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Expected to surrender in 100G 'son bribe'

By LARRY CELONA, CRAIG McCARTHY and MATT TROUTMAN

Ingrid Lewis-Martin, the formidable consigliere of Mayor Adams, will surrender Thursday to face accusations she helped two businessmen who gave her DJ son a \$100,000 loan to buy a Porsche, The Post has learned.

The accusations form the backbone of bribery charges expected to be leveled against Lewis-Martin, her son Glenn Martin II and at least one of the businessmen, hotelier Mayank Dwivedi, sources confirmed.

Lewis-Martin has been ordered to surrender to authorities Thursday afternoon, sources familiar with the case said.

"They're going to lean on her like no tomorrow," one source said, theorizing that the Manhattan District Attorney's Office would try to get Lewis-Martin to flip on Adams, possibly in relation to the case against him brought by federal prosecutors.

The expected indictment against Lewis-Martin led to her sudden resignation over the weekend as Adams' senior adviser.

New details about the charges were first reported in The New York Times.

Sources confirmed to The Post that Manhattan prosecutors believe Lewis-Martin, in her City Hall role, allegedly expedited a holdup with a construction project run by the two businessmen.

The businessmen allegedly had given her son, who goes by DJ Suave Luciano, a six-figure loan to buy a Porsche before Lewis-Martin is said to have returned the favor, the sources said.

Lewis-Martin's lawyer, Arthur Aidala, declined to comment.

Dwivedi's hotel portfolio includes The Maidstone, an East Hamptons landmark that caters to the likes of Jon Bon Jovi and Kylie Minogue.

He also manages The Capri Southampton, another luxurious Hamptons hotel, on behalf of celebrity attorney Mark Geragos.

Geragos' daughter, Teny Geragos, who is Dwivedi's lawyer,



IT LUXE BAD: Ingrid Lewis-Martin (above) is expected to face charges for allegedly helping a pair of businessmen who gave her DJ son (right) a \$100,000 loan for a Porsche.



didn't return a call for comment.

DJ Suave Luciano has performed at the city's Rise Up NYC concerts, in addition to brunch gigs and releasing rump-shaking music videos to his 78 YouTube subscribers.

He didn't answer a call for comment, but he appeared aware of the potential charges. He retweeted the Times story that re-

vealed the alleged Porsche loan led to the case.

Aidala, during an appearance Tuesday on the "Sid & Friends in the Morning" radio show, said he believes prosecutors will accuse Lewis-Martin of making a "phone call" to the city Department of Buildings on behalf of unnamed parties asking for a reinspection amid a dispute between the parties and city.

LOTTERY

"Six months later, these guys allegedly, like, hire her son to be a DJ or some job like that," Aidala said. "And now they're saying that six months before, when Ingrid did this favor, she anticipated — not that there was a quid pro quo — if she would help them here, down the road it would give a benefit to her son."

Additional reporting by Ben Kochman

Madman slashes stranger on the Q

stabbed a straphanger watching Netflix in an unprovoked attack on a Brooklyn train Tuesday night - and now the victim says he'll think twice before taking the subway again.

The 32-year-old victim was watching a show on a northbound Q train at Park Place and Seventh Avenue in Park Slope just after 11 p.m. when the stranger suddenly lashed out, according to the victim and sources.

"I was coming home from work, to Astoria," the victim, who did not want his name used, told The Post in Spanish. "I was watching a show on Netflix. Then a guy came into the train and started to yell things at me.

"I didn't pay any attention to him because I thought he was crazy," the rider added. "But then he hit me, he stabbed me with something in the chest and my arm."

The injured man was taken to Brooklyn Methodist Hospital, where he received two stitches on the arm and two on his chest.

The victim, with a wife and kids back home in Mexico, said the attack left him afraid to ride the subway. "The truth is I'm scared," he said.

The suspect was still on the loose Wednesday.

The assault came hours after a 17-year-old girl was knifed on the left side of the face in the 161st Street-Yankee Stadium subway station at around 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, authorities said.

She was in stable condition at Harlem Hospital.

> Joe Marino, Jorge Fitz-Gibbon and Amanda Woods

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NEW JERSEY Pick-3 Wed.: 574; Fireball: 7 Pick-4 Wed.: 0906; Fireball: 7 Cash-5 Xtra Wed.: 7, 8, 19, 25, 45; Xtra: 4

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Play-3 Wed.: 104; Wild: 7
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Shay Mitchell skips the Christmas tree and decorates herself with twinkling lights in a cover shoot for Bustle. The 37-year-old actress, who has starred on "Pretty Little Liars" and the Hulu sitcom "Doll-face," nods to her uniquely festive ensemble by declaring: "I don't have any rules when it comes to fashion," adding, "Listen, do you try to add a little bit more glitz, a little bit more spar-kle around the holidays? Yes!" **Disney**

trans Pix nix

Disney scrapped a transgender storyline from Pixar's debut TV series.

"Win or Lose," set to premiere in 2025, follows a co-ed middle-school softball team's road to the championship game. Each episode follows a certain character with one originally featuring the tale of a transgender child.

The character remains in the show, but references to their gender identity were removed, according to reports.

"We recognize that many parents would prefer to discuss certain subjects with their children on their own terms," a Disney rep said. Shane Galvin

TEENS JUST SAY NO Post-COV abstain

By ALLIE GRIFFIN

It's a sobering report.

Most American teenagers are staying away from alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes and vapes as part of a lasting effect of the COVID-19 pandemic — while just one vice is growing, according to a national survey released Tuesday.

Roughly two-thirds of high-school seniors said they hadn't drunk alcohol or used marijuana or tobacco products in the past month — marking the greatest percentage of sober teens since the annual survey began documenting substance use in 2017.

Even fewer underclassmen are turning to substances.

Zyn an outlier

The federally funded Monitoring the Future survey, based on responses from 24,000 students in grades 8, 10 and 12 across the country, found that 80% of 10th-graders hadn't recently used any of the above drugs or booze and 90% of eighth-graders had abstained.

among illicit substan-

graders using Zyn and other pouches increased from just 3% in 2023 to 6% this year, according to the survey.

Researchers believe that the decline in teenage substance use is a lasting effect of pandemic lock-downs that limited social gatherings - and dampened peer pressure.

High-school freshmen are often turned on to drugs and alcohol by their older peers, the researchers noted.

'Stopped the cycle'

But the freshmen during the pandemic era were forced to avoid large gatherings and social events and never started drinking and smoking. As they got older, they didn't have the experience with booze and marijuana to influence the underclassmen, researchers theorized.

"The pandemic stopped the cycle of new kids coming in and being recruited to drug use," said the survey orchestrator, Richard Miech, of the University of Michigan.

The trend surprised researchers who thought they'd see teen usage jump back up after the lockdowns and restrictions on social gatherings were lifted.

"I think everyone expected at least a partial rebound," Miech said.

With Wires

But the one outlier ces teens are turning to at a higher rate is nicotine pouches such as the popular brand Zyn. The amount of 12th-Bustle



CNN hits a new low

Viewers keep tuning out

By TAYLOR HERZLICH and ARIEL ZILBER

Ratings-challenged CNN plummeted to a new all-time low in the most coveted demographic for advertisers — a downfall exacerbated by viewers tuning out left-leaning networks following President-elect Donald Trump's election win.

The cable news pioneer — in the midst of a major overhaul that will reportedly include mass layoffs — averaged 92,000 total day viewers in the key 25-to-54-yearold demo this year, a 1% drop from its previous rock bottom of 94,000 last year, according to Nielsen data first reported by Mediaite.

Ratings freefall

CNN suffered a 52% decline in its prime-time demo since the election, pulling in a measly average audience of 77,000, according to Nielsen.

Its overall prime-time viewership shriveled by 45% this year to viewers, the data 405,000 showed.

Just 11% of cable news viewers tuned in to CNN's prime-time shows after Trump's win - lagging behind left-leaning rival MSNBC's 16%.

Meanwhile, Fox News drew a staggering 72% of all eyeballs in prime time, according to Nielsen.

CNN attempted to paint a rosier image of its freefall.

"On television, CNN ranked again as a top 5 network in all of cable in Total Day among [people age 2 and over] for the 5th consecutive year and in the top 10 among [the 25-to-54 demo-

graphic]," the network said in a press release.

Fox's prime-time viewership has grown 7% since the election compared with its October average, according to Nielsen data earlier cited by The Hollywood Reporter.

Fox stays No. 1

The conservative network also extended its reign as the No. 1 cable news channel in total viewers and the key 25-54 demographic for the ninth year in a row.

"I am extremely proud of our entire team for proving once again why we are the nation's most-watched network as we outpaced the competition in covering the stories that mattered most to everyday Americans," Fox News Media CEO Suzanne Scott said.

MSNBC took second place for average total day viewers but fell behind CNN in the 25-54 demo amid its own post-election turmoil. Since Nov. 5, MSNBC's ratings have tanked more than 60% in prime time, dropping to only 57,000 average viewers, according to Nielsen.

The Comcast-owned channel has also seen viewers abandon its weekend shows. Last Saturday, its talk show hosted by Jonathan Capehart managed just 12,000 viewers in the 25-54 demo.

By comparison, upstart network NewsNation's competing afternoon program generated an audience nearly three times that number — 34,000 viewers — in the demo. From noon to 7 p.m., NewsNation beat MSNBC by 35% in the 25-54 demographic 23,000 viewers to 17,000.



Stephanopoulos told

By ALEXANDRA STEIGRAD and ARIEL ZILBER

George Stephanopoulos was repeatedly told by his executive producer not to "use the word rape" before going on the air to discuss Donald Trump but the ABC News anchor ignored the warning — a decision that cost the network \$16 million, The Post has learned.

Parent company Disney's capitulation last week in the defamation lawsuit by Trump against ABC News and Stephanopoulos shocked media and legal experts, but the damning revelation could help explain why Mouse House CEO Bob Iger signed off on the settlement so quickly.

The "This Week" host uttered that Trump was "liable for rape" while discussing the civil lawsuit won by journalist E. Jean Carroll during an interview with Rep. Nancy Mace (R-SC) in March.

A producer on the news show "said 'don't use the word rape' before the segment started," a network source told The Post. "The EP [executive producer] said it so many times.

A second source at the show confirmed via a text message viewed by The Post that Stephanopoulos was warned "not to say rape."

Damaging discovery

Disney's chances of winning the lawsuit would be damaged if Stephanopoulos ignored his producer's warning, legal experts told The Post.

Often, when dealing with litigious subjects, the company's legal team may speak to producers ahead of time to advise on language so as to avoid lawsuits, which is customary in the media industry.

However, it was unclear whether ABC's legal team had been involved before Stephanopoulos went on the air.

ABC News declined to comment. Reps for Disney and Stephanopoulos did not return requests for comment.

Iger agreed to the deal late Friday — hours after Florida Judge Cecilia Altonaga rejected a request to delay the case and ordered Trump and Stephanopoulos to sit for hours-long depositions just days before Christmas, The New York Times reported Wednesday.

The judge also demanded that Disney turn over emails and text messages sent from and to Stephanopoulos by Sunday -



MOUSE TRAP:

Disney CEO Bob Iger (near right) was advised to settle Presidentelect Donald Trump's suit vs. ABC News in part to prevent alleged damning internal texts from George Stephanopoulos being exposed.

which could have forced the media mogul's hand if the damning texts surfaced.

Disney's top lawyer, Horacio Gutierrez, urged Iger to settle the suit rather than risk a civil trial in front of a jury in the president-elect's home state. people familiar with the matter told The Wall Street Journal.

Iger also was worried that fighting the case could "risk damaging press protections" and "hurt the Disney brand," according to the Times.

If Disney were to suffer a negative outcome in US District Court in Florida, the company feared the possible repercussions of appealing to the Supreme Court given the current 6-3 right-leaning majority.

According to the Journal report, Disney was concerned that appealing an unfavorable ruling to the Supreme Court would have increased the risk of possibly overturning New York



landmark 1964 decision that granted the press sweeping protections against defamation lawsuits.

Sources also told The Post that one factor playing into Iger's thinking is that he didn't want a lawsuit hanging over his company's flagship television property ahead of a possible

The deal awarded \$15 million to a presidential foundation and \$1 million for Trump's attorney

Still 'Furious George'

As part of the settlement, Stephanopoulos was forced to apologize — which made the journalist "apoplectic" and "humiliated," The Post exclusively reported Tuesday - in an article headlined: "Furious George.'

ployees are now calling Stephanopoulos "furious George" behind his back. They are also wondering how the star anchor can now cover the incoming Trump administration.

"Everyone seems to be asking that question except brass," the source said.

Trump initially filed the lawsuit in March.

The anchor went on CBS's "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert"

"I'm not going to be cowed out of doing my job because of the threat," Stephanopoulos

Trump has denied all wrongdoing toward Carroll, but last year a New York court found he was liable for sexual abuse over allegations that he abused her at a department store in 1996 and later defamed her in his statements where he denied her alle-

Last year, Iger denied reports that Disney was looking to offload ABC amid a strategic pivot as it relates to its linear-television business.

But recently, rival media giants such as Warner Bros. Discovery and Comcast parent NBCUniversal are shifting resources away from their cable assets, which are no longer growing amid cord-cutting and the rapid growth of streaming.

Comrades call him smart leader

By RYAN KING

Two decades ago, while the insurgency was raging in Iraq, an Army commander of Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion of the 187th Infantry Regiment, which was gearing up for a deployment, got an unusual request.

