an ERA of 1.00 and 17 strikeouts in 18 innings.

Batting stars: Hatcher hit .368 with two homers and five RBIs. Steve Sax hit .300.

2020

Regular-season record: 43-17

**Dodgers 4
Tampa Bay Rays 2**

- Game 1:** Dodgers 8, Rays 3
- Game 2:** Rays 6, Dodgers 4
- Game 3:** Dodgers 6, Rays 2
- Game 4:** Rays 8, Dodgers 7
- Game 5:** Dodgers 4, Rays 2
- Game 6:** Dodgers 3, Rays 1

The Dodgers finally end their three-decade drought in the first World Series held at a neutral site because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Memorable moment: For Dodgers fans, it was Julio Urias striking out Willy Adames looking to end the World Series drought. From a baseball sense, it was the wacky ending to Game 4, when the Dodgers made two errors on the final play of the game, allowing Randy Arozarena, who had slipped rounding third, to basically crawl home with the winner. **Pitching stars:** Clayton Kershaw went 2-0 with a 2.31 ERA, striking out 14 in 11²/₃ innings. Urias struck

out 13 in seven innings. **Batting stars:** Corey Seager hit .400 with two homers, five RBIs and seven runs scored. Max Muncy led the Dodgers with six RBIs, while Justin Turner set a team record with four doubles.

2024

Regular-season record: 98-64

**Dodgers 4
New York Yankees 1**

- Game 1:** Dodgers 6, Yankees 3 (10)
- Game 2:** Dodgers 4, Yankees 2
- Game 3:** Dodgers 4, Yankees 2
- Game 4:** Yankees 11, Dodgers 4
- Game 5:** Dodgers 7, Yankees 6

The Yankees were supposed to feature superior starting pitchers, but the Dodgers' starters opened the series on fire and neutralized the perceived New York advantage. Aside from a rough Game 4 and brutal start to Game 5, the Dodgers limited the Yankees' power hitters. The biggest difference in Game 5 was the Dodgers' strong fundamentals that helped them pounce on Yankees errors and erase a big deficit.

Memorable moment: Freddie Freeman's 10th inning walk-off grand slam in Game 1 turned him into a Dodgers legend. The team's rally during a wild fifth inning in Game 5 ranks a close second.

Pitching stars: Jack Flaherty and Yoshinobu Yamamoto opened the series with sharp starts, Blake Treinen and Michael Kopecch were steady in relief and Walker Buehler pitched the final inning of Game 5 on two days' rest to seal the title.

Batting stars: Freeman hit four homers and tied a World Series record with 12 RBIs despite playing with a sprained ankle and broken rib cartilage. Mookie Betts was the most consistent hitter all postseason and drove in the go-ahead run during Game 5.

DODGERS DE LOS ÁNGELES
CAMPEONES DE LA SERIE MUNDIAL



KIKE HERNÁNDEZ sostiene el trofeo de la Serie Mundial en el escenario junto a Anthony Banda y otros durante una celebración en Dodger Stadium el viernes. WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

¡Dodgermanía!

55 59 63 65 81 88 20 24

‘Mr. Semillas’ y ‘Mr. Octubre’, una dupla letal en otoño

Teoscar Hernández le dio profundidad a los Dodgers; Kike Hernández fue su mejor versión en los playoffs

Por Eduard Cauch



TEOSCAR HERNÁNDEZ (izq.) abraza a Kike Hernández antes del Juego 3 de la Serie Mundial. Ambos fueron refuerzos importantes en el campeonato de los angelinos.

El dominicano Teoscar Hernández recibió una pelota de hit en el jardín izquierdo que Anthony Volpe había golpeado con todo su corazón buscando sobrevivir en la Serie Mundial. Teoscar necesitaba un tiro casi perfecto hacia su receptor Will Smith pues Giancarlo Stanton estaba en segunda e iba rumbo a la anotación.

Fue eso, simplemente perfecto, un láser de 93.9 millas por hora que puso out al pelotero californiano estrella de los Yanquis.

Fue una de las grandes jugadas en la Serie Mundial ocurrida en el cuarto inning del Juego 3 en Yankee Stadium. Esa joya de Teoscar confirmó el dominio de los Dodgers en ese partido. De haber anotado, los Yanquis se ponían a solo dos carreras de empatar el Juego 3. Pero fue una jugada que le dio un duro golpe a los de Nueva York y del cual nunca se levantaron. En lugar, los Dodgers se colocaron 3-0 en la Serie Mundial y solamente le tomó dos juegos más para adquirir el campeonato, el octavo en su historia.

