



CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

**ALIA PHILLIPS** and her husband at their Camarillo home. The Mountain fire came on the third anniversary of their engagement.

## Something precious in all they've lost

'A needle in a haystack would be easier to find,' firefighters said of Alia Phillips' ring

By **NOAH GOLDBERG**

Alia Phillips thought she might never see her wedding ring again. But even on her engagement anniversary, that was low on her list of concerns as she drove her Prius through orange smoke and falling, flaming branches. Wednesday morning had been a chaotic flurry of conflicting orders as the Mountain fire tore through residential neighborhoods in Camarillo, burning homes, fields and trees in its wake.

Phillips had left work that morning to check on her 18-year-old dog, Little Miss, and turn on her sprinklers when she first heard of the fire. It had started fairly far away. To reach her three-story home on East Highland Drive in Camarillo Heights, the fire would have to jump over the 118 Freeway, cross fields, then go up and over a mountain. But in the time it took her to check on her house, everything changed. The sky had turned completely orange. It had gotten hot and

[See **Camarillo**, A9]



GINA FERRAZZI Los Angeles Times

**THE WIND-DRIVEN** Mountain fire engulfs a home and burns the surrounding landscape on Wednesday in Camarillo.

## LIBERAL BALLOT ISSUES APPEAR DOOMED

Measures on prisons, wages are poised for defeat. Is California moving to the right?

By **MACKENZIE MAYS**

There was no surprise on election night when a solid majority of California voters selected Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris over former President Trump. But the outcomes of a list of ballot measures told a more complicated story of a state known for its liberal bent.

Voters overwhelmingly supported a measure to undo a decade of progressive criminal justice reform, and preliminary poll results showed they were poised to reject measures that would increase the minimum wage and ban forced prison labor.

Proposition 6 — which would ban "involuntary servitude" as punishment for a crime — lacked majority support in deep-blue California on Wednesday even as supporters promoted it as a way to end what they call modern-day slavery. A similar measure was on track to pass in Nevada.

California voters also rejected a measure that would have made it easier for cities to impose rent control and pass local bond measures for affordable housing.

Some progressive voters in the state, where Democrats control the governor's office and Legislature, were dumbfounded by the early results, while Republicans seized on the moment as proof that California is becoming more conservative.

"It's a new day in California," Assembly Republican leader James Gallagher of Yuba City said in a social media post about the election results. "The shift is beginning."

But longtime California election watchers were more tempered about what the outcomes of the ballot measures say about the state's political leanings.

Mark Baldassare, survey director for the Public Policy Institute of California, a nonpartisan think tank that conducts polling, said con-

[See **Measures**, A9]

### LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

## A worrier's guide to Trump anxiety and reality

By **DOYLE McMANUS**

President-elect Donald Trump made hundreds of promises during his campaign, including dozens he vowed to implement on "Day One" of his administration. At the top of the list: closing the U.S. border with Mexico,



mass deportations, increased oil and gas production, and retribution against his political opponents. Many of his proposals would hit California hard, and Gov. Gavin Newsom has already promised to wage war in the courts against the new administration. There's plenty on Trump's wish list to worry about. But as I wrote when he was elected to his first term, you can't hit all your

panic buttons at the same time. Here's an attempt to sort the biggest concerns from lesser ones. Which Trump priorities are worth losing sleep over — and which will be hard for him to carry out?

### His top priorities

**Mass deportation** "Closing the border" has been Trump's shorthand for a draconian crackdown on illegal immigration. He has

repeatedly promised to launch "the biggest domestic deportation campaign in American history." A drive to expel every undocumented immigrant would deprive California of more than 7% of its workforce, potentially cripple agriculture and construction, divide families and disrupt communities. It would also face a practical problem: The federal government doesn't have enough immigration agents

to round up 11 million people. This is one promise Trump clearly intends to keep. But there may be a debate in the new administration over how fast and how sweeping the deportation drive should be. "It's not going to be a mass sweep of neighborhoods. It's not going to be building concentration camps," Tom Homan, a former acting director of

[See **McManus**, A5]



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

### HE'S ALL ARMS AND LEGS

Quarterback Justin Herbert runs for a touchdown in the Chargers' 27-17 win over the Titans. He also threw for another score. **SPORTS, D1**

### Security boosted for soccer game

After violent assaults in Amsterdam, Paris will deploy 4,000 police officers when Israeli team visits. **WORLD, A3**

**Weather** Mostly sunny. L.A. Basin: 70/54. **B6**

### New LAPD chief facing scrutiny

As sheriff years ago, he allowed some in jail to be targeted for deportation. **CALIFORNIA, B1**



### COLUMN ONE

## At 30, tennis player gets back in pro game

Karue Sell resurrects his career by finding success via YouTube and key partnerships.

By **CONNOR SHEETS**

When Karue Sell really rips a serve, it sounds like a tactical shotgun, the ball kicking up shoulder high. His backhand is like a precision laser carving up the baseline. To the casual observer, he's the mustachioed version of Roger Federer. Yet he lives in a world far different from the one the "Maestro" glided through on the way to 20 Grand Slam singles titles. So far this year, Sell's tour-

[See **Tennis**, A8]



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

**KARUE SELL** hits a forehand while training on the courts at Redondo Union High. The former UCLA standout is making his second run at a pro career.



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## PERSPECTIVES

## BOILING POINT

## U.S. democracy and planet's health are at stake

What might Abraham Lincoln have to say about Donald Trump and global warming?

SAMMY ROTH

“There is, even now, something of ill-omen amongst us. I mean the increasing disregard for law which pervades the country; the growing disposition to substitute the wild and furious passions, in lieu of the sober judgment of Courts; and the worse than savage mobs, for the executive ministers of justice.”

Abraham Lincoln spoke these words in 1838, part of his Lyceum Address. He was 28 years old then, a member of the Illinois House of Representatives and still more than two decades from the White House and the Civil War.

But he sensed that America was in danger.

Stirred by the lynching of a Black man in St. Louis and the murder of an abolitionist newspaper editor, the future president warned that the nation's political institutions — and along with them civil rights and religious liberty — could crumble in the face of mob violence, disregard for the law and a politics dominated by revenge.

If the American democratic experiment were to fail, he said, no foreign adversary could ever be to blame.

“If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher,” Lincoln prophesied.

My job at The Times is to write columns about climate change. But as I watched Americans vote to

return former President Trump to the White House, I kept thinking that climate change is part of a larger historical story.

And Lincoln's words kept springing to mind.

A few days before the election, Trump told supporters that he doesn't mind if journalists — people like me and my L.A. Times colleagues — get shot. He said he “shouldn't have left” the White House after he was voted out of office in 2020, a reminder of the violent Jan. 6 riot that he fomented with his lies and incitements. He once again called global warming a “hoax,” citing the cool weather in Pennsylvania that day as (absurd) evidence.

Maintaining our democracy, Lincoln said, would require “general intelligence, sound morality, and in particular a reverence for the constitution and laws” — all qualities that Trump not only lacks but so clearly disdains.

It's hard to know what will happen now that Trump has defeated Vice President Kamala Harris.

Will the United States find a way to live up to its founding principles? Will we keep respecting the rule of law, and treating all people with dignity and respect, and listening to science and reason? Or will we succumb to our worst instincts, and tie our collective fate to the whims of a racist, vengeful authoritarian?

Even if Harris had won, the terrifying political forces that empowered Trump wouldn't have gone away.

The Times' Jeffrey Fleishman recently described a “culture of retribution” that has seen Trump supporters harass librarians, threaten election workers and target scientists in conspiracy theories.

Trump has said that immigrants are “poisoning the blood of our country” — sounding like “a newsreel from 1930s Germany,” Fleishman wrote.

As an American Jew, that kind of language terrifies me.

My grandfather, a rabbi who died this year, made it out of Europe before the Holocaust. But much of his extended family was killed. And as he and others taught me, the Nazis didn't just murder Jews. They killed millions of others deemed inferior, including Soviets, Poles, Roma, people with disabilities, gay men and their political enemies.

I don't really think we're on the cusp of another Holocaust, at least not yet. I do think it's worth taking stock of the fact that when we refer to the “American democratic experiment,” we're not just using a fun turn of phrase.

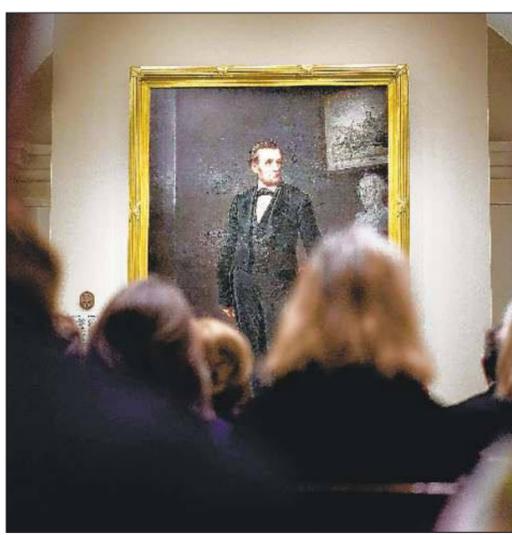
This nation is still very much an experiment. The fact that it may feel permanent and unshakable means nothing if we don't fight like hell to defend it. Reelecting Trump doesn't necessarily mean we've failed, although it tips the scales heavily in the wrong direction. Similarly, electing Harris wouldn't have meant we'd succeeded.

Again, Lincoln: “If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher.”

Let's say democracy survives the next four years. What can we do to sustain a livable planet?

It's harder to turn to Lincoln for guidance here.

But in 1824, 14 years before the Lyceum Address, French physicist Joseph Fourier first proposed what we now call the greenhouse effect — the idea that certain gases can trap heat in the atmosphere, thus in-



CAROLYN KASTER/Associated Press

ABRAHAM Lincoln said keeping our democracy requires “a reverence for the constitution and laws.”

creasing the planet's surface temperature. That means we've had the origins of climate change science for two centuries.

Before Lincoln was born, actually, the Industrial Revolution had begun, marking the dawn of the fossil fuel era — which continues today with ever-deadlier heat waves, fires and floods. The year after Lincoln was assassinated by slavery supporter John Wilkes Booth, the strip-mining of coal got started in Lincoln's home state of Illinois.

I'd like to think the 16th president would follow the science and support a rapid shift to climate-friendly energy — in part because climate justice also means racial justice, the cause that has come to define Lincoln's presidency.

As scientists and advocacy groups including the NAACP have noted, people of color and low-income families are more likely to suffer from air polluted by

fossil fuels and weather disasters exacerbated by higher temperatures. That's both because of where those people live and because they have less money to protect themselves.

These racial disparities are no accident. They're legacies of the systemic injustices that Lincoln tried to extinguish and that Trump eagerly uses as political kindling. Let's not forget that it took a full century after the Civil War — by which time Trump was a teenager, and Harris was just being born — to abolish the legal doctrine of “separate but equal” segregation. It's impossible to separate climate action from racial equity. History is alive and well.

That's why I'm proud of the work we're doing at the L.A. Times. Our 17-person Climate California reporting team is dedicated to covering air quality, environmental justice, water, wildlife, public lands, the Pacific coast and more. Any

hope of a safe, equitable future for all Americans rests in part, as Lincoln knew, on a robust free press.

I can't tell you my employer is perfect.

Like many L.A. Times reporters, I was stunned and frustrated by our owner's decision to block our editorial board from endorsing in the presidential election. (The board had planned to endorse Harris.) I sympathize with readers who have canceled their L.A. Times subscriptions as an act of protest against our owner, Patrick Soon-Shiong.

But I'd urge you to keep supporting our work. My colleagues and I need you now more than ever.

We need you to stand with us and prove there's an audience for our journalism as we shine a light on the Trump administration — on the president's appointees, on his treatment of public land and wildlife, on his all-but-certain favoritism toward the fossil fuel industry. We'll tell stories you won't find anywhere else. And we won't let up here in California. We'll keep holding Gov. Gavin Newsom and other state and local officials accountable too.

One way or another, the work will continue. The story isn't finished.

Lincoln knew America needed a vibrant free press.

“Whenever the vicious portion of population shall be permitted to gather in bands of hundreds and thousands, and burn churches, ravage and rob provision stores, throw printing presses into rivers, shoot editors, and hang and burn obnoxious persons at pleasure, and with impunity; depend on it, this Government cannot last.”

It needs to last. For our planet, and for ourselves. Let's make Honest Abe proud.

## Climate talks spotlight energy plans of host Azerbaijan

Observers question authoritarian state's commitment to a green transition.

BY EMMA BURROWS

The spotlight is on Azerbaijan as the small petrostate in the South Caucasus prepares to host the U.N.'s biggest climate conference, which opens Monday.

Diplomats from around the world are descending on the capital, Baku — a birthplace of the oil industry — for COP29, the annual summit on how to avert increasing threats from climate change.

The world's first oil fields were developed in Baku in 1846, and Azerbaijan led the world in oil production in 1899.

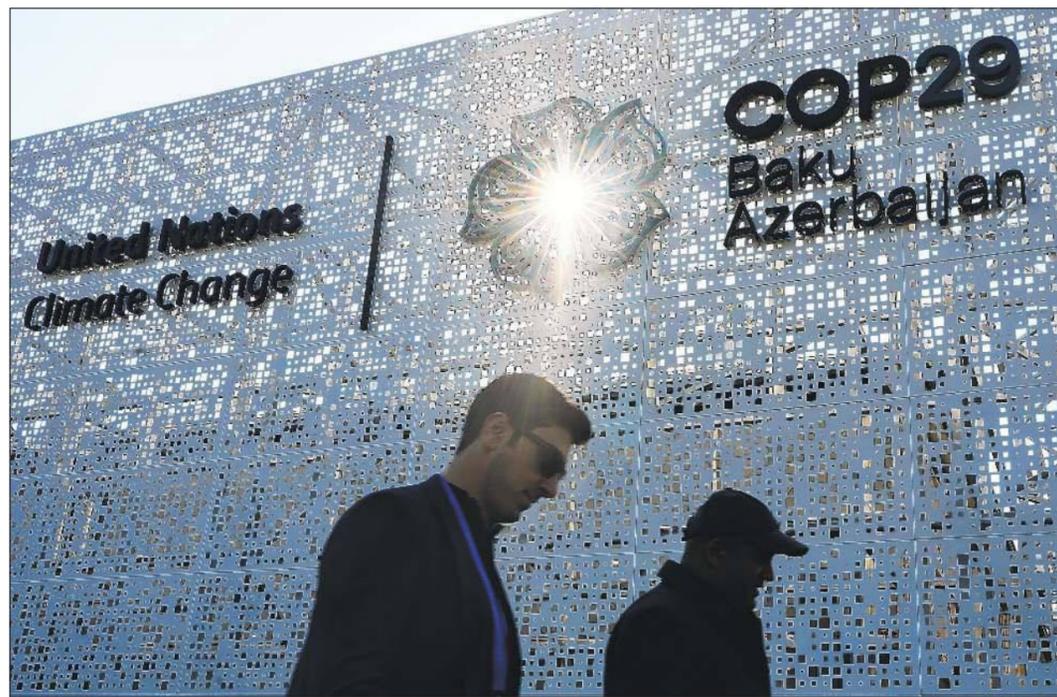
Sandwiched between Iran to the south and Russia to the north, Azerbaijan is on the Caspian Sea and was part of the Soviet Union from 1922 to 1991. Azerbaijan exports mainly oil and gas, two of the world's leading sources of planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions. President Ilham Aliyev described the resources in April as a “gift of the gods.”

Aliyev is Azerbaijan's authoritarian leader. The son of the former president, he has been in power for more than two decades, overseeing a crackdown on freedom of speech and civil society. Authorities would not grant the Associated Press permission to report in the country ahead of the conference.

Aliyev has said it is a “big honor” for Azerbaijan to host the conference. He has also said he wants his country to use more renewable energy at home so that it can export more oil and gas abroad.

### Signs of fossil fuel addition in capital

In metal cages next to Azerbaijan's Aquatic Palace sporting venue are pumpjacks — a sign says they extract just over 2 tons of oil a day. Others pump away elsewhere, sucking up oil in view



RAFIQ MAQBOOL/Associated Press

COP29, the annual United Nations climate summit, begins Monday in Azerbaijan. The petrostate's talk of renewable energy gives the impression that it is doing more than it is to combat climate change, skeptics said.

of one of Baku's religious and tourist sites, the Bibi Heybat Mosque, which was rebuilt in the 1990s after it was destroyed by Bolsheviks almost 80 years ago.

Aliyev said he sees Azerbaijan's selection to host COP29 as “a sign of respect” from the international community and a recognition of what the country is doing around green energy.

Some of those plans involve developing hydro-power, solar and wind projects in Karabakh, a region populated by ethnic Armenians before most fled to Armenia after a lightning military offensive by Azerbaijan in September 2023.

Aliyev said in a speech in March that his country is in the “active phase of green transition” but that “no one can ignore the fact that without fossil fuel, the world cannot develop, at least in the foreseeable future.”

Mukhtar Babayev, Azerbaijan's environment minister and former vice president of the state energy company Socar, will serve as conference president for the climate talks. Babayev said

in April he wants this “oil and gas country of the past” to show the world a green path with its efforts to ramp up renewable energy, especially wind power.

He said he believes this COP summit must build on last year's agreement to transition away from fossil fuels and pave the way for countries to come together in 2025 for beefed-up and financed plans to clamp down on heat-trapping gases.

But some observers doubt those commitments. Multiple organizations say Azerbaijan's talk of renewable energy amounts to greenwashing — giving the impression that the country is doing more than it is to combat climate change.

### Health issues and crackdown claims

While many countries including the United States and last year's host, the United Arab Emirates, grapple with the challenges of transitioning away from fossil fuels, Azerbaijan has historically not been proactive in that regard, said Kate

Watters, executive director at Crude Accountability, which monitors environmental issues in the Caspian Sea region.

Environmental monitoring in Azerbaijan is dangerous, she said, referencing a crackdown on civil society that has seen people detained and in effect has snuffed out any real opposition.

There's no effective mechanism in Azerbaijan for locals to ring alarm bells about exposure to pollutants from the oil and gas industry, Watters said. She referenced health issues such as rashes and sicknesses that residents may experience living near the Sangachal oil and gas terminal, just outside Baku, but indicated that their concerns are not heard.

Azerbaijani government officials did not respond to numerous requests from the Associated Press for comment.

Babayev, the environment minister, has pointed to Azerbaijan experiencing higher-than-normal temperatures, saying he wants

states to come together to improve plans to stop the emission of gases that contribute to global warming. But his country has been criticized for failing to clamp down on exactly that.

Analysis from Global Witness, a nonprofit organization, found the volume of gas flared at oil and gas facilities in Azerbaijan has increased by 10.5% since 2018.

Gas flaring is a major source of soot, carbon dioxide and methane emissions, contributors to global warming. Flaring takes place when excess gas released by oil drilling is burned off rather than collected. Human rights groups and investigative journalists have blamed the practice for some of Azerbaijan's health issues, including around the Sangachal terminal.

“We're heading into a COP where even the host isn't bothering to do the basic functions of climate diplomacy,” Louis Wilson, head of fossil fuels investigations at Global Witness, told AP.

The Paris climate agree-

ment requires countries to submit plans to combat climate change. Azerbaijan's latest update, in 2023, was rated “critically insufficient” by a group of climate scientists in September. It's expected that the country will submit an updated plan this year.

### Alternative source of gas for Europe

Azerbaijan owns Shah Deniz — one of the largest gas fields in the world — and BP announced in April the start of oil production from a new offshore platform in the Caspian Sea.

The nation's natural resources have transformed it into a geopolitical player, and Baku has said it will increase its fossil fuel production over the next decade.

Before Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Moscow supplied some of 40% of Europe's natural gas through four pipelines. Most of that was later cut off.

That meant opportunity for Azerbaijan: The European Union struck a deal later that year to double its imports of Azerbaijani gas to 20 billion cubic meters a year by 2027. But it's unclear whether Azerbaijan can meet that demand, and there are disagreements over the terms of the deal.

“The more renewable sources we have, the more natural gas we will save,” Aliyev said in March, calling such saved fuel “an additional contribution to the Southern Gas Corridor” of pipelines from the Caspian Sea to Europe.

Officials in Azerbaijan have argued that it is unfair to criticize Baku for producing more fossil fuels when there is a demand for them across Europe and as national governments endeavor to keep fuel prices low for citizens.

Azerbaijan's hosting of COP29 will turn the spotlight on the nation, which makes most of its money from selling fossil fuels — but it may also highlight Europe's — and the world's — continuing dependence on them.

Burrows writes for the Associated Press.

## THE WORLD



HASSAN AMMAR Associated Press

**TWO BOYS** stand near the site of an Israeli airstrike in Lebanon that killed at least 23 people, including seven children, in Aalmat village. The location is far from areas where Hezbollah militants have a major presence.

## Israeli air attacks kill at least 23 in Lebanon, 17 in north Gaza

Netanyahu said he and Trump 'see eye to eye regarding' the Iranian threat.

BY WAFSA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY AND KAREEM CHEHAYEB

**DEIR AL BALAH**, Gaza Strip — Israeli strikes killed dozens of people including children Sunday in Lebanon and isolated northern Gaza, as the world watched for signs of how the U.S. election might affect the war against Iranian-backed militant groups Hamas and Hezbollah.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had spoken three times with Donald Trump since Tuesday's election and they "see eye to eye regarding the Iranian threat and all of its components." Israel's president, Isaac Herzog, is scheduled to meet with President Biden on Tuesday.

The Israeli airstrike in Lebanon killed at least 23 people, including seven children, in Aalmat village north of Beirut, far from the areas in the east and south where Hezbollah militants have a major presence. Lebanon's health ministry said six additional people were wounded. There was no Israeli evacuation warning. There was no immediate Israeli comment.

Hezbollah began firing rockets, drones and missiles into Israel after war broke out in Gaza, in solidarity with the Palestinians and Hamas. Israel retaliated, and a series of escalations haved led to all-out war.

In northern Gaza, an Israeli strike on a home sheltering displaced people in the urban refugee camp of Jabaliya killed at least 17

people, including nine women, according to Dr. Fadel Naeem, director of Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City.

Israel's military said it targeted a site where militants were operating, without providing evidence. It said the details of the strike are under review.

A separate strike hit a house in Gaza City, killing Wael al-Khour, a minister in the Hamas-run government, as well as his wife and three children, according to the Civil Defense, first responders who operate under the government.

Israel has struck deeper inside Lebanon since September, when it killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah as well as most of his top commanders. Hezbollah has expanded its rocket fire from northern to central Israel. The fighting has killed more than 3,000 people in Lebanon, according to the health ministry, and more than 70 people in Israel.

After Israel's strike in Aalmat, some 25 miles north of Beirut, legislator Raed Berro denied that any Hezbollah personnel or assets were in the building that was hit, adding: "The important people are on the front line resisting ... It is impossible for them to be among people in civilian life."

Hassan Ghaddaf, who lived next door and was lightly wounded, said displaced people were in the house that was struck.

"I had seen them and got to know them the other day," Ghaddaf said. "They were peaceful. On the contrary, they had someone from the Lebanese Internal Security Forces that works for the state, and we saw their garb and clothes in the rubble."

In Syria, an Israeli airstrike hit a residential

building in the Damascus suburb of Sayyida Zeinab, state news agency SANA reported. Britain-based opposition war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least three people were killed and suggested Hezbollah was targeted. Israel did not immediately comment.

The mid-month deadline is approaching for an ultimatum the Biden administration gave Israel to allow more aid into Gaza or risk possible restrictions on U.S. military funding.

Israeli forces have encircled and largely isolated Jabaliya and the nearby northern Gaza towns of Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun for the last month, allowing only a trickle of humanitarian aid. Experts from a panel that monitors food security say famine is imminent or may already be happening.

The northern third of Gaza, including Gaza City, has suffered the heaviest destruction of the 13-month war that was triggered by Hamas' attack into southern Israel. Israel has sent forces back in after repeated operations, saying Hamas has regrouped.

Israeli strikes often kill women and children. The military says it only targets militants, whom it accuses of hiding among civilians.

Also Sunday, Israel's military released what it said was video of Hamas abusing detainees. The soundless footage, dated from 2018 to 2020, appears to show hooded detainees chained in stress positions. In some clips, men beat or poke them with batons.

It was not possible to independently verify the videos, which the military said it recovered during operations in Gaza.

Rights groups have long accused the Hamas-run gov-

ernment in Gaza and the Western-backed Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank of abusing detainees and violently quashing dissent. Israel has been accused of similar abuses, especially since the start of the war. Israeli prison authorities say they follow relevant laws and investigate any allegations of wrongdoing.

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. They killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250. Some 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, about a third believed to be dead.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 43,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities who do not distinguish between civilians and militants in their count but say more than half the dead were women and children.

Israeli bombardment and ground invasions have left vast areas of Gaza in ruins and displaced around 90% of the population of 2.3 million people, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands of people live in tent camps with few if any services.

Cease-fire talks mediated by the United States, Qatar and Egypt have repeatedly stalled, as have parallel efforts by the U.S. and others to halt the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.

Associated Press writers Shurafa, Magdy and Chehayeb reported from Deir al Balah, Cairo and Beirut, respectively. AP writers Lujain Jo in Aalmat, Lebanon, and Melanie Lidman in Tel Aviv contributed to this report.

## Ukraine drones strike Moscow, briefly halting Russian flights

Several people are injured in the massive attack amid fears the war could escalate.

BY SUSIE BLANN AND JOANNA KOZLOWSKA

**KYIV, Ukraine** — A massive drone strike rattled Moscow and its suburbs overnight into Sunday, injuring several people and temporarily halting traffic at some of Russia's busiest airports, officials reported. Meanwhile, a huge nighttime wave of Russian drones targeted Ukraine.

This came after Russian President Vladimir Putin signed into law a pact with North Korea on Saturday night, obliging the two countries to provide immediate military aid using "all means" if either is attacked. The agreement marks the strongest link between Moscow and Pyongyang since the end of the Cold War.

Last week, Ukraine reported that its troops engaged for the first time with North Korean units. U.S. officials earlier confirmed the deployment of at least 3,000 North Korean troops to Russia, while Kyiv has repeatedly said the number is far higher. This has fueled concerns of a marked escalation in Moscow's war on Ukraine, and tensions spilling over into the Asia-Pacific region.

### Russian troop losses estimated 700,000

Both Moscow and Kyiv have kept a tight lid on casualty figures since the start of the full-scale war despite regular reports of Russian forces taking huge losses following "human wave" attacks that aim to exhaust Ukrainian defenses.

However, the chief of the U.K. defense staff, Tony Radakin, told the BBC that Russian forces had suffered their worst month of casualties in October since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. He said Moscow's troops suffered an average of 1,500 dead and wounded per day, bringing their total losses in the war to 700,000.

According to Radakin, ordinary Russians were paying "an extraordinary price" for the war, even as a grueling, months-long Russian offensive in Ukraine's industrial east continues to eke out gains. He did not say how U.K. officials had calculated the Russian casualty figures.

"There is no doubt that Russia is making tactical, territorial gains and that is putting pressure on Ukraine," he said. But he added that they were "tiny increments of land," and Moscow's mounting defense and security spending was putting an increasing strain on the country.

Radakin insisted that Ukraine's Western partners should stand by it for "as long as it takes" to beat back Russian aggression, even as allies of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump have signaled that Kyiv may have to cede territory to seek peace.

### Russia cautiously optimistic on Trump

On Sunday, the Kremlin's official spokesman voiced cautious optimism about Trump's upcoming presidency, saying: "At least he talks about peace. ... He does not talk about confrontation."

"The signals are positive. Trump, during his election campaign, said that he perceives everything through deals, that he can make deals that will lead everyone toward peace," Dmitry Peskov told reporters at a briefing.

"He does not talk about a desire to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia, and this favorably distinguishes him from the current [U.S.] administration," Peskov said. Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday insisted that "strong decisions" from Kyiv's Western partners are needed to stop the "terror" of Russian drone and missile strikes, and secure "reliable peace" for Ukraine.

"The killing of children, the loss of family members cannot simply be forgotten," Zelensky said in a post on the Telegram messaging app.

"Without strong decisions, there is no security from terror, and this is equally clear in every country. There is no reliable peace without justice," he said.

### Fighting rages on across borders

Fierce fighting has continued near the eastern Ukrainian cities of Toretsk and Kurakhove, Ukraine's General Staff reported Sunday. Between 700 and 1,000 residents remain in Kurakhove, a front-line city surrounded on three sides and battered into ruin. Most of them live underground with no running water, heating or electricity.

Meanwhile, Russia's Defense Ministry said a total of 84 Ukrainian drones were shot down overnight in Russian territory, following what it called a "mass strike on civilian infrastructure." A man died under rubble after drones struck his apartment block in Russia's Belgorod region, just kilometers from the Ukrainian border, local Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov reported.

Five other people were injured in the Moscow suburb of Ramenskoe and a nearby village, according to local officials. Russian channels on the messaging app Telegram carried eyewitness reports of drone debris setting fire to suburban homes.

Russia's aviation authority said flights were briefly grounded at major international airports including Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo. At least 14 flights bound for Moscow were rerouted to Nizhny Novgorod, a city over 300 miles east, airport representatives there reported.

Ukraine's General Staff claimed on Sunday that Ukrainian drones caused a fire at an arms depot in Russia's southern Bryansk region, near Ukraine and Belarus. The online update featured a photo showing thick plumes of reddish smoke rising into the night sky. The AP could not verify the circumstances in which it was taken, and there was no immediate comment from Russia.

Separately, Russia's emergencies ministry on Sunday said that a major fire broke out at a warehouse outside of Moscow. There were no immediate reports of casualties, and it was not clear whether the blaze was linked to the Ukrainian drone strikes.

Russia overnight launched a "record" 145 drones at Ukrainian territory, according to Ukraine's air force, 62 of which were shot down. A further 67 were "lost," the air force said, a likely reference to electronic jamming that caused the drones to veer off course.

At least one person was injured as Russian drones struck residential areas in Ukraine's southern port of Odesa, local Gov. Oleh Kiper reported.

And at least five civilians, including a 17-year-old girl and 10-year-old boy, were injured by falling drone debris and shelling in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region Sunday, its Gov. Oleh Sinegubov and local prosecutors said.

Russia later on Sunday said that it had struck a large deployment of Ukrainian soldiers in the Kharkiv province with thermobaric rockets, but didn't immediately provide evidence.

Blann and Kozłowska write for the Associated Press. Kozłowska reported from London.

## Paris beefs ups security for soccer match

After violent assaults in Amsterdam, 4,000 officers deployed for France-Israel game.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**PARIS** — Paris police said Sunday that 4,000 officers and 1,600 stadium staff will be deployed for a France-Israel soccer match to ensure security in and around the stadium and on public transportation a week after violence against Israeli fans in Amsterdam.

France and Israel are playing in a UEFA Nations League match on Thursday that French President Emmanuel Macron will attend, the Elysee presidential palace said.

"There's a context, tensions that make that match a high-risk event for us," Paris police chief Laurent Nuñez said on French news broadcaster BFM TV, adding authorities "won't tolerate" any violence.

Nuñez said that 2,500 po-



TSAFPRIR ABAYOV Associated Press

**PEOPLE WELCOME** Maccabi Tel Aviv soccer fans as they arrive in Israel from Amsterdam on Friday.

lice officers would be deployed around the Stade de France stadium, north of the French capital, in addition to 1,500 others in Paris and on public transportation.

"There will be an anti-terrorist security perimeter around the stadium," Nuñez said. Security checks will be "reinforced," he added, including with systematic pat-downs and bag searches.

Nuñez said that French organizers have been in contact with Israeli authorities

and security forces in order to prepare for the match.

Israeli fans were assaulted last week after a soccer game in Amsterdam by hordes of young people apparently riled up by calls on social media to target Jewish people, according to Dutch authorities. Five people were treated at hospitals and dozens were arrested after the attacks, which were condemned as antisemitic by authorities in Amsterdam, in Israel and across Eu-

rope.

On Sunday, Dutch police detained several people for taking part in a demonstration in central Amsterdam that had been outlawed following the violence targeting Israeli fans, a local broadcaster reported.

French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau confirmed Friday that the France-Israel match would go ahead as planned.

"I think that for a symbolic reason we must not yield, we must not give up," he said, noting that sports fans from around the world came together for the Paris Olympics this year to celebrate the "universal values" of sports.

Macron's expected attendance not only is a show of support for the French team, but also aims at sending "a message of fraternity and solidarity following the intolerable antisemitic acts that followed the match in Amsterdam," an official in Macron's entourage said. The official couldn't be named in line with the Elysee's customary practices.

## THE NATION

# Why young Black, Latino men voted for Trump

The president-elect gained among men under 45, with many citing the economy.

By MATT BROWN, FERNANDA FIGUEROA, HANNAH FINGERHUT AND LINLEY SANDERS

WASHINGTON — Brian Leija, a 31-year-old small-business owner from Belton, Texas, was not surprised that a growing number of Latino men of his generation voted for Donald Trump for president this year. Leija had voted for the Republican in 2016 and 2020.

Leija's rationale was simple: He said he has benefited from Trump's economic policies, especially tax cuts. "I am a blue-collar worker," Leija said. "So, tax breaks for small businesses are ideal for what I do."

For DaSean Gallishaw, a consultant in Fairfax, Va., a vote for Trump was rooted in what he saw as Democrats' rhetoric not matching their actions. "It's been a very long time since the Democrats ever really kept their promises to what they're going to do for the minority communities," he said.

Gallishaw, 25, who is Black, also voted for Trump twice before. This year, he said, he thought the former president's "minority community outreach really showed up."

Trump gained a larger share of Black and Latino voters than he did in 2020, when he lost to Democrat Joe Biden, and most notably among men under age 45, according to AP VoteCast, a nationwide survey of more than 120,000 voters.

Even as Democrat Kamala Harris won majorities of Black and Latino voters, it wasn't enough to give the vice president the White House, because of the gains Trump made.

## Economy and jobs

Voters overall cited the economy and jobs as the most important issue the country faced. That was true for Black and Latino voters as well.

About 3 in 10 Black men under age 45 went for Trump, roughly double the share he got in 2020. Young Latinos, particularly young Latino men, also were more open to Trump than in 2020. Roughly half of young Latino men voted for Harris, compared with about 6 in 10

who went for Biden.

Juan Proaño, chief executive of LULAC, the nation's largest and oldest civil rights organization for Latino Americans, said the election results make it clear that Trump's messaging on the economy resonated with Latinos.

"I think it's important to say that Latinos have a significant impact in deciding who the next president was going to be and reelected Donald Trump," Proaño said. "[Latino] men certainly responded to the populist message of the president and focused primarily on economic issues, inflation, wages and even support of immigration reform."

The Rev. Derrick Harkins, a minister who has served Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York, has overseen outreach to Black American religious communities for more than a decade.

He said that Trump's hypermasculine appeal worked to win over some younger men of color.

"I think that Trump with this bogus machismo has been effective amongst the young men, Black, white, Hispanic," Harkins said. "And I think unfortunately, even if it's a very small percentage, you know, when you're talking about an election like we just had it can be very impactful."

## A shift in priorities

While about 4 in 10 young voters under 45 across racial and ethnic groups identified the economy as the top issue facing the country, older white and Latino voters were likely to also cite immigration, with about one-quarter of each saying that was the top issue.

A clear majority of young Black voters described the economy as "not so good" or "poor," compared with about half of older Black voters. Majorities of Latino voters, regardless of age, said the economy is in bad shape.

That belief made it more difficult for Harris to highlight the actual numbers in the economy, which show that inflation has receded dramatically, unemployment remains low and wages have risen. These voters simply did not feel that progress.

This is the first time Alexis Uscanga, 20, a college student from Texas, voted in a presidential election. The economy and immigration drove him to vote for Trump, he said.



REBECCA BLACKWELL/Associated Press

A SUPPORTER holds a sign at a Trump rally in July in Florida. Democrat Kamala Harris won majorities of Black and Latino voters, but not enough.

"Everything just got a lot more expensive than it once was for me," Uscanga said. "Gas, grocery shopping even as a college student, everything has gone up in price and that is a big concern for me and other issues like immigration."

Having grown up selling tamales and used cars, and washing cars, Uscanga knows how hard it can be to make a living. When Trump was president, he said, it did not feel that way, he said.

"Under the Trump presidency more opportunities were around," Uscanga said. "I was not very fond of Presi-

dent Trump because of his rhetoric in 2016, but I look aside from that and how we were living in 2018, 2019, I just felt that we lived a good life no matter what the media was saying and that's why I started supporting him after that."

Though the shift of votes to Trump from Black and Latino men made an impact, Trump could not have won without the support of a majority of white voters.

"Men of color are really beginning to emerge as the new swing voters," said Terrence Woodbury, co-founder of HIT Strategies, a polling

and research firm that conducted studies for the Harris campaign.

"For a long time, we talked about suburban women and soccer moms who can swing the outcome of elections. Now men of color are really beginning to emerge as that, especially younger men of color, who are less ideological, less tied to a single party, and more likely to swing either between parties or in and out of the electorate," Woodbury said.

## A 'strong leader'

A majority of voters na-

tionally said Trump was a strong leader; slightly fewer than half said the same about Harris.

Among Latino voters, even more saw Trump as strong in this election. Roughly 6 in 10 Latino men described Trump as a strong leader, compared with 43% who said that in 2020. About half of Latino women said Trump was a strong leader, up from 37%.

Black men and women were about twice as likely as in 2020 to describe Trump as a strong leader.

David Means, a purchasing manager in Atlanta who is Black, abstained from voting in the election because he did not feel either Harris or Trump was making the right appeals to Black men. But the results of the election did not disappoint him.

"I'm satisfied with the result. I don't feel slighted. I wasn't let down. I wasn't pulling for Trump or Kamala, but I did not want a woman in that position," he said.

And if it were to be a woman, Means said, "I'd rather have a really strong and smart woman, for example, like Judge Judy."

Brown, Figueroa, Fingerhut and Sanders write for the Associated Press. Figueroa reported from Austin, Texas. Associated Press writers Deepti Hajela in New York, Sharon Johnson in Atlanta and Darren Sands contributed to this report.

# Abortion foes protest as pill sales spike

Activists pledge to further reduce access to the procedure with Trump back in office.

By AMANDA SEITZ

WASHINGTON — Anti-abortion activists say there is still work to be done to further restrict access to abortion when President-elect Donald Trump returns to the White House next year.

They point to the federal guidance that the administration of President Biden released around emergency abortions, requiring that hospitals provide them for women whose health or life is at risk, and its easing of prescribing restrictions for abortion pills that have allowed women to order the medication online with the click of a button.

"Now the work begins to dismantle the pro-abortion policies of the Biden-Harris administration," the Susan B. Anthony List, the powerful anti-abortion lobby, said in a statement Wednesday. "President Trump's first-term pro-life accomplishments are the baseline for his second term."

The group declined to release details about what, specifically, they will seek to undo. But abortion rights advocates are bracing for further restrictions once Trump takes office. And some women are, too, with online abortion pill orders spiking in the days after election day.

Trump has said abortion is an issue for the states, not the federal government. Yet, during the campaign, he pointedly noted that he appointed justices to the Supreme Court who were in the majority when striking down the national right to abortion. And there are things his administration can do, including picking judges and issuing regulations, to further an anti-abortion agenda.