Pete Hegseth, a National Guard officer at the time, was seeking to go on their mission.

"I had never heard of anybody — before or since then — volunteering to serve as an infantryman, especially as a platoon leader, going to Iraq in like 2005," Sgt. Maj. Eric Geressy, who served on that team, recounted in an exclusive interview with The Post on Wednesday.

Ínitially, Geressy was skeptical. Hegseth had shown up just three weeks prior to heading overseas. His Princeton grad's pedigree and work as an equity capital markets analyst at Bear Stearns also gave Geressy pause.

The unit would be heading into a very dangerous mission where bullets would be flying, a far cry from Hegseth's investment background.

"I was rough on him," Geressy recalled. "He was very good. He took everybody's input immediately... very eager to learn, listen, open-minded and a very critical thinker."

Medal winner

Hegseth would go on to win the Bronze Star, the Army Commendation medal twice and Combat Infantryman Badge for his service in Iraq.

Geressy said Hegseth put "the troops first" and he would usually be the "first one through the door" during key missions. Now Hegseth, 44, is gearing

Now Hegseth, 44, is gearing up for an even bolder move, potentially leading every military service branch as head of the Pentagon.

Geressy was "fully surprised" to learn that Presidentelect Donald Trump had

LET'S ROLL: Pete Hegseth (left), in Iraq with Sgt. Maj. Eric Geressy in 2005, is called "extremely smart" and "open-minded" by men who served with him there and in Afghanistan.

tapped his former foxhole buddy to helm the Defense Department — an unorthodox pick that caught most observers off-guard — but hailed him as a "great selection."

'Breathes military'

"He breathes the military. That's all he talks about," Geressy reflected. "Pete's extremely smart. He's very articulate, he's a critical thinker, and he's going to learn from the experts and get a lot of

good information from folks. "100% he's going to get con-

firmed," he added.

Army Col. Chip Rankin, who fought alongside Hegseth in Afghanistan, recounted meeting him in 2011 after the decorated warrior reached out via a mutual friend about serving with his unit, which was slated to head over to the war-torn country at the time.

Rankin described Hegseth as clearly "well-educated" and a "lifelong learner" at the time who was constantly reading books and doing research.

He harked back to how Hegseth volunteered for a very risky situation outside the security of the base where an IED exploded.

"He was going through a vehicle that got blown up, and there were dead people, people that were fighting... And Pete went right into that situation, and performed admirably in a very, very challenging situation," Rankin said. "He could have been killed, and he never hesitated."

Senate OKs arms bill with trans provision

The Senate gave the green light to the Pentagon's \$895 billion annual budget Wednesday, despite a row over provisions barring the use of those funds for transgender surgeries on children, which roiled Democrats.

By 85-14, the Senate passed the 1,800-page National Defense Authorization Act, which had cleared the House of Representatives last week and now needs President Biden's signature.

In every fiscal year,

which starts Oct. 1, Congress is tasked with passing the NDAA. This year's bill, which comes two months late, amounts to a roughly 1% uptick over last year's budget.

It also features a 4.5% pay hike for service mem-

bers across the board at the start of 2025.

While NDAAs historically garner bipartisan support, Republicans managed to finagle the provision on transgenderism that has peeved Democrats.

Specifically, the NDAA blocks the military's health-care service, Tricare, from footing the bill for so-called "gender transition" coverage pertaining to service members' children under the age of 18. Ryan King

House nixes funding measure

The bloated congressional funding bill that faced a mass Republican revolt aided by President-elect Donald Trump was scrapped Wednesday night, House Majority Leader Steve Scalise confirmed.

Scalise (R-La.) told reporters the spending package — that would have funded the government until mid-March — is dead, leaving Congress scrambling to come up with a new agreement ahead of a looming government shutdown Saturday.

"There's still a lot of negotiations and conversations going on," Scalise said, noting there's no agreement on how to proceed.

A large contingent of House Republicans guffawed at the 1,547-page continuing resolution that Speaker Mike Johnson drafted in a negotiation with Democrats, who would likely try to hold up the bill in the Senate if they didn't get their measures in.

The revolt was spearheaded by Elon Musk, one of Trump's closest advisers and co-chair of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), as he went on a tirade on X Wednesday against Republicans who supported the stopgap measure.

ported the stopgap measure.

Trump and Vice Presidentelect J.D. Vance then weighed in on the GOP battle in a lengthy statement issued from the Ohio senator's X account, in which they called on Republicans to be "tough" and "smart" and not give in to Democratic requests.

The leaders also issued a new directive that had not been discussed previously: pass a debt-limit increase before Trump comes into office so deliberations are held now in President Biden's term.

Trump then went to Truth Social and directly threatened to primary Republicans who wouldn't vote for a debt-limit increase now.

A reporter asked Scalise if the new stopgap being deliberated will include a debt-limit increase.

"There's no new agreement right now, we're obviously looking at a lot of options," he responded. Diana Glebova



Plagiarism injunction.

Brazil hits Adele on song 'copy'

Adele has been accused of plagiarizing on her 2015

song "Million Years Ago."

In an injunction filed Friday in Rio de Janeiro's Sixth Commercial Court, Brazilian Judge Victor Torres ordered that the track off Adele's "25" album must be banned nationwide from streaming services and other global platforms, according Agence France-Presse.

The order reportedly threatens the Brazilian sub-sidiaries of Adele's labels, Sony Music Entertainment and Universal Music, with a fine of \$8,000 "per act of noncompliance.

Torres claimed that Adele's song — which she co-wrote with music producer Greg Kurstin — lifts from Martinho Da Vila's samba classic "Mulheres." Toninho Geraes, who wrote the Brazilian song, originally sued Adele,

36, for plagiarism in 2021.

"Million Years Ago" was previously accused of plagiarism in 2015 by fans of the late Kurdish singer Ahmet Kaya. Eric Todisco

Mex. cops kill cockfight thug

A notorious Mexican cartel boss was gunned down in a shoot-out with police — after pulling off a hit at a cockfight that left two dead, according to reports.

Jose "El Chabelo" Isabel, the top honcho for the Sinaloa Cartel in Manzanillo,

and his cohort pulled off the cockfight bloodbath Sunday, according to Spanish-language news outlet Excelsior.

the Empire State.

of the plant.

The resident spotted part of the

"When I found the teeth and ex-

jaw sticking out from topsoil with two teeth hidden near the fronds

A national police squad caught up with them, leading to a wild shoot-out that left Isabel and his unidentified accomplice dead, the outlet reported. Jorge Fitz-Gibbon



"I'm thrilled that our property has yielded such an important find for the scientific community." Museum and SUNY Orange staff arrived at the home and

pulled the well-preserved jaw as

"This mastodon jaw provides a unique opportunity to study the ecology of this magnificent species, which will enhance our understanding of the Ice Age ecosys-

ert Feranec, who curates Ice Age animals for the museum. "Fossils ... provide remarkable snapshots of the past" and "provide us with better context and understanding of the current world around us."

CONGESTION CON

Your subway fare is going up to a ride \$3...

Congestion tax is \$9 for each trip...

All to fund the MTA's

BILLION DOLLAR



SOMETHING NEW TO 'C': The inaugural "open-gangway" C train gets ready to roll in April — and now more of them are being bought.

BOONDOGE GET SENDING FOR SOUTH APRIL — and now more of them are being bought.

By NICOLE ROSENTHAL, HALEY BROWN and CRAIG McCARTHY

Well that's un-fare.

The MTA approved a \$1.27 billion order of 435 new subway cars—including 80 "open gangway" cars—then OK'd a plan to raise subway and bus fares to \$3.

"This is a good deal," MTA Chairman and CEO Janno Lieber said Wednesday of the price hike, after approving a budget plan that anticipates a 4% hike in fares from the current \$2.90 by the second half of 2025.

The MTA board will have to formally approve the hike next year.

"We are way cheaper than other major world cities," Lieber said. But the coming hikes met immediate blowback from critics who scoffed at the big spending alongside the fare hikes and a new Manhattan business district congestion toll that goes into effect Jan. 5.

'Paying double'

"Chicago Transit bought 400 cars for \$632 million pre-pandemic," City Council Minority Leader Joe Borelli (R-SI) said.

"So given the MTA's incompetence factor, multiplied by their waste, abuse and mismanagement, paying only double a few years later seems par for the course," he added. "Congestion pricing was supposed to solve all these capital shortfalls, but apparently now it won't."

The MTA's current five-year plan assumed a "routine" increase of 4% in 2025 and another 4% increase in 2027 — which would mean fares of about \$3.14. Meanwhile, commuters in private vehicles are slated to shell out \$9 at the start of the congestion toll, which will balloon to \$15 in the coming years.

"The Miserable Transit Authority strikes again, raiding the pockets of hardworking New Yorkers with their congestion tax scam and endless fare and toll hikes," City Council Member Robert Holden (D-Queens) said in a statement.

But it remains to be seen if the latest crunch on commuters will have any ramifications at the ballot box for Gov. Hochul or other pols with elections a ways off, insiders said.

"Unfortunately, the fiscal needs of the MTA and the political fortunes of mayors and governors rarely converge favorably," Democratic political strategist Jake Dilemani told The Post.

Few repercussions?

"Straphangers and commuters will feel the pinch even more," Dilemani added, "but it is unlikely this fare increase will have political repercussions when voters head to the polls for mayor next year and governor in two years."

The \$1.27 billion package is set to add 355 modern R211 subway cars, plus 80 more that include

the European-style "open-gangway accordian" trains enabling riders to walk the length of train completely inside.

Those trains without interior end doors are set to debut in 2027 and eventually replace all R44 trains on the Staten Island Railway and the orange-and-yellow-seat R46 subway cars used for decades on the A, C, N, Q, R and W lines. The new trains will also usher in the replacement of the R68s used on the B, D, N and W lines.

G-line straphangers will be able to ride the accordion-style cars starting early next year, the MTA said.

At least two five-car open gangway trains from the C line will be transferred to the G line in the

CONGESTION CON



PHOTO-OP CONDUCTOR: Gov. Hochul earlier this year rides the rails with photographers on the MTA's modern new "open-gangway" cars allowing passengers to walk end to end inside the train, among other features.

first quarter of 2025 — and riders will have about a one-in-five chance of riding in an open gangway setup.

'Fully modernizing'

"This latest order is putting the MTA closer towards its goal of fully modernizing the system," MTA chief of rolling stock Tim Mulligan said in a statement.

"The R2lls are state-of-the-art and less prone to breakdowns,

which means smoother trips for tens of thousands of New Yorkers and more reliable service for decades to come."

The R2II trains, first rolled out on the C line earlier this year, are part of a "generational upgrade to our subway fleet," NYCT President Demetrius Crichlow said at a Monday MTA board meeting, "and the benefits are huge."

Crichlow acknowledged new features such as wider doors, better signage, displays and the presence of video cameras "to improve the safety of our customers and employees."

Transit crime is down more than 6% citywide, according to NYPD data — and Lieber blamed most of the current subway crime on "mentally ill" people

"Where we continue to have challenges is because of what's going on with criminal justice," Lieber said. "The fact that someone thinks they can just get on a train and stab someone."



SOLDIERING ON: Strapping National Guard troops give subway straphangers a sense of security Wednesday at Grand Central.

Show of force underground

By VAUGHN GOLDEN and MATT TROUTMAN

The more the merrier.

An additional 250 National Guard troops will be deployed in New York City's subways for the holiday season and beyond, Gov. Hochul announced Wednesday.

The soldiers will swell the New York Army National Guard's total, \$100 million subway deployment to 1,000 troops as an expected 8 million visitors jingle all the way into the Big Apple for the holidays, the governor said at a news conference in Grand Central Station.

Indefinite presence

But while the deployment coincides with the Christmas and Hanukkah season, Hochul said there's no planned end date to draw down the troops because their mission is to instill a sense of safety in the subways.

"I want them to know when they walk through the turnstile they will be safe," she said of straphangers.

Hochul argued her controversial first deployment of troops into the subways in March has led to a dramatic drop in transit crime.

"It's about continuing this strategy that has proven its success," she said.

Major crime in the subways is down nearly 12% overall since the pre-pandemic year figures as of 12/15 **MURDER** 2023 2024 9 5 **SHOOTINGS** 2023 2024 12 8 **PETIT LARCENY** 2024 2023 838 647

Subway crime

of 2019, but a closer look at data shows many violent offenses are up.

Murder and felony assaults are respectively up 200% and 55% over 2019's levels, the data show.

When a reporter asked about bumps in violent crimes, Metropolitan Transportation Authority honcho Janno Lieber said those crime categories still involved a "very small" number of incidents.

Additional reporting by Craig McCarthy and Tina Moore

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE TURNPIKE

By ISABEL VINCENT and MARY K. JACOB

At least 17 military bases adjacent to Chinese-owned farmland across the US have experienced a rash of drone sightings in recent weeks, The Post has learned.

Mysterious drones have been reported near military bases in Hawaii and by installations in Utah, California, Maine and Florida — among other facilities scattered throughout the country.

The Post previously identified 19 military bases that lie in close proximity to farmland bought up by Chinese-owned companies — a situation that has worried China analysts, who feared the communist nation would use the land to spy on US military operations.

All those facilities apart from Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota and Joint Base San Antonio-Camp Bullis in Texas had reports of drones either attempting to fly over their bases or nearby, according to local reports.

It comes as residents in New York and New Jersey have reported thousands of sightings of unexplained mystery drones in the night skies.