Muchos hablarán de los jonrones de Freddie Freeman en la Serie Mundial o la monstruosidad de los 54 jonrones y 59 robadas de Shohei Ohtani en la temporada regular, pero un hombre que rindió toda la temporada fue el dominicano Teoscar Hernández, así como el boricua Kike Hernández, dos jugadores caribeños que comparten el apellido y también ahora la gloria de tener el anillo de campeones en 2024.

“Estoy agradecido de que los dos estamos en el equipo. De que los dos tenemos el mismo apellido y que el acento está en los dos apellidos”, había dicho Kike en la conferencia de prensa después de que los dos Hernández aniquilaron a los peligrosos Padres de San Diego con dos cuadrangulares en el Juego 5.

A uno le llaman ‘Mr. Semillas’ por tirar semillas a cada uno de sus compañeros que pega un jonrón. A otro ‘Mr. Octubre’ por transformarse en otro jugador en el momento más importante de la temporada.

Como quiera que sea su apodo, los Dodgers simplemente no lo hubiesen podido lograr sin ellos.

Teoscar, un pelotero de 27 años y de un brazo increíble, además de una sonrisa contagiosa, eligió a los Dodgers en la agencia libre en un contrato de un año y \$23.5 millones. Para Teoscar, el título representó la satisfacción de saber que hizo la decisión correcta en la temporada baja. Tenía opciones, los Angels de Los Ángeles y los Medias Rojas de Boston, pero ninguno lo pudo concretar y eligió a los Dodgers.

Esta temporada, al reportarse a los entrenamientos de primavera, el exjugador de los Astros de Hous-

ton, Azulejos de Toronto y Marineros de Seattle, tenía la sensación que iba a ser una campaña diferente.

“Desde que llegué a Arizona, vi esa armonía que tenían. No hay ego. No hay ese momento en el que dicen yo soy Freddie Freeman, yo soy Ohtani, yo soy Mookie Betts. Yo soy el héroe, yo soy el que va a sacar la cara. No vi eso, la mentalidad de todas esas estrellas era ganar”, expresó Teoscar en una entrevista con ESPN Deportes al ganar la Serie Mundial.

‘Mr. Semillas’ brindó no solamente poder a un repertorio ya profundo en la novena angelina, sino también un hombre que unió aún más al grupo.

Teoscar tuvo una temporada sólida, con 33 jonrones y 99 carreras producidas. En los playoffs,

tuvo una gran actuación en el Juego 2 de la Serie Mundial en Dodger Stadium al batear un jonrón que le dio el triunfo a los Dodgers por 4-2. En el Juego 5, él fue parte del rally con los que los Dodgers empataron 5-5 después de estar abajo 0-5.

Su juego defensivo también fue importante, como en aquella jugada en la que puso out a Stanton.

“He estado trabajando mucho en mi defensa, para ayudar en lo que sea en este equipo”, declaró Teoscar en una entrevista con FOX tras esa gran jugada.

En la Serie de Campeonato ante los Padres de San Diego, Teoscar pegó un Grand Slam en el Juego 3 que perdieron los Dodgers. Dos juegos después, en el partido decisivo, el Juego 5 de vida o muerte, conectó un jonrón al jardín

izquierdo.

Gran parte de la temporada de Teoscar fue por la buena comunicación que tuvo con su mánager Dave Roberts.

“Dave es un entrenador que te deja ser el pelotero que quieres ser. Y deja que te diviertas”, declaró Teoscar.

Y si se trata de divertirse en octubre, ese es Kike Hernández, quien volvió a a los Dodgers con un contrato de \$4 millones esta temporada y que dejó lo mejor de su repertorio para el final.

“Me encantan los playoffs, es lo único que te puedo decir”, expresó Kike después de golpear a los Padres con su 14 jonrón de postemporada.

Kike parece transformarse de un jugador promedio a un veterano con un colmillo largo y retorcido a

la hora de producir en otoño.

Kike tuvo .229 en la temporada regular pero en los playoffs demostró porqué se convierte en un monstruo de Halloween en el otoño. Después del jonrón ante los Padres, ya tenía más cuadrangulares en una postemporada que jugadores legendarios como Alex Rodríguez y Miguel Carrera en playoffs.

Ante los Mets, en el Juego 3 de la Serie de Campeonato en Nueva York, conectó su jonrón número 15 de la postemporada, colocándolo como quinto jugador nacido en Puerto Rico con más de 15 jonrones junto a Bernie Williams, Carlos Cabrera y Carlos Correa.