## Federal guidance expected to change

The Trump administration is expected to pull back Biden's controversial directive that requires emergency rooms to provide abortions when necessary to stabilize a woman's health or life.

The Biden administration had argued that the decades-old federal law, which requires hospitals to provide stabilizing treatment for patients in exchange for Medicare funding, also applies in cases where an abortion might be needed.



CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/Associated Press

MIFEPRISTONE and other abortion medications became easier to get by mail during the pandemic.

Reports of women being sent home or left untreated by hospitals in dangerous scenarios have proliferated across the United States since Roe vs. Wade was overturned. In some cases, hospitals said state abortion bans had stopped them from terminating a pregnancy.

"We're seeing the lives of pregnant people be put in jeopardy," Fatima Goss Graves, president and chief executive of the National Women's Law Center, said Wednesday. "We're seeing women who have become infertile, who have been subject to sepsis and we're now hearing reports with death."

Even if a Trump administration abandons the guidance of the law, Goss Graves said advocacy groups like hers will continue a legal fight for the Biden administration's interpretation of the law.

Some doctors and hospitals also have said the federal guidance offered a protection for them to perform emergency abortions in states like Idaho and Texas, where threat of prosecution for performing an abortion hangs over their decision-making.

Trump has said he supports exceptions for rape and incest cases, as well as when a woman's life is at risk. But he has not gone as far as saying he supports exemptions when a woman's health is on the line.

Abortions might be necessary to prevent organ loss, significant hemorrhage or dangerous infections for pregnant women in rare but serious scenarios. In cases like ectopic pregnancy, premature rupture of membranes and placental abruptions, a fetus might still be alive but continuing the pregnancy can be detrimental.

Doctors have argued that the legal gray area has put them in a bind.

In Idaho, for example, one hospital resorted to airlifting women out of the state after a strict abortion ban, which allowed for abortions only to prevent a woman's death, was enacted.

The Biden administration sued Idaho, arguing its state law conflicted with federal law requiring hospitals to provide stabilizing treatment, which might include abortions, for patients. The state amended its law to allow abortions for ectopic pregnancies, but other dangerous scenarios still remain unaccounted for. The Supreme Court declined to address the issue earlier this year, issuing a limited order that cleared the way for hospitals to provide emergency abortions while the case worked its way through lower courts.

Enforcement of the federal law, however, is on hold in Texas, which challenged the Biden administration's guidance on emergency abortions.

A patchwork of state laws governing abortion will remain in place under the Trump administration. Voters in Florida, Nebraska and South Dakota on Tuesday defeated constitutional amendments, leaving bans in place.

In Missouri, however, voters approved a ballot measure on Tuesday to undo one of the nation's strictest bans. Abortion rights amendments also passed in Arizona, Colorado, Maryland and Montana. Nevada voters also approved an amendment, but they'll need to pass it again in 2026 for it to take effect.

## Medication through the mail is targeted

The ease with which women have been able to get abortion pills could also be up for reconsideration under Trump.

During the COVID-19

pandemic, the Food and Drug Administration made it easier to obtain abortion pills, including mifepristone, allowing women to access the medication over telehealth. The agency has approved the drug's safety through 10 weeks of pregnancy, saying that adverse effects happen for 0.32% of patients.

Anti-abortion advocates have challenged that, arguing the medications are not safe and at the very least not fit for eased access without in-person supervision by a doctor.

Although the Supreme Court preserved access to the drug earlier this year, anti-abortion advocates and conservative states have renewed their challenge in lower courts.

Some women are worried. Telehealth company Wisp saw a 600% spike in abortion pill orders between election day and the following day.

In states like Florida and Texas, where the medication cannot be legally shipped, the company saw a nearly 1,000% increase in orders of so-called morning after pills, also known as emergency contraception.

The company fills about tens of thousands of orders monthly for reproductive products including birth control pills and abortion pills, CEO Monica Cepak told the Associated Press.

Right now women typically take a two-step regimen of mifepristone and misoprostol to complete a medication abortion. Cepak said the company will keep a "close eye" on mifepristone under a Trump administration and is prepared to shift to a misoprostol-only regimen should restriction to mifepristone be implemented.

But Trump could be a wild card on the issue, said Mary Ziegler, a law professor at UC Davis who is an expert on reproductive health issues.

In the final months of the campaign, he backed away from a more rigid stance on abortion — even saying he would not sign a national abortion ban if it came across his desk.

Although he has enjoyed firm backing from anti-abortion groups, he is willing to break with allies when he wants.

"I don't think we have a clear sense from him about what he would do," Ziegler said.

Seitz writes for the Associated Press. AP writer Lindsay Whitehurst contributed to this report.

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Los Angeles Times

# Bigger and lesser concerns about Trump's reach

**[McManus, from A1]** ICE under Trump, said last month on CBS' "60 Minutes."

Polls show that most Americans want tougher enforcement of immigration laws — but they don't support indiscriminate deportations, especially if they divide families. That's how Trump's first-term crack-down turned into a political disaster, forcing him to retreat.

## Oil and gas drilling

Trump has the plans and the power to roll back some environmental gains. On Day One, he is expected to open more federal lands and offshore waters to oil and gas drilling. He is also likely to ease restrictions on the oil industry's emissions of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and to revoke Biden's pause on increasing liquid petroleum gas exports.

Trump also plans to roll back Biden's efforts to encourage the adoption of electric vehicles and repeal federal subsidies for solar, wind and other renewable energy projects — important parts of California's drive to wean itself from fossil fuels. But a full-scale repeal of Biden's 2022 energy law could run into resistance from Republicans in Congress, because much of the program's spending has flowed into GOP districts.

The new administration is also likely to slow permits for new offshore wind energy projects. Trump has been a vociferous opponent of wind energy ever since Scotland built a wind farm that spoiled the view from one of his golf resorts.

## Imposing tariffs

"To me, the most beautiful word in the dictionary is tariff," the president-elect said last month. He has proposed tariffs of at least 10% on goods from every other country and at least 60% on China — and as high as 200% on Mexico.

A president has wide authority to impose tariffs, and Trump has been so voluble about his love for the trade barriers that they appear inevitable. But tariffs — which are essentially taxes on imports — come with two problems. They raise prices on many of the goods Americans buy, pushing inflation upward, and they almost always prompt other countries to retaliate by imposing tariffs on U.S. exports.

Amid Trump's first-term trade war with China, Beijing aimed retaliatory tariffs



JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON Associated Press

**DONALD TRUMP** promised a mass deportation, but there aren't enough agents to round up 11 million people.

at California farmers; economists calculated that California growers of almonds, the state's most valuable export crop, lost about \$875 million.

## Retribution

Trump has threatened to order the Justice Department to prosecute a long list of his political opponents, including Vice President Kamala Harris, Sen.-elect Adam B. Schiff and former U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney.

That's not a new impulse on his part. During his first term, he publicly demanded that Atty. Gen. William Barr arrest Biden, former President Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for what he claimed was a "treasonous plot" to spy on his 2016 campaign. (Barr ignored the order.)

If Trump appoints a more pliant attorney general this time, he has the power to order the Justice Department to investigate his critics, a GOP lawyer who is reportedly advising the president-elect wrote last week. The department's independence from political meddling is a long-standing norm, but it isn't protected by law.

Still, if he targets his critics, his term will be dominated by legal firestorms — potentially getting in the way of the rest of his agenda. Last month, he claimed that he refrained from prosecuting Clinton during his first term because "it would look terrible" — an implicit bow to political constraints.

Two actions Trump is virtually certain to take: He will order the Justice De-

partment to drop the federal criminal proceedings against him, stemming from his attempt to overturn Biden's election and his concealment of national security documents at his Florida estate. He has also promised to pardon most of the more than 1,000 people convicted of or indicted on charges of storming the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

## Yes, he can

### Foreign policy

A president's power to change direction in foreign policy is almost unfettered, and Trump has vowed to do exactly that. He has promised to negotiate an end to Russia's invasion of Ukraine even before his inauguration — and his other statements suggest he would do so by demanding that Ukraine surrender chunks of its territory. (His running mate, Vice President-elect JD Vance, has called for an immediate end to military aid for Ukraine.)

Trump is also likely to renew his first-term drive to pull the United States out of the 75-year-old North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or at least to weaken the U.S. commitment to defend European countries against a Russian invasion.

### Installing loyalists

Trump has promised to impose new rules on the federal civil service allowing him to fire bureaucrats more easily and replace them with loyalists. He imposed such a rule in the final months of his first term, but Biden revoked it. He has also promised to

fire senior military officers whose political views he dislikes and to purge the CIA and the FBI, accusing both agencies of "persecuting" conservatives.

Those moves "would turn much of the civil service into an army of suck-ups," Robert Shea, a former aide to President George W. Bush, told me this year.

## Political reality

### Abortion

One issue on which Trump may hesitate to buck public opinion: abortion. Polls show that most voters oppose harsher restrictions, and last week, voters in seven states — including conservative Missouri and Montana — approved abortion rights measures.

During the Republican primaries this year, Trump sought to take credit for nominating the conservative Supreme Court justices who enabled states to pass restrictive abortion laws. But once he was running in a general election campaign, he sought to avoid responsibility for the laws, arguing that he had left the question up to the states.

Some antiabortion activ-

ists want Congress to pass a national abortion ban, but Trump said during the campaign that he would not sign one into law. Trump has also indicated he does not intend to block access to mifepristone, the pill used for more than half of U.S. abortions. "The matter is settled," his spokeswoman, Karoline Leavitt, said last month.

Activists expect the Trump administration to revoke a Biden directive that requires emergency rooms to provide abortions when necessary to stabilize a woman's health, even in states with abortion bans.

### Obamacare

Conservative Republicans in Congress, including House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.), have said they hope to repeal or weaken the Affordable Care Act, the health insurance law popularly known as Obamacare.

Trump has said he is open to changing the popular law, which he tried and failed to repeal in his first term. But he has not presented a proposal, and admitted in the debate that he had only "concepts of a plan."

If the new Congress fails

to renew Biden-era subsidies, as many as 20 million users — especially middle and high income families — will see their health insurance costs rise.

## Not likely

Some of Trump's promises aren't likely to survive the real world.

He pledged to exempt Social Security benefits, overtime wages and tips from taxation. Many Republicans in Congress say privately that those ideas are impractical, because they would cost trillions in lost revenue.

Trump also promised that his pro-oil policies would cut energy prices by 50%. But energy prices are set by a global market; even if Trump stimulates a massive increase in oil production (which isn't a sure thing), the effect on prices may not be dramatic.

Trump has also threatened to cancel television networks' broadcast licenses. But the federal government grants licenses to individual stations, not networks — and it cannot cancel licenses because a president doesn't like their news coverage.

## The restraints

Trump, like all presidents, will hold vast power. But even a strongman may discover that there are limits to what he can do.

Courts can still overturn an administration's actions — and Democrats, including California's governor, are preparing to spend much of the next four years going to court.

The most important factor could be public opinion. Trump may have waged his last campaign, but Republicans in Congress face another election in two years. They know that voters often punish the party in power, especially if they believe the president has gone too far.

So the 2026 congressional election may be the strongest restraint on what Trump can do — and that campaign is already underway.

# U.S. to appeal ruling on 9/11 defendants' plea deals

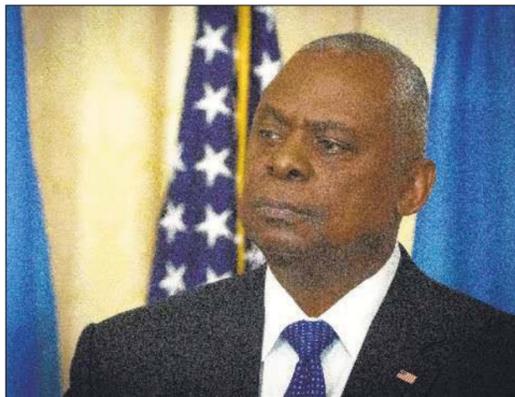
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department will appeal a military judge's ruling that plea agreements struck by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, alleged to be the mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and two of his co-defendants are valid, a Defense official said Saturday.

The recent ruling voided Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III's order to throw out the deals, and it concluded that the plea agreements were valid. The judge granted the three motions to enter guilty pleas and said he would schedule them for a future date to be determined by the military commission.

The department will also seek a postponement of any hearing on the pleas, according to the official, who was not authorized to publicly discuss legal matters and spoke on condition of anonymity. Rear Adm. Aaron Rugh, the chief prosecutor, sent a letter Friday to the families of 9/11 victims informing them of the decision.

The ruling by the judge, Air Force Col. Matthew McCall, allowed the three 9/11 defendants to enter guilty pleas in the U.S. military courtroom at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and would spare them the risk of the death penalty. The pleas by Mohammed, Walid bin Attash and Mustafa al-Hawsawi would be a key step toward closing out the long-running and legally troubled government prosecution in the attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people.



EFREM LUKATSKY Associated Press

**DEFENSE** Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III had issued an order this summer nullifying the plea agreements.

Government prosecutors had negotiated the deals with defense lawyers under government auspices, and the top official for the military commission at Guantanamo had approved the agreements. But the deals were immediately slammed by Republican lawmakers and others when they were made public this summer.

Within days, Austin issued an order saying he was nullifying them. He said plea bargains in possible death penalty cases tied to one of the gravest crimes ever carried out on U.S. soil were a momentous step that should be decided only by the Defense secretary.

The judge had ruled that Austin lacked the legal authority to toss out the plea deals.

The agreements, and Austin's attempt to reverse them, have made for one of the most fraught episodes in a U.S. prosecution marked by delays and legal difficul-

ties. That includes years of ongoing pretrial hearings to determine the admissibility of statements by the defendants, given their torture in CIA custody.

Although families of some of the victims and others are adamant that the 9/11 prosecutions continue until trial and possible death sentences, legal experts say it is not clear that could ever happen. If the 9/11 cases ever clear the hurdles of trial, verdicts and sentencing, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit would probably hear many of the issues in the course of any death penalty appeals.

The issues include the CIA destruction of videos of interrogations, whether Austin's plea deal reversal constituted unlawful interference and whether the torture of the men tainted subsequent interrogations by "clean teams" of FBI agents that did not involve violence.

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# THOMAS PORRICELLI, IAN C. BALLON, SAM SINAI AND JOE NAZARIAN SHARE INSIGHTS ON THE EVOLVING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE LANDSCAPE

The **Artificial Intelligence Roundtable** is produced by the LA Times Studios team in conjunction with Citrin Cooperman Advisors LLC; Greenberg Traurig LLP; LegalFacts; and Pathway Law Firm.



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**A** I technology has transformed industries, reshaped workflows and revolutionized the way we live, communicate and make decisions. From machine learning algorithms that predict consumer behavior to advanced language models that assist in human communication, AI is already deeply integrated into our everyday lives. However, as the presence and power of AI grow, so too do the complexities and concerns surrounding its use.

As AI becomes more autonomous and sophisticated, questions arise about privacy, accountability, job displacement and the

potential for bias in automated decision-making systems. How do we ensure AI serves society equitably? What policies and safeguards should be in place to protect individuals while fostering innovation?

As with any booming industry, especially with a polarizing and complex technology such as AI, learning about the ins and outs of the diverse and fast-growing space can be overwhelming. To take a closer look at the latest developing trends in the business of AI, we have turned to four experts on the subject who graciously weighed in for a discussion and shared insights.

## Q: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS TRANSFORMING THE WAY BUSINESSES OPERATE BY AUTOMATING PROCESSES, PREDICTING OUTCOMES AND PROVIDING PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCES. WHAT STEPS SHOULD BUSINESSES BE TAKING TO EASE THEIR WAY INTO AI USE?

### A: Porricelli

Introducing AI into your business can be a game-changer with thoughtful planning. Start by identifying where AI can make the most impact and set clear goals to guide you along the journey. Encouraging a learning mindset and offering training at the onset will ensure your team feels comfortable with the changes. Next, a

**66**  
*It's essential to have a clear strategy for data governance, as it not only ensures compliance but also enhances the performance of AI systems.*

- Sam Sinai

small test project can be used to gather insights. Using the right tools – and even hiring a professional – can help make sure that this phase runs smoothly. It is also essential to have your data organized and ready to go and address privacy and ethics concerns ahead of time to avoid any unintended bias. Track the performance of your projects and make adjustments as you go. Once you see success, expand AI's role in your organization gradually but continue to stay up-to-date on AI trends and developments to refine your approach.

### A: Nazarian

Businesses should start by identifying specific pain points within their operations. It's also essential to start small, implementing pilot programs to test the technology's effectiveness before full-scale adoption. This approach allows businesses to adapt to new processes without overwhelming their teams.

## Q: WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN AI THAT BUSINESSES SHOULD BE PAYING ATTENTION TO RIGHT NOW?

### A: Ballon

For companies with a global footprint – or that aspire to a global footprint – the divergent approaches to regulation, especially in the European Union and the United States, present challenges for companies in developing and deploying AI products.

### A: Sinai

One of the most transformative trends in AI is its application in enhancing client engagement and operational efficiency. At LegalFacts, we have developed a state-of-the-art AI intake agent in collaboration with RealBotics.ai, designed to facilitate seamless interactions with potential clients 24/7. This innovation not only increases conversion rates but also protects attorneys from losing leads to competitors, thereby driving revenue.

### A: Nazarian

The legal industry is increasingly recognizing the importance of such technology. Using an AI intake system helps streamline our processes, allowing us to focus on the personal touch that clients expect while ensuring that no potential client slips through the cracks.

## Q: WOULD YOU DESCRIBE AI AS SOMETHING THAT BUSINESSES AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC ARE READY TO EMBRACE, OR DO YOU THINK THAT SOME OF THE NEGATIVE PRESS ABOUT AI IS MAKING INDUSTRIES GET COLD FEET?

### A: Porricelli

The readiness to embrace AI really differs between businesses and the general public, and it is shaped by a few key factors. Many companies, especially in technology-heavy fields like finance and healthcare, are excited about adopting AI to boost efficiency and improve customer experiences. However, they tend to proceed cautiously, often concerned about costs, integration challenges and the need for skilled workers. On the public side, opinions on AI are mixed; while some people appreciate the benefits of AI-driven services, others worry about privacy, potential job losses and ethical issues, leading to hesitation. High-profile stories about AI bias or data breaches can heighten these concerns, making companies more likely to wait for clearer guidelines before fully committing to AI. Despite these challenges, interest in exploring AI remains strong, and fostering education and transparency can help ease fears, encouraging a more open approach to this technology.

## Q: HOW CAN COMPANIES ENSURE THAT THEIR USE OF AI IS ETHICAL, AND WHAT FRAMEWORKS EXIST TO GUIDE THIS PROCESS?

### A: Ballon

This is an issue of data governance. Most large companies have ethics committees to ensure their AI implementations are ethical. For smaller companies, there are guidelines available from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), IAPP, the Future of Privacy Forum and other organizations that can be adapted for company use.

### A: Sinai

Ensuring ethical AI use begins with transparency and accountability. It's important to have strict data governance policies that align with industry regulations to protect client information. Ethical considerations are paramount. It is critical to prioritize transparency and compliance. Our AI solutions are designed to support, not replace, the human elements of law, ensuring that ethical standards are upheld while enhancing client outcomes.

## Q: HOW CAN BUSINESSES LEVERAGE AI TO GAIN A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN SATURATED MARKETS?

### A: Nazarian

By using AI to manage initial client interactions, we can dedicate more time to building relationships with our clients. This personal attention helps foster trust and demonstrates our commitment to their cases, ultimately leading to better outcomes.

### A: Porricelli

Businesses can leverage AI for a competitive edge in saturated markets by applying a few strategies. First, analyzing data for customer insights helps businesses understand trends

**66**  
*The challenge for companies seeking to develop and deploy AI is that the emerging rules, both domestically and internationally, are not uniform.*

- Ian C. Ballon

and preferences, allowing them to tailor products and services for greater customer satisfaction. AI-driven marketing also enables personalized experiences so brands stand out among competitors. Automating repetitive tasks can improve operational efficiency, save time and reduce costs, while predictive analytics can forecast market trends and customer behavior, allowing companies

## ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

to make proactive strategic decisions. Dynamic pricing, informed by AI, also helps businesses adjust prices based on market shifts to optimize profitability. Additionally, AI tools boost marketing efforts through targeted ads and content optimization for a higher return on investment, and AI-powered chatbots provide quick, effective customer support. By implementing these AI-driven strategies, businesses can improve their effectiveness and establish a unique position in the market.

**A: Sinai**

AI can dramatically enhance personalization, which is crucial in a saturated market. Our AI intake agent achieves a 90% success rate in client engagement, which empowers firms to stand out. It allows for efficient data collection and analysis, facilitating tailored communication strategies.

**Q: WHAT OTHER EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES DO YOU SEE AS POTENTIAL DISRUPTORS IN THE LEGAL FIELD?****A: Nazarian**

Emerging technologies such as blockchain for secure documentation and advanced analytics for predictive outcomes are potential disruptors. These innovations could redefine how we handle cases and manage client relationships, positioning firms that adopt them at the forefront of the industry.

**Q: WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES BUSINESSES FACE WHEN IT COMES TO ACQUIRING AND MANAGING THE DATA NECESSARY FOR EFFECTIVE AI IMPLEMENTATION?****A: Sinai**

One of the main challenges is ensuring data quality and compliance with privacy regulations. It's essential to have a clear strategy for data governance, as it not only ensures compliance but also enhances the performance of AI systems. Trust is paramount in our industry, and we take that responsibility seriously.

**A: Ballon**

The biggest challenge is legal uncertainty. I have worked with companies on this issue since 2016, and the biggest challenge today remains, as it was in 2016, defining what companies may and may not use to train their algorithms. As I address in my legal treatise, there is a smorgasbord of remedies that may apply when a business seeks to train algorithms depending on what information or content is accessed, how it is accessed and what is done with the material once algorithms have been trained. Some data is in the public domain or may be licensed for a fee. Frequently, however, the data, content or information that a company needs to train AI algorithms is owned by third parties who do not offer it for these purposes. There is no comprehensive AI law in the United States. There are at least a dozen statutes or common law theories of recovery that may be implicated depending on what a company seeks to use, how it accesses the data, content or

**AI is reshaping how we approach client relationships and case management, enabling us to deliver more personalized and efficient services that ultimately enhance client satisfaction and outcomes.**

- Joe Nazarian

information and what precisely is done with it. These are complex issues that must be closely analyzed to avoid legal exposure. Among other things, copyright law protects original and creative expression – such as motion pictures, videogames and sound recordings – but individual facts generally are unprotectable. When factual data is grouped in a database, it may be entitled to copyright protection for the selection, arrangement or organization of the data, but unless the entire database (or substantially all of the data) is copied, copying may not be deemed infringement. Even where copying for purposes of training

AI algorithms may be deemed potentially infringing, the copying could be found to be a fair use depending on factors such as how much was taken, who it was taken from (a competitor vs. all sources) and what it is used for (such as research and scholarship vs. competitive purposes). Companies using third-party content as inputs need to closely analyze their proposed uses and may need to take steps to limit the output of their products to reduce their exposure. By contrast, businesses seeking to protect their content, data or information may need to use contractual and technological means to thwart unwanted use. In addition to ownership and use issues, privacy laws also present challenges. Privacy laws in California and Europe, among other places, allow consumers to have their personal information excised from databases in particular circumstances. This potentially can lead to improperly trained algorithms and AI that isn't actually very accurate or intelligent, if it was trained on incomplete data sets.

**Q: WHAT IS THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF AI ON THE WORKFORCE, AND HOW SHOULD COMPANIES PREPARE FOR THIS TRANSFORMATION?****A: Porricelli**

The long-term impact of AI on the workforce will be significant, transforming job roles and skill requirements. While many tasks will become automated, new roles will emerge that focus on managing and collaborating with AI technologies. Companies can prepare by investing in employee training and reskilling programs to equip staff with digital and analytical expertise. Encouraging a culture of continuous learning is essential to help employees adapt to changes. Businesses should also redefine roles to integrate AI effectively and ensure smooth collaboration. Monitoring the impact of AI on job satisfaction and performance will allow for leadership to make any necessary adjustments. Additionally, addressing ethical concerns and fostering transparency will help build trust among staff members. By proactively managing these changes, companies can leverage AI's benefits while supporting their workforce through the transition, ultimately leading to a more innovative and resilient organization.

**Q: HOW ARE CURRENT AND UPCOMING REGULATIONS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT AND DEPLOYMENT OF AI IN BUSINESS?****A: Ballon**

In the United States, the federal government is developing AI rules that impact government contractors and – by extension – corporate best practices across multiple industries. But there is no single federal regulatory structure. Individual states such as California, Colorado and Utah have enacted AI laws. The challenge for companies seeking to develop and deploy AI is that the emerging rules, both domestically and internationally, are not uniform. The European Union, for example, has issued extensive regulations governing AI. Businesses need to understand the rules applicable in their target markets and be nimble enough to adjust their practices as new regulations are likely to be adopted by state governments and others very quickly. We have seen this before with Internet regulation and with data privacy and cybersecurity laws. Legal regimes frequently lag behind technological developments, requiring companies to adapt to quickly changing regulatory environments and to comply with different – and sometimes conflicting – regulatory standards.

**Q: HOW IS AI SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE LEGAL INDUSTRY?****A: Sinai**

AI is fundamentally changing the legal landscape by automating mundane tasks, allowing lawyers to focus on what truly matters: their clients. An effective AI intake agent not only collects information but also analyzes client needs, helping attorneys prepare better case strategies.

**A: Nazarian**

AI is reshaping how we approach client relationships and case management, enabling us to deliver more personalized and efficient services that ultimately enhance client satisfaction and outcomes.

**Q: WHAT ROLE DOES AI PLAY IN ENHANCING CYBERSECURITY, AND WHAT CYBER RISKS DOES AI ITSELF PRESENT?****A: Porricelli**

AI enhances cybersecurity by improving threat detection and response through advanced data analysis. It identifies anomalies in network traffic, automates incident responses and predicts potential vulnerabilities based on historical data. AI tools can also streamline security operations, reducing response times and minimizing human error. However, AI also presents cybersecurity risks. Attackers can exploit AI systems, manipulating them to bypass security measures, and by automating cyberattacks using AI, they can increase the speed and sophistication of their strikes. Data poisoning is another major risk that can compromise the integrity of AI models by introducing harmful data during training. To balance these benefits and risks, organizations must implement robust security measures, continuously monitor AI performance and prioritize ethical AI practices. This proactive approach will help mitigate potential vulnerabilities while maximizing AI's capabilities to enhance cybersecurity.

**A: Ballon**

As someone who defends companies in lawsuits arising from cybersecurity breaches, I can attest to the fact that AI both enhances cybersecurity and itself presents certain new

**“The long-term impact of AI on the workforce will be significant, transforming job roles and skill requirements.”**

- Thomas Porricelli

risks. It enhances cybersecurity because AI tools can quickly identify patterns that may not otherwise be apparent. In this way, AI tools can help deter fraud and more quickly unmask it. AI also can be used to stress test security – revealing vulnerabilities that may not be apparent to software developers. At the same time, just as companies may deploy AI to reveal vulnerabilities in their networks and firewalls, hackers potentially can use AI to more effectively identify and exploit weak points.

**Q: HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF AI IN THE LEGAL INDUSTRY SHAPING CLIENT EXPECTATIONS?****A: Nazarian**

As AI continues to evolve, clients will expect faster, more efficient services with a high degree of personalization. Firms that embrace these technologies will not only meet these expectations but exceed them, creating a competitive advantage.

**Q: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO LAW FIRMS LOOKING TO INTEGRATE AI INTO THEIR PRACTICES?****A: Sinai**

Start small and focus on areas that will deliver immediate benefits, such as client intake and communication. Ensure that your team is trained and comfortable with the technology. A thoughtful, phased approach will facilitate successful integration and maximize your investment in AI.

**Q: WHAT OPPORTUNITIES DOES AI OFFER TO SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES?****A: Nazarian**

AI presents significant opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by leveling the playing field. By adopting AI, smaller firms can optimize their operations and compete effectively against larger firms, ensuring that they can provide high-quality services while maintaining cost efficiency.

**Q: HOW IS AI SHAPING GLOBAL BUSINESS COMPETITION, AND WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE REGIONS LIKE THE U.S., EUROPE AND CHINA PLAYING IN AI LEADERSHIP?****A: Ballon**

The U.S. and China lead the world in AI development, but the European Union leads the world in AI regulation. There is often a tension between entrepreneurial development and regulation. At present, the U.S. is a more hospitable market for AI development.



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

**TENNIS COACH** Andrew Mateljan, right, watches as Karue Sell tosses his racket in frustration during their training session.

## Ex-UCLA star rejoins pro tennis tour

[Tennis, from A1] nament winnings have added up to less than half the annual minimum full-time salary in California. Federer's net worth exceeds \$500 million.

A native of Brazil, Sell lives with his wife, Sarah, and their two dogs in a rental house near the mall in Torrance. He travels the world to play in second-tier tennis tournaments run by the Assn. of Tennis Professionals and International Tennis Federation. With the ATP, he competes on the Challenger Tour, the namesake of "Challengers," a recent Zendaya-starring film that highlighted the difficulties of life as a middling pro.

A former UCLA tennis standout, Sell is making his second run at a professional career. He moved to the United States from Jaraguá do Sul, Brazil, at 18 and still competes internationally for his home country. A few months before he gave up playing professionally six years ago, Sell's ranking peaked at No. 371.

Now he's 30 in a sport filled with younger players. But since he went full time in January, Sell has competed in 21 Challenger and ITF men's World Tennis Tour events on four continents, winning twice. He started the year at 858th in the world. Could he crack No. 371?

Prize purses are only part of how Sell earns a living. He's also a social media star who has leveraged his persona and tennis skills to build a YouTube audience of nearly 150,000 followers, helping him to secure brand partnerships and financial stability.

His well-produced lessons are popular with amateur players who are drawn to his blunt charm and direct way of teaching and who respect that he had a previous pro run of his own.

Sell is serving up a new way to success for talented pro tennis players who have elite-level skills but aren't quite good enough to crack the top 10 or win Wimbledon.

For several years, Sell worked mainly as a coach. He made tennis training videos, gave lessons to amateurs and was former world No. 1 Naomi Osaka's practice hitting partner, including when the Beverly Hills resident won her second U.S. Open trophy in 2020.

Then last year, Sell made a list of the pros and cons of returning to the tour. The list hangs on the Sells' refrigerator to this day. The pros won out, partly because he was excelling in the smaller competitions he had started entering, and partly because of the success of his tennis videos.

Beyond creating a niche for himself as an influencer, he's living every tennis nerd's dream, traveling the world and sharing courts with some of the best players in the game.

Sell's journey has become the source material for his popular "Turning Pro at 30" YouTube series, which features match playback, post-match analysis and behind-the-scenes footage. He can hardly walk 10 yards at a tennis event without someone stopping him, asking, "Are you Karue?"

"We love his videos," one fan, 13-year-old Ella Ramos, said after taking a picture with Sell at a tournament in Las Vegas in September. "It's just cool how he took a break and now he's building his ranking back up."

Former teen phenoms such as Rafael Nadal — who announced that he will retire this month after a legendary tennis career that saw him win his first professional



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

**SELL'S** persona and skills allowed him to build a YouTube audience of nearly 150,000 followers, helping him earn a living. Above, Sell checks in on his channel at home in Torrance.

match at 15 — have long dominated the sport's upper echelons. The Challenger tour, founded nearly 50 years ago, offers an alternative route to the top 100 for talented players who take longer to develop their skills and start winning consistently.

With more experience and better financial and emotional support than he had during his first pro run, Sell has managed to achieve what almost no one has: restarting a dormant tennis career from scratch and succeeding. "I'm on the back nine of my tennis career," he says after a recent practice session.

Now it's just a matter of seeing how many aces he can hit.

As this new phase of his tennis career blooms, Sell is simultaneously building a mini-empire online, and his viewership has grown as he's moved up the rankings. By June he had cracked the 400s, ending the month at No. 462 in the world.

He's got a natural swagger on camera, and he produces approachable yet intimate content littered with gems of tennis knowledge. As a tennis podcast host put it during an interview with Sell in September, he is "a YouTube tennis sensation" who's "arguably the most famous personality on

tennis YouTube."

Sell is aware that his time as an active professional player is limited — Pete Sampras retired at 32, Andre Agassi at 36 — and he's leveraging his skills to ensure he can transition smoothly into a post-tour career after his body breaks down or he tires of the grind.

"There are lots of parts of this that I don't like. I don't like the tour at all," he says. "I like playing tennis, I like playing matches, I like the practice. But I really don't like the lifestyle, the traveling around living out of a suitcase."

Unlike many other players at his level, Sell has multiple funding sources that help cover training, travel and living expenses. Chief among them is a partnership with MproV, a self-improvement platform co-founded by his former UCLA tennis teammate Clay Thompson. Sell also has an online merch store where he sells signature strings and clothes. Plus there's his content creator partnerships with brands including a sports drink company and a therapy app.

The diverse income streams have helped insulate Sell from the financial uncertainty many face on tour, as typified by a character in "Challengers" who lives out of his car while chasing elusive pro tennis glory.

"Right now, I have the freedom to play, which is really great," Sell

says. "I don't know how guys do it" without financial backing.

Before he decided to go pro last year, Sell says, he felt as though he was hitting well with friends — including at least one top 100 player — so he entered some lower-stakes competitions. He started winning matches, including the respected Ojai Tennis Tournament in April 2023.

Another factor in his atypical career has been the thriving Southern California tennis community, which has nurtured generations of stars from Sampras to the Williams sisters.

Even with his growing celebrity, Sell still sometimes coaches people in person.

People like Bob, a former junior player in his 60s whom Sell's up hitting with at 7:30 a.m. one recent Saturday at South End Racquet & Health Club in Torrance. Much of the lesson is taken up by long, hard-hitting rallies between the two of them, interspersed with Sell's chides and words of encouragement.

"Don't open yourself up so much. Throw the shoulder first," Sell says, critiquing his charge's forehand. "There it is," he adds as Bob makes seemingly minute changes to his mechanics.

"You need to stay balanced," Sell tells Bob during a break. "You're always in motion, but you've got to stay balanced too."

Sell mainly practices at Redondo Union High School, hitting the royal-blue hard courts by 8 many weekday mornings.

One afternoon in late August — on the heels of his win at a \$25,000 ITF tournament in Londrina, Brazil — he is laboring away under the marine layer, cycling through dumbbell exercises, agility drills and torturous rounds of medicine ball manipulation.

"Well, that was awful," Sell deadpans to his coach, Andrew Mateljan, dripping sweat after a particularly intense set of modified push-ups. "You're overestimating my athleticism."

But three days earlier, Sell had hit a new career-high ATP ranking: No. 329.

Last year, Sell reached out to Mateljan, the founder and director of the Laguna Beach Tennis Academy, to improve his fitness, a must if Sell wants to get past some of the next-gen players.

"I saw the potential and I like to invest the time into him because he can play at a high level," Mateljan, 35, says.

Sell also calls on a rotating cast of freakishly talented friends to help keep him sharp.

There's Gustavo, a college player Sell hits with when he's on break, and some former Bruins teammates, including Thompson and Marcos Giron, the latter Sell has known since they met as teenagers at the Junior Orange Bowl in Florida.

Sell traveled to tournaments last year as a coach for Giron, who is the most accomplished of the crew. When they hit together on the Redondo Union High courts one blue-sky afternoon in September, Giron was ranked 45th in the world, hot off his first ATP title in Newport, R.I., in the summer.

Giron, a 31-year-old from Thousand Oaks, ticked off his busy calendar the last few months — Roland Garros, Wimbledon, the Olympics, the U.S. Open. It's the kind of itinerary that could be on the horizon for Sell if he continues his rise. Already, there's buzz building about a potential Sell appearance in Melbourne in January, though there's a long road between now and the Australian Open.

Sell has spoken out about the low pay, long season and heavy physical toll of the Challenger and ITF tours. Giron agrees the lifestyle is difficult.

"Karue is a good player and he's been good for many years," Giron says. "Everybody thought he's got the ability, but the tour is brutal."

Sell strikes a discordant frame against the middle America bedlam of Fremont Street in downtown Las Vegas.

As tourists stumble by with tall cans of Bud Light Lime and cigarettes in hand, Sell's tattooed, sinewy limbs stretch a matching Lacoste tee and shorts, with the requisite crocodile emblems and matching bright-red shoes.

Sell's not here in Vegas to gamble or party. He's here for tennis, and when he arrives around noon on Sept. 10 at the Darling Tennis Center, 10 miles northwest of the Strip, it's 101 degrees.

Sell's got the late match today, so he has to wait for the prior one to end, the score ticking by slowly on his phone. Sell stays fueled by drinking water with a sports drink powder mixed into it and picking at a protein bowl.

This is what it takes to make one's dreams come true against such long odds. These mundane tasks and long hours of repetitive training culminate in competitive outbursts where careers are made and broken.

To keep progressing, one has to stay ahead of the thousands of others scrambling to get a toehold in the sport.

This afternoon in Vegas, when he finally takes the court, Sell has what it takes. He goes down love-30 in his first service game but comes back to win it before breaking his opponent, Strong Kirchheimer, the next game. He never looks back on the way to a 6-1, 6-2 rout that takes just 66 minutes.

There's a clear way to reach the top 100, and that's by winning, consistently, against great players. It's a meritocracy in that the very best reap the bulk of the reward, while the rest jockey for position, trying to grit through to the next tier.

An ITF championship or two is the best many players ever do. Even that's a dream. But Sell has bigger ambitions.

"Don't sell him short. Karue Sell with an epic third-set tiebreaker, takes out the eighth seed, Juan Pablo Ficovich, and books a spot in the quarterfinal," the announcer intones after Sell ekes by his next opponent in a long three-setter that ends in a wild 13-11 tiebreaker.

The following day, Sell breezes past fellow former UCLA star Kaylan Bigun in straight sets.

Sell comes out strong against Altadena-born Tristan Boyer in the semis, winning the first set 6-4 as his wife and coach cheer him on from the stands. But he can't quite close out the match.

Boyer is seven years his junior, and Sell struggles to return Boyer's oppressive flat serve, winning only the first game of the second set. He regains his confidence and they go 6-6 in the third before Boyer wins the tiebreaker 7-4 with a second serve down the middle.

Sell's run in Vegas is over.

He and Mateljan are back on the courts at Redondo Union three days later, doing a post-mortem of his performance in Vegas: his low volleys, his training regimen, his ability to read the ball. Then it's back to work, with hours of resistance bands, rallies and serve practice.

Sell headed into his next tournament — a Challenger in Antofagasta, Chile — with some extra confidence. On Sept. 23, he reached another milestone when he broke the top 300 for the first time. His ranking: 299.

"A year ago I was still posting lessons on YouTube. Now I have a 2 ... in front of my ranking for the first time," he posted on Instagram to mark the occasion. "What a ride."



CAMERON SPENCER Getty Images

**A NATIVE** of Brazil, Sell competed as a junior during the 2011 Australian Open in Melbourne. He turns 31 this week.

# Amid the destruction, a small solace for couple

[Camarillo, from A1] the wind had grown more intense.