'Adversarial' flights

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas) said Tuesday he believes some of the unidentified drones are "spy drones" from

"We need to identify who is behind these drones," he said. "My judgment based on my experience is that those that are over our military sites are adversarial and most likely are coming from the People's Republic of China."
In Southern California, drones

were reported over Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in recent

Spokesman Capt. James C. Sartain told The War Zone that between Dec. 9 and 15, "there were six instances of unmanned aerial systems (UAS)" seen entering the airspace over Camp Pendleton.

At the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, officials were forced to shut its airspace for four hours last week because of concern about the "small unmanned aerial systems," Bob Purtiman, the chief spokesman for the 88th Air Base Wing, told The Post.

In Virginia, drones have been spotted over Virginia Beach, about 24 miles from the Norfolk Naval Station.

Meanwhile, in Washington state, mysterious drones were also spotted earlier this week close to the Fort Lewis Army base near Tacoma.

Unidentified aircraft have also been reported this month above New Jersey's Picatinny Arsenal

Farms near US 'drone' bases JERSEY MYSTERY: A suspected drone is spotted flying over New Jersey, not far from several military bases.

and the state's Naval Weapons Station Earle — and on Sunday forced the temporary closure of Stewart International Airport in New York near Poughkeepsie.

Landowner 'Beijing' link

Sources have previously raised their concerns to The Post about Chinese landowners, who are usually linked to, or working on behalf of, the country's communist government.

Morgan Lerette, a former contractor for private military contractor Blackwater, previously told The Post: "The Chinese are, or will, use this farmland to learn more about US military capabilities, movements and technology.

"This will allow them to better understand how to transition their military from a defensive strategy to an expeditionary one."

A report in The Wall Street Journal from September 2023 found Chinese intruders attempted to breach military facilities more than 100 times in recent years, including sneaking onto a missile range in New Mexico and scuba divers spotted near a government rocket-launch site in Florida.

Meanwhile, in analysis from the Farm Service Agency of the USDA, Chinese investors owned 349,442 acres of US farmland as of Dec. 31, 2022.

Billionaire and Chinese Com-

munist Party member Chen Tianqiao is the second-largest foreign owner of farmland in the US. He bought nearly 200,000 acres of farmland in Oregon in 2015 at about \$430 an acre, according to The Land Report.

However, his purchase of the acreage did not appear in government records of land ownership by foreign investors when it was first revealed in January, according to The Daily Caller.

Chinese holdings total under 1% of foreign-owned agricultural land in the US, according to NBC, but it's the proximity to critical military installations that raises concerns, critics have charged.

ivincent@nypost.com

Joe: No reason to fear

President Biden broke his silence on the alarming number of drone sightings in the tri-state area, insisting there is "no sense of danger" due to the unexplained flights.

"Nothing nefarious apparently, but they're checking it all out," Biden told reporters at the White House Tuesday as lawmakers and the public

have sought answers.
"We're following this closely, but so far no sense of danger," the 82-year-old president said.

"There's a lot of drones authorized up there," Biden said. "I think one started it and they all everybody wanted to get in the deal."

The FBI, FAA, Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security also said in a joint statement Monday there is little reason to fret.

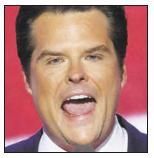
"We assess that the sightings to date include a combination of lawful commercial drones, hobbyist drones, and law enforcement drones, as well as manned fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and stars mistakenly reported as drones," the agencies Kenneth Garger

Jail-smuggle bids 'halted'

A New Jersey military base said that after numerous drone incursions this year, it has established countermeasures to thwart attempts to smuggle illicit items into a federal prison there.

Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, which houses FCI Fort Dix prison, confirmed the steps to military blog The War Zone.

"We take each case seriously," base rep Kitsana R. Dounglomchan said, noting "the majority of the drones were intercepted or recovered." Chris Nesi



MATT GAETZ Secret vote to bare probe.

House will open up Gaetz after all

mittee secretly voted to release the findings of its investigation of sexual misconduct allegations against former Rep. Matt Gaetz, according to a new report.
Gaetz (R-Fla.) resigned

from Congress on Nov. 13 when President-elect Donald Trump announced him as his pick for attorney general - before Gaetz withdrew eight days later due to Senate Republican concerns about those allegations.

The GOP-led Ethics Committee's secret vote occurred sometime in December, CNN reported Wednesday, and the document is expected to be released be-fore the end of the month.

Gaetz, 42, for years has faced allegations of sexual misconduct involving at least one alleged underage partner, which he has de-nounced as a political smear, saying that the Justice Department did not pursue charges when it looked into the claims.

The MAGA firebrand, now at One America News Network, denied the allegations again in a Wednesday X post after CNN's report — adding he was embarrassed of the fact that he had "woman-ized" in his 30s. "The Biden/ Garland DOJ spent years reviewing allegations that I committed various crimes. I was charged with nothing: EXONERATED," **FULLY** Gaetz wrote.

"In my single days," he went on, "I often sent funds to women I dated some I never dated but who asked. I dated several of these women for years. I NEVER had sexual contact with someone under 18."

Stephen Nelson

Soccer-star daughter blasts Rodman



nothing else." She alleged the former Chicago Bulls superstar

who was married to her mom, Michelle Moyer, from 2003 to 2012 - would constantly have parties while she and her older brother, D.J. Rod-

man, were in his care.
"We tried to live with him, but he's having parties 24/7. He's bringing random bitches in. He loves the spotlight. He loves the cameras," she claimed.

"My mom didn't want — she was strong enough to deal with it because even to this day, I still believe that my dad hasn't loved anyone after my mom."

'Alcoholic' demons

Moyer filed for divorce from Rodman, 63, in 2004 but their marriage wasn't dissolved until eight years later. Trinity said her mom left her dad because his "demons were too strong."

"I think my mom just saw the situation of, 'We love each other. It's not gonna work,'" the soccer star said. "For my kids, I can't have them seeing you treat me this way, embarrass me this way and have the party scene all the time."

The Washington Spirit player then spoke about the Basketball Hall of Famer's struggles with substance

"He's an alcoholic," she bluntly stated. "That's something that I don't want to say, but I'm just like, f--k it. It's just the truth."

Trinity shared that her dad was in her and D.J.'s "lives less" as they

"We were seeing him once, two, three, four times a year," she recounted. "Every time they were together, it was the same s--t. It was my mom being valid and what the f--k are you doing? Help us and help your children.

She also claimed that the fivetime NBA champ left them financially struggling after the divorce.

"Before the divorce happened, my dad was actually helping money-wise," she explained.

"He would actually give money to my mom and let us live life a little bit. When the divorce happened, it

was just like, 'F--k you guys.'"
Trinity said they "barely" had enough money to pay their rent and were allegedly living out of a car at one point.

The young athlete explained that

she's never spoken out publicly about Dennis because she wanted to protect his image.

"We never want to make him look bad, and that is at the cost of kind of holding it in a lot," she said.

"I guess it's just like the anger that I haven't really been able to let out is difficult for me."

No happy reunion

Trinity even says Rodman showing up during a NWSL playoff game in November 2021 was all

"He showed up to my game. I was like so mad," Trinity said, adding that she hadn't spoken to her father for months at that point. After her team, the Spirit, won, "I was like: 'You took this happy moment from me. You f--ked with my head again.' And he did it so many times. I think he knows what he does.'

Trinity said her father has been "trying to call" her over the last few weeks. "I answer the phone now for my conscience. If something does happen, God forbid, I want to know that I did that. Or if he needed to hear my voice before anything happens," she said.

"That's why I answer the phone, not for me."

Killer the rare case of gunwoman

Natalie "Samantha" Rupnow, 15, who killed a teacher, a student and herself at a Wis-consin Christian school Tuesday, is a remarkably rare case of a female shooter, law-en-forcement data show.

A report from the FBI on 345 active-shooter incidents from 2000 to 2019 found that

just 13 (3.7%) of the shooters

were women.
A Justice Department database comes to a similar con-clusion, finding that in mass shootings — an incident with four or more victims — from 1966 through 2019, 97.7% of the perpetrators were men. The Violence Prevention

Project found that in the past 25 years, just four out of 200 mass shooters identified as female. Only nine female students have committed a school shooting since 1999, according to The Washington Post.

According to experts, men are more likely than women

to blame others for their problems — which often in-clude personal issues with women — and turn to violence in response, NPR reported. Women are also more likely to pick up a knife rather than a gun if they intend to inflict harm, studies show.

Patrick Reilly

The 15-year-old Wisconsin school shooter who killed two and injured six at her conservative Christian school had a dark past which appears to have included membership in a morbid Web site called "Watch People Die."

But while police don't yet have a motive for the shooting, which also saw Natalie "Samantha" Rupnow turn the gun on herself then die on the way to hospital, she was apparently an aficionado of the twisted

Sub teacher died a hero 'Protecting her class'

COMMUNITY GRIEF: Several hundred people attend a vigil for school shooting victims Tuesday on Capitol Square in Madison, Wis.

By PATRICK REILLY

The 15-year-old who shot up a Wisconsin Christian school killed a substitute teacher who was covering for another educator out on

vacation, according to a parent.
Natalie "Samantha" Rupnow gunned down the substitute and another teenager, identified Wednesday as 14-year-old Rubi Patricia Vergara.

Rupnow also wounded six others before taking her own life at the Abundant Life Christian School in Madison on Monday.

The substitute teacher was running a study hall when Natalie started pulling the trigger, Lyndsay O'Connor, whose daughter and son attend the school, told Wisconsin Right Now.

"The teacher died protecting her class," O'Connor said. "Many more lives could have been taken. [Rupnow] sent off multiple rounds."

The teen shooter "was very much to herself" and was known for wearing "a collared shirt with a tie, jeans and combat boots" to school, the mom said.

Rupnow "weirded out" her daughter, Mackynzie, who had a messy locker next to Rupnow's, "but she decided to be nice to her a month into school and to [begin] talking to her," O'Connor said.

Rupnow regularly "pounded energy drinks" and was described by O'Connor as an "odd version of preppie in a way" who would dress up in shirts and ties.

The parent added that Rupnow did not have many friends and was "very isolated."

The killer had also appeared to have a troubled home life, and was constantly texting with her boyfriend, whom she said she had met over the Internet and was from Germany, the mother said.

"She died a broken girl," O'Connor said. "She died unheard, and she found solace in a bunch of people who didn't promote goodness."

She told people she had to go to the nurse before the shooting - but it was unclear if she ever did, O'Connor added.

School shooter's parents STUCK ON A 'MARRY' GO-ROUND

By PATRICK REILLY

The 15-year-old girl who killed two people and wounded six others when she opened fire at her Wisconsin Christian school had been in therapy over her troubled home life with her parents — who repeatedly divorced and remarried, court records show.

Natalie "Samantha" Rupnow, who died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound after the deadly mass shooting Monday at Abundant & Life Christian School in Madison, was at times yanked between her parents' homes every two or three days when they were separated, according to records obtained by The Washington Post.

Her mother and father, Melissa and Jeff Rupnow, first married in 2011, two years after they had Natalie, who had recently started using the first name Samantha.

They divorced in 2014 and shared custody of Natalie, whom



they agreed would live primarily with her mother.

The couple then remarried three years later in 2017 — just to get divorced for a second time another three years after that, in

This time, they more evenly split custody of their daughter,

with Natalie spending two days with her father, then two days with her mother, followed by three days with her father again in a schedule that would alternate weekly, the DC paper reported.

They married for a third time shortly thereafter — but by April 2021 were splitting up again.

Teen's death Web site link

site, which boasts it has over 3 million registered users.

The site includes graphic images of people being shot dead and run over, other school shooters, and many international incidents like one in which a 19-yearold man dies after being caught in a meat grinder.

Rupnow, allegedly posting under the handle @Crossixir, is said to have written four months ago in response to an apparent suicide-by-hanging video: "Gotta be thinking of something while hanging himself."

When another posted asked her to explain more she apparently added: "I wonder what a lot people think before they die you

"Like just simply if it's if they want to die at all or just nothing, or either perhaps just sex or just something stupid.

"Only thing I would bother to think of is just do it already if I was killing myself but depends on the situation. What would you think though?"

The site appears to be run by a male who uses an explicit screen

"Hi! I hate this website and that's really unfortunate, because I also run this website," the person writes.

"Please consider logging off," the site manager adds. "Watching the garbage here doesn't improve your life in any way. Go read a book or something."

Dana Kennedy

wed & divorced 3 times in span of 10 years



A judge granted the divorce a month later but noted that "parties admonished concerning remarriage," according to court documents.

In July 2022, a mediator ruled that the couple would again share custody of Natalie but she would live primarily with her father.

By that time, Natalie, just 12 years old, was going to therapy sessions that were meant to help determine which parent she would spend her weeks with, according to court records.

Before Natalie was born, her mom had been married to and divorced from a different man, and also had a daughter with a man she never married. Natalie's stepsister, now 20, was raised by other legal guardians, papers show.

Natalie's dad, meanwhile, is a Christian who shared photos of his daughter and cele-

brated her achievements — like earning a purple belt in karate on his Facebook page.

In one post from this past August, Jeff Rupnow posted a photo of Natalie shooting a rifle at the North Bristol Sportsman's Club in Sun Prairie.

He and Natalie, he said in the post, had joined the club earlier this year and "have been loving ... every second of it!"

Natalie opened fire in a study hall at the small K-12 school

around 11 a.m. Monday, killing a substitute teacher and a 14-yearold student, Rubi Patricia Vergara.