“Todos ellos son unos caballos, mejores que yo. Es algo que me llena de orgullo”, declaró Kike en una conferencia de prensa al hablar de ese grupo selecto de peloteros boricuas.

En el quinto inning del Juego 5 de la Serie Mundial, los Dodgers empataron un juego que estaban perdiendo 5-0, y todo comenzó con un hit del boricua. Su velocidad y agilidad al correr las bases fueron vitales para capitalizar los errores de los Yanquis en su colapso en ese partido definitivo.

“Trato de visualizar diferentes situaciones, como beisbolista, esos momentos llegan en la noche. Cuando me visualizo ganando en estas situaciones, y llega el momento, es cuando se hace realidad”, declaró Kike.

“Yo diría que tiene que ver un poco con mi sangre, con ser puertorriqueño. Nosotros jugamos en Puerto Rico juegos desde niño, juegos calientes. Desde que eres niño, tienes a los padres y las madres cantando canciones, sientes que son juegos grandes. Desde niño he estado soñando con tener estas oportunidades”, recordó Kike al hablar en la conferencia de prensa.

Kike tenía una cuenta pendiente con los Dodgers, ya que en 2020 ganó el campeonato en una temporada acortada por la pandemia, pero no pudo celebrar en un desfile en Los Ángeles. Al ganar la Serie Mundial este año, Kike finalmente pudo desfilar por las calles de la ciudad con sus compañeros que ganaron aquel campeonato en 2020, esta vez sin excusas de una temporada corta o de jugar en una burbuja.

Teoscar dijo que su prioridad en la agencia libre será regresar a Los Ángeles, pero él sabe muy bien que será uno de los más codiciados después de esta corona. Las posibilidades de volver para Kike también son complicadas, con su valor incrementando y los Dodgers buscando siempre a las estrellas. ‘Mr. Semillas’ y ‘Mr. Octubre’ puede que no regresen, pero se habrán quedado en los corazones de los Dodgers por siempre.

Vibra el espíritu del ‘Toro’ en celebración

Los Ángeles esperó, gozó y celebró el campeonato atado a un sentimiento del recuerdo del legendario Valenzuela

Por Jad El Reda

La fiesta que por 36 años la afición y los Dodgers habían esperado, finalmente la disfrutaron con todo los honores y mucho confeti.

El mejor equipo del béisbol pudo desfilarse por un trofeo de campeón de la Serie Mundial en las calles de Los Ángeles y en su casa, el Dodger Stadium.

Uno a uno de los jugadores fueron escalando y subiendo el tono al ambiente que ya estaba de por sí encendido. Todo en medio de su propia euforia, sobre la tarima improvisada en el césped que vivió tantas historias especiales, ante una casa abarrotada de azul y blanco.

La ovación más grande fue para el Jugador Más Valioso de la Serie Mundial, Freddie Freeman, mientras que un Clayton Kershaw, que no quiso llevarse créditos, también se dirigió a los fans, hasta los tímidos Shohei Ohtani y Yoshinobu Yamamoto aceptaron tomar el micrófono.

La fiesta era de los todos. En 2020, los Dodgers fueron campeones en una temporada acortada debido a la situación de emergencia global que causó el Covid-19. Los angelinos tuvieron que lidiar con la incredulidad de muchos y las irrespetuosas sugerencias de otros que señalaron que ese título debería llevar un asterisco. El 30 de octubre quedó claro que son los mejores del mundo del béisbol cuando acabaron con los místicos Yanquis de Nueva York.

“En 2020, nos hicieron pregun-

tas muy difíciles y adivinen qué, les respondí: En la década de los 2020, será la década de los Dodgers. ¿Quién tiene más títulos que Dodgers en los 2020? Absolutamente, inadie!”, replicó un eufórico Kike Hernández quien fue el alma de la fiesta.

Tampoco faltaron las lágrimas.

“Solo quiero decir: gracias”, dijo un conmovido Teoscar Hernández. “Juego para ganar y los Dodgers me dieron la oportunidad para venir a esta ciudad, a este equipo, con esta gente, para ganar un campeonato. Me hicieron mis sueños realidad”.

El festejo trascendió el triunfo de los Dodgers, fue un festejo como solo Los Ángeles puede ofrecer, pero con la mano de un grande hizo falta.

“¡Feliz cumpleaños, Fernando Valenzuela!”, gritó el mánager de los Dodgers, Dave Roberts.