“Babe, the fire is here. I don’t know how. It’s here,” she told her husband on the phone. “There weren’t even fire trucks in our neighborhood yet.”

She grabbed the dog and some cellphone chargers and tried to leave, but a firefighter told her it was too late. The only road out of the neighborhood was covered in flames. Ash was raining down from the sky.

The firefighter, Phillips said, told her it was safer at that point to remain in her home.

It wasn’t long before the house began to fill with thick smoke. Her husband instructed her to get their gas mask. When she briefly went outside, another fireman saw her. This time, the instructions were very different.

“You gotta go — now, now, now!” he yelled.

As she left the house and closed the door, Phillips saw embers floating into the home.

“I really didn’t want to die burning alive in my house,” she said.

Phillips threw Little Miss into the car and drove out of the driveway onto East Highland Drive, which was on fire. The trees surrounding the street were ablaze and flaming branches were falling into the street, on top of her car. She couldn’t see anything because of the smoke. On one side, the road falls off into a steep cliff. The car was overheating. She rolled over flaming logs.

“You can’t see anything and you are just hoping for the best. I was hyperventilating in the car. My hus-



**ALIA PHILLIPS** and her rescue dog, Little Miss, sit near a scorched vehicle Saturday at their home, which was razed by the Mountain fire. They escaped barely in time, driving through a landscape engulfed in flames.

CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

band was on the phone. He’s like, ‘You can do this,’ ” she recalled. “It was a complete miracle. I don’t know how I made it through that without falling off the cliff or burning alive.”

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There was not much time to be joyful about her escape.

They found out Wednesday night that their house had been completely flattened by the fire. Nothing left. To sharpen the pain of the loss, the fire came on the day of the couple’s third en-

agement anniversary.

Phillips had not been able to grab her wedding ring as she escaped the house. It was in a bathroom drawer on the second floor.

And that drawer, like the house around it, had been reduced to ash.

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Capt. Kevin May of the East Fork Fire Protection District and his crew had driven down from Douglas County, Nev., to assist in the firefight.

On Thursday, his engine was assigned to East High-

land Drive in Camarillo Heights. They were tasked with putting out hot spots and flare-ups. The main goal was to protect the three out of seven houses that had not burned down the day before.

Throughout the day, May spoke with residents who filtered back into the neighborhood to survey the damage. He saw the couple who lived at 711 E. Highland Drive. There wasn’t much he could do for them.

“I offered to look for a safe or whatever they might have that was lost in the rubble,” May said.

But the couple did not

have a safe.

“She said, ‘The only thing I care about is my ring, my wedding ring.’ ” May said.

May told Phillips that he and his crew would look for it. But he told her not to get her hopes up.

“A needle in a haystack would be easier to find than a ring in this house,” he told the couple.

Still, the firefighters got to work. They dug through the still-hot ash and positioned themselves where the couple believed the bathroom would have been.

Then the detective work began.

They found a twisted frame of a couch, which might have been on the floor above the bathroom. They scraped through more debris, eventually finding a bathroom sink faucet.

“We started actually getting the feeling that maybe there’s a chance we’re in the right spot,” May said.

Then, an earring. When May showed it to Phillips, she said it came from the same drawer as the ring. More digging.

Veneer stone the couple said had lined the bathroom counter. A bracelet. Tweezers. Getting warmer.

“Probably not 60 seconds later we found the ring,” May said.

It was hot in the ash and May held it in his glove until it cooled. He presented it to Phillips. It was dirty, covered in soot. But it wasn’t misshapen. All the diamonds were still in place.

“It slid right onto her finger,” May said.

The whole search took about 10 minutes.

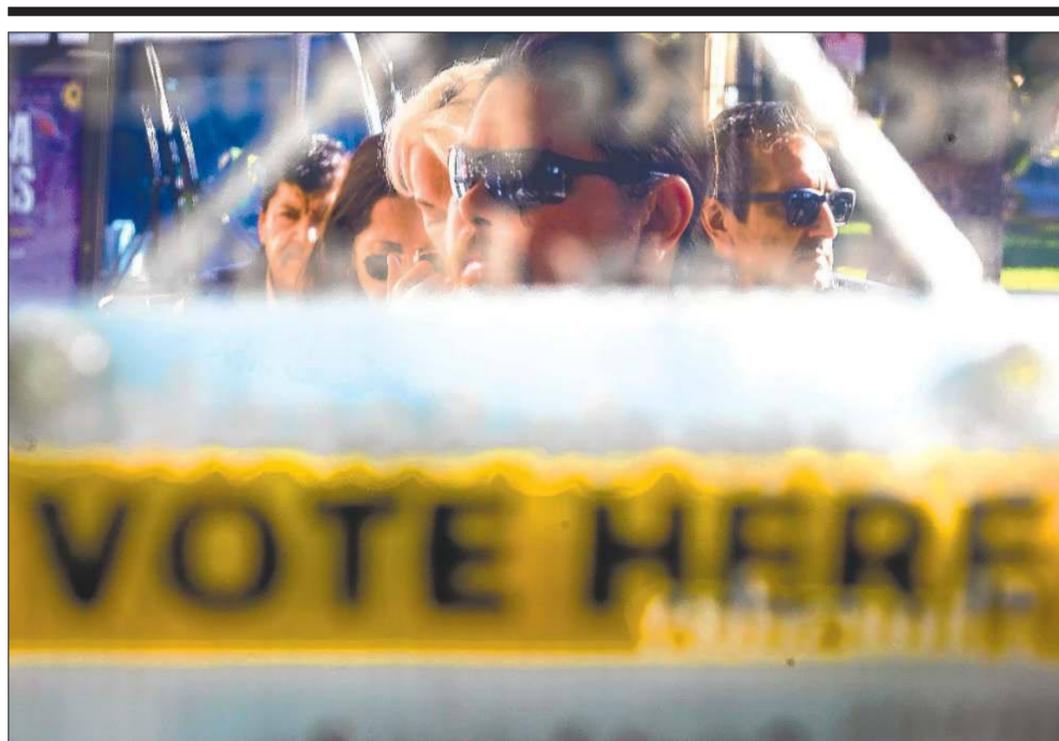
“The odds were just so slim and we all knew that. It happened so quick it was unbelievable,” May said.

It felt almost as important for the firefighters as it was for Phillips, May said. They had not been able to help much. Everything had already burned by the time they got to the street.

Later that night, May’s engine ended up back in the couple’s driveway, where they parked for dinner. It felt like the right spot to be. The couple had left, but the firefighters had returned.

May took out his phone and messaged Phillips.

“Thank you for letting us be part of that moment,” he said.



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

**VOTERS** wait in line Tuesday at a polling place in Highland Park. Californians strongly supported a measure to undo a decade of progressive criminal justice reform, and other liberal measures were on track to fail.

## Are California voters moving right?

[Measures, from A1]

fusing initiative descriptions can deter voters from supporting initiatives even if they actually agree with their intent — especially in a state that is accustomed to seeing a slew of wonky questions on their ballot each year on issues including kidney dialysis and condoms.

“Propositions are a part of the ballot where you don’t have Ds and Rs, you have yeses and noes,” Baldassare said. “The electorate looks at this on an issue-by-issue basis. I don’t feel like it’s necessarily an indicator that it’s a shift to the right. I think that the default for the voter is always ‘no.’ ”

Californians have defied the state’s liberal reputation when voting on ballot measures before. They have twice rejected ballot measures to abolish the death penalty in the past; and in 2008 they passed Proposition 8, which banned same-sex marriage. (On Tuesday, Californians passed a measure that stripped the last vestiges of Proposition 8 from the California Constitution, reaffirming gay marriage, which remains a federal right.)

Campaign messaging goes a long way for ballot measures, Baldassare said, and voters often weigh their decisions partly based on who is listed as supporters and opponents alongside the question on the ballot. Sometimes, it gets complicated.



JENNA SCHOENEFELD AP for AIDS Healthcare Foundation

**SUPPORTERS** demonstrate for Proposition 33, which drew millions in spending both for and against.

In the case of Proposition 33, which was endorsed by the California Democratic Party and would have repealed a law that bars local governments from regulating rent on some buildings, even rent control proponents fed up with the cost of living voiced concerns about unintended impacts of the measure.

Millions were spent for and against Proposition 33, with opponents warning it could make California’s housing shortage worse. A proposition coined as a “revenge measure” was added to the ballot, targeting how a healthcare foundation that is a prime proponent of rent control measures could spend its revenue.

Proposition 6 proponents chalked up its likely failure not to voters’ support for “slavery” but to

growing concerns about public safety and how those worries could affect any policy measure related to prison reform. In addition to approving Proposition 36, which cracks down on criminal sentencing for theft and fentanyl crimes, voters also ousted progressive-leaning prosecutors in L.A. County and the Bay Area.

Antonio Villaraigosa, the former Los Angeles mayor who is running for governor in 2026 and is expected to position himself as a moderate among a crowded field of Democrats, was reluctant to speculate about what ballot measure results mean before all of them are called. But he said he believes voters want a “course correction” on issues including crime and the economy.

As the Democratic Party nationally grapples with a

potential Republican trifecta — winning control of the White House, the Senate and the House of Representatives — and what it means for its movement and the future of the nation, California politicians also need to take a pulse check, he said.

“Are we really listening to people or are we spending all of our time telling them what they ought to do?” Villaraigosa said.

But many California Democrats were undeterred by the ballot measure results, again gearing up to lead the resistance against Trump. They pointed to the approval of progressive-backed causes such as a historic climate change bond and a measure to extend a tax to fund Medi-Cal as proof California remains a liberal bastion in a sea of red.

Assemblymember Alex Lee (D-San José), chair of the California Progressive Legislative Caucus, said that he’s disappointed by some of the ballot measure results but that “all the corporate and conservative special-interest money” spent on the complex initiatives should be considered before making judgments about the state’s electorate.

“On the whole, California is still more progressive than a country where just over half of the voters voted for a fascist,” Lee said just hours after Trump was elected to return to the White House.

## Militia members convicted in plot to kill U.S. agents

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**TOPEKA, Kan.** — Two men who co-founded a militia group have been convicted of attempting to murder federal agents ahead of a planned trip to the Texas-Mexico border to shoot at immigrants illegally crossing there and any federal agents who might try to stop them.

A jury found the men, Jonathan S. O’Dell, 34, of Warsaw, Mo., and Bryan C. Perry, 39, of Clarksville, Tenn., guilty of more than 30 felony counts each, prosecutor Teresa Moore announced Friday.

The verdict came Thursday after jurors deliberated for more than two hours at the U.S. District Court in Jefferson City, Mo.

O’Dell’s attorney, Jonathan Truesdale, declined to comment, but Perry’s attorney, Thomas Kirsch, said his client plans to appeal the verdict.

“My client has a deep love and passion for our country and the values it stands for and what the Constitution stands for, including his right to a trial by jury,” Kirsch said.

Sentencing dates have not been set. They each face at least 10 years in prison, and possibly life.

Perry also pleaded guilty to three other charges, including escaping from federal custody. He escaped in September 2023 from a county jail in Rolla, Mo., but was captured two days later and about 160 miles to the

northwest, outside Kansas City, following a high-speed chase.

The two men formed the 2nd American Militia and then in the summer and fall of 2022 tried to recruit others to join them, prosecutors said.

In September 2022, O’Dell’s home became a staging site as the two men collected firearms, ammunition, paramilitary gear and other supplies, according to the government’s evidence.

Prosecutors said Perry posted a TikTok video in September saying that their militia group was going to “go protect this country,” and another in early October saying the group would be “out huntin’.”

Prosecutors said the two men viewed U.S. Border Patrol agents as traitors for allowing immigrants to cross into Texas.

The day before they planned to leave for Texas, an FBI team using an armored vehicle served a search warrant on O’Dell’s home, and prosecutors said Perry fired 11 rifle shots at them. O’Dell and his girlfriend surrendered, but after exiting the house, Perry fought with agents.

The charges against the two men also included using a firearm in a violent crime, illegal gun possession and damaging federal property.

Perry couldn’t legally have a gun because in 2004, he pleaded guilty in Tennessee to a felony aggravated robbery charge and served about four years in prison, according to online records.

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## BUSINESS



MICHAEL BLACKSHIRE Los Angeles Times

**A STRIPPER** receives a tip last month at Club Cobra in North Hollywood. The Small Business Administration has repeatedly denied COVID-19 relief, alleging that the club offers services of a “prurient sexual nature.”

## Denial of COVID-19 aid riles LGBTQ+ venue owner

NoHo’s Club Cobra is among businesses fighting for program’s relief money

By Christi Carras

On a Saturday night at North Hollywood’s Club Cobra, a drag queen dressed as Miley Cyrus lip-synced to “Zombie” by the Cranberries, with Halloween decor and disco balls dangling from the ceiling. Muscular go-go dancers grooved in a cloud of rainbow fog while patrons vibed to hits by Selena and Bad Bunny.

It wasn’t easy for the popular Latin LGBTQ+ nightclub to rebuild to this level of live entertainment after nearly going out of business because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The public health crisis shut the operation down for 18 months and left its owners hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt. Making matters worse, the U.S. Small Business Administration has repeatedly denied Club Cobra’s application for COVID-19 relief money, alleging that the establishment offered services of a “prurient sexual nature.”

For Marty Sokol, 56, owner of Club Cobra, the lack of government assistance has been frustrating and surprising.

“We’re the good guys in this town,” Sokol said by phone. “We’re the place you have your birthday party at. We’re the place you bring your tía to. ... It’s beyond insulting.” (Tía is Spanish for aunt.)

Sokol is one of multiple business owners who say they were unjustly denied money from the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant program, or SVOG, launched by the federal government in 2021 to provide financial support of up to \$10 million to arts and entertainment venues and promoters decimated by the pandemic.

Some have taken legal action against the SBA. And though the courts have sided at various points with the business owners, Sokol and others are still fighting for financial aid.

“We really feel wronged,” Sokol said. “If it wasn’t for our community, there’d be no way we would have survived.”

The issue isn’t limited to nightclubs. The Times also spoke with a North Carolina-based movie theater chain and a Tennessee concert promoter that have struggled to secure grants. Prominent cases — including a dispute between the SBA and exhibition basketball team the Harlem Globetrotters over \$10 million in grant money — have drawn attention to the problems. (The court dismissed the Globetrotters’ complaint against the SBA in October 2023.)

The SBA has also drawn scrutiny for awarding more than \$200 million in SVOGs to companies with rich and famous owners — such as

Post Malone, Chris Brown and Lil Wayne — while withholding assistance for others, according to a report by Business Insider.

“The overarching complaint has been there is a lack of transparency in the SBA’s decision-making process,” said James Sammaturo, a Miami-based partner at law firm Pryor Cashman who has represented entertainment businesses in other SVOG cases.

“What [critics have] essentially said is it’s too subjective. ... It’s applied unevenly, and the SBA has — intentionally or otherwise — created a hierarchy of who is more entitled to receive the grant money.”

The SBA declined to comment, saying it “does not provide comment on pending litigation.”

The SVOG controversy serves as a reminder of the lingering consequences of COVID-19 years after the pandemic first wreaked havoc on the economy and judicial system. Just as entertainment businesses were disrupted by the global health crisis, so too were the courts, Sammaturo said, compounding the typical tedium.

“There’s no expedition that’s applied to these types of cases, even though you’re literally dealing with companies [whose] very lifeline

may be on the line,” Sammaturo said.

Club Cobra has been serving drinks, DJ sets and live performances to the local LGBTQ+ community for more than a decade. Its sister establishment, Club Chico in Montebello, is coming up on its 25th anniversary.

During the COVID-19 shutdowns, Sokol and his team kept their business alive by streaming a socially distanced drag and go-go show on the subscription platform OnlyFans. Proceeds weren’t enough to dig Club Cobra out of debt, so Sokol applied for a \$486,762 grant in April 2021.

When the SBA rejected Club Cobra’s application, Sokol appealed.

After some prodding, Sokol received an SBA email on Nov. 3, 2021, explaining that Sokol’s application was denied “at least in part” because Club Cobra “presented live performances of a prurient sexual nature” or derives meaningful revenue “through sale of products or services, or the presentation of any depictions or displays, of a prurient sexual nature.” In official materials regarding the SVOG program, the SBA outlines prurience as grounds for disqualification.

The SBA took issue with images of Club Cobra dancers

in “seemingly sexualized” poses and “revealing” outfits posted on the business’ social media platforms. It also disapproved of the virtual drag and go-go shows that Club Cobra streamed on OnlyFans, calling them “erotic dance shows.”

Sokol sued, accusing the agency of arbitrarily and capriciously refusing Club Cobra grant money while awarding SVOGs to similar establishments around Los Angeles — such as LGBTQ+ nightclub Reload Entertainment on Cahuenga and Silver Lake’s Los Globos. The SBA argued that it had conducted an informal review of the other establishments and determined that an additional “prurience review” was not necessary.

Sokol demanded that the U.S. District Court in Washington force the SBA to reconsider his application. The court concluded that the SBA failed to provide a “reasoned analysis for why these apparently similarly situated competitors were treated differently.”

Sokol said it was painful to see other nightclubs receive emergency aid while Club Cobra was refused money he could use to cover renovations, outstanding rent payments and other obligations.

“Watching them rebuild

with great ease, we didn’t begrudge them,” Sokol said. “We just wanted equal treatment.”

In December 2022, the SBA vetoed Sokol’s application again, this time providing analyses of five “alleged competitors” and why they qualified for grants. The SBA reasoned that, for the most part, those establishments did not regularly post suggestive images or present live performances of a prurient nature.

Sokol filed another motion for summary judgment in May 2024. The court has yet to respond.

Another business in contention with the SBA is Golden Ticket Cinemas, a North Carolina-based theater chain.

Golden Ticket Cinemas President John Bloemeke had opened his fifth and sixth locations when COVID-19 ravaged the entertainment industry.

Bloemeke was able to secure grants for most of his locations, but not for two based in DuBois, Pa., and Rapid City, S.D. After Bloemeke challenged the SBA’s move to shun those theaters, the government agency offered the business owner roughly \$500,000 — down from the roughly \$2.8 million he asked for.

Bloemeke filed complaints accusing the SBA of

shortchanging Golden Ticket Cinemas and then failing to disburse those funds.

The SBA countered that Golden Ticket Cinemas wasn’t eligible for the full SVOG amount requested because those locations had allegedly been operational for longer than Bloemeke reported.

The court agreed with the SBA’s position that it was not legally obligated to disburse the funds. However, it also concluded that the agency’s logic for awarding a significantly lower amount was flawed and ordered the SBA to reevaluate the application.

According to Bloemeke, the SBA has yet to heed the court’s ruling.

“It was very frustrating,” Bloemeke said. “I mean, we have a nine-plex that’s only operating five of the screens because we’re still trying to get our head a little bit above water with some of this stuff.”

Meanwhile in Nashville, Justin Roddick is still trying to snag a grant for his company, Concert Investor, which produces tours for up-and-coming musicians. Over the last 12 years, Concert Investor has helped launch the careers of Twenty One Pilots, Little Big Town, Kelsea Ballerini and other artists.

When acts stopped touring during the pandemic, Roddick’s business suffered.

“A year after COVID, we found ourselves with no other option other than to completely restart,” Roddick said. “So when I heard about the grant, I was very excited.”

Roddick was soon disillusioned. His request for about \$5 million was denied multiple times, with the SBA deciding that Concert Investor did not control enough aspects of its productions to “meet the definition of a performing arts organization operator.”

The Concert Investor team alleged that the SBA unfairly altered the definition and moved the goal posts after the fact.

Initially, the court ruled in favor of the SBA. But an appeals court reversed that ruling in May 2024.

According to Patrick Corcoran, a representative for the businesses, the SBA was given a deadline of Dec. 11 to deliver a new decision. Depending on how the agency responds, Roddick might have to wait for the next Ballerini or Twenty One Pilots to come along and revive his touring business.

“It’s devastating to pay into the system and to believe it works a certain way ... and then to have no action,” Roddick said. “It’s kind of unreal to me.”

## Tesla messages imply cars self-drive, feds say — they can’t

By Tom Krisher

DETROIT — The U.S. government’s highway safety agency says Tesla is telling drivers in public statements that its vehicles can drive themselves, conflicting with owners manuals and briefings with the agency saying the electric vehicles need human supervision.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is asking the company to “revisit its communications” to make sure messages are consistent with user instructions.

The request came in a May email to the company from Gregory Magno, a division chief with the agency’s Office of Defects Investigation. It was attached to a letter seeking information on an investigation into crashes involving Tesla’s “Full Self-Driving” system in low-visibility conditions. The letter was posted Friday on the agency’s website.

The agency began the investigation in October after getting reports of four crashes involving Full Self-Driving when Teslas encountered sun glare, fog and airborne dust. An Arizona pedestrian was killed in one of the crashes.

Critics, including Transportation Secretary Pete

Buttigieg, have long accused Tesla of using deceptive names for its partly automated driving systems, including Full Self-Driving and Autopilot, both of which have been viewed by owners as fully autonomous.

The letter and email raise further questions about whether Full Self-Driving will be ready for use without human drivers on public roads, as Tesla Chief Executive Elon Musk has predicted. Much of Tesla’s stock valuation hinges on the company deploying a fleet of autonomous robotaxis.

Musk, who has promised autonomous vehicles before, said the company plans to have autonomous Models Y and 3 vehicles running without human drivers next year. Robotaxis without steering wheels would be available in 2026 starting in California and Texas, he said.

Tesla did not reply to a message Friday seeking comment.

In the email, Magno writes that Tesla briefed the agency in April on an offer of a free trial of Full Self-Driving and emphasized that the owners manual, user interface and a YouTube video tell humans that they have to remain vigilant and in full control of their vehicles.

But Magno cited seven posts or reposts by Tesla’s

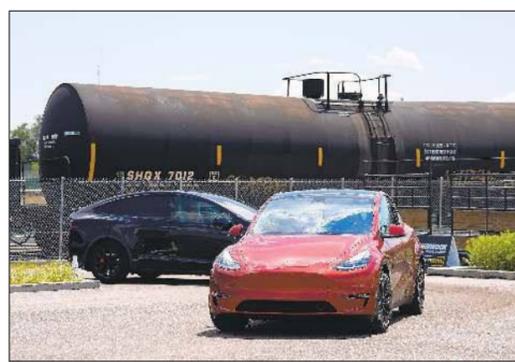
account on X, the social media platform owned by Musk, that Magno said indicated that Full Self-Driving is capable of driving itself.

“Tesla’s X account has reposted or endorsed postings that exhibit disengaged driver behavior,” Magno wrote. “We believe that Tesla’s postings conflict with its stated messaging that the driver is to maintain continuous control over the dynamic driving task.”

The postings may encourage drivers to see Full Self-Driving, which now has the word “supervised” next to it in Tesla materials, to view the system as a “chauffeur or robotaxi rather than a partial automation/driver assist system that requires persistent attention and intermittent intervention by the driver,” Magno wrote.

On April 11, for instance, Tesla reposted a story about a man who used Full Self-Driving to travel 13 miles from his home to an emergency room during a heart attack just after the free trial began April 1. A version of Full Self-Driving helped the owner “get to the hospital when he needed immediate medical attention,” the post said.

In addition, Tesla says on its website that use of Full Self-Driving and Autopilot



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI Associated Press

**TESLA** has been asked to “revisit its communications” to ensure its messages match user instructions.

without human supervision depends on “achieving reliability” and regulatory approval, Magno wrote. But the statement is accompanied by a video of a man driving on local roads with his hands on his knees, with a statement that, “The person in the driver’s seat is only there for legal reasons. He is not doing anything. The car is driving itself,” the email said.

In the letter seeking information on driving in low-visibility conditions, Magno wrote that the investigation will focus on the system’s ability to perform in low-visibility conditions caused by “relatively common traffic occurrences.”

Drivers, he wrote, may not be told by the car that they should decide where Full Self-Driving can safely operate or fully understand the capabilities of the system.

“This investigation will consider the adequacy of feedback or information the system provides to drivers to enable them to make a decision in real time when the capability of the system has been exceeded,” Magno wrote.

The letter asks Tesla to describe all visual or audio warnings that drivers get that the system “is unable to detect and respond to any reduced visibility condition.”

The agency gave Tesla until Dec. 18 to respond to the letter, but the company can ask for an extension.

That means the investigation is unlikely to be finished by the time President-elect Donald Trump takes office in January, and Trump has said he would put Musk in charge of a government efficiency commission to audit agencies and eliminate fraud. Musk spent at least \$119 million in a campaign to get Trump elected, and Trump has spoken against government regulations.

Auto safety advocates fear that if Musk gains some control over the NHTSA, the Full Self-Driving and other investigations into Tesla could be derailed.

Musk even floated the idea of him helping to develop national safety standards for self-driving vehicles.

“Of course the fox wants to build the henhouse,” said Michael Brooks, executive director of the Center for Auto Safety, a nonprofit watchdog group.

He added that he can’t think of anyone who would agree that a business mogul should have direct involvement in regulations that affect the mogul’s companies.

Krisher writes for the Associated Press.

OPINION

OP-ED

# Trump and our disappearing checks and balances

The president-elect will meet little resistance from the branches of government he shaped his first term

**JACKIE CALMES**

**I**F EVER A U.S. president needed the checks and balances that the founders established, it's law-breaking, oath-violating Donald Trump.



Yet those checks by Congress and the Supreme Court will hardly be a check at all once Trump is back in power. The former and future president has shaped each of those institutions in his image.

He's already benefited. The Supreme Court, where Trump's first-term appointees are half of its six-member far-right supermajority, ruled in July that presidents are virtually immune from criminal prosecution for official acts. The court's dilatory deliberations and then its stunning decision had the effect of delaying past the 2024 election any federal trial for Trump's alleged first-term crimes: plotting to overthrow Joe Biden's election and then high-tailing it to Mar-a-Lago with government secrets.

Now that he's headed back to the White House, those cases will be dropped. It remains to be seen whether Trump, as president, will exploit the license for wrongdoing that the court gave him. If past is prologue, the odds are good. Even better are the chances that the receptive court will rule in Trump's favor when opponents' challenges to his future presidential acts inevitably reach it.

But it's Congress where Trump will have real pull — at least for the two years until the 2026 midterm elections.

Just as at the start of his earlier term, both the Senate and House likely will be under Republicans' control, if only narrowly, thanks to Trump's coattails. (The House majority won't be officially determined until perhaps later this week, but Republicans are favored.) Their tie to Trump is stronger than it was in 2017-18. Republicans then were deferential; come January, they'll be obsequious. The founders will spin in their graves at the bowing and scraping we're about to see from the supposedly independent Congress.

Republican Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, House speaker in 2017 and 2018, broke with Trump in 2016 over the "grab 'em by the pussy" tape, but became accommodating enough once Trump was president. But contrast Ryan's ambivalence with the zealotry of current Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana, who's sure to be chosen as the Republicans' leader again when they meet this week. Dubbed MAGA Mike by approving right-wingers when he got the speakership last year, Johnson has since made repeated pilgrimages to Mar-a-Lago, campaigned with Trump and at every chance stood like a bespectacled bobblehead beside him.

As Punchbowl News reported: "Now Trump gets a congressional leader who will back his agenda — for better or worse." Worse, I'll wager.

In Ryan's time, a novice President Trump didn't have much of an agenda or even "concepts of a plan" beyond talk of building a wall, banning Muslims and repealing Obamacare; he didn't fully realize any of those goals. Credit Ryan and other Republicans for the 2017 tax cuts law that's counted as first-term Trump's singular legislative achievement — if you can count a budget-busting giveaway to the richest Americans and corporations as an achievement.

Next year they'll do it again. The House will extend the Trump tax cuts at a cost of about \$1 trillion annually in debt, according to the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, and add to those breaks, including with the promises Trump made on the campaign trail: "Just plow it through," as a Republican lobbyist said.

But this time Trump has a sprawling agenda beyond tax cuts: Project 2025, compiled by scores of his most far-right first-term advisors with his public blessing, but so unpopular that he disavowed it during the campaign. No surprise: That disavowal was just one lie among many.

"Now that the election is over, I think we can finally say that, yeah, actually Project 2025 is the agenda. Lol," conservative podcaster Matt Walsh cynically tweeted last week. To which Trump whisperer Steve



JOE RAEDLE Getty Images

**SPEAKER** Mike Johnson backs up Donald Trump at a news conference in April. The incoming president is more prepared to do damage than he was last time.

Bannon, fresh out of prison for contempt of Congress, responded on his podcast: "Fabulous!"

Look for Trump to issue executive orders and seek legislation from Congress to do much that's in Project 2025: Blow up the civil service and reestablish a 19th-century-style spoils system. Make the Justice Department his vengeful law firm. End the federal role in education and mount culture wars. Abandon clean energy efforts, though that Trump promise could run up against the reality that Biden's historic climate investments have brought good jobs, mostly to Republican districts. Support for Ukraine is all but doomed, just as Trump desires.

In the Senate, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky is stepping aside after a record run as party leader, leaving either Sen. John Thune of South Dakota or Sen. John Cornyn of Texas to become leader of the new majority. Each has had differences with Trump, but neither will likely defy him going forward, especially now that the Senate will include more Trump toadies.

Don't look for much Senate resistance to Trump's nominees for his Cabinet, other high posts and federal judgeships, as there

was on occasion in his first term.

With Republicans likely to have a slightly larger Senate majority than in 2017-18, relatively moderate Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska won't be the decisive naysayers they sometimes were before. Apparently, even anti-vax conspiracist and brain-worm carrier Robert F. Kennedy Jr. isn't off-limits as a Cabinet possibility: "I think the Senate is going to give great deference to a president that just won a stunning ... landslide," Florida's Republican Sen. Marco Rubio said when asked about the likes of Kennedy getting a role in the administration.

Here's a silver lining: Trump, a dictator wannabe with a pliant Congress, will all but certainly overreach. We know that much of his agenda is unpopular. But with Republicans controlling all the levers in Washington, they can nonetheless impose it — and own the result.

The reckoning will come in two years. Midterm elections for almost a century have nearly always gone against the party holding the presidency. May 2026 be no different.

@jackiecalmes

LETTERS



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

**GAVIN NEWSOM**, seen at the Democratic convention in August, has called for increased funding for state litigation against the incoming Trump administration.

## Coastal elites lost. Big surprise

Re "With Trump win, California is in for big fight," column, Nov. 7

**I** WAS LUCKY ENOUGH to be born to a Democratic activist mother and an ACLU father 81 years ago. I have been a Democrat since 1968. I voted for President Biden in 2020. I voted for Vice President Kamala Harris in 2024. Under no circumstances would I, or could I, vote for President-elect Trump.

Still, being a rank-and-file Democrat is hard. Our leadership insists on willful blindness to the fact that we have become the party of the well-educated elite and we have left the multiracial working class behind. Those who speak for us virtue-signal about culture war issues and congratulate one another for their moral superiority.

I voted for Biden four years ago, but even then I knew he was frail. I am ashamed that our leadership covered for him and allowed him to run until he withdrew last July.

What I have heard from my fellow Democrats is some version of, "Just wait until 2026, when we will take back the House and impeach him again." One more empty feel-good gesture.

We need to give up the conviction that because we are smarter and richer and cleaner, we are the party chosen by God or history. We need to get off our moral high horse and rethink our attitudes so the people will actually choose us.

Our attitude feels good, but it is stupid.

MARK JANSSEN, Yorba Linda

Columnist Anita Chabria needs a reality check. She's off when she writes, "The majority of Americans do not share the values that this state holds dear."

The voting-age population of the U.S. is just more than 262 million, and Trump's vote count so far is around 74 million. That's 28%, not half, and those who

did vote for Trump didn't all do so because they are hard-core bigots. Many voters have been fooled by right-wing demagoguery.

Also, the claim that "first and foremost ... this was a free and fair election" ignores serious right-wing voter suppression that has been going on for years.

VAL CARLSON  
Los Angeles

It didn't take long to see Gov. Gavin Newsom's strategy for his run for the presidency in 2028.

He is going to save California from the evil Trump administration and show the nation how it's done. Who is going to pay for this stage play? Why, the taxpayers of California, of course.

We have a high cost of living, the highest gas

prices, the highest housing costs, the highest homeless population and the highest taxes anywhere. Why not just add on the cost of challenging the federal government to this? Does anybody in California expect anything less?

WILLIAM CARROLL  
Carlsbad

## So much for tough on crime

Re "We don't have to choose between safety and reform," editorial, Nov. 8

The hypocrisy and stupidity of the electorate are staggering.

Californians rushed to approve Proposition 36 because they are concerned about crime and they want treatment for drug-related minor crimes (for which there is no funding).

President-elect Trump succeeded in convincing voters that undocumented immigrants are responsible for a disproportionate share of crime. Yet the facts show otherwise.

Moreover, the frequent mass shootings in this country are largely committed by "good old" white male U.S. citizens.

And while many declare themselves to value law and order, they have elected an adjudicated sexual abuser, a convicted felon, a pathological liar and an insurrectionist to the most powerful position in the world.

As they say, "Only in America." Welcome to the exclusive group that people so disdainfully call the "banana republics."

ROSA MARIA HERNANDEZ  
Whittier

The Times makes the popular vote sound bad. What happened to democracy? Does it only apply to leftist issues?

Let's build more prisons to keep the public safe and

make it clear to criminals that if you commit a crime, be prepared to do time. That makes sense to most people.

BENEDICT LUCCHESI  
Camarillo

## Is the freak-out going too far?

Re "Vote marks dark night for America's soul," column, Nov. 7, and, "What voters chose — and hope for those who didn't," editorial, Nov. 7

As a decades-long subscriber to The Times, I am used to the far-left opinion pieces it publishes. However, the column by Mark Barabak goes too far.

This is the first time in three election cycles that I actually voted for President-elect Trump, because I feared a Kamala Harris presidency more than returning Trump to the White House.

The left has only President Biden to blame. If he had stayed the course and governed as the one-term president he strongly suggested he'd be, the Democrats likely would have found a better candidate to run against Trump.

Instead of lauding Biden for choosing to "pass the torch" when he did, we should blame him and his party for leaving us with a Hobson's choice between Harris and Trump.

That said, the people have spoken, and Trump is our president again.

DAVID COX  
San Juan Capistrano

The Times' editorial board states, "His victory has us wrestling with the question of how two such starkly different visions of the United States coexist."

This sentence epitomizes the issue that so many in America have with most of the mainstream media. The Times still doesn't get it — and as long as it keeps hav-

ing only liberal editorial board members, it never will.

DAVID JANKOWSKI  
Indian Wells, Calif.

My very young Irish parents were on a movie date in England the day after Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese military. Halfway through the movie it was abruptly stopped and the theater manager announced that the U.S. was entering the war.

The audience stood and cheered — not because of the attack, but because with Adolf Hitler's forces at England's doorstep, they desperately needed U.S. support.

When my parents moved to California after the war, I remember both of them telling us that America saved Europe. I am glad that they are not here now to realize that Europe and our other allies cannot enjoy that comforting belief today.

EILEEN BLANKENHORN  
Valencia

Now aged 102 and a World War II destroyer sailor, I held my nose and voted for Harris, a really weak candidate.

Calling Trump's victory a retreat to the Dark Ages is ridiculous.

BILL SUTER  
South Pasadena

I am a white, male, Christian, American veteran. After Nov. 5, 2024, I am ashamed of all five of those things.

PHILIP FICKLING  
San Diego

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# A record 13 women will be governors next year

BY ISABELLA VOLMERT AND SEJAL GOVINDARAO

The election of Republican Kelly Ayotte as New Hampshire's governor means 13 women will serve as a state's chief executive next year, breaking the record of 12 set after the 2022 elections.

Governors hold powerful sway in American politics, shaping state policy and often using the experience and profile gained to launch campaigns for higher offices.

"It matters to have women in those roles to normalize the image of women in political leadership and even more specifically in executive leadership, where they're the sole leader, not just a member of a team," said Kelly Dittmar, director of research at the Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer was floated as a potential Democratic nominee for president after President Biden exited the race. Republican South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem was thought to be in the running for President-elect Donald Trump's vice presidential post.

Ayotte, a former U.S. senator, defeated the Democratic nominee, Joyce Craig, a former mayor of Manchester, New Hampshire's largest

city. New Hampshire's was one of the few competitive gubernatorial races among the 11 on ballots this year.

Still, 18 states have never had a woman in the governor's office.

"This is another side of political leadership where women continue to be underrepresented," Dittmar said. "Thirteen out of 50 is still underrepresentation."

With two women vying for governor in New Hampshire, a new record for female governors was inevitable. The state has a long history of electing women. As a senator, Ayotte was part of the nation's first all-women congressional delegation. It was also the first state to have a female governor, state Senate president and House speaker at the same time, and the first to have a female majority in its Senate. Ayotte will be the state's third woman to be governor.

"Being a woman isn't really that critical to her political persona," Linda Fowler, professor emerita of government at Dartmouth College, said of Ayotte.

Both Ayotte and Craig said their gender hadn't come up on the campaign trail although reproductive rights often took front and center. In her campaign, Craig attacked Ayotte's record on abortion, and both candidates released TV ads



CHARLES KRUPA Associated Press

**REPUBLICAN** Kelly Ayotte won the governor's race in New Hampshire, defeating Democrat Joyce Craig. Eighteen states have never had a woman as governor.

detailing their own miscarriages. Ayotte said she will veto any bill further restricting abortion in New Hampshire, where it is illegal after 24 weeks of pregnancy.

When Ayotte is sworn in, five Republican women will serve as governor at the same time, another new high. The other eight are Democrats.

The states currently governed by women are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New

Mexico, New York, Oregon and South Dakota.

New Hampshire's was one of the few competitive gubernatorial races among the 11 this year. More inroads or setbacks for women's representation could come in 2026 when 36 states will elect governors.

Most voters tend to cast their ballots based on party loyalty and ideology rather than gender, Dittmar said. However, she noted female candidates often face layers of scrutiny that male

counterparts largely avoid, with voters judging such things as a woman's intelligence, appearance and even dating history with a sharper lens.

The small gain for women in the gubernatorial office comes as Vice President Kamala Harris failed in her effort to become the first female president.

"I would not suggest to you that Kamala Harris lost a race because she was a woman, because she was a Black and South Asian

woman," Dittmar said. "We would also fail to tell the correct story if we didn't acknowledge the ways in which both gender and race shapes the campaign overall, and also had a direct effect on how Kamala Harris was evaluated by voters, treated by her opponents and even in the media and other spaces."

Executive roles, especially the presidency with its associations like commander in chief, often carry masculine stereotypes that women must work harder to overcome, Dittmar said.

Experts say women confront these perceptions more acutely in executive races, such as for governor, than in state legislatures, where women are making historic strides as leaders, filling roles such as speaker and committee chairs.

"Sexism, racism, misogyny — it's never the silver bullet," said Erin Vilardi, chief executive of Vote Run Lead, a left-leaning group that supports women running for state legislatures. "But we have so much of that built into how we see a leader."

Associated Press writer Volmert reported from Lansing, Mich., and Govindarao reported from Phoenix. AP writer Holly Ramer in New Hampshire contributed to this report.

# Army prep course aims to help recruits be all they can be

BY LOLITA C. BALDOR

FORT JACKSON, S.C. — Index cards taped to a large board on the wall at Fort Jackson, S.C., reveal the sometimes blunt and gritty reasons that new recruits took a chance at a last-ditch program to get into the Army.