Vergara was remembered in her obituary as someone who loved to sing and play keyboard in the family worship band and who "shared a special bond with her beloved pets," a dog named Coco and a cat named Ginger, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported.

The obituary said she will be "deeply missed" by her parents and brother, as well as several other relatives.

Another teacher and five other students were also shot, and two of those victims remain hospitalized in critical condition. All remain unidentified.

ROCKY CHILDHOOD:
Natalie "Samantha" Rupnow (left with dog), who killed herself after killing two others Monday in a school shooting, had a turbulent upbringing, with parents Jeff (inset left) and Melissa (together above) repeatedly splitting up and getting back together.

'Secret police station' in Chinatown



UNDERCOVER: Chen Jinping is circled at right next to alleged cohort "Harry" Lu Jianwang. Feds allege that both men helped Beijing locate US-based Chinese dissidents from an office in Chinatown (right).

Beijing spy's 'red badge' 'fess to feds

By KYLE SCHNITZER and BEN KOCHMAN

A Chinese spy who ran a "secret police station" in Manhattan to help Beijing target government dissidents faces up to five years in prison after pleading guilty Wednesday to acting as an illegal foreign agent, federal prosecutors said.

Chen Jinping, 60, admitted in Brooklyn federal court to "conspiring" to act on behalf of the People's Republic of China without telling US authorities.

He confessed to removing an online article about the alleged police station — which prosecutors say occupied a full floor of a Chinatown building near the Manhattan Bridge — for his Beijing handlers in September 2022.

"I knowingly agreed to act as a foreign agent for a foreign government," he told Judge Nina Morrison through an interpreter.

Wary to rat on agency

But he acted cagey when the judge asked him for which government he was working.

Chen briefly tried in vain to sidestep the question by repeating "the government" — and only admitted that he'd been representing China after he was pressed again by the judge.

"At the time I did this, I did not inform the attorney general that I was acting as a foreign agent, and I was not registered as a foreign agent," he added.

Chen and his alleged partner "Harry" Lu Jianwang, 61, were arrested in April 2023 and charged with opening the since-closed covert outpost in early 2022.

Lu, whose case is still pending, allegedly helped Chinese security officials locate dissidents living in the US, court papers claim.

The two tried to cover up their crimes by deleting their communications with a Chinese Ministry of Public Security official after learning that they were under investigation, the feds allege.

The arrests were part of what prosecutors at the time called a sweeping crackdown on Beijing's influence campaign in the US.

"This prosecution reveals the Chinese government's flagrant violation of our nation's sovereignty by establishing a secret police station in the middle of New York City," Brooklyn US Attorney Breon Peace had said.

Peace said Wednesday that the guilty plea reflects a "priority" of his office "to counteract the malign activities of foreign governments that violate our nation's sovereignty." Chen is set to be sentenced May 30, 2025.

Mayhem in cop chase

A man wanted for selling drugs stole a car and barreled into a 44-year-old cyclist during a wild police chase Wednesday in Greenwich Village, according to sources and witnesses.

The cyclist was riding in a bike lane at West Third and Mercer streets when the reckless, wrong-way motorist smashed into him—sending him to the pavement as police closely pursued the stolen vehicle shortly after 3 p.m.

shortly after 3 p.m.

Moments before the crash, the driver slipped into someone's black Ford Fusion as police zeroed in on him for selling narcotics, the NYPD said.

"There was a cyclist going the correct way down the street and the car hit the cyclist," witness Ariadne Chan-Miller, 17, told The Post.

"It seemed like there were cops behind it and the cyclist flew up into the air and then fell down and the car kept going. It didn't stop or anything. The cop had to stop behind because they didn't want to run him over," she said.

Medics rushed the injured victim to NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue in stable condition with head and leg injuries, the NYPD said.

The driver abandoned the car and was on the loose.

Steven Vago, Amanda Woods and Jack Morphet

SHSAT firm 'test' vote

A five-year, \$17 million contract for the company that administers the city's controversial entrance exam for specialized high schools was finally approved Wednesday evening after a much-delayed vote.

The city Department of Education's Panel for Educational Policy voted to renew the pact with Pearson, which has administered the state-mandated admissions exam since 1983.

The 2026 freshman class will now take a digital version of the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test—the sole criteria for entry into Gotham's elite public high schools. *Aneeta Bhole*



Miranda Devine

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HE shamelessness of the first family was writ large at the White House this week as the president's final whirl of Christmas parties attracted social media "influencers" whose biggest thrill was posting selfies with celebrity nepotist Hunter Biden.

In the very week that he was due to be sentenced to jail for tax fraud, the first son merrily pressed the flesh and flashed his \$70,000 pearly whites, secure in the knowledge that his father's "full and unconditional" pardon has got him off the hook for any and all crimes committed for the past 11 years.

The outrage over Hunter's pardon has been buried in an avalanche of other pardons Joe Biden has been doling out like candy to assorted scumbags.

Among this week's record round of 1,499 commutations and 39 pardons are Chinese spies and a childporn aficionado, a Pennsylvania judge convicted over the "Kids for Cash" scandal in which children were sent to for-profit prisons in return for kickbacks, a Mississippi cancer doctor who gave patients only partial doses of chemotherapy, assorted fraudsters and, appropriately, corrupt Democrat politicians.

It's a fitting end to Biden's beknighted presidency.

But there are other people he ought to pardon whose lives have been ruined because they fell afoul of the Bidens.

Dragged down

Take Devon Archer. A self-made man from humble beginnings on Long Island, he was dragged down by his association with Hunter, who called him his "best friend," and then left him in the lurch when a deal went bad and Archer was charged with fraud.

Archer was not a son of privilege. He grew up the son of a Vietnam vet-turned-Realtor and a teacher.

A talented lacrosse player, he worked hard to get into Yale where he met Chris Heinz, the scion of the ketchup family, and ex-boyfriend of Gwyneth Paltrow. They co-founded private equity firm Rosemont Capital and were riding high when fellow Yalie Hunter joined.

"I thought it was the most genius move ever but it ended up being absolute kryptonite," says Archer.

It was Hunter's identity as a "Politically Exposed Person," flagged by bank investigators as potentially a high risk for bribery and corruption, that eventually led to an FBI investigation that ensnared Archer and others over the collapsed firm Burnham Asset Management. Despite being vice chairman, Hunter was not even called to testify, while

Pardon Hunter?
Why not Archer?

Archer lost everything and has spent eight years in legal limbo.

Judge Ronnie Abrams declared an "unwavering concern that Archer is innocent" when she overturned his conviction in 2018, before it was reinstated on appeal. In May 2024, Abrams quashed his sentence over a guidelines error, and he is due to be resentenced next year.

In the meantime, he has testified to Congress, and provided crucial evidence implicating the president in Hunter's lucrative schemes. "I've lost eight years of my life," says Archer. "The fact that Hunter has been able to wipe the slate clean seems very unjust."

On the upside, the ordeal has brought him closer to his wife and their three children.

"It's been a really healthy filter on who your real friends are [and] the importance of family. It's given me a deep understanding of how much I love my wife and what a special person she is that sometimes you can lose your focus on in the hustle and bustle of [a busy] career."

Of course, Joe Biden will never do the right thing by Archer, because that would be to admit his own culpability. But the injustice of Archer's predicament is on Joe's conscience.

Drones on Joe's watch

The reason for growing public concern about the New Jersey drone sightings is because nobody trusts the federal government. Incompetence and dishonesty are what we have come to expect after four years. So, when Joe Biden tells us there is nothing to worry about, warning bells clang.

A proper president would have kept us informed and

reassured instead of tossing off alarming statements to reporters this week, en route to another vacation.

"Nothing nefarious apparently, but they're checking it all out," he said.

Apparently?! Who is "they?" "We're following this closely, but so far no sense of danger."

So far?! January 20 cannot come fast enough.

Well-heeled Nancy's downfall

All the best for Nancy Pelosi's recovery from hip surgery after falling over on marble stairs during a junket to Luxembourg.

But why on Earth was she tottering around on 4-inch stilettos at her age? Even the most agile young supermodel knows that the pointy heel provides little support on

uneven or slippery surfaces.

A fall at age 84 invariably results in severe injuries — like hip fractures. Some women are willing to suffer for vanity but this is ridiculous. It also cost taxpayers a fortune to airlift the self-styled "Speaker Emerita" to a hospital in Germany.

She should wear ballet flats and save all of us a lot of trouble.

Hochul hospital hoodwink

Gov. Hochul boasts about her social-justice record but she is presiding over the alleged rip-off of a safety-net hospital in Nassau County that serves the poorest of the poor.

The Nassau University
Medical Center is suing New
York for \$1.06 billion it claims
the state has defrauded from
its coffers over the past two
decades.

As the only public hospital in the county, 80% of its 275,000 patients are low income, uninsured, as well as on Medicare and Medicaid. It includes a nursing home and jail infirmary, Long Island's only burn unit and its largest inpatient psychiatric treatment center.

Despite its vital role,
NUMC was a financial basket
case losing \$180 million a year
when Republican Bruce
Blakeman was elected as
county executive two years
ago and asked wealthy
businessman Matthew
Bruderman to save the
hospital as its pro bono
chairman.

"It was a dumpster fire," says Bruderman. Millions of dollars were wasted on embezzlement and patronage jobs.

Bruderman managed to balance the books, extend clinic hours to nights and weekends, and appoint a competent CEO, in a turnaround model that could be replicated across the nation.

But the shocking discovery when he audited the finances was that New York, through a sleight of hand, has not been matching federal funds for Medicaid expenditures as required by law.

Documents seen by the Post reveal a \$50 million shortfall in 2024 alone. The hospital alleges that it has been ripped off every year since 2006.

Hochul has to make the hospital whole — or be exposed as a hypocrite.

EXECUTION ON 54TH STREET

Twisted fan club

youth support Luigi: poll

By DAVID SPECTOR

A shocking number of young people support UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson's killer, with 41% saying that Luigi Mangione's alleged actions are "acceptable," an Emerson College poll has found

Twenty-four percent of US voters ages 18-29 answered that Mangione's alleged cold-blooded killing was somewhat acceptable, and 17% said it was completely acceptable.

There was also a stark partisan split among those polled, with 22% of Democrats saying they find the killer's actions acceptable compared to only 12% of Republicans and 16% of independents who do.

The poll of 1,000 voters was conducted last week.

Mangione, 26, was indicted Tuesday on upgraded charges of murder as an act of terrorism. A grand jury slapped the Ivy League grad with first-degree murder and two counts of second-degree murder charges after he allegedly gunned down Thompson outside a Hilton in Midtown on Dec. 4.

Since the health-care exec's brutal slay, there has been a disturbing trend of celebrating his alleged killer among young people.

Former Washington Post journalist Taylor Lorenz disturbingly posted "And people wonder why we want these executives dead" on Bluesky after news of Thompson's murder broke.

"If you have watched a loved one die because an insurance conglomerate has denied their life saving treatment as a cost cutting measure, yes, it's natural to wish that the people who run such conglomerates would suffer the same fate," she said in an article defending her vile comments.

Meanwhile, a socialist professor at Mangione's alma mater, the

41% of DJ spin on Mangione

Disney-themed dance party took a twisted turn when giant photographs of accused UnitedHealthcare gunman gunman Luigi Mangione were beamed on a screen — as the Hannah Montana song "He Could Be The One" blared.

The event, held on Friday in Boston, garnered backlash as images showed attendees partying beneath a slideshow of

photos of Mangione. Video of the bizarre tribute shows revelers cheering as the pics flashed behind the DJ.

The teeny-bop hit "He Could Be the One," sung by Hannah Montana, the beloved Disney Channel character portrayed by Miley Cyrus, blasts in the background.

The DJ then tells the rapturous crowd, "We got to give the

people what they want."

commentators Online slammed the event as "sick" and "wildly inappropriate."

Vanessa White, who took the footage, told Storyful the "Disney night" was being put on by a DJ group called Bop to the

The group does not appear to be affiliated with Disney. Isabel Keane



University of Pennsylvania, venerated the alleged killer on social media, calling him an "icon.'

Julia Alekseyeva, an assistant professor of English and cinema & media studies, posted on TikTok that she has "never been prouder to be a professor at the University

of Pennsylvania."

Ugly trolls bashed the McDonald's worker in Altoona, Pa., who tipped police off to Mangione's presence in the restaurant, with others calling to boycott the fastfood franchise.

"To the stupid b---h that ratted

out my baby Luigi Mangione .. you will be dealt with," one troll posted with a violent "Family Guy" GIF showing a character shooting another in the head.

Some depraved individuals went so far as to set up a legal defense fund for Mangione.



Bragg drags

Luigi Mangione is set to be hauled back to Manhattan Thursday to face an "exceedingly rare" first-degree murder charge in the brazen shooting of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, sources said.

Mangione, 26, is expected to waive extradition during a hearing at the Blair County Courthouse in Hollidaysburg, Pa., on Thursday morning after previously fighting orders seeking to bring him to the Big Apple to face charges.

He will appear sometime this week — possibly as soon as Thursday - before Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Gregory Carro on an ll-count indictment unveiled Tuesday, a courthouse source confirmed to The Post.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg (pictured) said Mangione was indicted on the upgraded charges because the Dec. 4 crime was "intended to provoke terror." But murder in the first degree is being called by some experts a "reach."

"This is actually the first time in Manhattan I've seen one with a enhanceterrorism ment," veteran defense attorney Ron Kuby told The Post Wednesday.