Momentos antes de que el autobús de dos pisos llegara al estadio con sus héroes para la celebración, el Mariachi Las Catrinas cantaron “Las Mañanitas” al ‘Toro’.

“Esto fue un recuerdo a los logros de Fernando Valenzuela en toda su carrera y su trabajo en los micrófonos con nosotros”, dijo el narrador de los Dodgers en español, Pepe Yñiguez. “Esta fue una Serie Mundial que esperamos por 43 años, más de cuatro generaciones que no vieron aquella Serie Mundial de 1981, cuando conocíamos la ‘Fernandomanía’. Cuando supimos la noticia oficialmente de Fernando el pasado 22

octubre, se le nombró la Serie Mundial dedicada a Fernando Valenzuela, con mucho mérito a lo que hizo”.

Yñiguez y Valenzuela hicieron mancuerna en SportsNet LA en español desde el 2015 por seis años, además de una década anterior en otros proyectos para casi 22 años de vivir muchas experiencias profesionales y personales juntos.

El quiso rendirle un homenaje sublime a quien fue su compañero por tantos años cuando los Dodgers aseguraron el título en el Yankee Stadium.

“Gracias ‘Toro’, gracias 34, por ti ‘Toro’, el ‘Toro’ Valenzuela... Aquí ondeando la camisa de Valenzuela porque es algo emocionante, con la pena de no tenerlo por acá, pero también sabiendo que tenemos a Fernando aquí con nosotros en corazón y espíritu celebrando con cada uno de sus miembros”, dijo un emocionado Yñiguez durante la transmisión.

El narrador dijo haber llorado durante ese momento y además nombró a cada uno de los miembros de la familia de Valenzuela, además sintió que la presencia de Valenzuela estaba vigente durante esta Serie Mundial.

“Desde que se dio el Grand Slam de Freeman en el Juego 1, la

mano, el espíritu estaba presente en esta Serie Mundial, que él no pudo alcanzar a ver, pero es una Serie que representaba mucho para todos”, dijo Yñiguez. “Aún no me percató, no me convenzo todavía de que Fernando no está con nosotros, yo siempre lo sentí, la imagen de él en la cabina y me preguntaron ‘¿Cómo crees que se sienten los jugadores saber que acabamos de perder a Fernando Valenzuela?’. Ellos son unos profesionales y lo hicieron por la memoria de Fernando Valenzuela”.

Las camisetas con el número 34, las ofrendas y el recuerdo de Valenzuela eran palpables entre los aficionados en el estadio que se hizo grande.

Jackeline y Chris Portilla son unos hermanos que residen en Moreno Valley y no podían perderse la oportunidad de la doble celebración.

“Es algo que se vive una vez en la vida y que se puede gozar, especialmente en el cumpleaños de Fernando, que cómo quiera que sea, nos está apoyando”, dijo Jackeline, quien con Chris estuvo también presente para el día que retiraron la camiseta del ‘Toro’. “Fue emocionante y especial porque he sido un seguidor desde la época de Valenzuela, mi familia bromeaba con-

migo y me llamaban ‘ojitos de Valenzuela’”, agregó Chris.

Claudia García es una aficionada que ha sido seguidora de los Dodgers desde hace 50 años y, según ella, es una tradición que se ha mantenido en familia.

“Desde muy chiquita venía a los juegos con mi papá, vi a Fernando jugar”, recordó García, quien hoy, junto a su esposo, continúa la tradición de ir al estadio con sus hijos. “Todo ha sido maravilloso, tenía que ser en el día de su cumpleaños. El día en el que todos estamos celebrando aquí y en el Centro, es el día ideal. Teníamos muchos años esperando, desde el 2020, que no celebramos, luego el 2021, 2022 y 2023, no se pudo tampoco, pero ahora sí se dio”.

La celebración de haber alcanzado esta Serie Mundial, no pudo finalizar mejor que con un mensaje de Yñiguez a su gran amigo y a quien seguramente seguirá sintiendo de su presencia en las futuras transmisiones de los Dodgers.

“‘Toro’ descansa en paz, tu trabajo está cumplido, la misión está cumplida, lograste lo que el público de Los Ángeles, el aficionado de Los Ángeles quería el apoyo tuyo para esta Serie Mundial”, dijo Yñiguez en medio de lágrimas.



RYKER NOVO, 11 años, (izq.) y Jace Novo, 9 años, de Miami, Florida, disfrutaban del confeti que dejó la celebración del desfile de los Dodgers, el viernes, tras ganar la Serie Mundial.

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