"Eviction notices motivate me," one said. Others talked about getting free college, a good job and a way to better themselves. Known as the "Why Wall," the board is meant as an inspiration for recruits who could not meet the Army's physical and academic test standards, so they went into the Future Soldier Prep Course. It provides weeks of instruction to help them bring up their scores.

Started as a trial program two years ago to help boost dismal recruiting numbers, the prep course is fueling the Army's enlistment comeback. Recruiting has suffered for all the military branches in recent years coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, amid low unemployment and stiff competition from private companies able to pay more and provide similar or better benefits.

By the end of this budget

year on Sept. 30, the Army had made its recruiting goal of 55,000, and service leaders said more than 13,000 of those recruits — or 24% — came into active duty through the prep course.

Army leaders increased the goal to 61,000 for this year and are relying on the prep course to provide a significant chunk again.

During a recent visit to Fort Jackson, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth spoke with recruits and program leaders to see how the course is going and what changes may need to be made. She said the successful program, which more than 31,000 trainees have gone through since it started, deserves to be made permanent.

Wormuth said the Army may make adjustments based on a long-term study on the recruits coming out of the course, including looking at how well they did in their first enlistment and whether there were behavioral or disciplinary problems.

"We really want to see what kind of soldier kind of comes out at the back end of that first term, how do they do in terms of discipline," Wormuth said.

Drill sergeants have expressed concerns that they

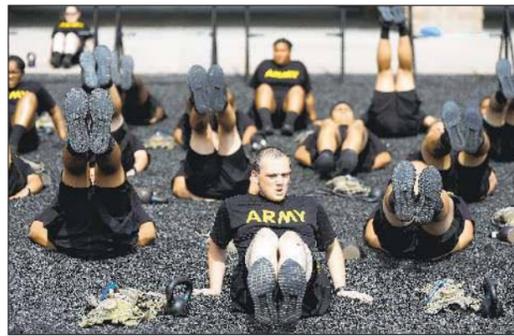
are seeing more discipline issues, disrespect and complaints from trainees in the academic course. And they say trainees whose first language is not English have a more difficult time understanding orders and dealing with computers.

Although they see fewer discipline issues from recruits in the fitness section, they do see more injuries, including ankle, knee and hip problems. Those trainees, they say, may need to be brought along even more slowly, to increase their strength and conditioning, rather than moving them to basic training the minute they hit the minimum level of requirements.

Commanders told Wormuth that the fitness program aims to give trainees a healthy foundation in eating and working out. Instructors said they do not want to break the recruits before they get to basic training, so they do a lot of yoga, stretching and other exercises to help avoid injuries.

In the classrooms, they are learning basic math, English and other academic skills. The bulk of recruits going through the program are in the academic course.

So far, Wormuth said, the data do not reflect some of the concerns expressed by



CHRIS CARLSON Associated Press

**RECRUITS** participate in the Army's prep course to help them meet military standards in Columbia, S.C.

drill sergeants and commanders. Instead, she and other Army leaders said that on average, the graduation rate from basic training is a bit higher — about 94% — for those who went through the program versus those who did not, which is about 92%.

But so far, they are taking inspiration from the thoughts scrawled on the "Why Wall."

Company commanders came up with the idea last year, to let recruits lay out their goals in their first few days so they can go back every week to get motivated or see their progress.

A bright yellow sign atop the board tells recruits: "Your WHY will keep you go-

ing even when you want to QUIT the most." The answer for many was they had something to prove — to themselves and others.

"I joined the Army because my family thought I couldn't accomplish anything in life. So I had to prove them wrong," one said. Another wrote: "I wanna show my family I'm worth something."

Others said they wanted to "be a better man," "gain my independence" and "prove to myself that I can accomplish something and I'm not a quitter."

One recruit was blunt: "To prove to her I'm not gonna turn into who she said I'd become."

Recruits lined up near the wall told Wormuth that the physical fitness program is working for them.

Couper Godleski, from Pennsylvania, said that in 10 weeks he had lost 20 pounds.

Britney Vaughn, from Louisiana, said she had lost 30 pounds in six weeks. And although she said she is missing her 3-year-old daughter, "I feel like everything will be worth it."

On the academic side, recruits told Wormuth that even as they struggle with math or English comprehension, they are getting help from instructors while learning the structure and discipline of the Army. A key goal, said one female recruit, is "to be a role model to my nieces and nephews" and get money for college so she doesn't have to be in debt.

For Wormuth, the visit confirmed Army leaders' intention to keep the program going.

"I think we're going to probably continue to see pretty low unemployment. We're still going to see 60% go to college. It's a more competitive labor market," she said. "So we're going to have to keep fighting hard for our new recruits."

Baldor writes for the Associated Press.

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# CALIFORNIA

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/CALIFORNIA



JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times

## HONORING AMERICA'S VETERANS

Amy Ortlieb visits the grave of her father, Thomas L. Morrison, who served in the Navy during the Vietnam War, on Sunday at Los Angeles National Cemetery. Monday is Veterans Day, a federal holiday.

## L.A.'s top cop faces questions on immigration

As sheriff years ago, chief allowed federal agents to target some in jail for deportation.

By LIBOR JANY

The clashes that long-time immigration advocate Martha Arevalo had with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department under Jim McDonnell were years ago — but still fresh in her mind after last week's election.

Under McDonnell, who was sheriff during Donald Trump's first term as president, the department allowed federal immigration authorities to operate freely, targeting people for deportation in the nation's largest jail system.

So as soon as Arevalo heard that McDonnell was selected for the LAPD chief's job — with Trump returning to office and pledging to conduct mass immigration sweeps — she braced for another fight.

McDonnell and some of his supporters have defended his record with the Sheriff's Department, saying his administration handed over only the most dangerous criminals to federal authorities, in keeping with the laws. He would not do so as chief, McDonnell has said, because department rules forbid it.

But Arevalo, executive director of Central American Resource Center of Los Angeles, is among those raising concerns about McDonnell's record on immigration and pushing for stronger protections of the city's diverse immigrant population. The new chief was sworn in last week.

"It is worrisome in L.A. where we are a city of immigrants, we choose someone to lead the Police Department that does not have a track record to care for, or be friendly, or even want to protect the immigrant community," Arevalo said. "Maybe this was naive of us, or naive of me, but I never thought that the city and the mayor would choose somebody like McDonnell to be chief."

The LAPD has long-standing policies that should prevent McDonnell — or any other chief — from cooperating closely with federal immigration authorities.

For more than 40 years, the LAPD has prohibited officers from questioning residents solely to determine their immigration status. After Trump's first election in 2016, the department stepped up its efforts to foster trust and cooperation among undocumented people.

Observers say that continued outreach has allowed the department to make significant strides in some communities that were long mistrustful of law enforcement. The police force — once almost all white — has become more than half Latino, much like the ethnically diverse city it patrols. After the passage of a state law allowing police to hire immigrants brought to the country illegally as children, it also welcomed its first recruits who were so-called Dreamers.

But Arevalo said that days after Mayor Karen Bass selected McDonnell for the chief's job in early October, she and other immigration advocates held a meeting with both officials and left "disappointed with the very weak answers that we received."

"All he could really say is that he would follow the law, and unfortunately we know that that does not necessarily guarantee protection," Arevalo recalled of McDonnell.

[See McDonnell, B2]

## The sad, Hispandering end of De León's career

Hubris was the engine and the incinerator of his reign

GUSTAVO ARELLANO

He preened, he hugged, he shook hands and hobnobbed with legends and politicians. Los Angeles City Councilmember Kevin de León was in full campaign mode two days before Tuesday's election, when voters would decide whether he deserved a second term.



The setting wasn't a restaurant or a neighborhood street: It was the VIP section of a dedication ceremony in Boyle Heights for a towering set of murals featuring the late Dodgers ace Fernando Valenzuela.

Wearing a satin Blue Crew jacket, De León emceed the one-hour-plus program attended by hundreds of baseball fans. Outside the fenced-off area where he held court, workers in neon yellow vests emblazoned with "Kevin de León Cleanup Crew" handed out bottles of water. Nearby, an electric truck bore in Spanish the legend "Courtesy of: Councilmember Kevin de León."

He led chants and cracked jokes and introduced a parade of speakers — among them Councilmember Monica Rodri-

[See Arellano, B5]



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times



RINGO H. W. CHIU Associated Press

**COUNCILMEMBER** Kevin de León at City Hall on Sept. 20, 2024. On Friday, he conceded to his opponent, tenant's rights attorney Ysabel Jurado, in a historic defeat that will be felt for years in L.A. politics.

**PROTESTERS**, left, shout in 2022, calling on De León to resign after the audio leak that captured his presence during a conversation in which others schemed on how to check Black political power.

## L.A. is pressured to pay more for homeless services

Providers warn of closure of facilities if the city doesn't fully compensate them.

By DAVID ZAHNISER

L.A.'s elected officials received a blunt warning last week about the rising cost of combating the city's homelessness crisis.

The Greater LA Coalition on Homelessness, which represents dozens of homeless service providers across L.A. County, said those nonprofit groups have not been getting paid for the full cost of the services they provide at the city's "interim" housing facilities, which serve Angelenos relocated from sidewalk encampments.

Unless the City Council significantly increases the amount it pays nonprofits to staff city homeless shelters, tiny-home villages and other facilities, some organizations will probably pull out to avoid losing more money, coalition members said.

That bracing message was delivered Nov. 4 at a closed-door meeting with Mayor Karen Bass' team. It was repeated two days later at the council's homelessness committee, where some warned that as many as 1,288 homeless beds — in as many as 14 facilities — are now at risk.

Rowan Vansleve, president of the nonprofit Hope the Mission, said homeless service providers are losing

so much money that they're facing the prospect of "demobilizing" certain interim housing sites. Without a hike in the rates, "14 sites across the system are going to be vanishing," he told the committee.

"And this isn't an isolated incident," he said. "In fact, this is a clear warning that the homeless services system is on the verge of collapse."

Vansleve made his remarks one day after voters passed Measure A, a county-wide half-cent sales tax that is expected to generate \$1 billion a year for homeless services and affordable housing. That measure — and its recent passage — is now a talking point in the fight over the rates the city and county pay homeless service providers.

"The people of Los Angeles want to see this crisis dealt with. They're willing to fund real solutions. That's what Measure A's passage tells us," said Jerry Jones, executive director of the Greater LA Coalition on Homelessness, which represents "55 nonprofit organizations on the front lines of homelessness."

Jones and the coalition are pressing the city to hike the rate at certain facilities to \$89 per bed per night starting Jan. 1, up from a range of \$60 to \$66. Facilities with fewer than 50 beds should go even higher, he said, reaching \$116 per bed per night.

The coalition also has been pushing for an even

[See Services, B3]

### CAPITOL JOURNAL

## There's lots to blame for Harris loss

Presidents Biden and Obama had roles in botching Democrats' effort

GEORGE SKELTON  
IN SACRAMENTO

How did we allow a convicted felon, compulsive liar, adjudicated sexual abuser and wannabe dictator to be elected our nation's president? Three words: Democrats botched it.



It shouldn't have been even close, running against a man with his disqualifications. And, in fact, it wasn't. Republican Donald Trump



JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON Associated Press

**VICE** President Kamala Harris joins former President Obama in October at a Georgia campaign stop.

won with ease.

Here's my postmortem on the political demise of Democrat Kamala Harris.

Just as Republicans themselves are at fault for allowing the California GOP to sink into irrelevance in state government — through years of bad positioning and ignoring moderate voters — top Democrats fumbled nationally leading up to the 2024 presidential election.

It started with a betrayal by President Obama in 2016. The blame begins with him.

Obama reportedly

[See Skelton, B4]

# Trump's return brings scrutiny for chief's record

[McDonnell, from B1] nell.

McDonnell provided a similar response when he appeared before a council committee last month and faced questions about his immigration record.

He was noncommittal when asked whether he would support a sanctuary city ordinance being pushed by some community groups and several council members to shield some immigrants' deportation, saying simply that he would follow the law.

Advocates for the immigrant community say that police encounters, already fraught with risk for the city's undocumented population, will become even more problematic under the expected ramping up of enforcement under a second Trump administration.

Minor violations such as a broken taillight or seat belt left unbuckled may lead to a ticket for an average motorist, but for someone who is undocumented it can have life-altering consequences.

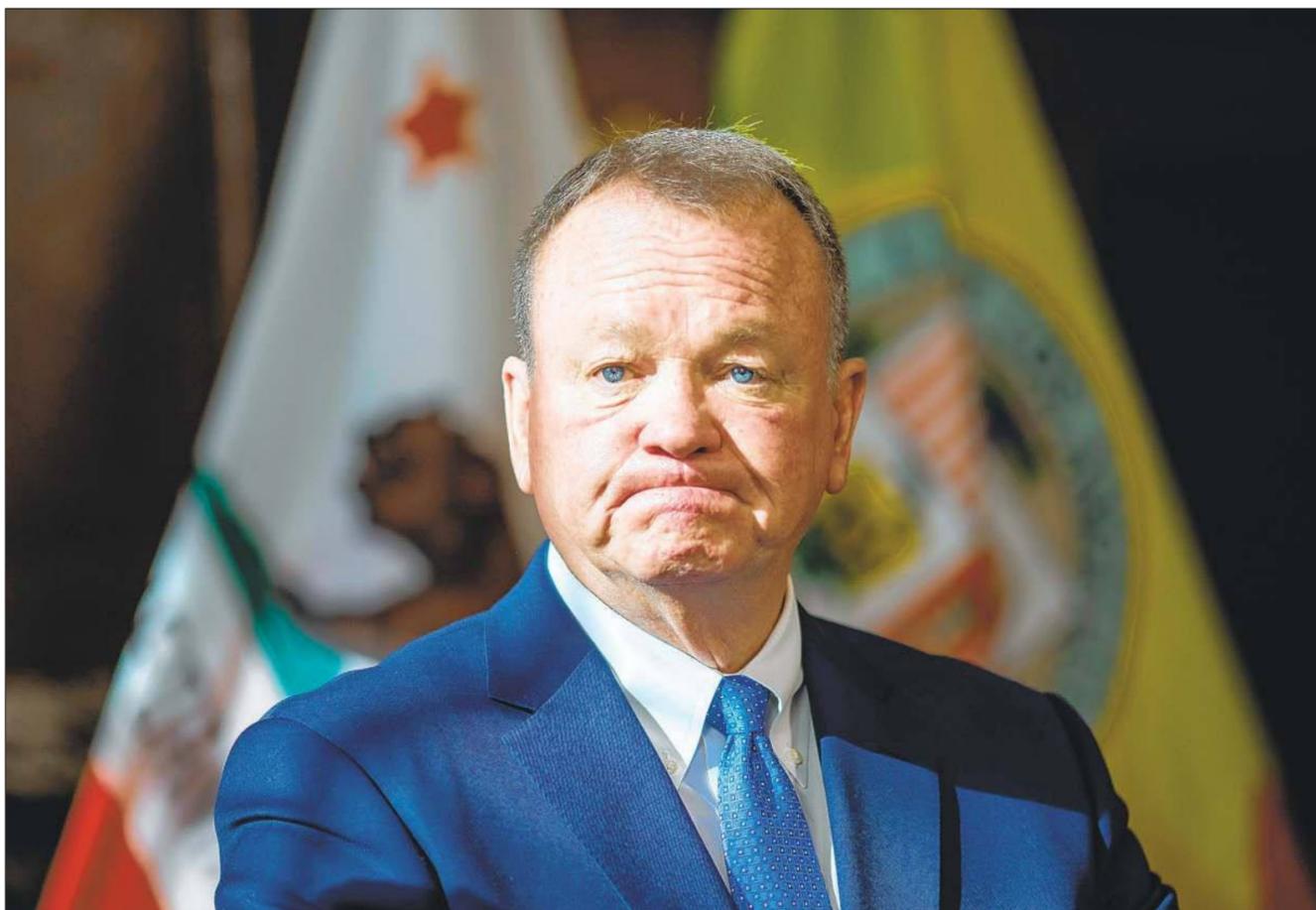
During the first Trump presidency, police in L.A. and elsewhere reported decreases in reporting of even serious crimes such as domestic abuse, which some experts saw as a sign that people had become fearful of calling law enforcement.

"We saw it when McDonnell was sheriff, and families and victims will not call the police even if they are victims of domestic violence," Arevalo said.

McDonnell has not granted interviews since being named LAPD chief. In 2017, he described himself to The Times as "not a Trump guy" and "not an anti-Trump guy." He has been a registered Republican in the past, but said during his time as sheriff that he was no longer affiliated with a political party.

Maraky Alemseged, a local organizer with the Black Alliance for Just Immigration, said the concerns extend beyond the Latino community.

A study by the organization found that people of African descent were disproportionately represented



Photographs by RINGO CHIU For The Times

**NEW POLICE CHIEF** Jim McDonnell, shown during his introductory news conference at Los Angeles City Hall last month, will lead the LAPD as a second Trump administration transitions into the White House, drawing concerns from immigration advocates.



**MARTHA AREVALO** is among the advocates pushing for stronger protections for L.A.'s immigrants.

among people deported in recent years, Alemseged said, often because a low-level offense led to their detention.

"When we talk about the police-to-deportation pipeline is a racial justice issue, this is exactly what we mean," Alemseged said.

Other research has also shown that immigrants are less likely than U.S. citizens to commit violent crimes.

The department currently bars officers from inquiring about a place of birth when interviewing victims, witnesses or people who are temporarily detained.

Previously, during arrests — but no longer — a suspect's place of birth was

recorded during fingerprinting and sent to an FBI database, which immigration authorities can access.

The LAPD also no longer transfers people with certain minor criminal convictions to the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Officers continue to hand over those wanted for signed federal warrants for serious or violent felonies, including for murder, rape, criminal threats, carjacking and arson.

During a presentation before the Police Commission in May, Cmdr. German Hurtado of the Professional Standards Bureau said that the department had not complied with any of the 631

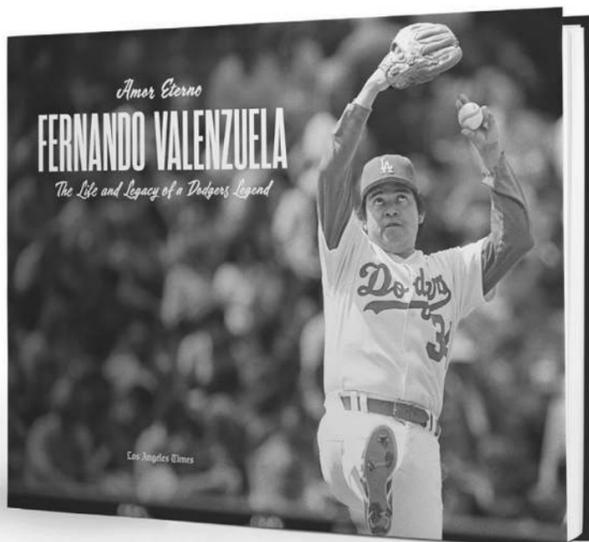
"detainer" requests it had received last year from federal authorities to hold undocumented immigrants for possible deportation.

The department's policies to protect undocumented people have faced repeated attacks both from factions within the LAPD as well as anti-immigration activists who say they give a free pass to criminals in the country illegally.

The department does, however, assign officers to scores of federal task forces, including one with Homeland Security Investigations dealing with "crime tourists" from South America who travel to the state on temporary 90-day visas and form burglary rings.

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Los Angeles Times

## CITY &amp; STATE

# Progress against Ventura County blaze

BY PALOMA ESQUIVEL

Firefighters made progress Sunday against the destructive Mountain fire in Ventura County. The blaze, which has burned more than 20,000 acres and destroyed 134 structures, was about 26% contained early Sunday as firefighters continued mopping up hot spots before winds were expected to pick up again Monday night, authorities said.

Ten areas remained under evacuation orders Sunday, including neighborhoods around Santa Paula and Somis. An additional eight were under evacuation warnings, where residents were asked to prepare for a potential evacuation. Up-to-date information on evacuations was available at the Ventura County Sheriff Emergency Services Incident Dashboard.

"The impact on our community is profound and we are working tirelessly alongside firefighters from Ventura County and neighboring areas along with a vast amount of emergency services to bring this fire under control," Capt. William Hutton, of the Ventura County Sheriff's Department, said during a Saturday evening news conference.

Light winds coming from the ocean and favorable humidity levels Sunday helped authorities in the effort to contain the fire, which started Wednesday morning amid an extreme Santa Ana wind event. The blaze led thousands to evacuate and upended the lives of residents across a number of communities. The cause is still under investigation.



**A FIREFIGHTER** walks through rubble after the Mountain fire destroyed many homes on Old Coach Drive last week in Camarillo. The blaze had destroyed 134 structures and was 26% contained as of early Sunday.

GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

Officials said they were continuing to monitor weather changes as winds were expected to pick up again Monday night through Tuesday morning — though they were not expected to be as strong as the winds that initially fueled the fire.

"It's something that we're watching closely," National Weather Service meteorologist Ryan Walbrun said at a news conference late Saturday. "The wind speeds right now do not look to be nearly as strong as when the fire started."

More than 130 structures have been destroyed in the fire, most of which are

homes. An additional 46 have been damaged, said Justin Boyajian with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection in Tulare County.

"We're doing the best we can, trying to help as much as we can for people who have lost their homes," Boyajian said.

About 500 customers of Southern California Edison were still without power in parts of Camarillo, Santa Paula and Somis, and it was not immediately clear when power would be restored, company spokesman David Eisenhauer said.

"We have to still safely get

in there and assess damage and make repairs so it's hard to tell right now," he said. "We know this has been a really difficult time for [residents] and we'll work as soon as we can safely get power restored to them."

Residents were planning to gather Sunday night for a community meeting at Ventura County Fire Station 54 in Camarillo, where officials would answer questions from residents and update them on progress against the blaze.

Ventura County Fire Chief Dustin Gardner said during the news conference late Saturday that he under-

stood that people in the community were frustrated and in need of more information about what the recovery would look like. The county is also planning to bring together various service providers Wednesday to help answer residents' questions about the recovery process, he said. He urged patience while firefighters work to contain the blaze.

"We're continuing to work diligently ... to get this fire suppressed, to get things mopped up, to get things closed up and get things ready for people to come back in," Gardner said. "And that takes time."

# Driver sought in Van Nuys multi-car collision

A Rolls-Royce is abandoned after a high-speed crash left four people injured.

BY JACK FLEMMING

Who would abandon a \$400,000 Rolls-Royce on the street in Van Nuys?

Evidently, someone involved in a reckless driving incident that led to two wrecks and four people being taken to the hospital.

LAPD officers are on the hunt for the driver, who fled the scene of a crash Friday night.

Reported around 9:50 p.m., the collision was triggered by two luxury cars — a Rolls-Royce Cullinan (\$389,000 for the base model) and Mercedes GT63 (base price \$153,350) — going west side by side on Sherman Way at high speed, according to the Los Angeles Police Department.

The Mercedes driver clipped a Honda Civic turning left onto Sherman Circle, ejecting the Honda driver from the car and also injuring the passenger.

The Rolls-Royce driver swerved into oncoming traffic to avoid the collision, ran into a Chevy Traverse and crashed into the curb. The driver fled the scene.

As of Saturday afternoon, the police had not yet released a description of the driver, who is being pursued for charges of reckless driving and hit-and-run.

Both people in the Honda sustained serious injuries and were hospitalized. The Mercedes driver was hospitalized and arrested on suspicion of reckless driving. According to the Los Angeles Fire Department, a fourth person from the collision was also transported to the hospital.

The status of the Chevy driver is unclear.

According to the Fire Department, two adult males were transported in critical condition (both reportedly ejected from the vehicle). Two patients (an adult male and an adult female) were transported with non-life-threatening injuries.

Police did not confirm whether the Rolls-Royce and Mercedes drivers were street racing.

# L.A. County Registrar's office target of fake bomb threat

BY JACK FLEMMING AND CLARA HARTER

The L.A. County Registrar-Recorder's headquarters in Norwalk received a bomb threat Saturday — the latest in a string of threats targeting vote counters and polling centers across the region and country.

No explosives were found at the site. An investigation is underway, according to L.A. County Registrar clerk Dean Logan.

"We take all such threats seriously and are working closely with the FBI, state authorities, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to ensure the safety of our staff and communi-

ty and maintain uninterrupted operations," Logan said in a statement. "These threats and efforts to disrupt the legal, transparent, and secure process of counting all eligible ballots have no place in our electoral process."

The threat came via email, according to L.A. County Registrar spokesperson Mike Sanchez. No employees were present, and none were scheduled to work at the office until Tuesday.

The source of the threat may have gotten their addresses mixed up — ballot processing centers have been the targets of a number of recent bomb threats, but the one for L.A. County is at a facility in Industry, not

Norwalk. Authorities swept that facility as well and found nothing suspicious.

On election day, the FBI said it was aware of fake bomb threats made to polling locations in several states, noting that many of them appeared to originate from Russian email domains.

Other Southern California voting hubs were targeted after the polls closed. The San Diego County Registrar of Voters Office received a bomb threat Friday night but concluded that the threat was not credible, authorities said.

Registrars' offices in Orange and Riverside counties were evacuated Friday evening after receiving bomb threats, but no explosives

were found at either site, authorities said.

All staff and members of the public at the Orange County Registrar of Voters were evacuated from the Santa Ana office 15 minutes before the facility was scheduled to stop processing ballots, officials said in a statement. Orange County sheriff's deputies were already on site and coordinated evacuating the building at 1300 S. Grand Ave.

Bomb detection dogs were used to search the entire building, and no explosives were found.

"The Orange County Registrar of Voters is committed to ensuring equal access to the election process, protecting the integrity of votes, and maintaining a

transparent, accurate and fair election system," Registrar of Voters Bob Page said in a statement. "We are working diligently to address this incident and keep all staff and members of the public who visit our office safe."

A similar unfounded threat was also received by the Riverside County Registrar of Voters on Friday evening at its office in Riverside.

The Riverside County Sheriff's Department was immediately notified, and members of the public and staff were evacuated from the site at 2720 Gateway Drive within five minutes. Sheriff's deputies and bomb squad members conducted a thorough search and found no explosives.

# City pressured to pay more for housing services

[Services, from B1] larger increase starting July 1 that would take the nightly bed rate up to \$139. That amount, Jones said, would reflect the true cost of interim housing services — staffing, meals, security, insurance and other expenses. The figure first surfaced in an third-party analysis released this year by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, he said.

Jones said staffers at many interim housing sites are struggling to make ends meet, even as they perform crucial work for the city. Their financial woes have contributed to high staff turnover at homeless service nonprofits, he said.

City budget officials acknowledge that they have not been paying the full costs incurred by homeless services groups and have proposed a series of rate increases over the next nine months. But their proposed increases are smaller than the ones sought by the coalition.

Under the city's proposal, interim homeless housing facilities with 51 or more beds would see the nightly rate reach \$69 on Jan. 1, then jump again to \$89 per bed on July 1. Smaller facilities — those with 50 or fewer beds — would see the nightly bed rate jump to \$79 on Jan. 1, then to \$116 on July 1.

City Administrative Officer Matt Szabo pushed back against the \$139 rate cited in the study, saying the num-



**KAREN FORD**, left, gets help with her belongings from Lila Omura, a Redondo Beach housing navigator, who showed Ford a possible place for her to live. Unlike L.A., Redondo Beach has been a homelessness success story.

GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

ber includes some services the city already pays for in other ways. That increase, if approved, would add at least \$186 million to the city budget in 2025-26, Szabo said.

Bass, asked about the warnings from the nonprofit coalition, said the city welcomed the passage of Measure A, which doubles the existing quarter-percent sales tax for homeless services.

"I will tell you one thing: We have no intention of closing facilities and putting people out on the street," said Bass at a news conference in the San Fernando Valley on Thursday. "Fortunately, with Measure A, we are not going to have to put people out on the street."

Some council members sounded more frustrated with the situation, which comes amid a major finan-

cial crunch for the city. Council members are already planning a new round of cutbacks to balance the budget and replenish the city's reserve fund.

If the council doesn't provide nonprofits with the increases they've been demanding, those organizations could end up running "unsustainable deficits" — and closing interim housing sites, said Councilmember

Bob Blumenfeld, who sits on the homelessness committee.

But if the council agrees to pay the higher rates, there might not be enough money in the budget to keep all of the city's interim housing sites open, Blumenfeld said. Under that scenario, he said, the city would be the one to decide which facilities would close.

Complicating matters

further, the city is paying a different, higher rate to the nonprofits hired under the mayor's Inside Safe homelessness initiative, which has moved unhoused residents into dozens of hotels and motels and is currently paying service providers \$110 per bed per night.

Councilmember Monica Rodriguez, who sits on the homelessness committee, voiced frustration that the city is paying one rate for one set of interim housing facilities and another, higher rate at the ones supervised by the mayor.

It will be difficult to hold the line on costs, Rodriguez said, when one city program is already paying a higher rate.

"We're negotiating against ourselves," she said.

Clara Karger, a spokesperson for Bass, said rates are higher for Inside Safe because "more is expected" in that program. The higher rate has ensured that homeless service groups have the capacity to help "more people get off the streets and stay housed than ever before," she said.

"We wanted to raise the standard of service and we saw the results," Karger said in an email.

The council must make a decision by the end of the month for the increases to go into effect by Jan. 1. City officials are looking to hike the rates in coordination with L.A. County, which also pays for interim housing services.

# Plenty of blame to go around in Harris' loss

[Skelton, from B1] shoved aside his own vice president, Joe Biden, and backed Hillary Clinton for president. He dissuaded Biden from running.

Democrats thus missed their grand opportunity. Biden was at his peak back then and probably would have beaten Trump, nipping his political career in the bud.

Why'd Obama do that? We can only guess. But here's my assumption:

In 2008, after Obama had beaten Clinton in a bitter race for the party's nomination, he was desperate for her unifying support. They met face-to-face at California Sen. Dianne Feinstein's home in Washington, D.C. I don't know the precise deal they cut. But after his election, Obama gave Clinton the coveted secretary of State post and eight years later backed her for president over Biden.

Clinton turned out to be a poor candidate.

Many Democrats believed she lost because America wasn't ready for a female president. But as New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd wrote recently:

"Hillary Clinton did not lose because she was a woman. She lost because she was Hillary Clinton. She didn't campaign hard enough, skipping Wisconsin and barely visiting Michigan. She got discomfuted about gender."

So Trump was elected president the first time.

Then in 2020, Biden finally won the Democratic nomination but, in my view, fumbled his choice for running mate. He had pledged to name a female veep and was under heavy pressure to choose a woman of color.

Look, it's a mistake to lock yourself into a narrow field of potential selectees months before needing to make a decision.

And maybe it's time for Democrats to ease up on identity politics. Whatever the policy merits are, it doesn't appear to be benefiting Democrats politically.



SUSAN WALSH Associated Press  
**PRESIDENT** Biden did not keep a 2020 promise.

Anyway, Biden's preferred woman of color for vice president was Harris, the then-California senator whose own White House bid had bombed. She bowed out before any primary votes were cast, avoiding an embarrassing loss in her home state.

Biden was largely drawn to Harris because she and his late son, Beau, were close allies when both were state attorneys general.

He probably would have been better off tapping then-U.S. Rep. Karen Bass of Los Angeles, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, who was likable, energetic and a goal-achiever. Bass later was elected L.A. mayor.

But the Biden-Harris ticket ousted Trump from the White House, with the scheming poor loser refusing to concede defeat and inciting a riotous mob at the nation's Capitol in a failed effort to block certification of the election results.

As vice president, Harris eventually became less popular even than the fading Biden, according to polls, and was generally regarded as a drag on the president's 2024 reelection prospects.

By far the biggest drag, however, was the 81-year-old Biden himself. And he shares significant blame for Harris' loss last week. That's because he reneged on his 2020 campaign promise to be a transitional president and pass the torch to a younger generation.

He stubbornly refused to face reality and listen to Democratic voters who kept telling pollsters they desired

a spryer candidate. It was only after Biden exhibited the worst TV debate performance in history that he bowed to party pressure in July and stepped aside.

But I also blame Democratic congressional leaders and large party donors for not leveling with the president much earlier and giving him a shove.

Biden's attempt to seek reelection kept Democrats from conducting a normal, competitive nominating process that is vital for any party standard-bearer. It hones battle skills, tests voter messages and builds a national support base.

Harris may have been the voters' choice in primaries. We'll never know. She captured the nomination by default — without ever having won a single vote in a caucus or primary. There wasn't even a convention fight because other Democratic wannabes didn't have the stomach to contest her.

Harris actually turned out to be a fairly good candidate, exceeding many people's expectations, including mine. She clobbered Trump in their sole debate.

But it didn't matter much. Voters sought change and she represented the status quo.

She failed to adequately respond to working-class voters' major concerns about the economy and illegal immigration.

She overemphasized abortion rights, a winning issue for Democrats in the 2022 midterm elections that had played out by last week.

And voters didn't want to hear about Trump being a scumbag. They already knew that and didn't really care. A majority no longer have a standard of decency for a presidential candidate — or if they do, it's lower than a rattlesnake.

Mothers can still tell their children that in America anyone can grow up to be president. And now they can add that it's true even if they lie, cheat and incite a deadly insurrection against the nation's government.

Just don't be a California Democrat.



Google Maps

**VANDALS** smashed several storefronts in L.A.'s Pico-Robertson area. "Someone is systematically targeting our type of businesses," the owner of Got Kosher? said.

# Hate crime suspected in vandalism inquiry

Six L.A. businesses were left with broken glass and graffiti. Most were Jewish-owned.

BY TERRY CASTLEMAN

Los Angeles police are investigating incidents of vandalism against six businesses in the Pico-Robertson neighborhood since the evening of Nov. 4 as possible hate crimes.

The majority of the businesses vandalized were Jewish-owned, said Alain Cohen, owner of Got Kosher? Bakery.

On Tuesday morning, he got a call from his staff, telling him that the glass storefront was smashed.

"I came right away, I saw that, I called the police," he said, "and then I boarded the glass."

"Later I heard that this was done to five other stores on the same block," Cohen said. "Someone is systematically targeting our type of

businesses. "It's clear that if it happens in that particular block in this particular political and international situation, there's a connection."

The vandalism comes as authorities have reported a surge in antisemitic incidents across the country since the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel by Hamas militants and Israel's military response.

Last November, the Los Angeles Police Department launched an investigation into a protest at the Brentwood home of the president of a pro-Israeli lobbying group, where protesters ignited smoke devices in the street and spattered fake blood on the property.

The Anti-Defamation League of California released a statement on the vandalism incident, saying it was monitoring the situation.

Police arrived on the scene around 9:20 a.m. Tuesday, said David Cuellar, a LAPD spokesperson.

"Officers located six to

seven businesses which were vandalized and the instance is being investigated as a hate crime," Cuellar said. The majority of those businesses were Jewish-owned.

Despite rumors, there was no evidence of a shooting, Cuellar said. One building was burglarized, and the others were left with broken glass and graffiti.

Officers suspect that the window smashing may have been carried out by a golf club or a similarly shaped object, Cuellar said.

The perpetrator was caught on another business' security camera but couldn't be identified from the photo, according to Cohen.

"Like every Jewish business owner, I don't feel safe. We are targeted and we have been targeted since the beginning of time, since Abraham to be precise," Cohen said.

"We are targeted and we need to stand up," he said. "The Holocaust happened because people didn't speak up."

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Los Angeles Times

### SUMMONS (CITACION JUDICIAL)

Case Number (Numero del Caso): 23STCV22575

**NOTICE TO DEFENDANT: (AVISO AL DEMANDADO):**  
Shabnam Amiri Dogaheh, an Individual; Naser Hamedani Khamseh, an Individual

**YOU ARE BEING SUED BY PLAINTIFF: (LO ESTA DEMANDANDO EL DEMANDANTE):**  
Mario Escalante, an Individual; Thannya Cristina Flores, an Individual

**NOTICE!** You have been sued. The court may decide against you without your being heard unless you respond within 30 days. Read the information below.

You have 30 CALENDAR DAYS after this summons and legal papers are served on you to file a written response at this court and have a copy served on the plaintiff. A letter or phone call will not protect you. Your written response must be in proper legal form if you want the court to hear your case. There may be a court form that you can use for your response. You can find these court forms and more information at the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), your county law library, or the courthouse nearest you. If you cannot pay the filing fee, ask the court clerk for a fee waiver form. If you do not file your response on time, you may lose the case by default, and your wages, money, and property may be taken without further warning from the court.

There are other legal requirements. You may want to call an attorney right away. If you do not know an attorney, you may want to call an attorney referral service. If you cannot afford an attorney, you may be eligible for free legal services from a nonprofit legal services program. You can locate these nonprofit groups at the California Legal Services Web Site (www.lawhelpcalifornia.org), the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), or by contacting your local court or county bar association. NOTE: The court has a statutory lien for waived fees and costs on any settlement or arbitration award of \$10,000 or more in a civil case. The court's lien must be paid before the court will dismiss the case.

**¡AVISO!** Lo han demandado. Si no responde dentro de 30 días, la corte puede decidir en su contra sin escuchar su versión. Lea la información a continuación.

Tiene 30 DÍAS DE CALENDARIO después de que le entreguen esta citación y papeles legales para presentar una respuesta por escrito en esta corte y hacer que se entregue una copia al demandante. Una carta o una llamada telefónica no lo protegen. Su respuesta por escrito tiene que estar en formato legal correcto si desea que procesen su caso en la corte. Es posible que haya un formulario que usted pueda usar para su respuesta. Puede encontrar estos formularios de la corte y mas información en el Centro de Ayuda de las Cortes de California (www.sucorte.ca.gov), en la biblioteca de leyes de su condado o en la corte que le quede mas cerca. Si no puede pagar la cuota de presentación, pida al secretario de la corte que le de un formulario de exención de pago de cuotas. Si no presenta su respuesta a tiempo, puede perder el caso por incumplimiento y la corte le podrá quitar su sueldo, dinero y bienes sin mas advertencia.

**The name and address of the court is: (El nombre y dirección de la corte es):**  
Stanley Mosk Courthouse  
111 North Hill Street Los Angeles, CA  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**The name, address, and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney, or plaintiff without an attorney, is: (El nombre, la dirección y el número de teléfono del abogado del demandante, o del demandante que no tiene abogado, es):**  
Elisabeth K. Fiekowsky, Esq.  
100 Pine St Ste 1250  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
6282854966

**Date: (Fecha)** September 19, 2023

David W. Slayton Clerk  
(Secretario)  
Y. Ayala Deputy  
(Adjunto)

### SUMMONS (CITACION JUDICIAL)

Case Number (Numero del Caso): 24STCV05130

**NOTICE TO DEFENDANT: (AVISO AL DEMANDADO):**  
WILMA GALATHE an individual, IMANI BAKARI, and individual, and DOES 1 TO 20, inclusive

**YOU ARE BEING SUED BY PLAINTIFF: (LO ESTA DEMANDANDO EL DEMANDANTE):**  
PHINEAS Y. GRAY III

**NOTICE!** You have been sued. The court may decide against you without your being heard unless you respond within 30 days. Read the information below.