In addition, Mangione is also expected to face federal charges in the coming days.

Kyle Schnitzer

Migrant bracelets in 'boost'

The Trump transition team is considering a plan to increase the number of ankle monitors used to track the millions of illegal migrants who are currently roaming the country after they were released at the border, according to Fox News.

While President-elect Donald Trump's incoming administration wants to detain as many illegal migrants as possible to carry out its planned mass deportation effort, it's hoping to place more ankle monitors for a longer period of time on those it doesn't have the capacity to hold, the outlet reported.

There are currently more than 7 million migrants who are not in federal custody, but Immigration and Customs Enforcement only has the capacity to hold tens of thousands — and the incoming Trump administration has made clear that it wants to prioritize detaining and deporting migrants have committed crimes.

The program, which is dubbed "Alternatives to Detention," is currently tracking more than 25,000 migrants using ankle and wrist-worn monitors, which costs taxpayers an average of nearly \$80,000 each day, according to ICE data.

Jennie Taer

2 killed in plane crash

A plane crashed into a building in Hawaii during a training flight — with a pilot telling the control tower, "We're out of control here."

The two people on board were killed when the aircraft crashed into a building near Daniel K. Inouye International Airport in Honolulu on Tuesday afternoon, Hawaii News Now reported.

Video shot from a highway showed the plane flying low, dipping out of view then exploding in flames.

Officials have not publicly ID'd the victims. But sources told Hawaii News Now one victim was pilot-in-training Hiram Defries. Isabel Keane



FEENG THE BEAST **Broker-\$\$** suit

By NICOLE ROSENTHAL and PETER SENZAMICI

If it ain't broker, don't fix it. A cohort of Big Apple realestate brokers is suing the city over a new law that shifts the burden of costly broker fees away from tenants and the case could prevent the legislation from taking effect this summer as planned.

The Real Estate Board of New York and other groups representing brokers and landlords filed suit Monday in an attempt to block the controversial bill, dubbed the Fairness in Apartment Rentals Act, which passed in the City Council by a ve-to-proof 42-8 vote on Nov.

"While the FARE Act may have the 'right intention,' it will wreak havoc on the New York City rental markets and unleash a host of unintended consequences, causing immediate and irreparable harm to the consumers it purports to protect, as well as harm brokers and landlords around the city," the suit charges.

The law mandates that the person hiring the broker pay the fee, instead of the prospective tenant.

Supporters hope it will ease the housing-affordability crisis, while opponents argue it could lead to rent spikes.

While it is slated to take effect next July — 180 days after council approval — the Manhattan federal lawsuit could halt the law until further notice, experts said.

"Although the [real estate] industry has a high burden in court ... they [brokers] have a shot because the merits are on the side of the industry," trial attorney and lobbyist David Schwartz told The Post, adding a judge could potentially block the law from taking effect.

"The law is another attempt by our local government to micromanage the freedom of parties to enter into a contract, and this law violates the contracts clause and the First Amendment of the US Constitution, and also is pre-empted by state law," Schwartz added.

But attorney Altagracia Pierre-Outerbridge, whose practice focuses on landlord-tenant litigation, called the suit's arguments "long shots" and an "uphill fight against City Hall."

'Irreparable harm'

To block the law from taking effect, REBNY's attorneys must prove it would cause irreparable harm to brokers, she said.

"The First Amendment speech-restriction lenge has to overcome the fact that the law is not trying to suppress any viewpoint or idea, or force brokers to express an idea," Pierre-Outerbridge, "and there are other city regulations of real-estate brokers, like the part of the City Human Rights Law that outlaws certain discrimination in real estate."

Mayor Adams — who did not veto or sign the bill by last Friday's deadline, automatically making it law himself previously expressed skepticism, suggesting property owners could merely pass the cost of hiring a broker to a tenant on the lease.

New York City is one of the only municipalities in which landlords can hire a broker and pass the hiring cost onto the tenant, part of upfront costs that reached an all-time high average of \$13,000 this year, per a recent StreetEasy analysis.

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Midtown | Manhattan 24 West 55th Street, 7F, New York, NY 1 BR | 1 Bath | \$750,000

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Bravo knew of 'abuse' tales



Ian Mohr

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Oli Coleman ocoleman@nypost.com Mara Siegler msiegler@nypost.com Carlos Greer cgreer@nypost.com

Returning fire

THE truth is out there? **Alec Baldwin** went on "X-Files" star David Duchovny's podcast recently and said he's going to "expose what really happened" in that fatal "Rust" shooting. Baldwin said: "There's more to come, but ... it's going to be undeniably a successful effort to raise and to expose what really happened. I was counterpunching. I was on the defensive. I was being accused. I was being indicted." He claimed, "The mainstream press and tabloid press suppressed every story that could help me, and amplified every story that could hurt me." In 2021, Baldwin fired a prop gun loaded with live ammo, killing cinematographer Halyna Hutchins. The manslaughter case against him was tossed.



Consensual sax

BILL and Hillary Clinton (above) were spotted this week at the exclusive Jazz Club at Aman, the luxe Fifth Avenue club and hotel. We hear the political animals seemed to be in a "preholiday celebratory mood" at the hot spot in the redeveloped Crown Building. Said a spy: "They were seen greeting other power guests and enjoying acclaimed jazz saxophonist Tim Ries performing tunes from his album "The Rolling Stones Project," while his daughter sang vocals." But, the source added, "Unfortunately for Bill, Ries did not ask him to play."

AMID a string of allegations that Bravo has failed to keep its cast members safe, Page Six has learned that the network investigated claims that "Vanderpump Rules" star **James Kennedy** was violent with women — a year before his domestic violence arrest.

Sources tell Page Six that in the fall of 2023 a whistleblower — who is a production insider — alerted Evolution Media, the production company that makes the show for Bravo, to a list of claims about Kennedy that had been floating around behind the scenes, hinted at publicly or mentioned during tapings of the show.

Among them were claims — which have not been independently substantiated by Page Six

— that he attacked more than one woman he'd had a sexual relationship with. According to documents seen by Page Six, Bravo hired an independent attorney to investigate the claims.

Sources told us the whistleblower was horrified when Kennedy appeared at the network's fan convention, BravoCon, with the other cast members while the investigation was still underway. It's unclear how the probe panned out, because Bravo fired the entire cast last month. Kennedy was booked Dec. 10 in Burbank,

Calif., for misdemeanor domestic violence for allegedly attacking girlfriend **Ally Lewber**.

The news comes after Brayo said investigations

The news comes after Bravo said investigations into figurehead **Andy Cohen** had cleared him of

wrongdoing in two matters — "Real Housewives of New York" star **Leah McSweeney**'s claim (which she made in a lawsuit) that Cohen and other producers intentionally pushed her to fall off the wagon, and "Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" star **Brandi Glanville**'s claim that Cohen sexually harassed her.

In both cases, Bravo said it found no wrongdoing on Cohen's part. "Real Housewives of New Jersey" star **Caroline Manzo** has also sued Bravo, claiming the network allowed Glanville to sexually abuse her during filming. Glanville has denied the abuse claims.

Bravo didn't get back to us. A rep for Kennedy couldn't be reached.



RiRi busts a move

RIHANNA loudly (and not very demurely) requested Mariah Carey to "sign [her] tit" at the final "Mariah Carey's Christmas Time" tour stop Tuesday at Barclays Center. "I need a signature," Rihanna, 36, declares in a fan video (left) circulating on social media. "Who has a Sharpie?" the "Umbrella" singer says and subsequently takes Carey's mike to exclaim, "Mariah Carey is signing my tit, y'all! This s--t is f--king epic!" She and Carey then share a hug. Carey kicked off the tour in November and made headlines last week for canceling several tristate area shows after coming down with the flu, she claimed. Carey said she was "devastated" to cancel, but ultimately made her stage return Monday.

Sightings

JEREMY Pope, Billy Porter and Jack Schlossberg seeing Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at City Center . . . LILY-Rose Depp, Nicholas Hoult, Willem Dafoe, Bill Skarsgård and producer Steve Garrin at a screening of "Nosferatu" at the Angelika Film Center.



Way to set goals

EDGY pop chanteuse Billie Eilish (above) announced that she accomplished her 2024 goal ... of having "good sex." When the singer, 23, was asked to re-spond with a thumbs up or thumbs down to the goal she set during last year's "Billie Eilish: Same Interview" with Vanity Fair, Eilish chuckled and said she certainly "got there!" "I've had a lot of good sex," the Grammy winner said during the video interview. She added, "You're welcome, Billie!" Her other goals for the year included going skydiving, stunt driving, getting "more" piercings and tattoos and spending more time with loved ones. She summed up, "It's just been a year filled with friendship which, honestly ... that was the thing that I

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Stallion kicks out at heel Tory

MEGAN Thee Stallion is seeking a restraining order against her incarcerated one-time hip-hop pal **Tory Lanez** — who she claims has been harassing her from prison via surrogates as he serves 10 years for shooting her in the feet. The petition filed in LA Superior Court requests a judge prevent Lanez from using alleged third

parties to wage online harassment against her. She also has alleged that Lanez was trolling her online before he was locked up in the case. "Even now, while behind bars, [Lanez] shows no signs of stopping," the petition reportedly says. "Despite being sentenced to 10 years in prison for shooting [Megan], [Lanez] continues to subject her to repeated trauma and revictimization." Reps for Lanez have not commented. A hearing is scheduled for Jan. 9. In 2022, Lanez was

convicted of three felonies. Lanez appears on a new hit song by another artist, **DDG**, in which he raps about the fateful night he shot Megan following a 2020 **Kylie Jenner** pool party. But he says in "Handling Business," he only regrets hopping out of Kylie's pool. He previously released some hip-hop hits from jail this year — but his recording equipment was later confiscated by guards.



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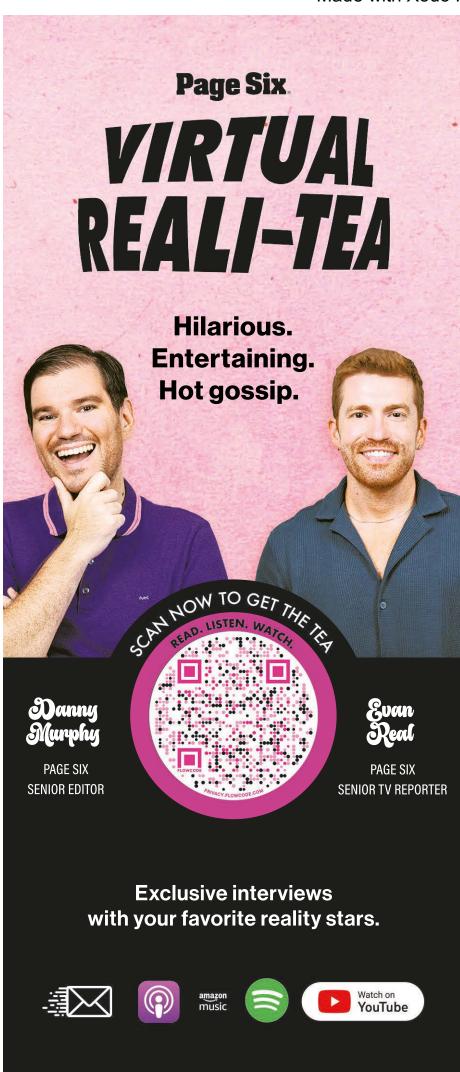
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NYPD OT queen is suspended Probed amid bid to retire

By LARRY CELONA and MATT TROUTMAN

The NYPD's highest-paid employee, who shoveled in more than \$400,000 last year, filed for retirement this week and then was suspended amid an Internal Affairs Bureau probe into her astronomical overtime, The Post has learned.

Lt. Quathisha Epps will retire just shy of 20 years with the department, sources said, an early exit that will impact her pension and cost her a \$12,000-a-year supplement for cops who reach the two-decade mark.

Leaving money on the table is seemingly uncharacteristic for Epps, who raised eyebrows by pulling in roughly \$204,000 in overtime last year for her administrative job in Chief of Department Jeffrey Maddrey's office, payroll records show.

The sources told The Post that Epps' whopping overtime was capped after The Post's exclusive report last month on her pay.

She was also told she'd be put back on patrol, an apparently unappetizing prospect after her cushy



QUATHISHA EPPS \$204K in overtime.

desk job, sources said.

"There is no way she was going to go out on patrol," one source said.

Facing probe

Epps, 51, also faced an IAB investigation into her OT, the sources said.

Investigators were probing allegations she falsified overtime hours and signed off on the time slips herself — as well as complaints over her coming in to work late, leaving early or not showing up at all, the sources said.

Records showed that last year she worked nearly 1,627 hours of overtime on top of her regular shift, or an average of roughly 74 total hours a week.

The OT, plus her \$164,477 base salary and other fringe benefits, pushed Epps' total

compensation past \$400,000 and made her the highest-paid department employee.

By comparison, her boss, Maddrey, made roughly \$292,000 the same year, records show.

Epps' eye-watering overtime rankled many rank-and-file cops.

"What administrative work requires you to stay there 115 to 120 hours every f--king month to apply that type of money?" one Bronx cop griped to The Post last month.

Epps filed paperwork Monday for a vested separation retirement, according to information obtained by The Post. Her last day will be Jan. 14 and she was suspended without pay Wednesday, sources said.

Despite the early retirement after 19 years, she's still slated to collect about a \$16,000 monthly pension, the sources said.

The department has 30 days to investigate before the pension goes into effect.

Epps declined to comment when reached by The Post on Wednesday.