You have 30 CALENDAR DAYS after this summons and legal papers are served on you to file a written response at this court and have a copy served on the plaintiff. A letter or phone call will not protect you. Your written response must be in proper legal form if you want the court to hear your case. There may be a court form that you can use for your response. You can find these court forms and more information at the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), your county law library, or the courthouse nearest you. If you cannot pay the filing fee, ask the court clerk for a fee waiver form. If you do not file your response on time, you may lose the case by default, and your wages, money, and property may be taken without further warning from the court.

There are other legal requirements. You may want to call an attorney right away. If you do not know an attorney, you may want to call an attorney referral service. If you cannot afford an attorney, you may be eligible for free legal services from a nonprofit legal services program. You can locate these nonprofit groups at the California Legal Services Web Site (www.lawhelpcalifornia.org), the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), or by contacting your local court or county bar association. NOTE: The court has a statutory lien for waived fees and costs on any settlement or arbitration award of \$10,000 or more in a civil case. The court's lien must be paid before the court will dismiss the case.

**¡AVISO!** Lo han demandado. Si no responde dentro de 30 días, la corte puede decidir en su contra sin escuchar su versión. Lea la información a continuación.

Tiene 30 DÍAS DE CALENDARIO después de que le entreguen esta citación y papeles legales para presentar una respuesta por escrito en esta corte y hacer que se entregue una copia al demandante. Una carta o una llamada telefónica no lo protegen. Su respuesta por escrito tiene que estar en formato legal correcto si desea que procesen su caso en la corte. Es posible que haya un formulario que usted pueda usar para su respuesta. Puede encontrar estos formularios de la corte y mas información en el Centro de Ayuda de las Cortes de California (www.sucorte.ca.gov), en la biblioteca de leyes de su condado o en la corte que le quede mas cerca. Si no puede pagar la cuota de presentación, pida al secretario de la corte que le de un formulario de exención de pago de cuotas. Si no presenta su respuesta a tiempo, puede perder el caso por incumplimiento y la corte le podrá quitar su sueldo, dinero y bienes sin mas advertencia.

**The name, address, and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney, or plaintiff without an attorney, is: (El nombre, la dirección y el número de teléfono del abogado del demandante, o del demandante que no tiene abogado, es):**  
Marcereau Law Group  
24681 La Plaza, Suite 370  
Dana Point, CA 92629  
(949) 323-4890

**Date: (Fecha)** 02/29/2024

David W. Slayton Clerk  
(Secretario)  
Y. AYALA Deputy  
(Adjunto)

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## JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

**DVOIE**

**EHPES**

**LZIFEZ**

**ETGTNO**

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**Print your answer here:**

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: TOPAZ VIPER MUFFIN WISELY

Answer: The chef who enjoyed using seasonings to create bold flavors had a — ZEST FOR LIFE

# Hubris was Councilmember De León's downfall

[Arellano, from B1] guez, actor Edward James Olmos and East LA Community Corp. President Monica Mejia — who thanked him for helping spearhead the mural, along with playwright Josefina Lopez and artist Robert Vargas.

That wasn't enough credit for De León. Just before a giant tarp dropped to reveal one of the murals, he told the crowd that what they were about to see was "my gift to all of you, to all of Boyle Heights and to all of L.A."

From a distance, I stared with a mix of pity and disgust. It wasn't surprising that De León was there, because his Eastside district includes Boyle Heights. But I figured he had enough sense to offer a few words and sit down like all the other dignitaries, not squeeze a pseudo-rally out of a ceremony meant to honor a recently deceased icon.

Hubris was the engine of De León's 18-year political career. It propelled the child of Guatemalan immigrants from an impoverished upbringing in San Diego to community activism in L.A. to stints in Sacramento as an Assembly member and state senator before he landed at City Hall in 2020. He gained enemies along the way but also followers who cast him as a Dickensian hero willing to fight for the neediest.

Hubris was also his downfall. On Friday, De León conceded to his opponent, tenant's rights attorney Ysabel Jurado, in a historic defeat that will be felt for years in L.A. politics.

"While the results of this election did not go our way, I respect the decision of the voters and our democratic process," De León said in a statement on Instagram. He congratulated Jurado "on a well-fought campaign" and wished her "success in leading our district forward" — a stark contrast to the campaign, when he and his surrogates painted her as a dangerous socialist unfit for office.



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

**THEN-LOS ANGELES** mayoral candidate Kevin de León tours the Olive Fresh Garden Marketplace in North Hollywood in June 2022. He was the first Latino leader of the California Senate in 130 years.

De León never recovered from his role in the 2022 City Hall audio leak that captured him laughing as others mocked Oaxacans, trashed political opponents and schemed on how to check Black political power in L.A. to ensure the spread of Latino power.

De León continued on the council despite repeated calls to resign and ran for reelection despite warnings he wouldn't be able to win.

His loss will cause further teeth-gnashing among the region's Latino political class, who had already cast Jurado's rise as little better than a civil rights violation. The political novice will be the first Filipino American on the council.

Latinos make up nearly half of L.A.'s population but will hold only four seats on the 15-member council after De León's departure. That a non-Latino will represent the Eastside, the cradle of Latino politics in the city, for the first time in nearly 40 years is particularly galling to some Eastside residents

and especially politicians.

Even before Jurado's win, California Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta's legal team had questioned whether the council's district maps provide sufficient representation for Latinos, singling out two districts on the Eastside, including De León's, as potential areas of concern, sources told my colleagues Dave Zahniser and Dakota Smith.

But what De León's supporters don't get is that the Latino Power strategy that long fueled Eastside politics is over — and their guy's campaign proved it. In the wake of the audio leak scandal, the incumbent wrapped himself in *latinidad* like a tamale snug inside a corn husk — and he still lost.

His office sponsored a World Cup final watch party at Pershing Square and consistently handed out free food to residents in Latino-majority neighborhoods. At a debate at Dolores Mission last month, De León talked almost exclusively in Span-

ish and kept referring to his constituents as *nuestra gente* — our people — to imply that Jurado could never understand Latinos and their needs.

Spanish-language radio ads paid for by the Latino Victory Fund called the council member *el mero mero* — the big boss man. A series of mailers designed like comic books featured mariachi musicians holding a "Re-Elect Kevin De León" sign as the cartooned council member nabbed copper wire thieves, cleaned up graffiti and carried boxes for homeless people as they moved into apartments. In another mailer, De León posed with firefighters in front of the iconic Virgin of Guadalupe shrine at the Ramona Garden housing complex in Boyle Heights and talked to voters at Mariachi Plaza.

Other mailers funded by political action committees touted De León as someone who wanted to "preserve Latino culture," who was "a champion for our communi-

ty" and "a symbol of this great generation of strong Latino leaders." A text message from De León's campaign included a grainy photo of Jurado and warned that "Forty years of Latino representation is threatened."

De León even earned an endorsement from beyond the grave from his council predecessor, Eastside political titan Richard Alatorre. A mailer featured a letter in Spanish from Alatorre's widow, Angie, disclosing that Richard had supported De León's campaign and stating, "We should ensure that Latino leadership continues being important."

None of this Hispandering worked. While De León doubled down on ethnic solidarity, Jurado and her team focused on a ground game that tied the Highland Park native's story — daughter of immigrants who lacked legal status, teenage mom who went on food stamps, adult who had to move back in with her father — to that of Eastside

residents. She easily won, with the latest vote count showing her at 56% to De León's 44%.

It didn't have to end this way. If De León had resigned in the wake of the audio leak, or decided to not seek reelection, he could have left with egg on his face but nevertheless walking tall after an impressive career of service to Latinos.

He was an architect of the massive marches against Proposition 187 in 1994 — protests that birthed a generation of Latino activists and politicians. He was the first Latino leader of the state Senate in 130 years, with enough political cachet to stage serious runs for U.S. senator and L.A. mayor. He sponsored the bill that turned California into a sanctuary state and helped pass important legislation on climate change and clean energy.

Those achievements will rightfully fill up the majority of De León's biography. But history will now also remember him as the Joe Biden of the Eastside — someone who stayed way past his expiration date, ended his political career with a whimper and cost his base their political power because he refused to leave.

That was the De León on display at the Valenzuela mural unveiling. He remained onstage in the VIP section long after the ceremony ended, chatting up Dodgers broadcasting legend Jaime Jarrín and others, instead of trying to mix with the crowd.

Some supporters went up to him to take photos, but the council member posed from his side of the barricades. It was as if he knew his time in power would soon be over, and he wanted to bask in the moment as long as possible.

I lingered to see if we might chat. After about half an hour, I realized it wasn't going to happen.

As I walked back to my car, I turned back for one last look at De León. His cleaning crew was sweeping up litter from the street while their boss talked and talked and talked.

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Los Angeles Times

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Los Angeles Times

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THE WEATHER

Today in Southern California

Dry and windy: An upper-level low will move in Monday, bringing lower temperatures to many areas, with a more noticeable drop along the immediate coast. Temperatures will drop more Tuesday before rising Wednesday.

5-day forecasts

High/low temperatures are average forecasts for entire zone.

Table with 5 columns: L.A. Basin, Valleys, Beaches, Mountains, Deserts. Rows for Today, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

Air quality



Surf and sea

POINT CONCEPTION TO MEXICO Inner waters: NW wind 5-10 kt, becoming W 10-20 kt with local gusts to 25 kt in the afternoon; seas 2-3 ft.

Surf zone: The risk for strong rip currents is high at Ventura County beaches, moderate at S.B., S.D. and O.C. beaches and low at L.A. beaches.

Table with 5 columns: County, Height, Period, Direction, Temp. Rows for Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego.

Tides

Table with 5 columns: Time, Height, Direction. Rows for Today, Tue.

UV index

Minutes to burn for sensitive people Las Vegas, 45 Phoenix, 45 Los Angeles, 45 San Francisco, 60

California cities\*

Large table with 5 columns: City, Sun., Today, Tue. Rows for various California cities like Anaheim, San Diego, Los Angeles, etc.

Sun and moon

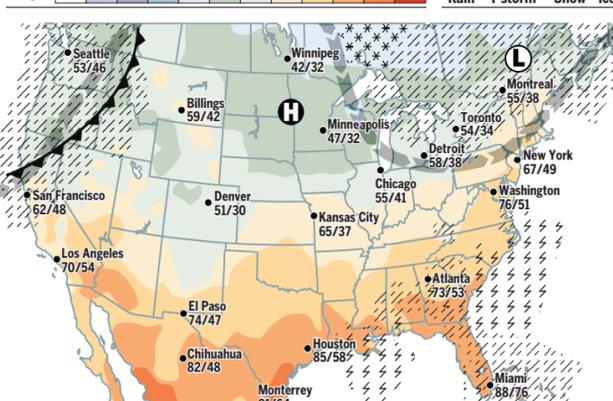
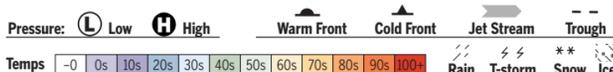
Today's rise/set Los Angeles Co. Orange Co. Ventura Co. Sun 6:22a/4:52p 6:21a/4:51p 6:27a/4:55p Moon 2:18p/1:26a 2:17p/1:24a 2:22p/1:30a

Almanac

Table with 5 columns: Temperature, Precipitation, Humidity. Rows for Los Angeles, Fullerton, Ventura, Los Angeles, Fullerton, Ventura.

Today in North America

Rain with some snow: High pressure over the northern Plains is keeping much of the region dry. Rain will continue for the Pacific Northwest, with snow in higher elevations.



U.S. cities

SUNDAY'S EXTREMES AS OF 2 P.M. FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES

High 94 in Alice, Texas Low 2 in Monte Vista, Colo.

Table with 5 columns: City, Sunday, Today, City, Sunday, Today. Rows for Albany, Albuquerque, Anchorage, etc.

World

Table with 5 columns: City, Sunday, Today, City, Sunday, Today. Rows for Acapulco, Amsterdam, Athens, etc.

Table with 5 columns: City, Sunday, Today, City, Sunday, Today. Rows for Seattle, Tampa, Tucson, etc.



“THREE days before Halloween, I was ... driving on the 110 and saw the building and thought, ‘That’s it,’” Xavier Mozejewski says of his costume, which looks like one of the unfinished Oceanwide Plaza towers downtown.

A set designer’s salute to graffiti-covered skyscraper

By Noah Goldberg

Over the last year, the graffiti-pocked husk of the unfinished Oceanwide Plaza skyscrapers has haunted the Los Angeles skyline, a beacon of disrepair and, for some, artistic expression.

net for months. I think it’s just recognizable to everybody in L.A. In a weird way, it’s super niche but also recognizable. Everyone has had some sort of connection to it in a way.”

Mozejewski’s costume represented the latest chapter in the colorful history of the abandoned plaza that many see as a symbol of the city’s neglect and stubborn crime problem.

velopment. The abandoned buildings became infamous this year as artists broke in and tagged the skyscrapers from top to bottom, with some daredevils even BASE jumping off the towers.

95% of San Diego sightseeing tour company’s vehicles destroyed in fire

By Clara Harter

A sightseeing tour company in San Diego is having to hit the brakes on rentals after about 30 of its vehicles, including several powered by lithium-ion batteries, went up in flames Thursday night, authorities said.

ing the batteries. Boone, however, said it does not appear that any of the lithium-ion batteries caught fire. Rezende told The Times on Friday that it’s possible the gasoline-powered vehicles started the fire, which then spread to the EVs.

# SPORTS

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/SPORTS

## NFL WEEK 10

### Ramsey's presence still felt by Rams

Miami cornerback helped L.A. win Super Bowl and mentored team's current leaders.

BY GARY KLEIN

Jalen Ramsey is a season and a half removed from playing for the Rams.

But the Miami Dolphins star cornerback's influence still runs through a Rams defense that adopted many of the three-time All-Pro's traits.

Four Rams defensive backs were Ramsey's teammates in 2021, when the Rams won Super Bowl LVI. And rookie starters in the secondary and defensive line said they have studied Ramsey since he played at Florida State.

Rams coach Sean McVay, quarterback Matthew Stafford and Rams receivers will get a close-up look at Ramsey on Monday night when the Rams play the Dolphins at SoFi Stadium.

"You see a lot of the same things that made him such a fun guy to watch do his thing here," McVay said. "Hopefully, that won't be the case on Monday night."

Ramsey, 30, is the NFL's top-paid cornerback, a status he first achieved with the Rams.

At the 2019 trade deadline, the Rams sent two first-round draft picks and a fourth-round pick to the [See Ramsey, D3]



TODAY'S GAME

Rams vs. Miami

AT SOFI STADIUM

TV: 5:15 p.m., Ch. 13, ESPN



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

JUSTIN HERBERT fakes a throw before running past Roger McCreary. Herbert scored the Chargers' first touchdown on a scramble.

## Herbert's legs pull quite a feat

Quarterback with dazzling arm adds shifty running in Chargers' win

BY THUC NHI NGUYEN

The linebacker ended up on his backside. The cornerback fell backward as if he was breakdancing. Justin Herbert just kept running, juking and winning.

Used to embarrassing defenders with his arm, Herbert added a display of shifty running in the Chargers' 27-17 win over the Tennessee Titans (2-7) on Sunday at SoFi Stadium. The quarterback rushed for 32 yards in nine carries with one touchdown, his first rushing score since Oct. 1, 2023.

The Chargers (6-3) followed their quarterback's lead to their third consecutive win, the team's longest winning streak since four straight victories in 2022.

The Chargers held a ninth consecutive opponent under 20 points, moving into a tie for the NFL's second-longest streak of games with 20 or fewer points allowed to begin a season. Matching the record of 10 — set by the New York Giants in 1990 — won't be an easy task as the Chargers' schedule takes a dramatic turn.

Facing only one team ranked 10th or better in the NFL in points

per game in their first nine games, the Chargers have four of their next five games against top-10 offenses, including next Sunday's prime-time game against Cincinnati.

With Joe Burrow visiting, the "Sunday Night Football" contest figures to be a matchup of marquee quarterbacks. Herbert continued his hot play Sunday with 164 yards passing and one touchdown. Completing 14 of 18 passes, Herbert set the NFL record for most completions for a player through their first five seasons, passing Derek Carr.

Herbert helped jump-start a sputtering offense by scoring the

Chargers' first touchdown with a four-yard scramble on fourth and one. Giving the Chargers a 13-7 lead going into halftime, Herbert handed the ball to center Bradley Bozeman, and the offensive lineman's spike nearly dented the turf in the end zone.

With a high-ankle sprain a distant memory, Herbert's running ability proved to be an early threat. He scrambled up the middle for eight yards on the Chargers' first possession, juking Tennessee linebacker Kenneth Murray Jr. so aggressively that the former Chargers linebacker toppled to the turf.

## STARING DOWN HIS BIGGEST OPPONENT

Garcia says he's past his mental health and alcohol issues. But can he revive his boxing career?

BY KEVIN BAXTER

To say Ryan Garcia has had a bad year is an understatement.

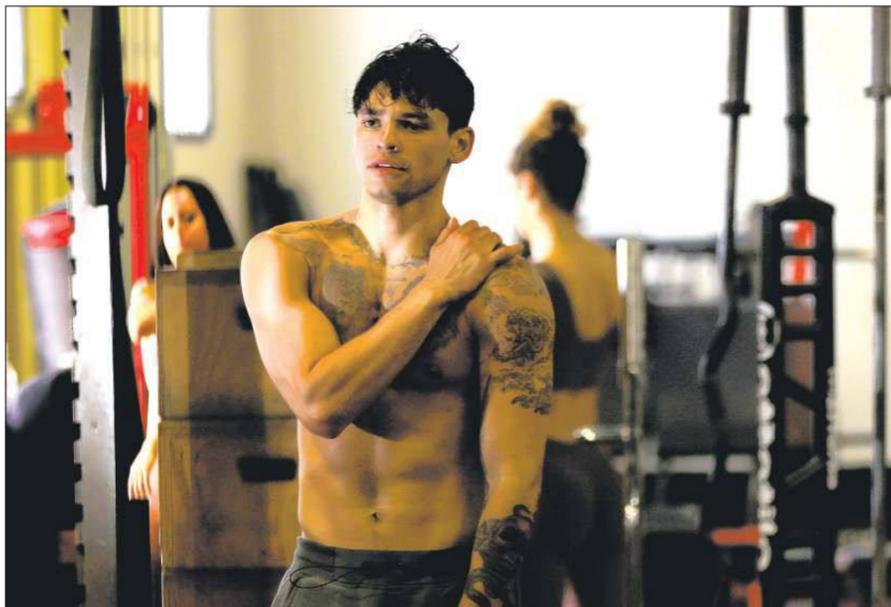
The Chicago White Sox had a bad year. For Garcia, things have risen to a whole other level of self-destruction.

The boxer entered 2024 with one loss in 25 professional fights. He was young, handsome, talented and charismatic. In a struggling sport that is all about brashness and self-promotion, Garcia seemed a savior.

Then he knocked himself out with a spectacular series of self-inflicted body blows that has sent his career to the canvas.

In January, he filed for divorce from his wife, Andrea Celina, and in April he gave up a chance to win the WBC super lightweight title when he failed to make the 140-pound weight limit for his fight with Devin Haney.

The fight went on anyway and Garcia won a majority decision, only to forfeit the upset victory — and incur \$1.8 million in fines — when he tested positive for a per-



LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

RYAN GARCIA is training for a potential New Year's Eve exhibition match in Japan after a series of out-of-ring episodes marred the personal life of the Mojave Desert boxing prodigy.

formance-enhancing drug. That also earned him a year's suspension.

Garcia strongly denied he knowingly took banned substances, but his troubles were only beginning.

In June he was arrested for causing thousands of dollars in damage at a tony Beverly Hills hotel; the case was dismissed last month when Garcia, who has no criminal record, paid \$15,000 in restitution.

However, in July his-then estranged wife — the two are currently attempting to reconcile — posted video and photos to Instagram allegedly showing the damage Garcia caused when he broke into their home. That month he was also expelled from the World Boxing Council over slurs against Blacks and Muslims he made on social media, comments for which he quickly apologized. Despite the apology, three weeks later he doubled down on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, writing in a profane tirade that he hoped members of the LGBTQ+ commu-

[See Garcia, D4]

### Much ado over Bronny James' debut

With his father and other Lakers stars on hand, Bronny plays first G League game in El Segundo. **D2**

### Chiefs stay perfect on last-second block

Kansas City (9-0) bats away Wil Lutz's field-goal try in victory over Denver as win streak hits 15 games. **D3**

### Orange Lutheran captures flag title

Lancers convert late fourth-down play for 20-18 win over Newport Harbor in inaugural championships. **D6**



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PRO CALENDAR

	MON 11	TUE 12	WED 13	THU 14	FRI 15
RAMS	MIAMI 5:15 ESPN, Ch. 13				
CHARGERS	SUNDAY VS. CINCINNATI, 5:20 P.M., CH. 4, PEACOCK				
LAKERS			MEMPHIS 7 SpecSN, ESPN		at San Antonio* 4:30 SpecSN, ESPN
CLIPPERS	at Oklahoma City 5 FDSC, NBA TV		at Houston 5 FDSC		at Houston* 5 FDSC
KINGS	at Calgary 5:30 FDW		at Colorado 7 TNT, truTV, Max		
DUCKS			VEGAS 7 Ch. 13, Victory+		DETROIT 7 Victory+
GALAXY	MLS SEMIFINALS VS. MINNESOTA, NOV. 24, 3 P.M., APPLETV+				
LAFC	MLS SEMIFINALS VS. SEATTLE, NOV. 23, 7:30P.M., APPLE TV+				

Shade denotes home game \*NBA in-season tournament

TODAY ON THE AIR

TIME	EVENT	ON THE AIR
<b>BASKETBALL</b>		
5 p.m.	Clippers at Oklahoma City	TV: FDSC, NBA R: 570, 1330
<b>MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL</b>		
3 p.m.	Youngstown State at Ohio State	TV: Big Ten
4 p.m.	McNeese State at Alabama	TV: SEC
4 p.m.	Western Michigan at Butler	TV: FS1
5 p.m.	Yale at Purdue	TV: Big Ten
6 p.m.	Central Michigan at Marquette	TV: FS1
6 p.m.	Mercer at DePaul	TV: FS2
7 p.m.	Boston University at UCLA	TV: Big Ten R: 1150
<b>WOMEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL</b>		
4 p.m.	Jacksonville at Miami	TV: ACC
<b>COLLEGE GOLF</b>		
11:30 a.m.	Showcase at Cedar Crest, first round	TV: Golf
<b>HOCKEY</b>		
5:30 p.m.	Kings at Calgary	TV: FDW R: ESPNLA
<b>PRO FOOTBALL</b>		
5:15 p.m.	Miami at Rams	TV: 13, ESPN, ESPND R: 710, 93.1
<b>SOCCER</b>		
7 p.m.	Mexico, women, Tigres UANL vs. Pumas UNAM	TV: FOXD
<b>TENNIS</b>		
6 a.m.	ATP Finals, singles and doubles, round robin	TV: Tennis
5:30 a.m.	ATP Finals, doubles, round robin (Tues.)	TV: Tennis

SPORTS EXTRA

For late coverage of Rams, Chargers, Lakers and Clippers games and more, see our daily digital eNewspaper. Subscribers get free access to an exclusive "Sports Extra." View it on your phone, tablet or computer at [latimes.com/enewspaper](http://latimes.com/enewspaper).



ALEX GALLARDO Associated Press

**DEFENSEMAN** Vladislav Gavrikov, center, gathers with his teammates after his goal Saturday night.

Kings stay hot on home ice to best Blue Jackets

They shake slow start and erase an early deficit to move to 4-1-1 at Crypto.com Arena.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Trevor Moore scored shorthanded and Alex Laferrriere got his ninth goal of the season as the Kings beat the Columbus Blue Jackets 5-2 on Saturday night at Crypto.com Arena.

L.A. is 4-1-1 over its past six games. That is also the Kings' mark on home ice to start the season, picking up where they left off after posting the league's best record following the All-Star break in 2023-24.

The Kings overcame a sluggish first period, falling behind on Dmitri Voronkov's goal, before they took charge with defenseman Vladislav Gavrikov's shot through several screens and Warren Foegele's finish off the rush 1:56 apart in the second.

Ivan Provorov had a power-play goal for the Blue Jackets, who have lost four straight, with three of those defeats coming in regula-

tion. It was their first loss in five games when leading after the first period this season.

Laferrriere tipped Joel Edmundson's shot in at 7:05 of the third, giving Los Angeles the insurance goal it had struggled to create earlier in the year.

Defenseman Brandt Clarke added an empty-netter in the final minute for Los Angeles, and David Rittich had 24 saves.

The Kings' Samuel Helenius, a 2021 second-round pick, made his NHL debut and got his first career point with the secondary assist on Foegele's goal.

SATURDAY'S SLATE SUMMARY			
KINGS 5, BLUE JACKETS 2			
Columbus	1	0	1 - 2
KINGS	0	2	3 - 5
<b>FIRST PERIOD:</b> 1. Cim., Voronkov 1 (Danforth), 13:26. <b>Penalties</b> —Pyyhtia, CBJ (Hooking), 8:55. Monahan, CBJ (Interference), 15:40. Kempe, KINGS (Interference), 16:43.			
<b>SECOND PERIOD:</b> 2. KINGS, Gavrikov 2 (Kopitar, Kempe), 4:16. 3. KINGS, Foegele 6 (Thomas, Helenius), 6:12. <b>Penalties</b> —Englund, KINGS (Fighting), 9:06. Olivier, CBJ (Fighting), 9:06. Fantilli, CBJ (Delay of Game), 15:29. Helenius, KINGS (Cross Checking), 19:40.			
<b>THIRD PERIOD:</b> 4. KINGS, Moore 2 (Danault), 0:30 (sh). 5. Cim., Provorov 1 (Fantilli, Danforth), 0:49 (pp). 6. KINGS, Laferrriere 9 (Edmundson, Foegele), 7:05. 7. KINGS, Clarke 2 (Kempe, Kopitar), 19:29 (en). <b>Penalties</b> —KINGS bench, served by Fiala (Too Many Men on the Ice), 3:06. Monahan, CBJ (Tripping), 17:42.			
<b>SHOTS ON GOAL:</b> Cim., 7-11-8-26. KINGS 6-10-7-23. <b>Power-play Conversions</b> —Cim., 1 of 3. KINGS 1 of 4.			
<b>GOALS:</b> Cim., Merzlikins 2-4-1 (22 shots-18 saves). KINGS, Rittich 5-3-0 (26-24). Att.—18-145 (18,230). 1-2-24. R-Peter MacDougall, Carter Sand-lak, L-Jonathan Deschamps, Brandon Gawryletz.			



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ Associated Press

**CLIPPERS** guard Kris Dunn is elated after dunking in the first half against Toronto at the Intuit Dome.

Clippers beat fatigue, hold off Raptors for fourth straight win

Harden and Powell each score 24 points in a game decided in the final seconds.

BY BRODERICK TURNER

Slowly and deliberately, Clippers coach Tyrone Lue climbed the steps to the podium for his postgame news conference and plopped down in his chair. He shook his head.

"I'm tired," Lue said. And so were his players.

The Clippers' fatigue was evident Saturday in how they blew a 14-point lead against the Toronto Raptors at the Intuit Dome. Their weariness showed in how James Harden and Norman Powell missed three of the team's six free throws down the stretch. Their exhaustion showed after heavy minutes for Harden, Powell and Ivica Zubac pushed them to their limit.

Ultimately, the Clippers escaped with a 105-103 win that was decided in the final seconds.

The Clippers have played four games in six days. In 10 games this season, they've played three sets of back-to-backs.

They won their fourth consecutive game, but it took Harden playing more than 34 minutes to get 24 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists. Powell played 35:03 to get his 24 points and

Zubac played 38:20 to get 14 points and 12 rebounds. It also took stellar defense by Terance Mann for the Clippers to close out with a win.

"I knew a few of our guys were tired," Lue said. "But this was one we had to fight through mentally. I know Norm was tired from the jump and what he has been doing for us offensively. We needed every minute he could give us tonight, and I know he was tired. Zu was a little tired. But we had to win this game."

"We'll worry about tomorrow, tomorrow. But today was a winnable game. We're up so we had to finish the game out and guys had to play a little bit more minutes than you would like on a back-to-back, but we needed the win."

After Toronto's Immanuel Quickley tied the score 102-102 on a three-pointer with 39 seconds left, the Clippers retook the lead when Powell made a free throw seconds later. Back on defense, Mann rose to the occasion, blocking a shot by Quickley.

A few seconds later, Harden also fouled. But Harden also made just one free throw. He finished just five for 17 from the field and two for eight from the three-point line.

"We had a tough schedule," Harden said. "But we make some good money to go out there and play the game that we love. So, we just got to figure out ways to win games."

"It ain't nothing ... I don't know what you want me to say as far as ... You know, tomorrow we travel, go to OKC and play another one. Like, this is the NBA."

With the Clippers clinging to a two-point lead, Mann came up big again on defense, forcing RJ Barrett to miss a shot. But instead of sealing the game when he was fouled, Powell missed another free throw, making it 105-102 with 8.7 seconds left. That left the door open for one more opportunity for the Raptors.

After Toronto center Jakob Poeltl drew a foul and made his first free throw, he intentionally missed his second free throw. He tried to score on a putback, but his shot missed and Zubac corralled the rebound with 2.5 seconds left. He passed it to Harden, who threw it down court as time expired.

"In the game for me tonight, I was a little tired, a little fatigued from last game," Powell said about Friday night's game in Sacramento. "T Lue saw it, but the coaches were telling me just play the game the right way, don't have to force anything and I just kept telling myself to stay in the moment and find a way."

Leonard not on trip

Lue was asked if Kawhi Leonard, who hasn't played this season because of inflammation in his right knee, would travel with the Clippers on their three-game

trip that opens Monday against Oklahoma City. He was short with his answer.

"Uh, no," Lue said.

Lue said he wasn't sure if center Mo Bamba, who hasn't played this season because of a knee injury, would play during the trip. Bamba has been playing in five-on-five and three-on-three sessions, Lue said.

SATURDAY'S LATE BOX CLIPPERS 105, RAPTORS 103

TORONTO									
	Min	FG-A	FTA	OR-T	A	P	T		
Agbaji	36	9-14	0-0	2-7	3	3	21		
Barrett	30	6-15	0-2	0-6	3	2	13		
Poeltl	30	1-6	3-6	2-12	3	2	5		
Dick	34	5-12	3-4	0-0	2	1	15		
Quickley	26	8-18	2-2	1-3	4	2	21		
Boucher	24	6-12	2-3	3-6	0	2	14		
Mitchell	21	2-9	2-4	2-4	2	4	7		
Battle	13	1-5	0-0	0-2	1	2	3		
Mogbo	9	0-0	0-0	1-2	3	1	0		
Fernando	8	2-3	0-0	1-2	3	5	4		
Sheard	5	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	1	0		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40-95</b>	<b>12-21</b>	<b>12-44</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>103</b>			

Shooting: Field goals, 42.1%; free throws, 57.1%. Three-point goals: 11-37 (Agbaji 3-6, Quickley 3-8, Dick 2-5, Barrett 1-3, Battle 1-5, Mitchell 1-5, Sheard 0-1, Boucher 0-4). Team Rebounds: 11. Team Turnovers: None. Blocked Shots: 5 (Poeltl 3, Barrett, Fernando). Turnovers: 10 (Barrett 4, Poeltl 4, Mogbo, Quickley). Steals: 8 (Agbaji 2, Barrett 2, Boucher, Dick, Mogbo, Quickley). Technical Fouls: None.

CLIPPERS									
	Min	FG-A	FTA	OR-T	A	P	T		
Jones Jr.	18	1-5	2-2	1-1	0	5	4		
Mann	28	2-5	0-0	2-5	0	4	4		
Zubac	38	7-12	0-0	2-12	1	3	14		
Harden	34	5-17	12-13	1-12	7	2	24		
Powell	35	7-14	7-9	0-3	3	2	24		
Coffey	23	2-6	1-2	0-1	0	1	6		
Porter Jr.	21	5-9	3-6	0-6	5	2	15		
Dunn	19	3-3	0-0	0-3	0	1	7		
Batum	16	3-5	0-0	1-3	2	0	7		
Jones	3	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>35-76</b>	<b>25-32</b>	<b>7-47</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>105</b>			

Shooting: Field goals, 46.1%; free throws, 78.1%. Three-point goals: 10-26 (Powell 3-6, Porter Jr. 2-2, Harden 2-8, Dunn 1-1, Coffey 1-2, Batum 1-3, Mann 0-1, Jones Jr. 0-3). Team Rebounds: 10. Team Turnovers: 2. Blocked Shots: 8 (Zubac 3, Batum 2, Jones Jr., Mann, Powell). Turnovers: 12 (Harden 4, Powell 3, Porter Jr. 2, Dunn, Jones, Zubac). Steals: 6 (Zubac 2, Dunn, Harden, Porter Jr., Powell). Technical Fouls: None.

Toronto		Clippers	
22	25	33	103
28	24	29	24-105

A-17,927, T-2,23.

Much ado over this James debut

With father and other Lakers stars on hand, Bronny James plays first G League game.

BY DAN WOIKE

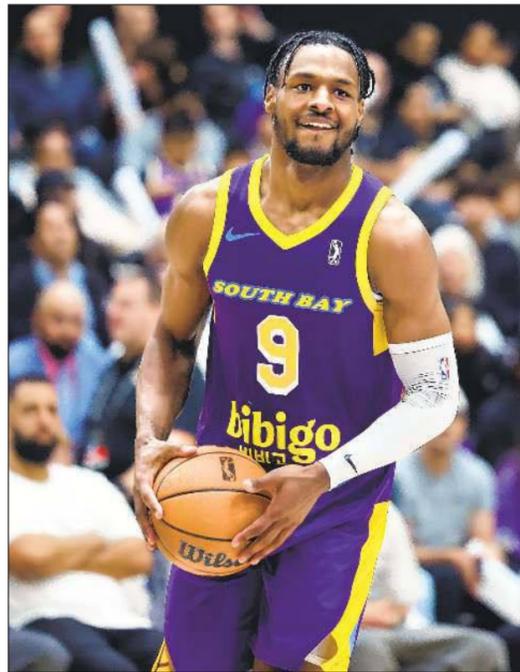
There was one gold Lakers jersey for sale at the pop-up merchandise stand in the lobby outside the UCLA Health Training Center in El Segundo — and it represented why some of the Lakers' biggest VIPs transformed a practice court into a venue for nearly 700 fans Saturday night — Bronny James.

In front of Lakers general manager Rob Pelinka, coach JJ Redick, and players D'Angelo Russell, Anthony Davis and, of course, LeBron James, the Lakers' rookie began the developmental league portion of his season, scoring six points with three rebounds and four assists in the South Bay Lakers' 110-96 win over Utah's G League affiliate, the Salt Lake City Stars.

"It felt pretty good to go out there and just play my game," Bronny James said. "Not much difference. I was just playing basketball. It felt good."

James missed South Bay training camp while he was on the road with the Lakers. For Redick and South Bay coach Zach Guthrie, the goal is to help James make the transition from one roster to the other as smooth as possible.

"That's the beauty of what we're doing here,



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

**BRONNY JAMES** tallied six points, three rebounds and four assists for the South Bay Lakers.

right? The importance for us is that there is no real transition, right? That South Bay and L.A. are the same," Guthrie said. "We have the same terminology, we use the same words, the plays are the same, the defensive schemes are the same. So his transition is seamless. Just like it was Christian [Koloko] playing against Memphis. So that's what we want to be able to do, is just seamlessly transition from each team, play hard, execute, same things. Every-

thing they're asked to do for L.A., they're asked to do for South Bay."

James made the first shot of the South Bay season, a baseline jumper similar to the one he made in Cleveland on Oct. 30 for his first NBA points. He scored on a floater in the lane, but couldn't connect beyond that. He missed all four of his three-point shots.

Still, his defensive physicality and playmaking, despite five turnovers, impressed guard Quincy

Olivari.

"To have Bronny out there looking like how we did, I was just happy to see him get out there and show the world that he can play," Olivari said. "I think I'm a big advocate on pushing that he's a great basketball player, and that the criticism he gets is unfair."

Jalen Hood-Schifino, the Lakers' 2023 first-round pick who recently had his third-year contract option with the team declined, started with second-year wing Maxwell Lewis, James and two-way players Koloko and Olivari.

Hood-Schifino scored eight points but left before halftime with a leg injury. Lewis, the Lakers' second-round pick a season ago, scored 27 on 10-of-18 shooting.

Olivari, who earned a two-way contract in the pre-season, scored 28 points to go with 10 rebounds and six assists while shooting seven for 15 from three-point range.

"My biggest goal was to come out here and show the Lakers and the people that were watching that what I was doing with the big team isn't just a facade," Olivari said. "I can come out here, even when I'm with the G League team, and show that I want to pick up [all] 94 [feet of the court]. That I'm a playmaker, that I'm willing to make all the right plays. But at the end of the day, if I get the ball and you need me to score, I'm gonna shoot it."

The South Bay Lakers next play Friday in Santa Cruz.

THE DAY IN SPORTS

# Dodgers' coach is Marlins' manager

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

The Dodgers' World Series-winning coaching staff won't remain entirely intact next season.

On Sunday, the Miami Marlins hired Dodgers first base coach **Clayton Kullback** to be their new manager, as ESPN first reported, creating the first opening on the Dodgers' coaching staff in two seasons.

A 44-year-old former minor-league catcher, Kullback had spent the last 10 years in the Dodgers organization. He'd been first base coach since 2021.

—JACK HARRIS

ETC.

## Logano earns NASCAR title

**Joey Logano** won his third NASCAR championship with a relentless drive at Phoenix Raceway that gave Team Penske its third major motorsports title in less than a month.

Logano held off Penske teammate **Ryan Blaney** over the final 20 laps to beat him to the Cup Series title by 0.330 seconds.

**Bernhard Langer** won for the 18th straight year on the PGA Tour Champions tour, holing a 30-foot birdie putt on the final hole to hold off **Steven Alker** in the season-ending Charles Schwab Cup Championship at Phoenix Country Club. ... **Austin Eckroat** won the World Wide Technology Championship for his second PGA Tour title of the year, shooting a nine-under 63 for a one-stroke victory in Los Cabos, Mexico. ... **Paul Waring** carded a six-under 66 to win the Abu Dhabi Championship. ... **A Lim Kim** won the Lotte Championship on Saturday for her second LPGA Tour title, closing with a four-under 68 in Honolulu.

**Coco Gauff** won the WTA Finals for the first time by rallying to beat Olympic champion **Zheng Qinwen** 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (2) in the final on Saturday in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. ... Tennis Channel took analyst **Jon Wertheim** off the air "indefinitely" after Wimbledon champion **Barbora Krejickova** called him out on social media for what she called "coverage that focused on my appearance rather than my performance."

**Lauren Betts** had a career-high 31 points and nine rebounds and No. 5 UCLA defeated Colgate 81-63 in its home opener. Betts shot 15 of 18 from the floor for the Bruins (3-0).

Oregon was the No. 1 team in the Associated Press Top 25 college football poll for the fourth straight week while Indiana climbed to No. 5, the Hoosiers' highest ranking since they were No. 4 in the final poll of the 1967 season. ... Florida State coach **Mike Norvell** fired his offensive and defensive coordinators one day after a 52-3 loss to Notre Dame. ... **Dillon Gabriel** broke the NCAA record for total career touchdowns with 179 and top-ranked Oregon remained undefeated with a 39-18 victory over Maryland on Saturday night. Gabriel broke **Case Keenum**'s record of 178 at Houston from 2007 to 2011.

In other late Saturday games, **Zion Young** returned a fumble 17 yards for the game-winning touchdown with 22 seconds remaining as No. 24 Missouri stunned Oklahoma 30-23. ... No. 11 Alabama routed No. 14 Louisiana State 42-13. ... **Xavier Brown** caught a touchdown pass and ran for another score as Virginia upset No. 23 Pittsburgh 24-19. ... **Ash-ton Jeanty** ran for 209 yards and three touchdowns and No. 12 Boise State held off upset-minded Nevada 28-21.

**Kevin Durant** is out for at least two weeks with a left calf strain, the Phoenix Suns announced Saturday. ... The Memphis Grizzlies announced that two-time All-Star **Ja Morant** has an injured right hip that will keep him out week to week.

NFL ROUNDUP

# Chiefs block field goal to stay unbeaten

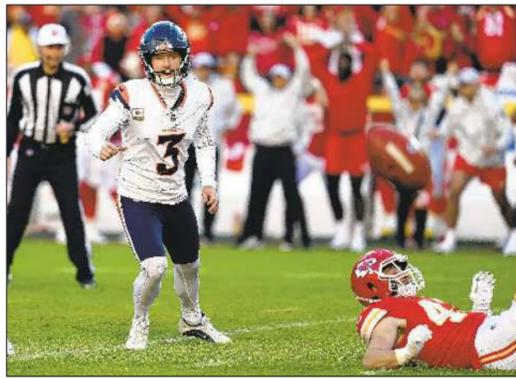
ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Chiefs blocked Broncos kicker Wil Lutz's 35-yard field goal attempt as time expired Sunday, and Kansas City escaped with a 16-14 home victory over the Broncos to extend its winning streak to 15 games dating to last season.

The Chiefs had taken the lead on Harrison Butker's field goal with 5:57 remaining, but Bo Nix and the Broncos converted on three third downs while marching right back down field. They proceeded to set up Lutz for the winner, but Leo Chenal was given credit for coming up the middle amid a big push by the Kansas City defensive line to get his hand on the kick.

Kansas City became the fifth team to follow a Super Bowl triumph by winning its first nine games. That also matches the best start to a season in franchise history. The Chiefs' winning streak dating to last season is the longest in the NFL since the Packers won 19 in a row from 2010 to 2011.

**Steelers 28, at Commanders 27:** Russell Wilson shook off his first interception in 11 months and hit trade-deadline pickup Mike Williams for a 32-yard touchdown with less than 2:30 left — the quarterback's third scoring throw — to lift Pittsburgh to a comeback victory over Jayden Daniels and the



CHARLIE RIEDEL Associated Press

**THE BRONCOS' WIL LUTZ** (3) chases the ball after his last-second kick was blocked by the Chiefs.

Commanders.

The AFC North-leading Steelers (7-2) won their fourth game in a row, including all three since Wilson took over from Justin Fields as the starter.

Washington (7-3) led 24-14 but couldn't hold on as it attempted to get to 8-2 overall for the first time since 1986 and 5-0 at home for the first time since 1991, when the team went on to win the Super Bowl under coach Joe Gibbs.

**at Saints 20, Falcons 17:** Marquez Valdes-Scantling caught three passes for 109 yards and two touchdowns in his second game for New Orleans, and the Saints began Darren Rizzi's tenure as interim coach by snapping a seven-game skid with a victory over Atlanta.

Tyrann Mathieu thwarted a promising Atlanta drive with an interception of Kirk Cousins at the New Orleans 38 with 2 minutes to go.

**49ers 23, at Buccaneers 20:** Jake Moody redeemed himself after missing three earlier field goals by booting a 44-yarder as time expired to give San Francisco a victory over Tampa Bay.

Moody, in his first game back after being sidelined three weeks with a sprained ankle, also kicked field goals of 28 and 33 yards for the defending NFC champion 49ers (5-4), who have won consecutive games for the first time this season.

The usually reliable kicker, who was 13 of 14 entering Sunday, also missed wide left from 49 and 50

yards before missing wide right on a 44-yard attempt that would have given San Francisco a six-point lead with 3:09 remaining. That left time for Tampa Bay to tie the score.

**Vikings 12, at Jaguars 7:** Minnesota's stingy defense held Jacksonville to 143 yards — the fewest in coach Doug Pederson's three seasons — and the Vikings overcame Sam Darnold's three interceptions to beat the Jaguars.

It was Darnold's first three-interception game in three seasons. All came while targeting All-Pro receiver Justin Jefferson, who finished with five catches for 48 yards.

The Vikings (7-2) trailed most of the day, but took the lead on the third of John Parker Romo's four field goals. Romo hit from 29, 34, 33 and 45 yards in his NFL debut.

**Patriots 19, at Bears 3:** Drake Maye got the better of Caleb Williams in a matchup between top rookie quarterbacks and the New England Patriots beat the struggling Chicago Bears.

Maye led five scoring drives and the Patriots sacked Williams a season-high nine times, helping New England (3-7) come away with the win after losing seven of eight.

The Bears (4-5) managed just 142 yards and were one of 14 on third downs facing a

team that came in tied with six others for the worst record in the NFL.

**Bills 30, at Colts 20:** Taron Johnson returned Joe Flacco's first pass 23 yards for a touchdown, and Josh Allen and James Cook each had touchdown runs to lead the AFC East-leading Buffalo past Indianapolis.

The Bills (8-2) extended their winning streak to five with their first victory at Indianapolis since 1998. Allen was 22 of 37 for 280 yards with two interceptions while running eight times for 50 yards. Cook had 19 carries for 80 yards.

Flacco had four turnovers — three interceptions and a fumble — in his second start since replacing the benched Anthony Richardson.

**Panthers 20, Giants 17 (OT):** Eddy Pineiro kicked a 36-yard field goal in overtime and Carolina made it back-to-back wins for the first time this season, beating New York in Munich, Germany.

The Giants (2-8) won the coin toss to start overtime, but rookie running back Tyrone Tracy fumbled on the first play from scrimmage and Josey Jewell recovered at the 23 for Carolina (3-7) to set up the winning kick.

New York rallied from a 17-7 deficit late and forced overtime on Graham Gano's 42-yard field goal with five seconds remaining.

# Ramsey on time in L.A.: 'amazing'

[Ramsey, from D1] Jacksonville Jaguars for Ramsey, the fifth player chosen in the 2016 draft.

Before the 2020 season, the Rams gave Ramsey a five-year, \$120-million extension, and he helped them reach the NFC divisional round. The next season, they won the Super Bowl.

But in March 2023, after suffering the worst Super Bowl hangover in NFL history, the Rams began a financial pullback necessitated by their spending to build the championship roster. Ramsey was traded to the Dolphins for a third-round pick and tight end Hunter Long.

"There were a lot of tough decisions that were on the horizon for us as a football team, and it didn't have anything to do with us not wanting him here," McVay said. "There were a lot of things that we had to do as a result of some previous years and things of that nature. He understood that."

In 10 games last season, Ramsey intercepted three passes. In September, he signed another extension that once again made him the NFL's highest-paid cornerback, with an average salary of \$24.1 million per season. In last week's 30-27 defeat to the Buffalo Bills, he displayed his athleticism by intercepting a pass that bounced off a receiver's chest near the end zone.

On Saturday, Ramsey told reporters in Miami that the move from Jacksonville to the Rams could not have worked out better.

"At a time when I stopped liking football as much, then I got traded to L.A., it just drastically changed everything for me," Ramsey said. "It's amazing, just my whole L.A. experience. I literally have nothing bad to say about L.A. or my time in L.A. at all."

Rams defensive coordinator Chris Shula was the team's outside linebackers coach in 2019 when the Rams acquired Ramsey.

The Rams were preparing for a game against the Atlanta Falcons, who featured star receiver Julio Jones. Ramsey walked into the Rams' building and proclaimed, "I got Julio," Shula recalled.

"All right," Shula thought, "We got a good one."

Ramsey shut down Jones and established himself on a defense led by star defensive lineman Aaron Donald. In 2020, Brandon Staley replaced Wade Phillips as defensive coordinator and deployed Ramsey from all angles and positions.



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

**THEN-RAMS** cornerback Jalen Ramsey is introduced before a 2022 game at SoFi Stadium. After that season, he was traded to Miami to cut costs. Ramsey has no hard feelings. "I ... have nothing bad to say about L.A."

## Rams prediction

The Rams, coming off an overtime victory over the Seattle Seahawks, aim to increase their winning streak to four games. Quarterback Matthew Stafford has passed for six touchdowns in the last two games, including the game-winner to receiver Demarcus Robinson at Seattle. Stafford has passed for 366 career touchdowns, and needs one to take over sole possession of 10th place on the NFL's all-time list.

Stafford and coach Sean McVay hope star receiver Puka Nacua learned a lesson after getting ejected for punching a Seahawks player. If Nacua stays in the game, he combines with Robinson and Cooper Kupp to give Stafford an array of targets.

Monday night's game could mark the return of interior offensive linemen Jonah Jackson and Steve Avila, who have been sidelined seven games because of injuries. Joe Noteboom or Warren McClendon Jr. will start in place of injured right tackle Rob Havenstein.

The Rams' defense, surging with young defensive linemen Jared Verse and Braden Fiske, has scored in four consecutive games, including Kamren Kinchens' 103-yard interception return against the Seahawks.

The Dolphins are 2-6 under coach Mike McDaniel, but three of those defeats occurred when quarterback Tua Tagovailoa was sidelined for four games after being placed on injured reserve because of a concussion. Tagovailoa has played two

games since returning, including last week's 30-27 defeat to the Buffalo Bills.

If Tagovailoa finds his rhythm, he can count on an array of weapons, including dual-threat running backs DeVon Achane and Raheem Mostert. Receiver Tyreek Hill could be a game-time decision because of a wrist injury. Jaylen Waddle and former Ram Odell Beckham Jr. are other talented targets. The Dolphins' defense is led by former Rams cornerback Jalen Ramsey.

**Line:** Dolphins by 1½. **Over/Under:** 49.

**Key injuries:** RAMS — OL Rob Havenstein (ankle, out); DL Neville Gallimore (shoulder, out); S Kam Curl (knee, questionable but expected to play); OL Kevin Dotson (ankle/knee, questionable but expected to play); LB Christian Rozeboom (neck, questionable but expected to play). DOLPHINS — OL Austin Jackson (knee, out); WR Tyreek Hill (wrist, questionable); FB Alec Ingold (calf, questionable); S Jevon Holland (hand/knee, questionable).

**Gary Klein's pick:** Despite the Dolphins' poor record, the Rams know that their opponent's speed and coach Mike McDaniel's scheme to use the entire field will be a challenge. But Stafford appears to be on a roll, and if Nacua can stay in the game, the Rams will prevail. **Rams 27, Dolphins 24**

Aubrey Pleasant, the Rams' assistant head coach, was the team's defensive backs coach in 2019 and 2020. If Ramsey did not get enough reps in practice as the season went on, he occasionally inserted himself onto the scout team, Pleasant said.

"He would give the offense the most incredible look that you could ever imagine, and then go play safety — and look incredible at that spot," Pleasant said. "It indirectly showed his teammates how much he really loved the game, and it also showed how much of an unbelievable athlete he really was."

In 2021, despite opponents avoiding his side of the field, Ramsey intercepted four passes and helped lead the Rams to victory in Super Bowl LVI at SoFi Stadium.

Before the Rams traded Ramsey to the Dolphins, he had played alongside and/or mentored current Rams cor-

nerbacks Darius Williams, Cobie Durant and Derion Kendrick and safeties Quentin Lake and John Johnson III.

"He just always brought that energy, brought that passion, brought that fire," Williams said. "It kind of made you want to play with the same energy, for sure."

"But, I mean, more than that, it's just keeping up with that competitiveness that he brings."

Lake, a rookie in 2022, said Ramsey was physical and cerebral. He understood how offensive coordinators attacked defenses and individual players.

Lake said one lesson from Ramsey stood out.

"He said there are guys that are going to make plays, guys that are going to capitalize on their opportunity when it comes," Lake said.

"But there are also guys where it might not be a play that's made but it might be a tone that's set.

"It might be you just absolutely blow up a crack block, or absolutely hit the running back with a good hit. That's a tone-setting play, and the energy that's created, and the energy that carries on through the defense and it carries through the whole team."

"He said, 'Who are going to be those guys ... that are going to make plays? But if you're not that guy, who's going to set the tone?'"

Jared Verse, the No. 19 pick in this year's draft, is an edge rusher but said he came of age as a brazen chatterbox on the field by listening to Ramsey in mic'd up moments. Rookie safety Jaylen McCollough said he was watching Ramsey "when he was wearing [No.] 13," as a freshman at Florida State.

"He's just one of the best all-around," said McCollough, who has four interceptions. "His mindset, his technique, his approach to

the game. ... Guys that always kind of find the ball. Real-deal football players."

Rams receivers are embracing the challenge of playing against Ramsey.

Cooper Kupp, who sharpened his skills practicing against him, described him as "a unicorn" of a football player.

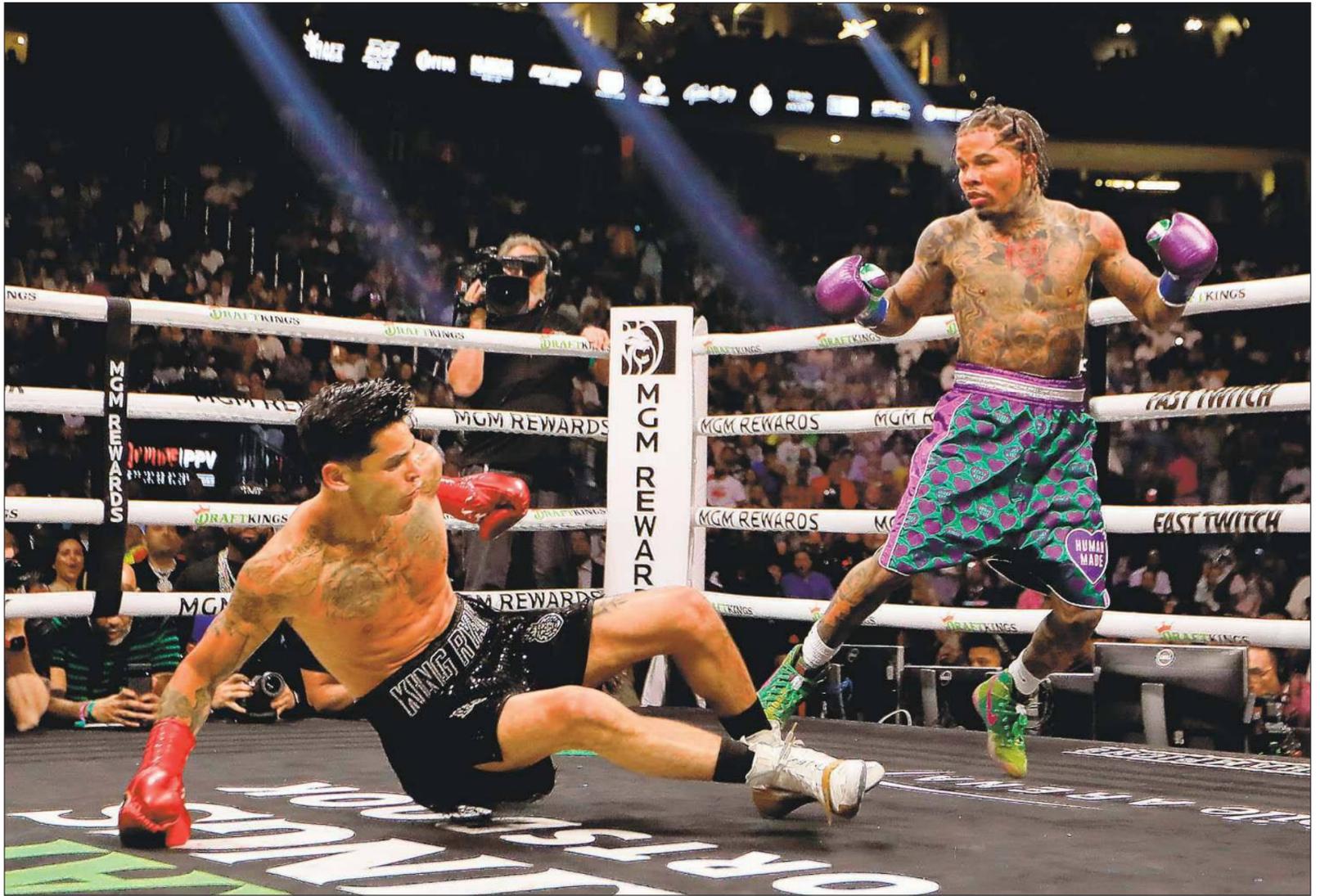
"The physicality and the urgency that he plays with, it makes you meet him there," Kupp said. "You can't hesitate at all."

Second-year receiver Puka Nacua said Ramsey was a smart player with "the physicality that you build a Madden [video game] corner with."

Stafford can attest to that. "It still jumps off the tape," he said of Ramsey's skills. "Some of the plays that he makes down the field, tracking the football, blitzing the quarterback, batting balls down or whatever it is, he's still got all the tools."

'I want people to know that I've self-reflected and that I'm bettering myself mentally and physically ... I definitely want to be a role model.'

— RYAN GARCIA



LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

GERVONTA DAVIS, right, floors Ryan Garcia in the second round of their fight in April 2023. The seven-round loss was the first of Garcia's career after 23 wins.

## Garcia attempting to revive career

[Garcia, from D1]

nity would "rot in hell."

Lastly, in September, Haney filed a lawsuit in New York charging Garcia with battery, fraud and breach of contract over the April fight. And the boxer's terrible, horrible, no good, very bad year isn't over yet since 2024 still has more than six weeks to go.

The question now is can Garcia, who is training for a possible New Year Eve exhibition against a mixed martial artist in Japan and a January appearance at a festival in Dubai, climb off the canvas and save his career? Fighters may be trained to get up when they've been knocked down, but first they have to know they're being counted out. And Garcia has yet to admit that.

So as he squirmed uncomfortably on a small sofa at his lawyer's house while the rap sheet was read back to him, he also brushed aside the growing list of controversies surrounding him the way he might deflect a left hook. In his telling, he's the victim, not the perpetrator of much of what has befallen him.

"I did make maybe one or two mistakes, for sure," he said. "But most of it was definitely just a year of people trying to knock me down. It was just a lot of little things that I had to persevere and I had to get through."

He also cautioned against counting him out, just yet.

"It's far from over," he said of a once-brilliant career that has stalled. "It's just starting. We're heading in the right direction."

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Outside the ring and away from his social media accounts, Garcia can be funny and extremely likable. He laughs often, smiles even more frequently and is handsome in a way that makes casting agents swoon. So it wasn't surprising to learn he's been handed multiple scripts and is considering acting as he sits out his suspension.

But any detour, he promises, would just be temporary.

"I feel like I'm just too good at my sport to leave yet," said Garcia, whose unshakable confidence — some would call it a cocky arrogance — is his real superpower.

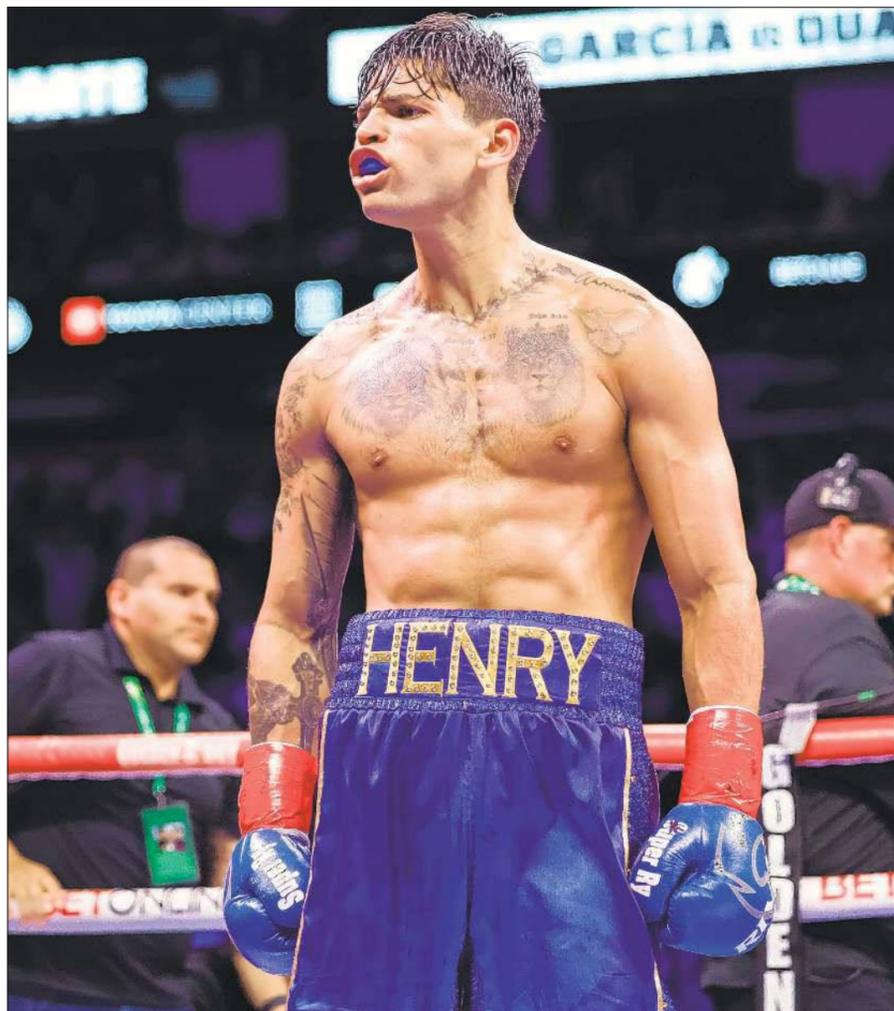
"My heart's in boxing," he said. "It's all I've ever done."

Garcia grew up with a brother and three sisters in the Mojave Desert, where there are almost as many cacti as there are people and where the temperatures drop below freezing in the winter, then soar into the triple digits for most of the summer.

It's also where Garcia fell in love with boxing before he had finished the second grade.

His father, Henry, a former professional fighter, was forced to give up the sport when he started a family. The sport, however, never left him. So when Ryan and his younger brother, Sean, a southpaw who has lost once in nine pro bouts, became curious about boxing, Henry stepped up to coach them.

Henry Garcia and his wife, Lisa, both became boxing officials after



CARMEN MANDATO Getty Images

THE PRESIDENT of Golden Boy Promotions says that if Garcia just focuses on boxing, "he can overcome anything." Above, Garcia after defeating Oscar Duarte in a bout last year.



LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

GARCIA is comforted by his mother, Lisa, and father, Henry, left, after the loss to Davis. Garcia's parents became boxing officials as they helped their son pursue the sport from age 7.

Ryan, then 7, embarked on a 10-year amateur career that would see him fight more than 200 times, capturing 15 national titles. But none of it was easy. The Garcias often slept in their car, they said, as they drove from event to event, overpaying the heavy dues required to advance in a sport that rewards the ability to both endure pain and to dish it out.

"He's always been special. Even as an amateur fighter he was special," said second-generation trainer Manny Robles, who has known Garcia since those amateur days. "You could tell this kid was going to excel."

And for Garcia, making good on that promise was the only way to reward his parents' sacrifice.

"We have had a long journey up, just kind of a lower-class family that had a big dream. They did whatever they could to take me [to] the tournaments," said Garcia, who trades on his family's Mexican roots, frequently carrying the tri-color flag into the ring with him although he and his parents were born in the U.S. and he speaks no Spanish.

Garcia dropped out of high school to turn pro at 17, beating Mexican lightweight Edgar Meza in his debut, which was held in a bar in Tijuana. Meza never fought again, but Garcia won five bouts over the next four months — mostly fighting on small cards in pool halls and nightclubs, the kind of dark, sad, smoke-filling rooms where careers typically go to die, not to be born.

"He came up the hard way," Robles said. "You're fighting at local bars in TJ, that's not the easy way."

But despite the humble surroundings, those early fights drew the attention of Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions, which signed him to a contract in the fall of 2016. Suddenly he had a chance to reward his parents not just with trophies, but with money as well.

"It was a lot of pressure as a young kid," said Garcia, whose net worth has been estimated at nearly \$50 million. "You just grow and mature faster than other kids. You have different responsibilities. You feel like, 'Oh, man, I better win this fight. They need me.'"

"It was hard to see how much pressure it was during the moment. But later on it was like, 'Dang, I actually had a lot on my plate.'"

Soon Garcia was working with Eddy Reynoso, Canelo Alvarez's trainer, and fighting the co-main event on a card headed by Alvarez at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

He needed 98 seconds to win that fight, claiming the WBC silver lightweight title. But the storm clouds were already gathering.

In January 2021, in a fight delayed by COVID-19, Olympic gold medalist Luke Campbell sent Garcia to the canvas for the first time. Garcia got up to win on a seventh-round technical knockout, claiming the WBC interim lightweight title he was to defend against Javier

## ‘Is he really working on himself? ... That’s the question. And we won’t know that until he comes back to the ring.’

— MANNY ROBLES, a trainer who has known Garcia since Garcia’s amateur career



FRANK FRANKLIN II Associated Press

**ALTHOUGH RYAN GARCIA**, above, beat Devin Haney, he forfeited for testing positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

[Garcia, from D4]

Fortuna in a fight that would set up a title unification bout with Haney.

The Fortuna fight never happened, however, with Garcia withdrawing 11 days after the contract was signed “to manage my health and wellbeing [sic],” the boxer wrote on Instagram.

In the 46 months since beating Campbell, Garcia was suspended or arrested outside the ring as often as he won inside it as rumors of alcohol abuse spread. He could be brilliant one moment, maddeningly undisciplined the next.

He was knocked down twice in a seven-round loss to Gervonta Davis in April 2023, for example, suffering his first loss as a pro. Then two fights later he knocked Haney down three times, only to have the win ruled no contest when he failed a drug test.

Boxing is littered with world champions whose careers were destroyed by drugs, alcohol or lack of focus and discipline, dating to the early 19th century and bare-knuckle champion Tom Molineaux, who died penniless at age 34 of an alcohol-related illness. More recently, drugs cost two-time welterweight champion Aaron Pryor one of his world titles, heavyweight champion Tyson Fury saw his career stalled by cocaine and depression, and Edwin Valero, an undefeated world champion with a violent temper, was arrested for assault, then murder, during an eight-month descent into hell that ended with the boxer dying by suicide in a Venezuelan prison cell in April 2010. He was just 28.

Robles said Garcia, who can’t compete in a sanctioned fight until next spring, may be at a similar fork in the road, with one path leading to redemption, boxing glory and unimaginable riches and the other leading to who knows what. What Garcia does during this forced timeout he earned for bad behavior will go a long way toward defining that path.

“Just depends on what he’s doing with himself,” said Robles, who trained heavyweight world champion Andy Ruiz Jr. and female world champion Mikaela Mayer, among others. “Is he really working on himself? Is he being a better person really? That’s the question. And we won’t know that until he comes back to the ring. I hope he doesn’t end up in a bad place.”

But, the longtime trainer cautioned, “the kid better wake up and realize that that could all be gone and over. Especially if you’re hanging around with the wrong people, the wrong crowd, the wrong circle, you’re going to end up in a very dark place.”

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Nobody knows exactly when Garcia’s career began spiraling out of control, but there’s widespread agreement why. If few opponents could give the hard-punching fighter trouble inside the ring, the demons he battled outside the square circle—mental health challenges and alcoholism—have proved far tougher.

“I’ve been struggling with mental health for some years now,” he said recently. “I just try my best to work with my highs and lows at times. That’s just something that I



TIM WARNER Getty Images

**GARCIA ENJOYS** a win over Luke Campbell during Garcia’s once-brilliant career. “It’s far from over,” he said of his reboot. “It’s just starting. We’re heading in the right direction.”

had to go through.

“Sometimes you gotta, you know, take a little pause and try to come back. That’s what I did.”

Garcia was seen drinking in public before the Haney fight—he even drank a beer at the weigh-in, where he was 3½ pounds overweight—then two months after the fight, a reportedly drunken Garcia was arrested for felony vandalism and hospitalized after causing \$15,000 in damage at the Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills.

When Garcia paid for the damage, the hotel declined to pursue the case and Judge James P. Cooper III last month granted a civil compromise, essentially dismissing the charges over the objections of L.A. County Dist. Atty. George Gascón, who said he wanted the boxer held accountable.

A couple of weeks after the hotel episode, Celina, Garcia’s wife, posted photos of the damage she says the fighter caused at her Porter Ranch home in another drunken rampage. Both incidents occurred shortly after Garcia said he learned his mother, Lisa, had been diagnosed with breast cancer.

“I was going through a hard

time. It was just me having one emotional moment,” said Garcia, who is again living with his wife in Porter Ranch as the couple reportedly try to save their three-year marriage, though the boxer was publicly linked to two other women in the past nine months and his divorce petition remains open.

In between the two violent incidents, Garcia’s father, the man who sacrificed his own career to launch one for his son, said Ryan stopped speaking to him. So he did interviews and took to social media to urge Ryan to seek therapy for his addiction. His son sent a response via X, claiming—inaccurately—that he had given up drinking.

Father and son have since reconciled as the boxer slowly and haltingly begins to acknowledge the obvious: His drinking could wipe out everything he’s worked for. His nickname is “King Ry,” but at the moment the king has no crown, having been forced to relinquish the WBC lightweight title he once held.

“I want people to know that I’ve self-reflected and that I’m bettering myself mentally and physically, especially with alcohol,” he said. “I want people to know that I’m going to still be a pain in the ass, but as far

as promotion-wise and everything else, I definitely want to be a role model.”

That’s about as close as the likable Garcia gets to a *mea culpa* during a quick if wide-ranging interview at his lawyer’s home as his driver/bodyguard/escort waits outside behind the tinted windows of a black SUV.

The irony of Garcia largely shrugging off his problems was thick because before his 2023 loss to Davis, who had his own well-chronicled trouble with the law in South Florida, Garcia mocked his opponent for not having a moral compass.

“It’s a gift to me to know what’s right or wrong in life, even in little instances,” he said then, a take that has not aged well in the intervening 18 months. “That’s not something you teach.”

Although Garcia, his heavily tattooed body hidden behind a loose-fitting T-shirt and blue jeans torn at the knees, is surrounded by the wreckage of his career, it remains confident he can put it back together again. And he definitely has a lot of people in his corner.

Golden Boy founder Oscar De La Hoya, who had his own well-publicized legal and substance-

abuse issues during a career that saw him win 11 world titles in six weight classes, has been advising Garcia, as has Golden Boy partner Bernard Hopkins, who, as teenager, was convicted of nine felonies and sentenced to 18 years in prison before turning his life around and becoming a multi-time world champion.

“He’s not the first one to go through problems like these. And we’re always going to encourage him,” Golden Boy president Eric Gómez said. “We want the best for him and if anybody can do it, Ryan can. He’s still young.”

“If he really focuses on what he does best, which is boxing, he can overcome anything.”

(Another reason Golden Boy remains with the 26-year-old Garcia is financial. If the boxer gets his career back on track, he’s young enough to become one of the best-paid fighters in the sport, and the promoter, whose contract with Garcia extends into 2026, will cash in.)

Garcia no longer drinks at home, he says—but that was never really the problem—and concedes the pressure of being in the public eye led him to turn his social media accounts over to other members of his team. (Many of Garcia’s problems, a source close to the boxer said, were caused by Garcia’s own trolling on social media, where he told tall tales to generate attention only to have the lies repeated wildly, causing embarrassment and forcing his camp to walk them back.)

He’s also learned to watch his behavior when he goes out.

“I’ve kind of had to adjust my life to that,” he said. “I can’t do anything without people knowing.”

“Everyone’s taking pictures. TMZ’s there. It just gets annoying.”

Robles has a different theory. Garcia’s problems didn’t begin with a bottle or a social-media account, he says. Instead it began in early 2022, when the boxer left the camp of Álvarez, the hyper-disciplined Mexican world champion, and Reynoso, his trainer.

“That’s the worst thing he could have done,” Robles said. “What better role model is there than Canelo Álvarez? He’s a true professional, inside and outside the ring. That could be Ryan. But instead he’s somewhere else, doing all the extracurricular activities.”

Garcia said he left because Reynoso didn’t have time for him, an explanation Gómez agrees with. But Reynoso said the boxer made the relationship difficult.

“He’s a very good kid,” Reynoso said in Spanish shortly after the split with Garcia. “But he’s too focused on the cameras and other things. He doesn’t have a real focus on what is boxing.”

Few sports can match boxing for jealousy, backstabbing and general loathsomeness, so not everyone shares Robles’ concern. In fact, Garcia’s critics are having a field day, saying the fighter, once known for his hard work and ring IQ, has become lazy and dumb, has no footwork and even less defense.

Now he’s also been linked to mental health and substance-abuse problems, which can be damning in boxing. And when he begins his comeback, he’ll almost certainly have to step up in weight to compete as a welterweight, a hugely competitive division.

But Garcia, unlike most current boxers, understands the game. He’s been mentored by Floyd Mayweather and long admired Muhammad Ali, two master showmen who taught him that fights need attention to draw sponsors and sell pay-per-view subscriptions. And nothing draws attention like controversy, which Garcia can fan through social media accounts that have more than 15 million followers combined.

If Garcia was once boxing’s fair-haired boy, a fighter who, like De La Hoya, rose from humble beginnings to the top of his sport through dedication and hard work, this year’s controversies have stamped him as something else.

“I’m the heel,” he said, borrowing a wrestling term used to define villains. “... People started kind of relating to me. You know how people love the anti-hero? He’s a bad dude, but damn, I kind of like this guy?”

“I think I could turn it on for the fight, for the promotion. But as far as my daily life, I definitely need to tone it down.”

That appears to be Garcia’s road to redemption. Play the bad guy in the boxing ring while struggling, surviving and sacrificing to become the good guy outside it. Make millions by enticing people to root against his anti-hero while writing a comeback story that ends heroically.

Sounds complicated. But Gómez says it would be a bad idea to bet against him.

“He’s just scratched the surface,” Gómez said. “I really feel that he could be the biggest thing in boxing. He just needs to focus on his craft a little bit more.”

“He’s got the talent, he’s got the looks. He’s very personable. If he focuses, the sky’s the limit.”

Times researcher Scott Wilson contributed to this report.

# Southland high school basketball is soaring

Coaches across region agree that the number of top-caliber players is unprecedented.

## ERIC SONDEHEIMER ON HIGH SCHOOLS

If you're a fan of amateur basketball, there's no better place to spend the next four months than Southern California, where talent at the high school level has converged among the classes of 2025, 2026, 2027 and 2028 to create one of those "I can't believe it" moments.

"No question, it's special," Harvard-Westlake coach David Rebibo said.

"SoCal basketball is the greatest amateur basketball in the world right now. Tomorrow may be different but today," Inglewood coach Jason Crowe Sr. said in a tweet.

Let's start with the class of 2025. Nikolas Khamenia from Harvard-Westlake has grown to 6 feet 9, won two gold medals representing USA national teams and is committed to Duke. Brayden Burries from Eastvale Roosevelt is a 6-4 guard considered the best uncommitted senior in California after averaging 24.8 points for a 31-4 team last season.

The class of 2026 is unprecedented in the quality of talent concentrated in one area. Tyran Stokes of Sherman Oaks Notre Dame, Brandon McCoy of St. John Bosco, Alijah Arenas of Chatsworth, Jason Crowe Jr. of Inglewood, Tahj Ariza of Westchester and Chris-

## PREP BASKETBALL PRESEASON RANKINGS

By Eric Sondheimer

Rk.	School	Comment
1	ST. JOHN BOSCO	Brandon McCoy, Elzie Harrington, Christian Collins are impressive trio to build around.
2	HARVARD-WESTLAKE	Defending state champions have 6-9 Nikolas Khamenia, plus promising young players.
3	EASTVALE ROOSEVELT	Came close last season to CIF title, and Brayden Burries, Issac Williamson, Myles Walker return.
4	SHERMAN OAKS NOTRE DAME	Watch for big improvement from Zachary White to aid other stars.
5	MATER DEI	Luke Barnett and Owen Verna are terrific shooters from long range.
6	JSERRA	The addition of Brannon Martinsen makes the Lions very dangerous.
7	SANTA MARGARITA	The arrival of Kaiden Bailey adds offensive power.
8	SIERRA CANYON	As usual, a group of new players, led by Gavin Hightower, must have chemistry to succeed.
9	LOS ALAMITOS	Veteran team is ready to use its chemistry and experience.
10	ROLLING HILLS PREP	Strong offseason work has team on the rise.
11	DAMIEN	7-foot center Nathaniel Garcia leads a veteran group.
12	LA MIRADA	Gene Roebuck and Julien Gomez are terrific duo.
13	WINDWARD	Veteran team has chemistry and weapons to succeed.
14	CRESPI	Nevada commit Peyton White leads Celts.
15	REDONDO UNION	Hudson Mayes is ready for big senior season.
16	ST. PIUS X-ST. MATTHIAS	Harvard commit Douglas Langford is the player to watch.
17	ST. ANTHONY	Defending 2AA champions are experienced and talented.
18	HERITAGE CHRISTIAN	Dillan Shaw and Tae Simmons are formidable duo.
19	ANAHEIM CANYON	Brandon Benjamin is back to lead Comanches.
20	SAN CLEMENTE	Guards Christian Fernandez and Porter Hansen lead Tritons.
21	BISHOP MONTGOMERY	Coach Doug Mitchell returns all of his top players, so beware.
22	RANCHO CUCAMONGA	Guard Aaron Glass is one of the best.
23	INGLEWOOD	The Jason Crowe era begins with lots of firepower.
24	LONG BEACH POLY	Cal commit Jovani Ruff has some help this season.
25	MIRA COSTA	6-4 Jacob De Armas, 6-7 Eneasi Piuleini lead the team.

tian Collins of St. John Bosco are top-15 college prospects.

Add Kaiden Bailey from Santa Margarita, Luke Barnett from Mater Dei, Brannon Martinsen from JSerra, and a Southland all-star team could travel the country and take on anyone.

"To have this many national-level-caliber players in Southern California is pretty amazing," St. John Bosco coach Matt Dunn

said.

Players have played with and against one another, so that raises the level of intensity for the upcoming matchups. Stokes and McCoy were teammates on the USA U17 gold-medal team. Crowe and Arenas have been club teammates. Ariza and Collins used to be teammates at St. Bernard. Much of the talent is concentrated in the Mission and Trinity leagues, and games involving them will

be played Jan. 10 in a special one-day showcase at the Intuit Dome.

The class of 2027 is led by La Mirada's Gene Roebuck, who averaged 24.1 points as a freshman. The Barnes twins, Carter and Isaiah, should be much improved at Crespi.