The NYPD didn't return a request for comment.

Additional reporting by Amanda Woods

OK with execution

A "deeply evil" Oklahoma inmate facing execution for torturing and killing a little girl as part of a cannibalistic fantasy admitted he deserves to die during a hearing in which a final clemency plea was shot down.

ency plea was shot down.

Kevin Ray Underwood,
44, made the jarring statement in front of the state's
Pardon and Parole Board,
which voted unanimously
against his clemency last
Friday more than a decade
after he was convicted of
murdering 10-year-old Ja-

mie Rose Bolin. Underwood lured the child, who was a neighbor, to his Purcell apartment before beating her on the head with a cutting board and suffocating her in 2006.

He admitted the gruesome slaying was part of a twisted cannibalistic fantasy, though he did not end up eating the young girl.

"I recognize that although I do not want to die . . . I deserve to for what I did," he said Friday over video from prison on Friday, according to The Oklahoman. Underwood also apologized to the victim's family.

David Propper with Wires

Porn warning for Floridians

Pornhub is ending its tawdry services in Florida on Jan. 1 in protest of the state's new age-verification law.

Gutter-minded Internet users with Florida IP addresses were presented with a pop-up announcement Tuesday laying out the website's plans to yank its content from the Sunshine State.

"YOU WILL LOSE ACCESS TO PORNHUB IN 14 DAYS," the banner read.

The new Florida law HB3 provides online protections for minors. *Shane Galvin*

N. POLE ON A ROLE!



Claus clones dish on tricks of the trade

By ASIA GRACE

Jennifer Harrison really digs her *Claus* into Christmas.

Trading her blond locks for snow-white ones and rocking Christmas-berry red nails and matching velveteen vestments, the 60-year-old New Yorker is Mrs. Claus.

"Putting on that costume makes me feel alive," Harrison, a full-time portrayer of Santa's wife, told The Post. During the latter half of the year, the mom of one and author spends two hours each day getting into Mrs. Claus glam to spread holiday cheer.

"When I'm Mrs. Claus, everything is magical," said Harrison, "whether I'm spreading joy at St. Patrick's Cathedral or down in the subway."

Transforming oneself into Santa or his wife doesn't just happen in the twinkle of a reindeer's red nose. It's a *job*, say the folks who still love doing it.

Brant Miller, the most popular Santa at the nation's largest mall, The Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., spends an entire year — and over \$1,500 — morphing into the role.

"I love being Santa Claus," says Miller, 42, a married dad of two toddlers who has played the part at the mall for the past nine years — visiting with over 98 kids (and pets on Sundays) per day, six days per week from late November through Dec. 24.

"But," said Miller, "I do sacrifice a lot during this time of year"

Long, tough shifts

"Santa's shift is often long," noted Monster.com career experts in a recent report, that noted the Clauses often work 12-hour days so kids don't notice a relief crew.

But putting up with tots — their whining, tantrums and wish lists — can pay off in a big way.

Mall Santas across the US earn an average of \$48,997, annually, according to online job marketplace, ZipRecruiter.

For Miller, the gig isn't about the money.

"There's so much joy just seeing the kids come in with smiles on their faces," he said. "They light up."

A 20-year, former cancer-infusion specialist, Miller recently left health care to pursue video editing and full-time Santa work.

"I lose all my free time and time with my wife and kids," he added of being Claus, "but it's so worth it."

To achieve the Ho-Ho-Ho pro's look, Miller packs on an annual 10 pounds near the holiday.



He also shaves off his chest-length beard on Christmas morning and immediately begins growing out a new bush for the following year.

He forgoes haircuts and trims, allowing his strands — including his eyebrows — to lengthen sans interruption.

Three-step bleaching

In the fall, he and his beautician begin the weeks-long process of turning his brown hair white.

"Bleaching starts in early No-

vember, about two to three weeks before my first day as Santa," said Miller, whose stylist uses kelp-based haircare products. "I undergo a total of three sessions to go from brown to white."

After the first treatment, Miller's hair is an "orange juice" shade he endures for a week before his next dye job turns him into a blonde.

A week later, he's back at the beauty salon for the final whitening.

"It takes about 30 minutes to do my makeup each day," said Miller, who says he doesn't **SLEIGHING IT!** Brant Miller, far left) and Jennifer Harrison (above and near left) love playing Santa and Mrs. Claus each Christmas. Miller, The Mall of America's Santa in Minnesota, takes many steps to prepare

including gaining weight and dying his beard three times — orange, then blond, then the final white (insets). Harrison says wearing her Mrs. Claus costume in city spots like Grand Central Terminal (left) "makes me feel alive."

"wear the traditional Santa suit" but a "more casual 'Workshop Santa' costume."

The handmade number, stitched by an oncology nurse who worked for Minnesota's opera and theater costume shop, consists of a pair of velvet cutoff pants, a button-up shirt, Christmas-striped socks, London-style Birkenstock clogs and a wiry pair of reader glasses.

Sure, his days are long and makeover costs are high. But Miller plans to play Santa until he's actually old and gray.

"It's something I look forward to every year."

'Celebrating' a rough health year

Season's gratings from Harry & Meg



RINCE Harry and Meghan Markle like their holiday cheer with an extra bit of virtue signaling. The couple sent out their public Christmas card this week, featuring a montage of photos — with multiple shots of them hugging and holding hands with the good people of Nigeria during their "faux" royal tour earlier this year.

They are humanitarians here to save the world, whether the world wants them or not.

The message on the card exuded all the warmth of a ChatGPT robot, reading, "On behalf of the office of Prince Harry and Meghan, The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, Archewell Productions and Archewell Foundation, We wish you a very happy Holiday Season and a Happy New Year."

Despite the collection of happy photos (reportedly a more personal one was sent to friends), the haughty Sussex corporation is a failing venture. Having been given a whopping \$100 million deal with Netflix—the ultimate nepo-baby trophy—the couple still can't read a room or an audience.

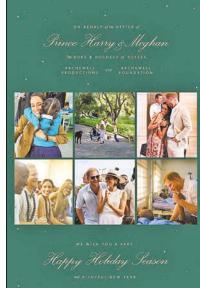
'Polo' series a flop

Their latest offering, the docu-series "Polo," is a resounding flop.

"This series offers audiences an unprecedented, behind-thescenes look into the passion and determination driving some of the world's elite polo players, revealing the grit behind the glamour," Prince Harry has said.

Sounds great, Harry! I love sports. I love sports documentaries. I love Argentinians.

So, despite the critical savaging the series has received, I



YOU TWO: A public Christmas card shows Prince Harry and wife Meghan Markle in Nigeria — humanitarians, OK, and a couple out to make a buck.

went in with an open mind. That open mind went dark about 10 minutes into the first episode when, lulled into an ambient state, I suddenly found myself studying the inside of my eyelids.

Still, I persisted. I rewound. I kept watching. But soon "Polo" was relegated to background noise while I cooked. (At least my dinner was good.)

Sold by Netflix as "high stakes," the five-part "Polo" feels as low stakes as a \$2 scratch-off ticket.

It does nothing to pull the viewer into this rarefied world or convince them to emotionally invest in these players' fortunes. There is an abject failure to turn the action on the field into gripping, dramatic footage. There are no highlight reels put to music. No training montages (and, if "Rocky" taught us anything, it's that training montages rule).

It is a snooze fest with pretty people. But no heart.

Which, let's be honest, is to

be expected considering both Harry and Meghan were reportedly heavily involved in the editing process.

Remember when Spotify's Bill Simmons called them "f--kin' grifters"?

Not working

These two are great at one thing: exploiting the royal family. Lest we forget, their big hits have been that now-legendary car-crash interview with Oprah and Harry's scathing "Spare" memoir.

Neither of which make them knowledgeable TV producers (sorry, Netflix). Or podcast hosts (sorry, Spotify). Or, I predict, lifestyle entrepreneurs.

Games, which Harry founded, is truly a wonderful initiative, no one watched "Heart of Invictus," the 2023 Netflix doc about it.

There was also "Live to Lead" which profiled activists, including Greta Thunberg. Scintillating stuff. Markle's animated series "Pearl" was axed before it saw the light of day. Her latest podcast with Lemonada seems to be as scarce as her pricey homemade jam.

Now comes a report that DOA "Polo" has put Markle's Netflix cooking show — which is meant to be an accompaniment to her lifestyle brand, American Riviera Orchard — in jeopardy and will likely mean that the couple's \$100 million deal with the streaming giant will not be renewed.

"There won't be another deal. There may be one-offs but that's it," a source said.

But Harry and Meghan won't learn any lessons. They're too blinded by their own good deeds to admit they don't know what they're doing. By SARA NATHAN

It's been another *annus horribilis* for the royal family.

King Charles — who just can't seem to catch a break since his coronation — and Kate Middleton both faced cancer diagnoses that took them out of public life for some time, leading to months of wild rumors about the Princess of Wales' health. Queen Camilla was temporarily knocked out by pneumonia. Princess Anne suffered a nasty fall and was kicked by a horse. Prince Harry and Meghan Markle continue to run their renegade operations from California.

And, once again, Prince Andrew is in the doghouse, after a British high court heard evidence suggesting that an alleged Chinese spy who has been banned from the UK was a "close" confidant of the exiled royal.

Andrew is now off the guest list for the royal family's annual Christmas lunch at Buckingham Palace on Thursday — and he won't join his brother, King Charles, and the rest of the clan at Sandringham, the monarch's Norfolk residence, over the holidays. That means he also will miss being photographed with senior royals including Prince William and Kate during the very public walk to church on Christmas Day.

Instead, Andrew will be holed up at his reportedly falling-apart Windsor home, Royal Lodge, with his ever-loyal ex-wife, Sarah Ferguson, while daughters Princess Beatrice and Princess Eugenie each visit their in-laws.

Andrew's an outcast

The Duke of York had reportedly insisted on being part of the festive Christmas lunch, attended by all extended members of the royal family, but had to be persuaded otherwise by Ferguson, a source confirmed to Page Six.

"The Duchess of York has advised Prince Andrew that this is the best course of action, and he's accepted that it's the right and honorable thing to do," said a York source.

"Nobody wants him in public life, and he accepts that," Hugo Vickers, noted royal historian and friend of the family, told Page Six.

Adding insult to injury: On Tuesday, The Sun quoted an anonymous woman who said Andrew could not take his eyes off her cleavage at an official royal engagement two decades ago.

The unidentified events manager, who was 24 at the time, told the outlet she met the royal at an appearance with a doctor she was working for.

"He wouldn't leave me alone," she recalled.

It's just the latest debacle for Andrew, 64, after he was forced to leave public life back in November 2019 over his ties to convicted sex offenders Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell.

"He has nothing else except riding in the park and golf, his children and grandchildren — that's all he has, literally nothing," Vickers said.

The prince is said to be holding on tight to his home, known as Royal Lodge, after Charles made a bid to kick him out earlier this year. Andrew recently found the funds to allow him to stay at the leased 30-room mansion, which reportedly needs hundreds of thousands of dollars in upkeep.

"Andrew doesn't want to move out of Royal Lodge, as he thinks it will make him look guilty when he doesn't feel guilty...he's lived there for 22 years," Vickers said.

Security 'breach' eyed

After days of intrigue, an anonymity order was lifted in a British court this week to reveal the name of Andrew's Chinese contact, who has been banned from the UK because of concerns he cultivated links with the royal in an alleged effort to influence British elites on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party.

The man, identified Monday as Yang Tengbo, said he wasn't involved in espionage and had "done nothing wrong or unlawful." However, it was revealed that Yang, also known as Christopher Yang, went to Buckingham Palace twice in June 2018.

The Daily Mail reported that the palace has "grave concerns" about the depth of Andrew's involvement with Yang, who referred to himself as the "special envoy of Prince Andrew" and was appointed by the royal as head of his Pitch@Palace China, a "Shark Tank"-style initiative from which the duke took a cut.

Andrew, who held a trade envoy role at the time, has said he "ceased all contact" with Yang after receiving advice from the British Government.

In a statement, his office told the BBC the royal had met the businessman "through official channels" and there was "nothing of a sensitive nature ever discussed." But in a damning revelation, correspondence from Andrew's senior adviser Dominic Hampshire, dating to 2021, was found by security services on Yang's phone.

"Outside of [Prince Andrew's] closest internal confidants, you sit at the very top of a tree many, many people would like to be on,"

at the time, fold "Outside of closest internal a doctor she was a doctor she was "many people"

& endless public embarrassments



Hampshire wrote. More worrying for palace officials, Hampshire wrote that, after a meeting with Andrew, they had "wisely navigated our way around former private secretaries and we have found a way to carefully remove those people who we don't completely trust."

He added that "under your guidance, we found a way to get the relevant people unnoticed in and out of the house in Windsor" — a reference to Royal Lodge.

There is no clue who these people are or why they would be so

keen to circumvent security.

The High Court judges wrote that Yang had won an "unusual degree of trust from a senior member of the royal family who was prepared to enter into business activities with him" — adding that the relationship had developed at a time when the prince was "under considerable pressure" that "could make him vulnerable to the misuse of that sort of influence."

Questions were raised about the prince's finances after he reached a 2022 settlement — reportedly as much as \$12 million — in a civil sexual-assault case brought against him by Virginia Giuffre, whom he allegedly bedded when she was 17. The prince has denied sexually assaulting Giuffre, whom he allegedly met through Epstein and Maxwell.