Corona Centennial has 6-3 freshman Kai Patton, who coach Josh Giles said is "the most freakish athletic freshman I've had in 22 years of coaching." Mater

Dei's 6-7 freshman Evan Willis is also highly regarded.

There are players from Senegal, China, the Republic of Congo, Croatia, South Sudan, Russia and Nigeria on rosters, adding to the intrigue of overflowing talent in the Southland.

For the first time, the Southern Section will use a computer algorithm to place teams in playoff divisions, which will be culture shock to some. There's no more knowing divisions before the season begins. It's similar to football, where teams in the same league could face off in the opening round.

With the season starting Nov. 18, there are four teams that start out as elite: St. John Bosco, Harvard-Westlake, Eastvale Roosevelt and Sherman Oaks Notre Dame. There are others capable of reaching that level, including Mater Dei, JSerra, Sierra Canyon, Damien and Windward.

Injuries and the sit-out period for eligibility could result in uncertainty early on. Stokes has a wrist injury, so he could be sidelined for weeks at Notre Dame. Servite has players 6-9 and 6-11 from Senegal who become eligible Dec. 27.

Mater Dei has 10 players with grade-point averages above 4.0, so coach Gary McKnight, entering his 43rd season as the winningest coach in California, is excited. "It's fun to come to practice," he said.

The most improbable City Section final in history happened last season, when King/Drew defeated LACES 51-45 in the Open Division

final. Then a group of King/Drew players transferred to Washington Prep in the offseason, led by All-City guard Donald Thompson Jr. They won't be eligible until Dec. 27. It's another wide-open affair to determine No. 1, with Westchester the early favorite.

## Players to watch

■ Nikolas Khamenia, Harvard-Westlake, 6-9, Sr.: Duke commit won two gold medals in summer competitions.

■ Brandon McCoy, St. John Bosco, 6-4, Jr.: His athleticism, competitiveness, defensive toughness are second to none.

■ Alijah Arenas, Chatsworth, 6-5, Jr.: City Section's No. 1 player keeps improving.

■ Jason Crowe Jr., Inglewood, 6-2, Jr.: Averaged 37.4 and 36 points the last two seasons at Lynwood.

■ Brayden Burries, Eastvale Roosevelt, 6-5, Sr.: Versatile, fierce, unselfish and a true leader.

■ Tyran Stokes, Sherman Oaks Notre Dame, 6-7, Jr.: Prolific Prep transfer has NBA-like skills.

■ Tahj Ariza, Westchester, 6-8, Jr.: Playing at his father's alma mater offers unique opportunity.

■ Elzie Harrington, St. John Bosco, 6-5, Sr.: Harvard commit has gained confidence and strength.

■ Nathaniel Garcia, Damien, 7-0, Sr.: California Baptist commit is stronger, more athletic and taller.

■ Brandon Benjamin, Anaheim Canyon, 6-6, Sr.: San Diego commit has improved as a three-point shooter.

## FLAG FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS

# Orange Lutheran takes the title

By Steve Galluzzo

Orange Lutheran faced fourth and two at its own 38-yard line with 57 seconds left. Quarterback Makena Cook took the snap, surveyed the field and calmly threw a dart to freshman Maddison Milne for a first down that clinched the Lancers' 20-18 triumph over Newport Harbor in the inaugural Southern Section Division 1 flag football championship game Saturday night at El Modena High.

"We just learned the play a few practices ago where I run the flat," Milne said. "It was there and I just had to catch it."

In a matchup between the top two seeds that was filled with drama and excitement, Cook shook off a first-half interception to hit Laina Yasumura in the end zone on fourth and goal from the five-yard line to put her team ahead 13-12 with 9:25 left. Yasumura's first touchdown catch of the season came at an opportune time.

After AJ Hendrix intercepted a pass over the middle and returned it to the Newport Harbor 20, the Lancers (23-2) needed three plays to cash in the turnover, as Cook connected with Milne on the four-yard scoring pass, then found Josie Anderson for a one-point conversion to make it 20-12 with 5:10 left.

Maia Helmar's pinpoint passing moved the Sailors within range and she connected with Maddy Michel from seven yards out to narrow the deficit. On the two-point try from the 10-yard line, Helmar was flushed from the pocket and her hurried throw was high over the outstretched arms of Michel in the end zone, leaving the Sailors behind by two with 1:22 left.

"I was looking for whoever was open," Cook said of the play that finally enabled the Lancers to run out the clock. "Coach didn't want to go for it but [offensive coordinator] Darren Kelso talked her into it. The game was in our hands and I was confident we could get the yards."

After the trophy presentation, Orange Lutheran players failed in the first attempt to douse coach Kristen Sherman with ice water,



STEVE GALLUZZO FOR THE TIMES

**ORANGE LUTHERAN'S** Josie Anderson, left, knocks the ball away from Newport Harbor receiver Cooper Dick in the end zone. The Lancers won 20-18.

but Cook found another bucket and Sherman willingly "took one for the team."

"I'm naturally risk averse, so it was a difficult decision for me," Sherman said about the fourth-down gamble. "But ultimately I figured what the heck."

Orange Lutheran trailed 12-7 at halftime and Sherman's message was clear: "It's not how you start, it's how you finish." Newport Harbor was trying to avenge a 28-12 defeat to Orange Lutheran on Aug. 24, and the Sailors scored on their first possession on Helmar's five-yard strike to Skylie Cid. The extra point was knocked away at the goal line.

On its opening drive, Orange Lutheran answered with Cook's three-yard toss to Ava Harrison, then the Lancers took a 7-6 lead on Ruby Fuamatu's one-point grab.

Safety Scarlett Guyser's interception gave Newport Harbor (25-3) the ball back at their 33. Five plays later Helmar threw a 27-yard scoring pass to Leah Showalter, but the extra point was dropped. Orange Lutheran got inside the 10-yard line in the closing seconds of the first half but was unable to score.

"We have one senior starter, all the rest of us are back," Cook said when asked if she thought her team could repeat. "So hopefully we can."

## Division 2

Natalie Keith threw five touchdown passes to lead Irvine Northwood to a 31-17 triumph over Trabuco Hills.

Elisa Kung caught two touchdown passes in the first half for Northwood (19-6), but after the second Madeline Hales picked off the conversion try in the end zone and returned it 82 yards for two points to make it 13-9.

"Natalie is so talented. I just found the open space and trusted her," said Kung, a senior who also plays soccer and lacrosse. "We'd never played them before, but we watched film and saw their safeties like to bite so the deep routes would be open and that's what we found. I quit club soccer to be here and it's the best decision I've ever made."

Emma Ortiz scored on a 65-yard hook-and-lateral play and added the one-point catch to pull Trabuco Hills (17-4) even at 7-7 with 15:30 left in the first half.

Keith found Hailey Brennan alone in the end zone for a short touchdown and the two hooked up again on the Timberwolves' next drive to widen the lead to 25-9 early in the second half. Hannah Kim's grab on fourth and goal with 8:40 left put the game out of reach.

## Division 3

Montana Longcrier caught a six-yard touchdown pass with no time on

the clock and Mia LaRosa snared the ensuing one-point conversion pass from Addyson Wink as Troy scored three times in the last two minutes to stun San Clemente 33-32 in the first game of the day.

"In the timeout before the conversion I literally said, 'Throw me the ball,'" said LaRosa, a senior who is committed to Cal State Fullerton for soccer. "Addyson and I have been friends since preschool. I trust her completely. Teams have underestimated us all season. I'm really proud of everybody. Actually we're all friends from other sports. It was a great game and this feels amazing!"

LaRosa's pick-six and the extra point by Longcrier pulled the Warriors to within 32-26 with 58 seconds left, then the defense forced a turnover on downs with 36 seconds left to set up the winning drive. Troy (17-3-3) ended the season on a 16-game winning streak.

## Division 4

Anica Mindes threw four touchdown passes — two to Chloe Sanders — to lead Santa Monica to a 28-6 victory over Fullerton. Jayla Johnson-Lake and Kyla Cotton each had an interception and a touchdown reception while Kalea Oshidari also intercepted a pass on defense for the Vikings (14-6), the two-time undefeated Ocean League champions.

"I have a lot of confidence

# Mater Dei repeats as girls' volleyball champ

By Steve Galluzzo

Winning back-to-back titles is one of the toughest feats in sports, yet the Mater Dei High girls volleyball team made it look easy Saturday night, sweeping Sierra Canyon, 25-20, 25-16, 25-20, at Cerritos College to defend its CIF Southern Section Division 1 championship.

Orange Lutheran transfer Westley Matavao had 12 kills and seven digs, USC-bound Layli Ostovar had 11 kills and 10 digs, and Kayla Ostovar added 15 digs for the Monarchs (35-4), who won their fifth section title under coach Dan O'Dell. They also won the title in three sets for the second straight year.

"Last year's team was better at passing, but this year we utilized all six players hitting in a 6-2 and all six of them can get kills," O'Dell said. "We're definitely better than we were at the start of the season."

Addison Coady had five kills and two blocks in a final between the top two seeds that was over in 86 minutes.

"We beat them at Durango [tournament], but we knew they'd be ready and we expect to get the best from every team we play," Coady said. "It was the same mindset we always have. It was less about keying on their weaknesses, more about not making errors on our side. We were up for the challenge."

Mater Dei breezed through its three pool play matches without losing a set. In contrast, the Trailblazers played two five-setters, losing one, on their way

to advancing on set differential. Eva Jeffries had seven kills and seven digs for the Mission League champions (32-5).

"Sierra Canyon definitely had a tougher pool... making it out of that gauntlet with Marymount and Mira Costa took a lot out of them," O'Dell said. "They're a great team, they just had an off night."

The Division 2 final earlier in the day was anything but one-sided as Murrieta Valley managed to hold off a furious Palos Verdes comeback to prevail in five sets, 25-23, 25-14, 20-25, 14-25, 15-12. The Division 3 final also went the distance before Long Beach Poly edged Bishop Diego, 25-27, 25-23, 16-25, 25-14, 25-12. The first match of the day saw Bell Gardens make quick work of Garden Grove, 25-15, 25-9, 25-9, in Division 8.

In Division 4, Campbell Hall swept host Newbury Park. Meanwhile, in the City Section, No. 1 Taft outlasted No. 2 Venice in epic fashion, 22-25, 25-17, 25-16, 17-25, 17-15, at Cal State Northridge to capture its first Open Division crown and sixth overall. The Treadors (40-7) finished the season undefeated against section opponents. University beat Western League rival LACES, 25-15, 24-26, 25-15, 25-16, to take the Division I title. It was the Wildcats' fourth City Crown. Vaughn swept Triumph, 25-17, 25-9, 25-20, for the Division II title (the White Tigers' second) and Reseda beat Arleta, 25-14, 25-13, 21-25, 25-8, in the Division III final, the first title for the Regents.

in my receivers," Mindes said. "I'm a senior and I've played quarterback both years we've had a team. I like being in the leadership role. I love how fast-paced the game is. I'm glad we won. We really wanted it."

## Division 5

Raeyara Cook scored twice in a 90-second span early in the first half and Antelope Valley (13-6) never looked back in a 28-0 shut-out of Northview.

Cook caught an 18-yard touchdown pass from Leandriah Zachry on the Antelopes' first possession. On the second play of Northview's ensuing drive the sophomore returned an interception 20 yards for a touchdown and Lyric Verdugo's one-point catch made it 14-0.

Ariana Soil slipped behind the defense to catch a 35-yard option pass from Zachry in stride and extend the lead to 21-0 before half-

time. Soil had an interception on defense and caught the last touchdown pass with 4:55 remaining.

"I like defense more... defense wins games," said Soil, also a point guard on the Antelopes' basketball team, which captured the Southern Section Division 5A championship last winter. "Basketball is my main sport, but I like that I can do both. We have lots of effective plays, but nine times out of 10 I'm the go-to [receiver]."

Saturday's results  
SOUTHERN SECTION  
First Round  
Division 1  
Division 8  
Beckman 42, Rancho Mirage 26  
Division 11  
Santa Paula 35, Crespi 34  
8 Man  
Division 1  
Santa Clarita Christian 26, Faith Baptist 20  
Cate 53, Chadwick 0  
Division 2  
Teacher 36, Hillcrest Christian 18  
Santa Clara 67, Southlands Christian 32

## PREP FOOTBALL PLAYOFF SCORES

Saturday's results  
SOUTHERN SECTION  
First Round  
Division 1  
Division 8  
Beckman 42, Rancho Mirage 26  
Division 11  
Santa Paula 35, Crespi 34  
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Los Angeles Times  
SPORTS EXTRA

A TIMES E-NEWSPAPER EXCLUSIVE :: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2024



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

**LEBRON JAMES** scores against the Raptors' Ochai Agbaji on his way to his second triple-double in as many games with 19 points, 10 rebounds and 16 assists Sunday.

# A triple-double, an eye injury, a Lakers win

BY DAN WOIKE

JJ Redick caught himself before the 10th game of his coaching career Sunday night.

The young Lakers coach was about to use an old coaching saying, chuckling at the absurdity of offering a “back in my day” to anyone listening.

“There’s an old saying in coaching, ‘You are what you emphasize,’” he said before the Lakers played the Toronto Raptors. “Your team becomes what you

emphasize.’”

Since taking the job, Redick has repeatedly offered his players that advice. Crash the glass. Get back on defense. Stay in rhythm on offense.

And after returning from a 1-4 trip, it’s once again become a focus for the Lakers.

But against the Raptors, that version of the Lakers didn’t arrive. At least not on time. They got crushed on the glass. They got beaten in transition. And they stagnated on offense.

Luckily, it happened early in the

game.

After a sluggish first quarter, the Lakers started to do the things the coaching staff had been emphasizing, zooming past the Raptors for a 123-103 win to stay undefeated at Crypto.com Arena.

The team fully found its footing midway through the third quarter, LeBron James barreling in transition, Anthony Davis anchoring the defense and Austin Reaves slashing through the paint.

James finished with 19 points, 10 rebounds and 16 assists, his third triple-double of the season and his

second in as many games. Davis scored 22 in 26 minutes and Reaves led the Lakers with 27 while dishing out six assists.

Davis, a huge part of the third-quarter run, made the biggest defensive play of the game when he met Raptors 7-footer Jakob Poeltl in front of the rim, rejecting a one-handed dunk emphatically.

But after the play, Davis fell to the court and writhed in pain, holding his face. Replays showed Poeltl had poked Davis in the left eye with his hand.

Davis didn’t return to the game.

Davis had to leave multiple games last season after being hit in the eye, even missing the following game on one occasion.

Redick said Davis was having trouble seeing after getting hit.

“Obviously, take a little trauma to the eye, it takes a little bit of time to sort of get your clear vision back,” Redick said.

“But other than that, no update.”

The Lakers have two days off before hosting Memphis on Wednesday night.

# Lions beat Texans on last-second field goal after Goff’s five picks

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jake Bates made a 52-yard field goal as time expired, and the Detroit Lions overcame a career-high five interceptions by Jared Goff to rally for a 26-23 win over the Houston Texans on Sunday night.

The Lions improved to 8-1 for the first time since 1954 with their seventh straight victory overall and fifth in a row on the road.

Detroit trailed 23-7 at halftime after Goff committed three interceptions in the first two quarters, and he had two more passes picked off in the third quarter. Nonetheless, the Lions scored 16 straight points to tie it with about five minutes to go on Bates’ 58-yard field goal.

The Texans (6-4) had a chance to take the lead with just under two minutes left, but Ka’imi Fairbairn’s 58-yard try was wide left.

The Lions became the first team to win when committing five or more interceptions since Atlanta beat Arizona 23-19 on Nov. 18, 2012, when Matt Ryan was picked off five times.

David Montgomery ran for three-yard touchdown early in the third, but his run on the two-point conversion try was stopped, leaving the Lions down 23-13. A nine-yard touchdown reception by Amon-Ra St. Brown got Detroit

within 23-20 early in the fourth quarter.

Goff threw for 240 yards and two touchdowns and Jahmyr Gibbs ran for 71 yards.

C.J. Stroud threw for 232 yards and a touchdown, but he had two interceptions in the second half as the Texans were shut out after the break to lose for the third time in four games.

Goff’s five picks were the most by an NFL player since Jameis Winston had five on Oct. 13, 2019, for Tampa Bay against Carolina.

Goff hadn’t committed an interception in five games and entered Sunday with just four all season. His previous career high was four in a loss to Chicago while with the Rams on Dec. 9, 2018.

Rookie Kamari Lassiter led the Texans with two interceptions as they set a franchise record for picks.

Jimmie Ward intercepted Goff on Detroit’s first drive on a ball that was tipped by Jalen Pitre to give Houston the ball at the Detroit 33. The Texans made it 7-0 when Joe Mixon ran eight yards for a score.

**at Cardinals 31, Jets 6:** Arizona won its fourth straight game by racing to a big lead and easily handling New York. Kyler Murray threw for 266 yards and a touchdown and also ran for two scores, picking apart a Jets defense that



DAVID J. PHILLIP Associated Press

**DETROIT’S** Jared Goff passes during the Lions’ come-from-behind 26-23 win over Houston on Sunday. Goff threw for 240 yards and two touchdowns with a career-high five interceptions.

was ranked No. 2 against the pass this season.

The Cardinals (6-4) scored touchdowns on four of their first five drives and never trailed.

Murray completed 22 of 24 passes, including a franchise-record 17 in a row.

**Eagles 34, at Cowboys 6:** Jalen Hurts threw two touchdown passes and ran for a pair of scores, and Philadelphia rolled over stumbling Dallas in the first game since quarterback Dak Prescott tore a hamstring.

Hurts shook off two sacks from Micah Parsons in the star pass rusher’s return from injury, con-

necting with Dallas Goedert for one of the touchdowns after his tight end missed three games with a hamstring issue.

The Eagles (7-2) took over first place in the NFC East with their fifth consecutive victory while Dallas (3-6) fell to 0-4 at home in a fourth straight loss overall.

**NHL**

## Gibson returns to help Ducks end slide

John Gibson made 38 saves, Brett Leason and Jackson La-

Combe each scored their first goals of the season and Anaheim ended a four-game losing streak with a 4-2 victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Gibson made his season debut after having an emergency appendectomy in September.

The Ducks got off to a fast start when Leason scored 3:13 into the game at Honda Center. Columbus tied it late in the first period.

Anaheim retook the lead in the second period and made it 3-1 with 9:40 left in the game. The Blue Jackets moved back within a goal with 3:03 left, but the Duck’s Isac Lundestrom scored into an empty net to put the game away.

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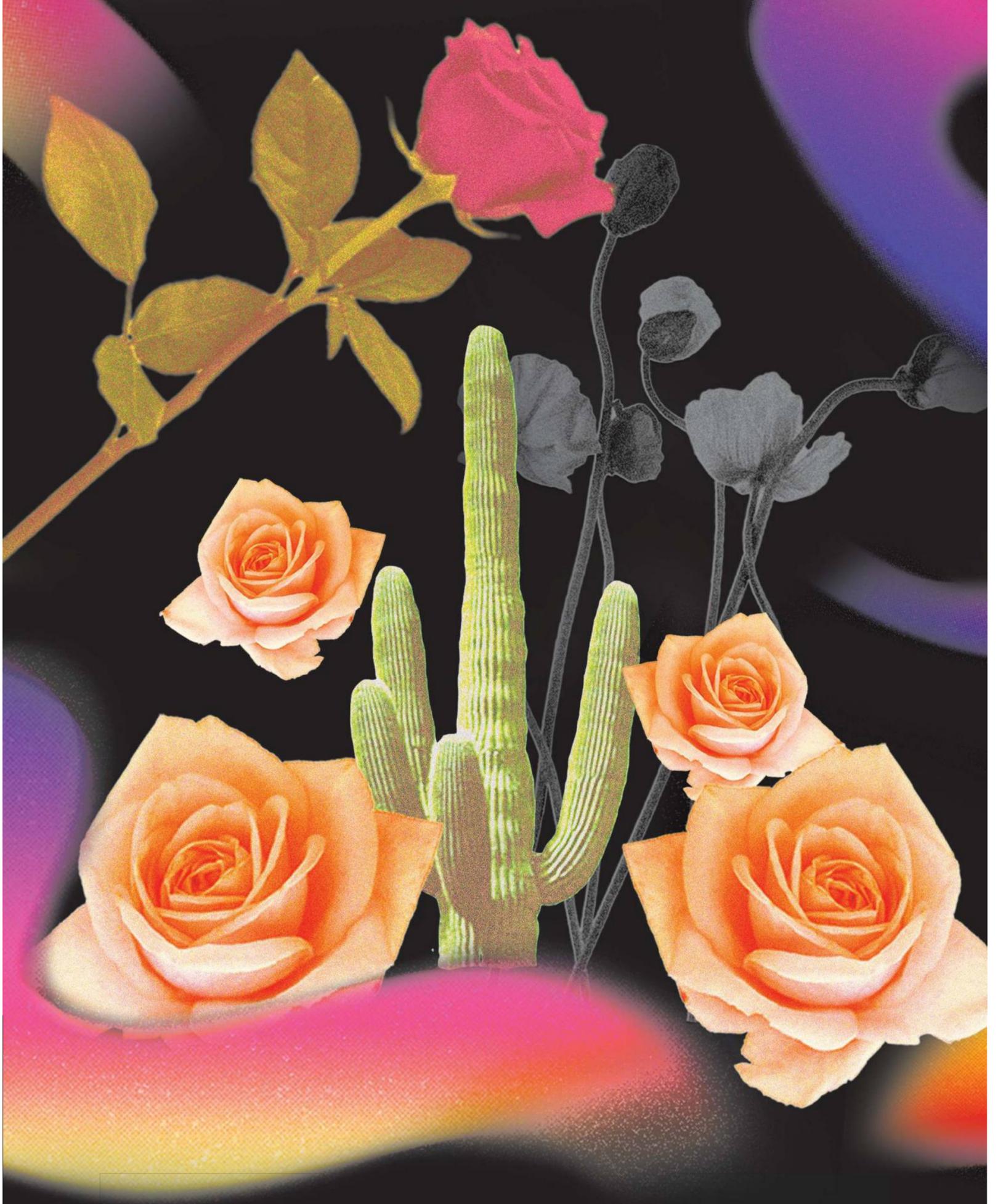


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# ENTERTAINMENT

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/ENTERTAINMENT



VICTORIA WILL For The Times

## A willing plunge into the darkness of Gotham's crime world

This article contains spoilers for the finale of HBO's "The Penguin."

Cristin Milioti gets self-conscious about sounding too "actor-y" in interviews and says she usually cringes when she hears a performer referring to a character in the third person. But she can't resist doing the same when talking about Sofia Gigante, née Falcone, her crime-boss villain in HBO's "The Penguin."

Milioti, speaking on Zoom from her home in New York, says she loves Sofia: "She's my favorite character I've ever played."

As such, when Milioti found out how the limited series was going to end for Sofia, she was "genuinely devastated."

In Sunday's finale of "The Penguin," Colin Farrell's Oz Cobb, the gangster who gets called the title moniker, finally wins his power play over Sofia. He takes control of Gotham's crime world and drives

Cristin Milioti has relished her time as Sofia on 'The Penguin': 'She's my favorite character I've ever played.'

By ESTHER ZUCKERMAN

his former boss' daughter to a remote area. For a beat, it seems like he's going to whack her and leave her for dead. Instead, he orchestrates another punishment, delivering her to the cops and sending her back to Arkham, where she suffered for years after being accused of a series of murders she didn't commit.

"What's horrible is he discovers a fate

worse than death for her," Milioti says.

Still, she finds a glimmer of hope in Sofia's ending: In prison, she gets a note from Selina Kyle, a.k.a. Catwoman. Matt Reeves' 2022 movie "The Batman" establishes that Selina's father is Carmine Falcone, making her Sofia's half sister. "There is this little spark of light at the end of the tunnel," Milioti muses. "She could have family." And Milioti has her own optimism driving her: She wants to play Sofia again at some point.

"It would be my wildest dream," she says.

Playing Sofia was already something of a dream for Milioti, who became an ardent fan of the Batman universe after her dad took her to see "Batman Returns" when she was 7. "I remember being utterly terrified and couldn't look away," she says.

She immediately ordered a Catwoman costume, but the obsession didn't stop there. She went to Blockbuster and rented Tim [See Milioti, E6]

### GRAMMY NOMINATIONS

## Beatles, but not Stones? What gives?

Nods for 2025 awards come with the usual snubs and surprises. Here are a few.

By AUGUST BROWN

The field for the 67th Grammy Awards is dominated by queens of pop — Taylor, Beyoncé and Billie, and now Chappell and Sabrina too. Beyond that, a recent changing of the guard in the Recording Academy's voting ranks brought shifting tastes with it that are reflected in who got nominated — and who didn't. Here are a few of the notable surprises and snubs.

#### Surprise: André 3000, the jazz-flute album of the year sleeper pick?

When the OutKast frontman dropped his experimental jazz-flute album "New Blue Sun" last November, you had to admit that the guy followed his muse where it led him. But the Grammys love a freewheeling veteran updating jazz traditions. The org handsomely rewarded bandleader Jon Batiste previously, [See Grammys, E2]



STEVE C MITCHELL Invision/AP

ANDRÉ 3000, fronting OutKast in 2014, gets a nod for jazz-flute album.

### L.A. racks up classical kudos

Gustavo Dudamel, the L.A. Philharmonic and Wild Up earn nominations for 2025 Grammy Awards. E2

### A voice of the early web era

Elwood Edwards, the man behind AOL's signature "You've got mail" greeting, has died at 74. E6

Comics ..... E4-5  
Puzzles ..... E5

## Finding dream role in La Mirada

Jason Alexander stars in full production of 'Fiddler on the Roof' at city-owned theater.

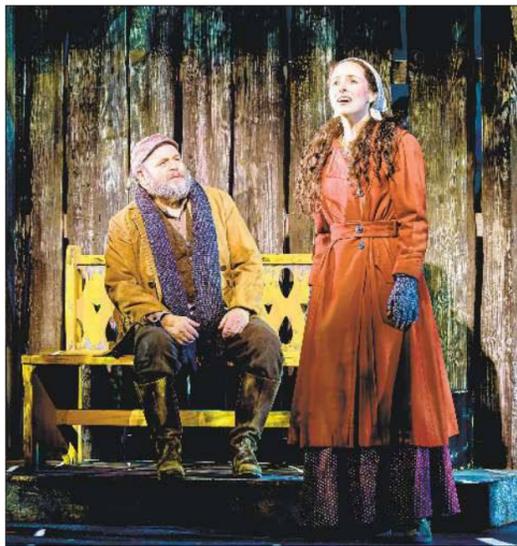
By ASHLEY LEE

"Am I still capable of this?"

Jason Alexander asked himself this while preparing to star in "Fiddler on the Roof" at La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts — his first stage musical role in decades.

"I'm 65 years old, playing a character that, if you crunch the math, should be about 40," he says of taking on Tevye, the show's devout dairyman.

"It's exponentially harder for me now. I can't dance the way I used to, and my best scampering days may be be-



JASON NIEDLE

JASON ALEXANDER and Alanna J. Smith perform in "Fiddler on the Roof" at the theater in La Mirada.

hind me. I've had to assess whether or not I could realistically convey this character's energy and vitality and really do the role justice."

Producers are counting on him to do so, and they are pulling out all the stops in the meantime.

Running through Dec. 1, the ambitious production features a rich, three-dimensional set, a 34-actor cast performing re-creations of Jerome Robbins' 1964 choreography and a 19-piece orchestra playing Don Walker's original orchestrations.

And it's all paid off: Eleven days before the first performance, the show broke even, setting records for the theater's season subscriptions and single-ticket sales — a rare return in today's regional theater landscape.

La Mirada Theatre's "Fiddler" is already in the [See 'Fiddler,' E3]

## Oddball opera having a glorious moment in L.A.

A trio of mainstream companies lead the way in showing the city's inventive spirit.

MARK SWED  
MUSIC CRITIC

If Los Angeles has a reputation for opera, it is as an outlier, a city freed from entrenched tradition and eager to invent. Long Beach Opera, the Industry and the Los Angeles Philharmonic have together created an enviable engine for remaking opera.

In the recently published "A New Philosophy of Opera" by Industry founder Yuval Sharon, two chapters — "Toward an Anti-Elite Opera" and "Breaking the

Frame" — offer an excellent introduction to opera L.A. style. But so, in a surprisingly different way, did three more mainstream L.A. opera companies that recently presented a trio of mid-19th century works.

The operas — Russian, French and Italian — are out of the ordinary. The venues, bare-bones to grand. The geography, Westside to East.

In a community room at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in the Sawtelle district, Independent Opera on Nov. 1 gave the West Coast premiere of Alexander Dargomyzhsky's "The Stone Guest." Left unfinished at the composer's death in 1869, it was the most important opera of that weekend and delivered in far and away the least decorative [See Opera, E3]

GRAMMY NOMINATIONS

# Dudamel, L.A. Phil recordings earn recognition

Work on 'Revolución Diamantina' racks up nods. L.A.'s Wild Up is also up for awards.

BY JESSICA GELT

Recordings by Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic nabbed six 2025 Grammy nominations Friday, with Dudamel and the orchestra picking one up for orchestral performance for their work on composer Gabriela Ortiz's "Revolución Diamantina."

That first full-length album of orchestral works by Ortiz racked up several nods, including one for contemporary classical composition, an award given to the composer. Other nominations for the L.A. Phil recording of Ortiz's work were for engineered classical album, classical producer of the year (Dmitri Lipay) and classical compendium.



JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times  
**GUSTAVO DUDAMEL** leads the L.A. Phil in its 2022 season opener. The conductor, who will join the New York Philharmonic in 2026, has five Grammy Awards.

Composer John Adams' opera "Girls of the Golden West," performed by the L.A. Phil and the Los Angeles Master Chorale, picked up nominations for opera recording and engineered classical album; it also was cited as part of Lipay's nomination for classical producer of the year.

In the orchestral performance category, Dudamel and the L.A. Phil are up against Marin Alsop and ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra for Adams' "City Noir," which was commissioned by the L.A. Phil for Dudamel's first gala. Others in the category include conductor JoAnn Falletta, who made her name as music director of the Long Beach Symphony, nominated with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra; the L.A. Phil's former principal guest conductor, Susanna Mälkki, nominated for conducting the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra; and Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony.

In the classical instrumental solo category, the L.A. ensemble Wild Up's recording of "Eastman: The Holy Presence of Joan d'Arc" earned nominations for soloist Seth Parker Woods and conductor Christopher Rountree.

Dudamel, who will leave for the New York Philharmonic in 2026, already has five Grammy Awards after winning one last year with the orchestra for a performance of "Adès: Dante."

A triumph for Dudamel at the 67th Grammy Awards would give him a sixth win from seven nominations. Other wins include choral performance for "Mahler: Symphony No. 8, 'Symphony of a Thousand'" at the 64th Grammys and orchestral performance for "Ives: Complete Symphonies" at the 63rd Grammys.

The 67th Grammy Awards will take place Feb. 2 at the Crypto.com Arena in downtown L.A. It will air live on CBS and Paramount+.

## Along with the nods come the usual snubs and surprises

[Grammys, from E1] and André also may benefit from a crowded pop field and take home a big-category prize. At the very least, he's the front-runner for instrumental composition for, yes, "I Swear, I Really Wanted to Make a 'Rap' Album but This Is Literally the Way the Wind Blew Me This Time."

**Snub: Jack Antonoff's producer streak lapses**

After winning yet another Grammy for producer, nonclassical in February on the strength of Taylor Swift's "Midnights," Antonoff seemed a shoo-in for a nod given that same artist's massive follow-up, as well as Sabrina Carpenter's "Short n' Sweet." Antonoff had won that Grammy three years running, but he won't be adding to his streak — this is the first time he hasn't been at least nominated for the award since 2019.

**Surprise: The Beatles are back**

Artificial intelligence has a lot to answer for — mangled fingers, election misinformation, siphoning the world's water. But give credit where it's due: It allowed producers to conjure a final Beatles song out of previously unsalvageable mixes. In terms of production innovation and craft, it's hard to argue with what "Now and Then" accomplished. A win would be the Beatles' eighth Grammy, 60 years after their first.

**Surprise: Khruangbin for new artist?**

For those who have been watching the great Texas psych-rock trio headline festivals for what seems like a decade, remember that you can be relatively known with a decent back catalog and still be a best new artist.

**Snub: Rock stars in repose**



HENRY REDCLIFFE  
"BRAT" summer? It's a "Brat" fall too for Charli XCX, who's racked up nominations in an assortment of categories for the 2025 awards.



DAVID BLACK  
**KHRUANGBIN** snared a new artist nod. Never mind that the trio has been headlining festivals for a while.

A well-received comeback Rolling Stones album with a hot young producer — that should be Grammy catnip, right? "Hackney Diamonds" did land one nomination, for rock album,

but it's surprising that the group didn't turn up in rock performance or song or even something bigger. But the Grammys punted on other easy choices for rock categories — no Dolly Parton for



CHRISTINA HOUSE L.A. Times  
**A SNUB** ends producer Jack Antonoff's streak.

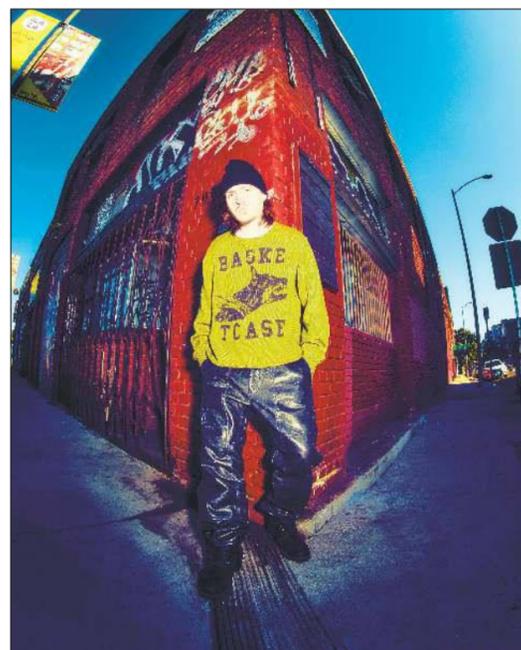
her feel-good ripper "Rockstar," no Hozier for the streaming smash "Unreal Unearth," no nod for young guitar god Mk.gee for "Two Star & the Dream Police."

**Surprise: Brat summer lives on**

Giving Charli XCX Grammys: The Recording Academy thought about it all the time. "Brat" is the critical and commercial peak of her career, and the academy has rewarded her up and down the program, with a second-highest seven nods for a messy meta-rave about how fame refracts femininity. She got nominations in a wide variety of categories — record, album, pop solo and duo/group performance, three dance music categories (like pop-aligned peers Beyoncé and Daft Punk) — as well as music video and packaging.

**Snub: Tommy Richman, don't @ me**

Richman's TikTok smash "Million Dollar Baby" has been one of the year's inescapable singles — a brash, funky and feather-light falsetto that rattled out of car windows and phone speakers for months. There might have been some category debates behind the scenes — is it rap? R&B? pop? — but he reportedly submitted for rap song and melodic rap performance, though it ended in a blank for the



KAYLA JAMES For The Times  
**TOMMY RICHMAN** had a TikTok smash with "Million Dollar Baby," but that didn't extend to Grammys.



JOHN AMIS Associated Press  
**EX-PRESIDENT** Jimmy Carter, in 2019, snares fourth nod, this time for "Last Sundays in Plains."

rising singer.

**Surprise: Jimmy Carter, Grammy icon**

The former president is up for his fourth Grammy — all in the spoken-word category — for "Last Sundays in Plains: A Centennial Celebration." Frankly, these days, hearing a centarian peanut farmer read you to sleep sounds like paradise.

**Snub: The Times' Envelope Grammy preview**

What Times columnist Bill Plaschke is to jinxing Dodger baseball, the Envelope appears to be for Grammy hopefuls. Our apologies to non-nominated recent Envelope stars Tyla, Vampire Weekend, Fuerza Regida and Megan Moroney — hopefully, your Grammy victory parade is just around the corner too.

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<p><b>ROYAL</b> 11223 Santa Monica Blvd. West L.A. <b>LITTLE GIRL BLUE</b> 7:00 PM <b>AFTER: POETRY DESTROYS SILENCE</b> 1:00 3:15 5:15 7:30 <b>DAHOMAY</b> 1:00 3:00 5:00 <b>NO RIGHT WAY</b> 1:20 4:10 7:00 <b>MONICA</b> 1332 Second Street Santa Monica <b>BLITZ</b> PG-13 1:10 4:10 7:10 <b>THE PIANO LESSON</b> PG-13 1:00 4:00 7:00 <b>EMILIA PEREZ</b> 1:10 4:00 7:10 <b>CONCLAVE</b> PG 1:20 4:25 7:20 <b>LA COCINA</b> 1:00 4:10 <b>ANORA</b> 1:00 4:00 7:00 <b>VAN GOGH - POETS AND LOVERS</b> 7:00 PM</p>	<p><b>TOWN CENTER</b> 17200 Ventura Blvd. Encino <b>BLITZ</b> PG-13 1:10 4:10 7:10 <b>SMALL THINGS LIKE THESE</b> PG-13 1:10 4:30 7:30 <b>THE LAST RIFLEMAN</b> PG-13 1:30 PM <b>EMILIA PEREZ</b> 7:00 PM <b>HERE</b> PG-13 1:20 4:10 7:20 <b>CONCLAVE</b> PG 1:00 4:00 <b>SALLYWOOD</b> 4:20 PM <b>VAN GOGH - POETS AND LOVERS</b> 7:00 PM <b>NEW HALL</b> 22500 Lyons Ave. Santa Clarita <b>BLITZ</b> PG-13 1:10 4:10 <b>FIGHTING SPIRIT: A COMBAT CHAPLAINS JOURNEY</b> PG-13 1:00 3:10 5:15 7:30 <b>HERETIC</b> 1:20 4:20 7:20 <b>THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER</b> PG 1:30 4:20 7:10 <b>HERE</b> PG-13 1:10 4:00 7:00 <b>CONCLAVE</b> PG 1:00 4:00 7:00 <b>VENOM: THE LAST DANCE</b> PG-13 1:30 4:30 7:30</p>	<p><b>GLENDALE</b> 207 N. Maryland Ave Glendale <b>BLITZ</b> PG-13 1:10 7:20 <b>DRIVE BACK</b> 4:30 PM <b>STOCKHOLM BLOODBATH</b> 4:10 PM <b>THE PIANO LESSON</b> PG-13 1:00 4:00 <b>EMILIA PEREZ</b> 1:10 PM <b>CONCLAVE</b> PG 1:20 4:20 7:20 <b>ANORA</b> 1:00 4:00 7:00 <b>NURSE UNSEEN</b> 7:30 PM <b>VAN GOGH - POETS AND LOVERS</b> 7:00 PM</p>	<p><b>NoHo 7</b> 5240 Lankershim Blvd. No. Hollywood <b>HERETIC</b> 1:30 4:30 7:30 <b>MEANWHILE ON EARTH</b> 12:50 3:00 5:10 7:30 <b>THE PIANO LESSON</b> PG-13 1:10 4:10 7:10 <b>EMILIA PEREZ</b> 1:00 7:00 <b>LUTHER: NEVER TOO MUCH</b> 4:20 PM <b>CONCLAVE</b> PG 1:10 4:10 7:10 <b>VENOM: THE LAST DANCE</b> PG-13 1:20 4:00 7:20 <b>ANORA</b> 1:00 4:00 7:00 <b>CLAREMONT</b> 450 W. 2nd Street Claremont <b>BLITZ</b> PG-13 1:10 4:10 7:10 <b>SMALL THINGS LIKE THESE</b> PG-13 1:30 4:30 7:30 <b>HERE</b> PG-13 1:20 4:10 7:00 <b>CONCLAVE</b> PG 1:00 4:00 7:00 <b>VENOM: THE LAST DANCE</b> PG-13 1:00 4:00 7:10 <b>BLACK HAWK DOWN</b> 1:00 PM <b>VAN GOGH - POETS AND LOVERS</b> 7:00 PM</p>
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## 3 operas in L.A. define the city's push for reinvention

[Opera, from E1] manner.