Push to vacate home

Charles, 75, has urged his brother to move out of Royal Lodge and into nearby Frogmore Cottage, the former home of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, in what the Times of London referred to as "the siege of Royal Lodge." Frogmore sits within a secured area of Windsor, while Royal Lodge does not; leaving would dramatically reduce the nearly \$4 million annual security bill for Andrew, which the king was paying until recently.

However, the Times reported, Andrew now has convinced the palace that he has funds from "legitimate sources to support himself" — even though he no longer receives public money (he does have a Royal Navy pension and, of course, inherited an unknown amount from his parents).

Andrew's honorary military affiliations and royal charitable patronages were removed by his mother, the late Queen Elizabeth, in January 2022. Sources said she would be wringing her hands over how things have devolved for Andrew, who was always said to be her favorite child.

"The queen did love him, and was very worried about the whole situation," a royal insider said. "It was very distressing to her."

snathan@nypost.com

GIFTS UNDER \$50



















REVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO SAVE YOU TIME AND MONEY



Yeah, boyeeeeee!

First Son Hunter Biden was living the high life Tuesday night as he yukked it up with rapper Flavor Flav (inset) at a White House Christmas party.

The "Unga Bunga Bunga" singer and the scandal-plagued 54-year-old son of President Biden were filmed shaking hands, with the 65-year-old hip-hop icon showing Hunter at one point the bling around his neck.

Hunter tapped his own chest in an apparent indication of heartfelt gratitude while Flav proudly displayed the large medallion on his necklace (pictured above, with Joe and Jill).

"Thank you, my friend, thank you," Hunter said as the fast friends embraced.

The president's son then shared his phone number with a rep for the rapper.

President Biden pardoned his disgraced son this month — despite saying repeatedly he would not do so — as he prepares to leave office on Jan. 20. Hunter was convicted of three federal gun felonies in Delaware in June and pleaded guilty in September in Los Angeles to \$1.4 million in tax fraud between 2014 and 2019. Steven Nelson



HITLER SMEAR BOMBED

Adams rips Dem race

By CRAIG MCCARTHY and JORGE FITZ-GIBBON

Mayor Adams blamed outof-touch Democrats for President-elect Donald Trump's victory, saying they were too busy comparing him to Hitler to discuss real issues affecting American people.

Hizzoner was asked about Trump's sweep over Kamala Harris and the message he thought constituents were sending.

"Oh, wholeheartedly, that we stopped speaking to people. We started speaking at people," Adams told Fox

News anchor Martha MacCallum on Wednesday.

"Not hearing the people and you engaging in dialogue while individuals are fearful of affordability, losing their home, the future of their children, and you're having these

intellectual conversations, and people are, like, saying, what the hell are you talking about?

"I'm hurting. And you asking, is Donald Trump Hitler or not?" Adams told MacCallum. "It's just not talking to the real needs of people."

Trump performed nearly 22 percentage points better in The Bronx and Queens this election than he did in 2020. He also saw huge gains in every other city borough, including Manhattan — and out on Long Island.

Democrats including thenvice presidential nominee Tim Walz likened Trump to Hitler — which dominated the news cycle in the final weeks of the election as left-leaning news networks like MSNBC latched onto the sound bite.

Adams also criticized the Biden administration's border policies, saying that the migrant gangbangers now wreaking havoc in New York City have little to do with the Big Apple's sanctuary status.

"Sanctuary city is totally different from a man-made crisis that we saw," he told MacCallum. "This is what sanctuary city states: If you're in this city and you are paying taxes, you buy a loaf of bread, you pay taxes, those are your tax dollars. You have a right to the services of the city.

"We're saying that, as a sanctuary city, if you are here

and you are participating legally, you are provided the services as you start your pathway to get citizenship or legal status." he added.

status," he added.

Just last week, Adams said he's looking into using his executive powers to target violent crimi-

nal migrants and asylum-seekers in the city — and has expressed willingness to deport migrants after they've been charged with a crime but before they've been convicted.

Adams, who is facing federal corruption charges, also defended his record since taking over at City Hall two years ago, saying he proved critics wrong after he was ridiculed for wanting to focus on public safety and invest in cryptocurrency.

"When I first started I said I was going to invest in cryptocurrency, people laughed at me. Who's laughing now?" he said. "And when I first got elected in 2022, I told the party it's public safety. People are tired of the revolving door, where people are constantly committing violent crimes and back on our streets."

INVASION

Ukraine's plane-zapping weapon

By PATRICK REILLY

Ukraine military officials revealed the country's new Tryzub laser air-defense weapon, which officials said can shoot down aircraft from more than a mile away and could be a game-changer in the conflict.

"It really works; it really exists," Col. Vadym Sukharevsky, the commander of Ukraine's Unmanned Systems Forces, confirmed at the Europe Defense Industry conference this week.

"We can state that today Ukraine is, if I'm not mistaken, the fifth country that can say it has a laser weapon," Sukharevsky told the Kyiv Post.

"We are already able to shoot down planes at an altitude of more than 2 kilometers [about 1.2 miles] with this laser."

Sukharevsky did not provide any further details about the weapon, but said the laser was named the Tryzub, the Ukrainian word for a "trident" which is the symbol used

on the nation's coat of arms.

He also said Ukraine is developing a program of large carrier drones capable of deploying smaller strike drones, the outlet

'Queen drones'

"Today, we are using so-called 'queen-drones,' which act as carriers for first-person view drones and can operate at depths of over 70 kilometers," he said.

According to Sukharevsky, the queen drone can carry two FPV drones while also acting as a repeater and striking deep enemy

"In my opinion, this is a real breakthrough," he added, calling

the scaling this project one of the most promising elements of his work.

In April, former British Defense

Minister Grant Shapps suggested that a prototype of the United Kingdom's DragonFire which is set to be unveiled in 2027, could be used in Ukraine to counter Russian drones.

Shapps said at the time advanced laser weapons could have "huge ramifications" in the war, which has raged since Feb. 24, 2022, according to The Telegraph.

"It didn't have to be 100% perfect in order for Ukrainians per-haps to get their hands on it," Shapps said at the time.

Fire weapon

(left and below).

Since the Nov. 5 US elections, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has expressed a willingness to cede territory to Russia to end the war, and President-elect Donald Trump has made ending the conflict a priority.

warning. Dangerous side effects from the injectable canine drug Librela — used to treat osteoarthritis joint pain — **LIGHT UP** THE SKY: The have been linked to seizures, new Ukrainian lameness and loss of muscle control, the agency said. More than 3,600 cases of laser air-defense weapon with a claimed debilitating dog-health problems caused by the range of 1.2 miles, may be similar to Britmedication were reported between January 2023 and ain's Dragon-

March 2024, the FDA said. "In some cases, death (including euthanasia) was reported as an outcome of these adverse events," the

'Urgent' alarm on

doggy Rx

A popular arthritis medication for dogs has sickened thousands of pets and likely caused others to die, the Food and Drug Administration said in an urgent

agency said Monday. The medication is produced by the pet drug firm Zoetis and was approved by the FDA last year.

Zoetis has claimed the drug is safe and effective, with dangerous side effects from a fraction of the millions of shots administered.

"We continue to have the utmost confidence in the safety and efficacy of Librela. Since launching in Europe over three years ago, Librela has been used effectively with millions of dogs suffering from osteo-arthritis pain," Zoetis told The Post. Natalie O'Neill

Firebomb attack on Canada synagogue

A Montreal synagogue was damaged in an apparent firebombing that investigators are calling an arson attack — the second time in just over a year the Jewish establishment was targeted.

Police and firefighters rushed to Congregation Beth Tikvah around 3 a.m. Wednesday over reports of a blaze inside.

The synagogue's front window was smashed open, and when the flames were extinguished, investigators found some kind of incendiary device inside.

"Witnesses told us that they saw one suspect that was leaving rapidly shortly after the fire started," a police spokesperson said.

Nobody was hurt in the

incident, and no arrests have been made.

The synagogue's rabbi said the fire didn't keep them from holding their morning services.

"We were able to recite the morning prayers in an abbreviated way," Rabbi Emeritus Mordecai Zeitz told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

"We did not close, even if we had to go outside to avoid the fires on the inside. But we had the fires of Jewish identity and Jewish pride very much front and center, in front of the charred doors of the synagogue," he added.

Officials have not yet determined whether the attack was a hate crime.

But not far off, another Jewish organization — a Federation CJA office — had a window smashed in a similar manner just hours later.

In November 2023, just weeks after Hamas' terror Oct. 7 attack on Israel, Beth Tikvah was targeted by an arsonist who damaged the building's front door.

Alex Oliveira With Wires

Cruise ship 'rager' dies

A Royal Caribbean passenger died after being detained for allegedly assaulting crew members and threatening other travelers in a drunken fit of rage, according to a report.

Michael Virgil, 35, died Friday on the Los Angelesto-Mexico cruise after his family claims security injected him with some kind of sedative, FOX 11 reported.

"He didn't deserve to die over it," a relative told the station.

The cause of his death on the Navigator of the Seas is pending an autopsy.

The FBI is investigating the altercation and death.

Allie Griffin

POSTOPINION

Covert Rescue FASTAKES

1,500-page bill saves feds' censorship arm

Congress seemed poised to strike a blow against the Censorship-Industrial Complex, its 11th-hour maneuvering may have snatched defeat from the jaws of free-speech victory.

Tucked into the 1,547-page continuing resolution now before Congress to fund the government into March is a section titled "Global Engagement Center Extension." If not struck, it will prolong the life of a key government censorship cog that had been ticketed for closure.

The State Department recently indicated its plans to shutter the GEC in a court filing. The department's announced plan to 'realign" the GEC's staff and funding to other "foreign information manipulation and interference activities" already gave free speech champions pause but any Deep State concession would have been significant.

GEC was formed to counter for-

BENJAMIN WEINGARTEN

eign propaganda and disinformation campaigns. But like other parts of the fed-led censorship apparatus, the interagency entity underwent civil rights-eviscerating mission creep, expanding its mandate to suppress the speech of Americans guilty of wrongthink.

The evidence of this emerged in Daily Wire v. State Department, whose plaintiffs allege that the GEC's funding, promoting and marketing of internet "riskraters" Global Disinformation Index and NewsGuard amounted to First Amendment-violating censorship-by-proxy.

These groups aim to purge purported mis- and disinformation by threatening the business models of outlets that publish news and views they deem illegitimate. They do so by starving those outlets of vital ad revenue, placing them on de facto blacklists that companies use in determining where not to advertise, to protect "brand safety."

Invariably, the risk-raters ding conservative and independent outlets due to subjective rating criteria and inherent biases, doing them financial and reputational harm. The New York Post has been ensnared in this wrongthink



Taking heat: Speaker Mike Johnson (I.) spoke to reporters Wednesday about his controversial continuing budget resolution.

dragnet, as has RealClearPolitics. As I testified to the House Small Business Committee in June, GEC's funding and support of the risk-raters meant our government had effectively abridged freedom of speech and of the press — with our tax dollars, and via a foreign-facing entity. The committee produced a report on government-backed censorship, indicating that GEC supported these media demonetizers and funded, "then promot[ed] tech start-ups ... in the disinformation detection space to private sector entities with domestic censorship capabilities."

GEC's interference in domestic speech was also apparent in its role as an "external stakeholder" in the federal government's Election Integrity Partnership, which played a role in censorship surrounding the 2020 election. Under the EIP, a project pushed by the Department of Homeland Security, four government-tied NGOs lobbied social media platforms to suppress disfavored election-related speech.

GEC was involved in search effort, contributing some of the offending content that EIP conveyed to social media companies like Twitter and Facebook.

When "Twitter Files" journalists and others exposed the GEC's efforts and drew congressional scrutiny, the State Department itself attacked GEC critics issuing official press guidance to discredit now Sen.-elect Jim Banks (R-Ind.) and reporters.

Under the law that first established it, GEC was set to go out of business at the end of this year. Its authorization was not renewed under the National Defense Authorization Act, the annual defense bill that passed the House on Dec. 11.

The State Department remained "hopeful that Congress extends this important mandate through other means," a spokesperson told me. Now, with the GEC's extension baked into Congress' last-minute funding bill, the department seems to have gotten its wish.

This chicanery makes President-elect Trump's "Free Speech Policy Initiative" even more imperative. Under that plan, he has vowed to bar federal agencies from colluding with censors and funding mis- or dis-informationlabeling initiatives. He's also pledged to fire bureaucrats who have engaged in censorship and to defund third parties, including NGOs and universities, who have targeted disfavored speech.

Brendan Carr, Trump's pick for FCC chairman, has said we must "dismantle the censorship cartel" and is probing NewsGuard's efforts to that end. Likewise Andrew Ferguson, Trump's pick for FTC chairman: "If platforms or advertisers are colluding to suppress free speech in violation of the antitrust laws, the FTC must prosecute them and break up those cartels," he has said.

"The fight for Free Speech is a matter of victory or death for America," says Trump. If Congress won't engage, the president must step into the breach to save our First Amendment.

Benjamin Weingarten is editor at large at RealClearInvestigations.

Republican: Beware the 'Fiscal Cliff'

"Republicans' election celebrations" soon must yield to facing the "fiscal cliff," warns ex-Rep. Jeb Hensarling at The Wall Street Journal. "Key" Tax Cuts and Jobs Act provisions expire next year as Uncle Sam hits the \$26.1 trillion debt ceiling, even as the feds are set to add \$5 trillion to debt. And neither stronger growth nor cuts by the new Department of Government Efficiency can fill the hole. Time to target "tax expenditures," such as for corporate health insurance and those in the American Rescue Plan and Inflation Reduction Act. Throw in assorted credits, like the deductibility of student-loan interest, and "you begin to unearth a target-rich environment." To maintain economic growth, Congress will have to cut the budget and outlays like these.