Independent Opera was formed in 2012 by Ukrainian conductor, pianist and all-around powerhouse Galina Barskaya to perform operas not normally heard in L.A., no matter how modest the means. For this one, members of the audience sat on four dozen folding chairs. Singers stood, themselves stone guests of sorts, at music stands. Barskaya accompanied at the piano. No matter, it was a revelation.

Dargomyzhsky is known, if known at all outside Russia, for this opera and for PDQ Bach's 1970 unmissable parody album, "The Stoned Guest." The real opera sets Pushkin's play, which was written as a response to Mozart's "Don Giovanni," word for word. Barskaya told the audience that she can't remember whether, growing up in Kyiv, she heard "The Stone Guest" or Mozart's "Don Giovanni" first, so seminal is the work to the development of Russian opera.

Composed without arias or set pieces, Dargomyzhsky's score illuminates Pushkin's words and paves the way for the truly Russian opera, however grander, of Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov. The opera has a different take on Don Juan than does Mozart's. Pushkin's womanizing protagonist is more a romantic than a cad, and his servant, Leporello (a deep bass in the opera), darker and unfunny.

Dargomyzhsky died leaving only a piano score, which Rimsky-Korsakov wonderfully orchestrated, but hearing "The Stone Guest" sung without theatrical or orchestral trappings made a powerful case for the sheer musical power that can be invested in the Russian language and Pushkin's text.

None of the score-bound young singers was Russian-speaking but they remained a talented and convincing cast, headed by TJ Simon (Don Juan), Michael Payne (Leporello), Shannon Moore (Donna Elvira) and Ariel Pisturino (Donna Anna).

The following night, at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles Opera revived a lavish production of Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet," written two years earlier than "The Stone Guest." Here were all the trappings of grand opera and none of the substance. Other than a couple of good tunes and a single popular aria, this vapid setting of Shakespeare's play makes it one of the least notable works in the standard operatic repertory and the least worthy "Romeo and Juliet" adaptation I know, Baz Luhrmann's "Romeo + Juliet" included.

Even so, and with the help of an Ian Judge production, L.A. Opera got away with using Gounod to feature sensation-making young singers: no less than Anna Netrebko and Rolando Villazón in 2005, Vittorio Grigolo with Nino Machaidze six years later.

I had figured that by now, the Lego-like set would have long been recycled, and that was that. But leave it to L.A. Opera. It's gotten away with it again — this time with the company debuts of a handsome, exhilarating pair of lovers, tenor Duke Kim and Amina Edris.

Taking over the original production, choreographer Kitty McNamee, in her first attempt at opera direction, brought a breath of fresh air by moving everyone onstage, including the chorus, with grace and flare. Despite the operatic odds in this work, the lovers provided consuming rapture. The fight scenes dazzled.

Best of all, the company had a conductor of remarkable eloquence who understood movement in all its musical aspects. Domingo Hindoyan, the Venezuelan chief conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, is a rising star. His Liverpool recording of Bruckner's Fourth Symphony, released in the spring, has a glow and grandeur that allows it to stand out in a very crowded field. Hindoyan's four performances with L.A. Opera

run through Sunday and are his only ones in the U.S. this season — a coup for the company. (Lina Gonzalez-Granados takes over the final two performances.) Does this signal that he is a candidate to succeed Music Director James Conlon, who steps down in 2026?

Not all Parisians were taken in by Gounod's opera, hit though it was at the Théâtre Lyrique. A parody, "Rhum et Eau en Juillet" (Rum and Water in July), was summarily staged at a competing Paris theater. It would be nice to know what that was like.

Continuing eastward to the Garibaldi Society in Highland Park on Nov. 3, I caught Pacific Opera Project's latest goofy offering, Antonio Cagnoni's "Don Bucefalo."

Here was a parody opera for real. This obscure and hilariously outrageous takeoff on the genre of Italian opera buffa, written in 1846, turned out to be the hit of the weekend. As director, designer and company founder Josh Shaw reminded the audience, the final performances probably were the only chance to see this opera.

"Don Bucefalo" is obscure for a reason. It is full of in-jokes of the era, but with sly and not-so-sly gusto along with a gifted cast, Shaw turned this into riotous supper-club opera. Pacific Opera Project seemed to start as a goof in 2011 — a peripatetic company making silly opera in corny productions in unpredictable places such as the Highland Park Ebell Club, the Forest Lawn cemetery and Occidental College. It has grown to have a significant following. The group has given important premieres, such as the first professional L.A. staging of Stravinsky's "The Rake's Progress," which was written in L.A. Last summer, Dvorak's "Rusalka" was a delight staged at Descanso Gardens.

But the company may never have been goofier than with "Don Bucefalo," performed in the Italian historic society founded in 1877. The stage was set up in a large room with tables covered by red-checked tablecloths. Pasta with meatballs was available, as was wine.

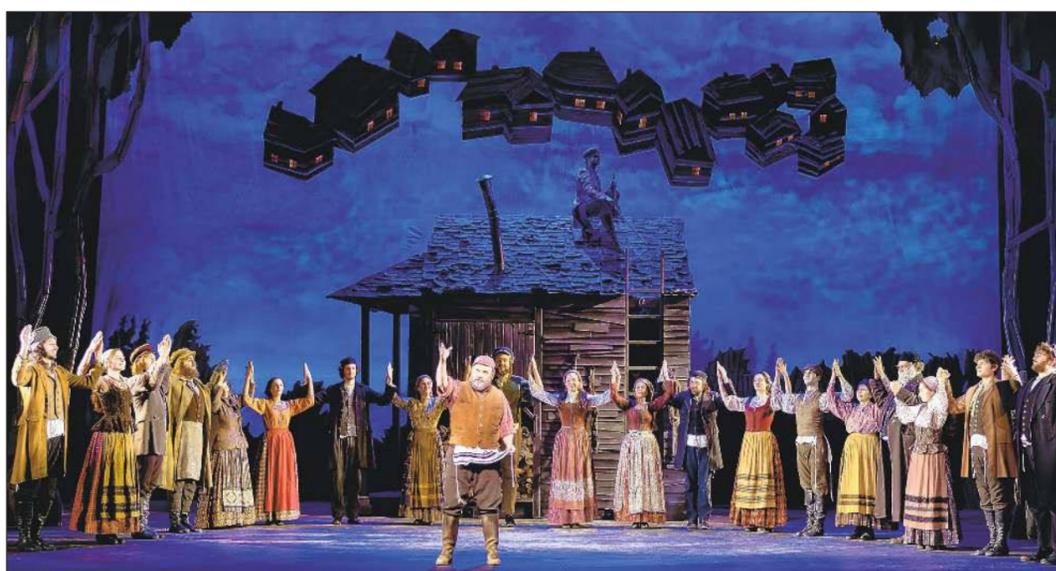
The set is nutty. The costumes are nutty. The opera, which revolves around an opera composer trying to put on a concert, is beyond nutty. The semi-talented Don Bucefalo and other suitors, including a semi-talented tenor, attempt to make love to a newly widowed, young, semi-talented soprano. Chaos, musical as well as romantic, ensues. There are Rossini jokes and Mozart jokes. Composer jokes included an arresting scene of this Don writing an aria worthy of PDQ Bach.

The biggest joke of all is on us. The music is actually quite good. The singers are too. As is the small chamber orchestra and the conductor, Kyle Naig. As Bucefalo, baritone Armando Contreras winningly overplayed the virtuoso farce, which was neither too lowbrow nor too highbrow. This will go down as one of the performances of the year.

He was surrounded by able singer-comedians, among them Véronique Filoux, Eric Botto, Dominic Salvati, Joel Balzun, Erin Alford and Mariah Rae, all of whom excellently mastered roles they likely will never have an opportunity to sing again. But in doing so, they have admirably lived up to Sharon's anti-elite L.A. opera ideal of big-time breaking the frame.

### 'Romeo and Juliet'

**Where:** L.A. Opera, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 Grand Ave., L.A.  
**When:** Through Nov. 23  
**Tickets:** \$33.50-\$400  
**Running time:** About 3 hours, 10 minutes (one intermission)  
**Info:** (213) 972-8001, laopera.org



JASON ALEXANDER, center, stars as Tevye in a production of "Fiddler on the Roof" at La Mirada Theatre.

## 'Fiddler' comes to La Mirada stage

['Fiddler,' from E1]

black partly, of course, because of Alexander's star power.

Playing the protagonist of the beloved musical has been a lifelong dream for the actor, who's spent his post-"Seinfeld" days directing and performing in stage shows.

The closest he'd previously gotten to doing so were brief talks to replace Danny Burstein in the fifth Broadway revival of the Joseph Stein-Jerry Bock-Sheldon Harnick musical, based on Sholem Aleichem stories about a Jewish milkman's family, faith and community.

"It's like it was written for him, and he's bringing all kinds of colors that I don't think any other Tevye has ever brought to the piece," director Lonny Price said of Alexander. The two first met as part of the original Broadway cast of "Merrily We Roll Along" in 1981.

"People will expect him to be funny in this, which he is, and he's always been a great singer and dancer," Price said. "But I think the people will take away from this is his range and his real skill as a dramatic actor. In this role, he's as equally moving as he is funny."

This "Fiddler" staging is a return to its original form at Alexander's request, albeit a costly one.

"I love the piece so much, and I wanted the full flavor bouquet of what was intended, and I was concerned that anybody who said they wanted to do it was going to do it on the cheap," he said.

For example, "It's so hard these days with the economics of theater to get a large company of actors onstage, but I knew that if you tried to do this with less than, say, 30 people, you can't fill out the stage enough to present a community. But our producers are wonderful. They've said yes to everything we've asked for."

Although the production is one of the most expensive ever staged at La Mirada Theatre, it is also the fastest in the venue's history to break even and begin turning a profit. It boosted season subscriptions 22% to a new high and set a new record for a single day's ticket sales. Altogether, an estimated 29,000 people will attend the production, with 21% of ticket buyers being first-time patrons.

But the production — and its profits — are possible only because of the playhouse's unique business model: It's the rare regional theater that's municipally owned and operated, with La Mirada commissioning the initial transformation of an obsolete movie house and continuing to pay its ongoing production costs, thanks to taxes, ticket sales and additional revenue streams like venue rentals.

"In addition to paying for the venue itself and the entire staff, the city also provides funding for everything in the theater — the actors, the royalties, the musicians in the pit, the props they're carrying, the microphones on their heads, down to the flowers in the lobby and the ticket stock you're holding," said producing artistic director BT McNicholl. "Of course, we do have people who donate, but that's not the bulk of the support."

With no board of directors to please or annual donor gala to host, it allows the theater to really focus on the patrons, McNicholl said.

"Ultimately, this is the city saying the arts is a public service, and it's enriching not just the city of La Mirada and its residents but all those in the surrounding Southern California cities that we're serving as well."

McCoy Rigby Entertain-

ment — which repeatedly brought Cathy Rigby and "Peter Pan" to Broadway and took the production on the road and is transferring a "Mystic Pizza" musical to New Jersey's Paper Mill Playhouse next year — has been staging La Mirada Theatre's seasons for 31 years and counting.

"There's no having to raise 50% or 60% of our nut through donations and corporate sponsorships," said Executive Producer Tom McCoy, "which, in the world of regional theater, is quite remarkable."

"It's such a gift to those of us who love the theater — my God, it's the difference between life and death," Alexander said of the theater's operations.

His own former theater company, Reprise, operated on a subscriber model, and the base of financial support to sustain it dried up, he said. But at La Mirada Theatre, the community is willing to sign the deficit check.

"They're saying, 'We don't expect you to end the season in profit, just serve the community and make sure they feel like their tax dollars have gone to something worthwhile,'" Alexander said.

"I wish that communities everywhere had the

### 'Fiddler on the Roof'

**Where:** La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts, 14900 La Mirada Blvd., La Mirada

**When:** 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 8 p.m. Friday, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, 1:30 and 6:30 p.m. Sunday; ends Dec. 1

**Tickets:** \$46 and up

**Info:** (562) 944-9801, lamiradatheatre.com

**Running time:** 2 hours, 50 minutes (one intermission)

benefit of this kind of a funding model. I'm sure it would pay benefits back to the community in triplicate, especially in the areas around the country that are generally underserved in the arts."

This star-led "Fiddler" came to be because Alexander mentioned his interest in Tevye in a 2022 interview — an article that McNicholl shared with producers McCoy and Rigby, the latter of whom had worked with him in a 2008 production of "Li'l Abner."

To be turning a profit well before opening night "is encouraging," said Price, "especially when you ask for

something you need, you know that you're not going to be hurting the theater to get it for you in order to put on the show you want their audiences to see."

McCoy said he's requested production rights to "Fiddler" for a possible sixth Broadway revival. But that transfer is not necessarily Alexander's goal. In fact, he hopes his turn as Tevye is a reminder to other actors to prioritize productions beyond the Great White Way or even Los Angeles.

"I will tell you, my manager was not excited about the idea of me doing this role in La Mirada," he said. "She went, 'Why are you doing this in La Mirada?' And I said, 'Why *wouldn't* I do it in La Mirada?'"

"To be on Broadway and have a Broadway audience, that's very exciting — as far as the commercial theater in America goes, that's our heaven, that's mecca. But there are audiences that can never get to New York; there are audiences that can't get to Los Angeles. The idea that they are any less deserving than any other audience? An audience is an audience, and if there's an audience who wants to see it, and there's a theater that will invest in it and do it well, it's worth doing."

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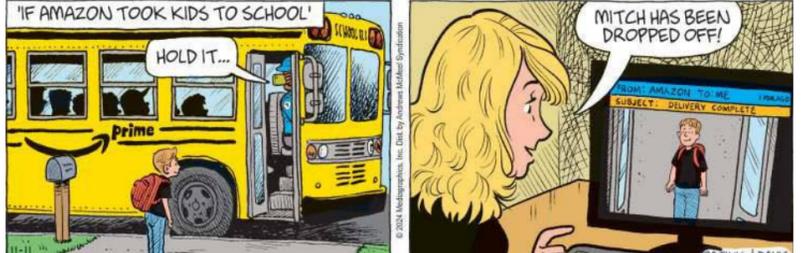
BABY BLUES By Jerry Scott & Rick Kirkman



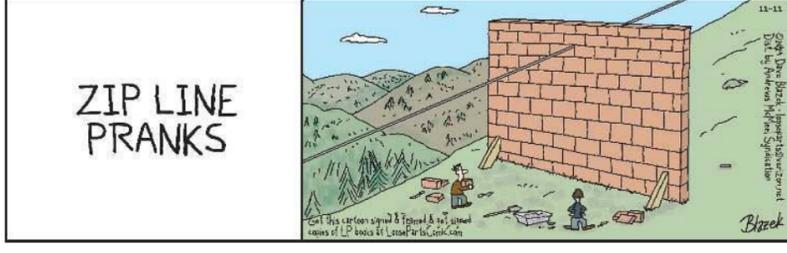
CANDORVILLE By Darrin Bell



CRANKSHAFT By Tom Batiuk & Chuck Ayers



LOOSE PARTS By Dave Blazek



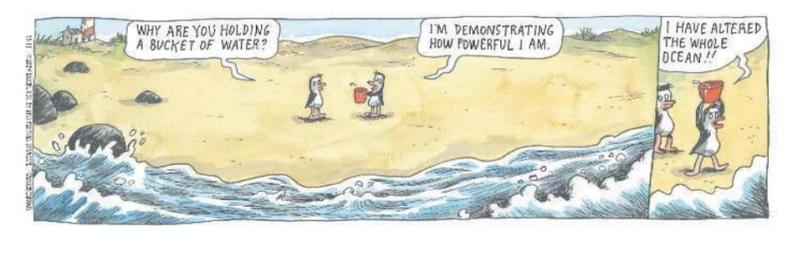
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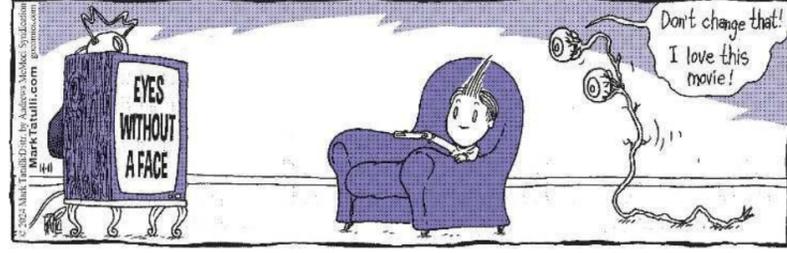
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE By Stephan Pastis



MACANUDO By Liniers



LIO By Mark Tatulli



BLONDIE By Dean Young & John Marshall



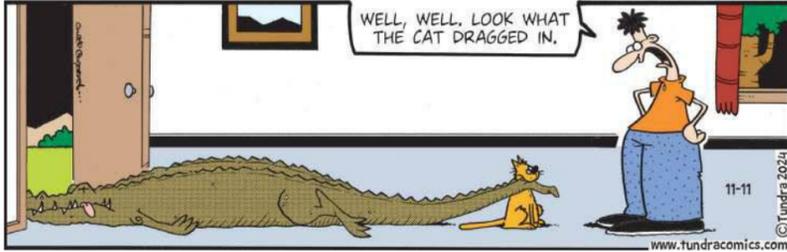
ZITS By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



BETWEEN FRIENDS By Sandra Bell-Lundy



TUNDRA By Chad Carpenter



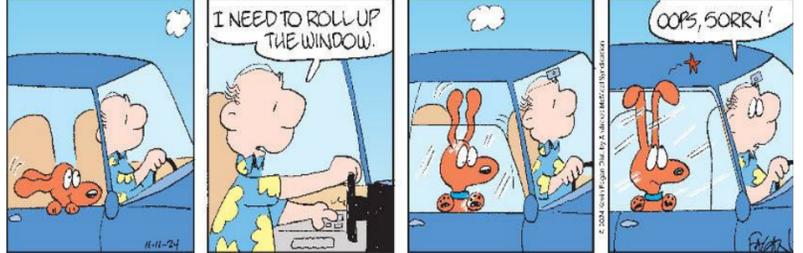
BIZARRO By Wayno and Piraro



SIX CHIX By Isabella Bannerman



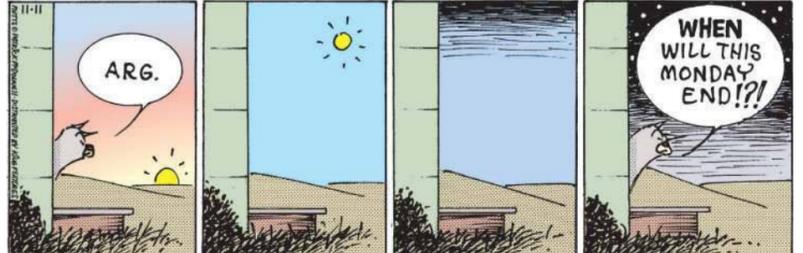
DRABBLE By Kevin Fagan



FRAZZ By Jef Mallett



MUTTS By Patrick McDonnell



NON SEQUITUR By Wiley



PEANUTS By Charles M. Schulz



COMICS

SUDOKU

9x9 Sudoku grid with numbers 8, 7, 5, 6, 2, 3, 5, 1, 8, 7, 1, 5, 3, 6, 7, 6, 3, 2, 5, 4, 3, 1.

6x6 Sudoku grid with numbers 5, 4, 3, 2, 6, 1. Includes solutions for 2x2 and 3x3 grids.

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KENKEN

Every box will contain a number; numbers depend on the size of the grid. For a 6x6 puzzle, use Nos. 1-6. Do not repeat a number in any row or column.

6x6 KenKen puzzle grid with numbers and mathematical symbols like 3-, 2+, 6x, 4+, 5+, 1-, 1, 2+.

6x6 KenKen puzzle grid with numbers and mathematical symbols like 2-, 1-, 2+, 5, 3-, 3+, 6+, 11+, 5+, 3+, 4, 6+, 12x, 3+, 11+, 9+, 3, 5-, 3.

PREVIOUS ANSWERS section with 3x3 and 4x4 grids containing numbers.

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HOROSCOPE

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

Aries (March 21-April 19): Nothing motivates you quite as much as the prospect of getting attention from someone you admire. For this, you will learn quickly. Taurus (April 20-May 20): One versatile friend will help you in multiple ways.

who's a good match for you. Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Conversation is an opportunity to make an impression, a connection or even a deal. Your careful choosing of topics will be key. Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): You sense exciting possibilities ahead and this inspires you to make the first move.

the story. Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Change is inevitable. The stability you seek comes from flexibility, not rigidity. Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20): There are deeper forces at work in the world today that can be accessed only through profound compassion.

CROSSWORD

Edited By Patti Varol By John Michael Currie

- ACROSS 1 \_\_\_dab in the middle 6 Smartphone downloads 10 Paper money 14 City west of Venice 15 Shave (down) 16 Spanish eight 17 Campy photo booth accessory 19 Comics icon Lee 20 Epitome of slowness 21 \_\_\_ acid 22 "Oorah!" military org. 25 Southern California's June Gloom, essentially 28 10-Across, slangily 30 Fish eggs 31 Assumed name 32 Gravy vessel 34 Goes (for) 38 Candy treat shaped like a chick or bunny 41 Some Fidelity offerings, for short 42 Fades to black 43 Snorer's affliction 44 Gut punch reaction 45 Trademarked pastry creation 46 Sleepover hideaway 52 Weightlifter's units 53 Furnish with gear 54 For starters 56 Skeet shout 57 Trial period for a new product, and what 17-, 25-, 38-, and 46-Across all have? 62 Flowerpot spot 63 Mideast canal 64 Battery terminal 65 "The \_\_\_-bitsy spider ..." 66 Lean and muscular 67 "Heavens to \_\_\_!"

13x13 crossword grid with numbers 1-67.

- 12 MacGowan of the Pogues 13 Accept, as a coupon 18 A pop 21 Card with no face or number 22 Savory quality 23 Renewable energy source 24 Catherine's "Schitt's Creek" role 26 Mountain range from Kazakhstan to the Arctic Ocean 27 Inflict upon 29 Fire residue 32 National park in Alberta 33 On in years 34 Perfectly timed 35 Tubular pasta 36 Start, as a golf round 37 Petty quarrels 39 Cat's noise 40 Armed conflict 44 Alley- 45 Keyboard shortcut starter 46 Cola brand 47 "That's it for me!"

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE grid with words like VOTES, GLASGOW, AGELA, MOISTURE, STADT, HANDPRINT, LAKE, HIKE, HALOS, GESTURE, MANET, LOTT, RANWILD, ANT, GOAL, TENDS, BALD, DUMNS, DIX, SLEEP, ONIT, NIX, LAGASSE, LEVY, SWOLE, TOSCALE, OHARE, BAMSONITE, LAYCR, CAKE, VIVIDO, FENAMOD, FANFMSY, SELENO, FRASSES.

BRIDGE

BY FRANK STEWART

Cover today's East and South cards. Try to beat four spades.

Your partner's raise to two hearts over North's double didn't promise much. When South bid two spades, you had the strength and shape to compete to three hearts, but North bid game, hoping his honors were well placed.

East's nine is a "count" signal, showing an even number of hearts. Your ace will not cash, but you need three more tricks from somewhere.

You could continue with the ace and a second club,

hoping East could ruff. But if he had four hearts plus a singleton club, he would have jumped to three hearts, preemptive, over the double.

At Trick Two lead a low club. Declarer wins in his hand and lets the queen of trumps ride. East wins, returns his last club and ruffs the third club.

You hold: ♠ 7 ♥ A K 7 5 2 ♦ K 9 5 ♣ A 6 5 2. Your partner opens one spade, you respond two hearts and he next bids three diamonds.

Answer: For some partnerships using a "2/1" style, partner's "high reverse" to three diamonds would not promise extra strength, and then you would have to bid 3NT. But if three diamonds suggests a strong hand, your hand is too promising to sign

off at game. Bid four clubs. Your partner might hold A K 4 3 2, Q 4, A Q J 8 4, 3, and you could make a grand slam.

West dealer N-S vulnerable. NORTH: ♠ A 10 6 2, ♥ Q 6 3, ♦ A Q, ♣ K Q 8 3. WEST: ♠ 7, ♥ A K 7 5 2, ♦ K 9 5, ♣ A 6 5 2. EAST: ♠ K 5 4, ♥ J 9 8 4, ♦ 8 7 4 2, ♣ 9 4. SOUTH: ♠ Q J 9 8 3, ♥ 10, ♦ J 10 6 3, ♣ J 10 7. WEST: 1♥, 3♥. NORTH: Dbl, 4♠. EAST: All Pass. SOUTH: 2♠. Opening lead - ♥ K.

ASKING ERIC

Dear Eric: Two years ago, a group of 11 women on my husband's side, including his mother, sisters and aunts, went on a beach house girls' trip. The group also included the daughters-in-law of his aunts.

My husband was angrier about it than I was, but I asked him not to say anything so as not to cause drama that would come back on me.

They are planning another trip to the same place for next year. No one has asked me if I am going or if I want to go. I wouldn't go even if I was invited.

LEFT OUT AGAIN

Dear Left Out: Despite the warmth of a beach vacation, getting invited to join a group that's been so callous to you would feel like awfully cold comfort.

However, this might be a good opportunity to let your

husband say something about it. They don't have to socialize with you, but years of being sidelined and maligned is taking a toll.

Dear Eric: I'm a retired and never-married 46-year-old man, with a 25-year-old son. Minus training and deployments, I've raised my son by myself as a single parent since he was two.

I've only dated other single parents, hoping that there would be some kind of mutual understanding. Outcomes were the constant feeling of needing to account for my predecessors' transgressions.

Now, five months after my most recent relationship ended, I'm at the point of risk versus reward before considering getting into another one.

I'm fine and thriving being single but wouldn't mind sharing future experiences with a woman while deviating from negative relearned

experiences. What does a guy in my situation do, stay single for sanity or give it another go?

DATING DEBATE

Dear Dating Debate: Think of this as the entrance to a new phase in your dating life. Many of the choices you made in the past were, understandably, tied to your status as a parent of a child.

It's wonderful that you're prioritizing your retirement goals and life experiences. The satisfaction you get from pursuing your interests could also draw potential mates to you.

To that end, also please consider talking to a professional about the experience you had with your son's mother, as well as your other relationships. There could be some trauma that still needs to be worked through.

Email questions to eric@askingeric.com.

FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane



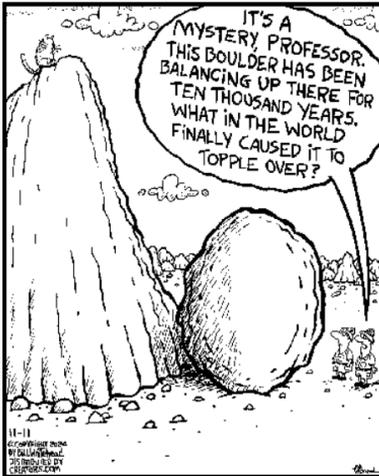
"Guess who my name is?"

DENNIS THE MENACE By Hank Ketcham



"I'M TOO FULL... BUT NOT FOR ICE CREAM!"

FREE RANGE By Bill Whitehead



"No, sorry, I do not have an oxygen tank."

MARMADUKE By Brad & Paul Anderson



"THE FIRST RULE OF MIME CLUB IS: YOU DON'T TALK ABOUT MIME CLUB."

BLISS By Harry Bliss



"I'LL BE RIGHT THERE, HONEY. I'M JUST GONNA TAKE A FEW PHOTOGRAPHS OF THIS COLORFUL SUGAR MAPLE IN AN EFFORT TO OWN THE FLEETING ESSENCE OF THE UNOWNABLE... BE THERE IN A JIF."

SPEED BUMP By Dave Coverly





VICTORIA WILL For The Times

**PLAYING** Sofia was something of a dream for Cristin Milioti, a fan of the Batman universe since childhood.

## Finding her niche in 'Penguin'

[Milioti, from E1] Burton's 1989 "Batman," which she watched over and over. When "Batman Forever" hit theaters in 1995, she made her dad take her six times. She even had pictures of Jim Carrey's Riddler on her walls. For Milioti, the love of Batman comes from her sympathy for the characters.

"Batman, all his villains, they come from such a place of real pain," she says. "They

don't have powers, they make all their own costumes, and it's fabulous and can be campy and can be humorous but then also gut-wrenching."

Growing up in New Jersey, Milioti was always drawn to complicated female characters with violent tendencies. In addition to Michelle Pfeiffer's Catwoman in "Batman Returns," she was obsessed with Uma Thurman's Bride in Quentin

Tarantino's "Kill Bill," her favorite film.

"When I saw 'Wonder Woman' in theaters and all these little girls watching, it was very emotional, and I remember in that movie thinking, 'Oh, 'Kill Bill' was my 'Wonder Woman,'" she says.

After dropping out of New York University, Milioti thrived in the New York theater scene but realized that she wasn't able to transform

the way she wanted to in the television and film roles she was auditioning for: jobs like "girl found dead in a trunk" or "party guest at Blair Waldorf's." She never did book a job on "Gossip Girl."

But fans of Milioti have long known her range. Among her roles are the Czech songwriter in the Broadway musical "Once," the titular "mother" on "How I Met Your Mother," the writer with a "sexy baby"



MACALL POLAY HBO

**OZ COBB** (Colin Farrell) has a confrontation with Sofia (Milioti) in the HBO series "The Penguin."

voice on an infamous episode of "30 Rock" and the wedding guest stuck in a time loop in the rom-com "Palm Springs."

In recent years, Milioti has been "incredibly grateful" that she's gotten to work on projects she believes in — even if they haven't found their audiences, like the short-lived Peacock series "The Resort" or Max's surrealist dark comedy "Made for Love," which has since been removed from the streaming platform. (She's very frustrated about that development.)

Still, she knew she was waiting for something like "The Penguin."

"A couple of months before this project came to me, I think this is just a part of getting older, I started to think about time more, how I want to spend my time," she says. "I was always keeping an eye out and looking for a role like this. They're just really hard to find."

Usually, she adds, such roles also result in a metaphorical bloodbath involving dozens of actors. But "The Penguin" showrunner Lauren LeFranc and executive producers Craig Zobel and Reeves wanted to Zoom with her.

Even from the first script, Milioti could sense that there was a lot to mine from Sofia, despite not knowing her full backstory.

"There are incredible scenes where it's like an iceberg, you're just seeing the top, but there's a lot rolling below," she says.

Indeed, Sofia morphs multiple times over the course of the series. In a flashback episode, we see her as an innocent who learns about the murders of women committed by her father, Carmine (Mark Strong). She's then framed for those killings. Later, she takes revenge on her entire clan — whom she considers complicit in keeping her committed at Arkham — by gassing everybody, strutting around her family's mansion in a yellow gown and a gas mask. It's a sequence that's echoed in the finale when she burns the place down in a fabulous red coat, which was made for her by costume designer Helen Huang.

Milioti uses the word "collaborative" repeatedly to describe the process of working with LeFranc. She suspects the amount of input she had is unusual,

given how high-profile the series is.

"I don't have any other franchise to compare it to because I haven't been in anything like that, but I have to imagine that's not the case," she says. "I know what a blessing that was."

With LeFranc and other department heads like hairstylist Brian Badie, Milioti figured out how Sofia would "bloom" throughout the episodes. As she asserts herself — and becomes more of a mob boss — Sofia gains confidence. Milioti pushed, for instance, for her hair to evolve from prim and pulled back into the sexy shag she has by the end. "It's like a further sort of blossoming into an animal," she says.

I confess to Milioti that I was rooting for Sofia to beat Oz at his own game. It looks like she might when she bombs his warehouse. Alas, he gains the upper hand. As an actor, it's her job to advocate for her characters, even the ones who do terrible things, but she admits she was cheering for Sofia too. Others on set were as well. "I even remember members of the crew feeling that way too," she says. "But we wanted her to win."

Her final scene with Farrell was one of the last ones she shot, and it was an emotional day. "I could not have asked for a better partner to go to the depths of darkness with," she says. "I think he also understood how devastating that was as well."

There have already been rumors that Sofia might return for the sequel to "The Batman," but Milioti says she hasn't had any discussions with Reeves or LeFranc. "Everyone's keeping it really locked down," she says.

The character, however, means so much to Milioti that she was deeply stressed when she was initially on set. "I was like, 'Oh, my God. This is a needle in a haystack,'" she remembers. "And it certainly contributed to my absolutely crippling nerves for the first couple of months that we shot. I just was so aware that opportunities like this don't come around a lot."

When did the nerves dissipate for her?

"By the time I realized that there was so much of me in the can that if they were going to fire me, it was going to be a huge pain in the ass for them."

ELWOOD EDWARDS, 1949 – 2024

## Voice of AOL's iconic 'You've got mail' salute

His 'jack-of-all-trades' work in media included commercials, reporting the weather.

By MALIA MENDEZ

Elwood Edwards, a media multihyphenate who voiced AOL's iconic greeting "You've got mail," has died.

Edwards died last Tuesday at age 74 in New Bern, N.C., after a long illness, his former employer, Ohio NBC affiliate WKYC, confirmed. According to the television station, he died the day before his 75th birthday.

During his decade-long stint at WKYC, Edwards worked as a "graphics guru, camera operator, and general jack-of-all-trades," the station said, "yet it was a somewhat random opportunity that earned him international fame."

That year, Edwards recorded the four short phrases — including "You've got mail" — that he had "a certain amount of trouble trying to escape" for the rest of his life, he joked in 2012.

Thirty years ago, Ed-

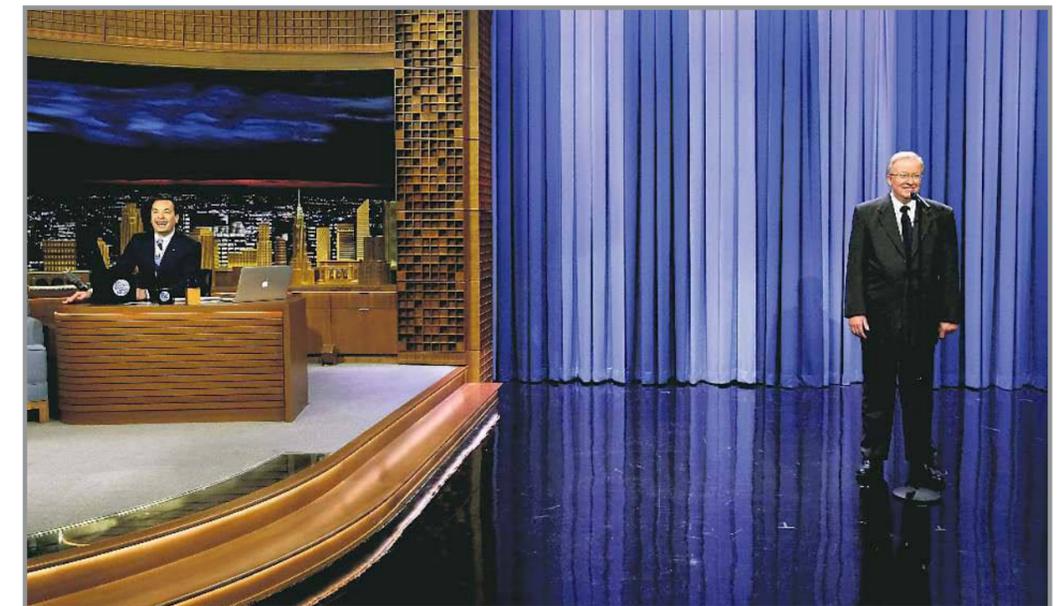
wards' wife, Karen, was working as a customer service representative at Quantum Computer Services, AOL's predecessor company, when she overheard then-Chief Executive Steve Case say he needed a voice-over actor for a new project.

"I had an idea. Why not make the service more personal by adding the voice of a person?" Case wrote in his 2016 book "The Third Wave: An Entrepreneur's Vision of the Future." Karen Edwards promptly volunteered her husband's services.

"I'd never met him, and didn't know what his voice sounded like. But I figured it would at least be a good prototype, a sample we could play for other voice-over actors when we started auditions," Case said.

The executive scribbled a few phrases — "Welcome," "You've got mail," "Files done" and "Goodbye" — onto a Post-it note and handed them to Karen, who promised recordings by the next day.

Edwards' voice "couldn't have been more perfect," Case recalled in his book. "It was disarmingly friendly, like the voice you'd expect



NBC NBCUniversal

### 'THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME'

Elwood Edwards went on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" in 2015 and recited his signature phrase, "You've got mail." Years earlier, he'd lent his voice to promotions for the rom-com of the same name.

from a stranger who offered to carry your grandmother's groceries. The second I heard it, I knew we weren't going to be auditioning anyone else."

Within a month, AOL was mailing CDs to millions of people nationwide, each containing upgraded software and a message from Elwood Edwards — who was paid a mere \$200 for the homemade recordings.

"I didn't really think anything of it at the time," Edwards said in a 2019 episode of the "Twenty Thousand Hertz" podcast. He had worked in broadcasting since high school, so hearing his name come out of a

speaker was "nothing new." "I don't think anyone had any idea what it would become," he said.

Edwards went on to lend his voice to other projects, including promotions for the 1998 romantic comedy "You've Got Mail" and a 2000 episode of "The Simpsons." In 2015, he appeared on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon," and after he recited his signature phrase, Fallon told the audience, "That's worth the price of admission, right there. That's enough."

The former broadcaster never received any residuals for his AOL voice work, he told Inside Edition in 2016,

two years after his retirement from WKYC. He wasn't able to find much voice-over work after the gig either, he told Culture Honey later that year, because he was "pigeonholed as the 'You've got' guy, and nothing ever really came of that."

Still, he said on "Twenty Thousand Hertz," being the voice of AOL was immensely gratifying, as was being recognized for it over the years.

"Our world is full of people who were in the right place at the right time, and I'm glad to be one of those," he said.

Elwood Hughes Edwards Jr. was born on Nov. 6, 1949, in Glen Burnie, Md., and began

his broadcasting career in high school in North Carolina.

"He started out as a teenager, before he was old enough to collect a paycheck," his daughter Sallie Edwards told the New York Times on Thursday. He went on to work behind the scenes in television, sometimes going on camera to report the weather. Later, he voiced commercials for businesses and other organizations, including a local church.

In addition to his daughter Sallie, Edwards is survived by another daughter, Heather Edwards; a brother, Bill; and a granddaughter, the outlet reported.