Liberal: Don's Much-Improved '2nd Honeymoon'

"Americans appear likely to look more favorably upon Trump's second term in office" than the first go-around in 2016, observes The Liberal Patriot's John Halpin. Many, if not most, support his economic and immigration policies; polls show up to 60% want "to see Trump's border and deportation plans pursued in 2025 along with his ideas for cutting personal taxes, reducing government spending, and increasing domestic oil drilling." He'd be wise to prioritize these issues, as his "pro-corporate and nationalist agenda items are viewed as far less of a priority." If Trump focuses "on the core economic and social priorities" most Americans' share, he should remain popular. "Too much time and energy on the narrow political obsessions" and "he will quickly lose public support."

Health beat: How Gov't-run 'Care' Kills

Those arguing to imitate the UK or Canadian "free" health-care systems "are either misinformed or intentionally trying to deceive the public, because government-run health care systems frequently delay or deny needed medical care," cautions Merrill Matthews at The Hill. Indeed, those "systems have serious problems" — and consequences. When Britain's National Health Service doctors went on strike in May and June, an estimated "300 to 500 people were dying each week" as a result of delayed care. A Canadian who loses her primary-care doctor can wait "months or even years to be accepted by a new one, which can mean no referrals to a specialist." Beware: "Delayed care is often denied

Mideast desk: Assad's Fall & a New 'Great Game'

"The last time a power vacuum of this magnitude opened up in the



Benjamin Netanyahu

Middle East was the fall of the Soviet Union," notes Commentary's Seth Mandel. Israel's PM Benjamin Netanyahu, "Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and Jordanian King Abdullah cannot wait for the dust to settle." Turkey's been "newly empowered" by "territorial gains in the wake of Assad's fall" made by its proxies. "The U.S. has immediate interests on the ground as well. American troops worked with Kurdish forces against ISIS." New Syrian supremo "HTS leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani is keeping his options open." "There is rarely a dull moment in the Middle East, but this moment is unusually frenetic. And no one in the region or among world powers can afford to sit it out."

From the right: Why Trump Approval Is Sky-High

President-elect Donald Trump's 55% approval rating "is nothing short of astonishing," considering he was at 40% eight years ago, cheers Hugh Hewitt at FoxNews. "'Not being Biden' (or Vice President Kamala Harris for that matter) is helping the numbers," as is the fact that "the majority of Americans aren't buying what legacy media is selling" anymore. But the real reason is Trump himself. Americans "now have a side-by-side comparison of government under the direction of "Trump vs. Biden. The Donald "is more popular today than ever before because Americans like optimism, and Trump's not only selling hope, he believes in it." Combine "the crumbling into dust of the credibility of Trump's critics and the disasters of the Biden years, and you get 55% instead of 40%."

– Compiled by The Post Editorial Board

A Predictable Waste

hat cost city taxpayers \$1.4 million in just three months and stinks to high heaven? The How Many Stops Act's 18,000 hours of make-work NYPD overtime, of course — exactly as we warned.

"Overtime costs will rise," we wrote in January, also predicting the law would "mean higher police overtime costs and lower morale for the already besieged rank-and-file."

The inane statute, passed early this year over the mayor's veto but only kicking in July 1, requires cops to file detailed reports on even the briefest encounters with civilians.

We're still awaiting hard data on how many hours of actual policing it has cost, let alone the impact on morale (though early retirements remain elevated). But NYPD Chief of Department Jeffrey Maddrey this week shared the 18,000 hours of OT info with the council's Public Safety Committee.

He also noted that 98% of the paperwork involves Level 1 encounters (over 562,000), such as when he asked an exhausted runner at this year's Marathon if he needed help.

Meanwhile, police-hating critics claim that as many as 30% of police encounters go undocumented while "unconstitutional" stops have increased.

Chief among those critics is Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, who has pilloried the NYPD over concerns that OT would hit \$750 million this fiscal year. "I don't think any other agency would be able to do this," groused the head hypocrite.

Fact is, Madame Speaker, no other city agency is handcuffed by the City Council like the NYPD — not even the child-endangering Administration for Children's Service, which has seen scores of innocent kids dying under its watch.

Has Adams polled her constituents on whether they'd rather their precinct's police just headed back to the stationhouse an hour earlier every day to get the makework done without earning OT? Indeed, every councilmember burning to lower overtime costs should speak up and volunteer his or her district for some "de-policing."

Plus, if the critics claim stops are up anyway, then the law has failed by the standards of its own supporters. Speaker Adams & Co. should get going on repeal of How Many Stops, so the NYPD can get back to a full focus on fighting crime.

Nonprofit Profiteering, Continued

ven "helping the homeless" can be lucrative if you're shameless enough. A damning Department of Investigations report shows the heads of city-paid shelter "charities" have been milking the system for years.

The numbers are jaw-dropping: \$916,000 for the CEO of Acacia Network Housing; more than \$700,000 across multiple years for the head of Camba; \$1 million for the CEO of CORE, Jack Brown. SEBCO Development Inc. used \$11.6 million in taxpayer cash to buy security services from a SEBCOowned; SEBCO execs cashed in on nearly \$400,000 in salaries from the subsidiary. A lot of profit for the heads of nonprofits.

And those are just the ones that actually reported executive salaries; at least 13 of 87 contracted shelter providers have not.

Want more? Back in October, The Post reported that Garner Environmental Services, the outfit picked to replace scandal-ridden DocGo, was set to rake in an eye-watering | the taxpayer's dime.

\$457 million from the city — a cool \$25 million more than its predecessor. Before that, it was DocGo spending \$1.7 million on nearly 10,000 unused hotel rooms (which brought in \$408.680 in commissions for DocGo).

And none of it is new. In the de Blasio era, at least a quarter of shelter contracts went to scandal-plagued "nonprofits." That it continues is on the new mayor, but also on city Comptroller Brad Lander, who's supposed to scrutinize these contracts.

Then again, dozens of nonprofits are tied to a group run by Lander's wife, Meg Barnette. The sector is rife with nepotism.

And these same nonprofits are often early stops in the careers of future city politicians, or the bases of entire political machines.

The City Council may posture in "shock," as members did this week, but most of them are part of a social-services "ecosystem" that serves as an all-you-can-eat buffet on

Progs vs. the Little Guys

rogressives claim to stand for the little I guy, but their pro-crime prescriptions make life worse for low-wage workers everywhere: Witness the latest development in the theft-slammed US retail sector — Walmart testing bodycams for employees.

The idea is to get "unruly" customers on tape, after retail outlets large and small have moved to locking up some, most or all of their items to guard against theft. And after a raft of employees were killed or injured in efforts to stop theft.

In other words, lefty laws meant to hamstring police and coddle criminals are working as intended — with law-abiding little guys suffering worst because the progs didn't anticipate the consequences: many stores shutting down while others lock everything up — and poorly trained, poorly paid, likely terrified clerks and stockers step up to fill the void left by "de-policing."
This insanity,reveals just how much con-

tempt for the actual little guy progs have.

Average Americans have had enough. Witness the defeats of woke DAs like LA's George Gascón and Oakland's Pamela Price and the ousting of pro-crime legislators like Reps. Cori Bush (D-Mo.) and Jamaal Bowman (D-NY). Or the acquittal of Daniel Penny.

But until every last pro-crime lefty learns better or pays at the polls, expect the carnage and the Kafkaesque absurdities to continue.

effers@nypost.com

Drones, Drones, Drones: Sure, This Is *Totally* Normal

• There has been a ton of media coverage of the drones across the country, yet it doesn't seem

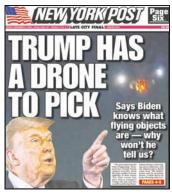
like we are getting any answers or insight into what is going on ("Trump has a drone to pick," Dec. 17).

I'm just wondering what's happening behind this media coverage. With the current administration doing everything possible to disrupt the smooth transition of power to the incoming Trump administration, worried they are going to try something extremely detrimental to our country and our incoming president.

Jean Cole Juno Beach, Fla.

• Apparently, there is no problem with drones the size of cars flying over the home of Presidentelect Donald Trump and military bases in New Jersey, but there would be an emergency response if a kid tried flying a kite on Pennsylvania Avenue.

President Biden's response is to send HomeTHE ISSUE: The government's opaque response to mysterious drones appearing across the country.



land Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas out there to reassure American citizens. Well, it's not working.

Jake McNicholas Whitestone

•Mayorkas says that aircraft are commonly mistaken for drones, and not to worry.

Phew! I am so relieved about his input regarding invaders in air space, especially considering his outstanding record regarding other invad-Sallyanne Ferrero ers. Naples, Fla.

• Mayorkas is gaslighting us again. Drones the size of small automobiles hover over our cities, yet he asserts nothing is unusual about these airspace incursions.

"Everything fine": That's the same gaslighting he espoused about the Chinese spy balloon that flew over the United States for over

a week in February earlier this year. He also told the American people that the border was secure, and how did that turn out? Mayorkas' gaslighting tactics never **Earl Beale**

Terre Haute, Ind.

•There were drones in mid-November and the beginning of December over New Jersey.

But, as far as I know there were no drones on Thanksgiving. What does that tell you?

> **Michael Shapiro** Boca Raton, Fla.

Goodbye, & Good Riddance

•President Biden's approval rating is his responsibility ("'Hollow Man' Joe derelict in last days," Michael Goodwin, Dec. 14).

He sat back while members of his party and his weaponized Justice Department, lied to the American people, divided our country and tried to destroy his political opponent and his family and essentially any American citizen who spoke out against the progressive nonsense the Dems were serving up.

All this, while allowing illegal migrants to pour THE ISSUE: President Biden's quiet, final weeks in the Oval Office before leaving January.

into our country, tanking our economy, weakening our national security and diminishing America's prestige in the world. Michael D'Auria Bronxville

•Newsflash: Joe Biden has been "derelict" his whole presidency. It's just that in these final couple of months, we see how he has totally given up. Hashtag: worst president ever.

In his first month in of-

fice, Biden's own party wrote a letter, authored by Rep. Ted Lieu and signed by over 30 Democrats, asking for Biden to give up control of the nuclear codes. If the Democrats thought he was competent, would that happen?

Biden once bragged knowing about world's leaders. I wonder if those leaders are even taking his calls these days. **Robert Fishman**

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POSTOPINION



Jan. 6 Pardons: Yes!

N his first day in office, President-elect Donald Trump promises, he will pardon at least some of the 1,500 or so people who have been charged with crimes in connection with the riot at the US Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. He notes most of those defendants were not violent and that they faced a lot of pressure to plead guilty, as about 1,000 have done so far.

Trump's most vociferous critics are apt to view any pardons in these cases as an outrageous and self-interested attempt to excuse the behavior of "insurrectionists" who sought to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. But even though Trump himself is largely to blame for the riot, which was inspired by his unfounded insistence that Joe Biden had stolen the election, he raises some valid points about prosecutorial power, which can lead to unjust results that might be remedied by the prudent use of presidential clemency.

As of Nov. 6, the Justice Department reports, about 590 people had been charged with "assaulting, resisting, or impeding law enforcement agents or officers or obstructing those officers" during the riot. They included 169 defendants "charged with using a deadly or dangerous weapon or causing serious bodily injury to an officer."

More than 300 defendants had pleaded guilty to felonies, while 661 had pleaded guilty "only to misdemeanors." Defendants who pleaded not guilty, by contrast, typically have been convicted of felonies.

Prosecutors had a bunch of potential charges to choose from, including misdemeanors such as demonstrating inside the Capitol, "disorderly or disruptive conduct," and entering or remaining in a restricted building. The sentences in such cases ranged from probation to short jail terms.

Even defendants who received relatively light sentences may have grounds to complain that the charges were not deployed consistently. According to a recent report from the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General, four FBI informants "entered the Capitol dur-



ing the riot," while 13 "entered the restricted area" around it.

None of those informants has faced prosecution. Although the DC US Attorney's Office claims that is consistent with its policy of "generally" not charging protesters who didn't enter the Capitol itself, it doesn't explain why the four informants who admittedly entered it got off scot-free.

Potential felony charges in the Capitol riot cases, which carry much more severe penalties, included violent crimes such as assault. But they also included offenses that were not violent, such as obstructing "an official proceeding," punishable by up to 20 years in

prison under 18 USC 1512(c)(2).

Given the possibility of such charges, Trump said on "Meet the Press" this month, defendants who pleaded guilty "had no choice." Because prosecutors can severely penalize defendants who insist on a trial, he added, the criminal justice system is "yery corrupt" and "yery pasty"

"very corrupt" and "very nasty."

The Section 1512 charge, which figures in a quarter of the Jan. 6 cases, illustrates that point. Although the Supreme Court ruled last June that the offense *must* involve attempts to conceal evidence—meaning it does not cover the conduct of the Capitol rioters—that seemingly important decision is expected to have little impact on the outcomes of these cases.

The Justice Department says "there are zero cases where a defendant was charged only for violating" Section 1512. And even in the 26 cases where defendants pleaded guilty to that charge alone, the agreements explicitly allow prosecutors to pursue other charges now that they can no longer rely on this statute.

When you combine that sort of discretion with the puzzling practice of imposing sentences after trial based on allegations that the prosecution failed to prove beyond a reasonable doubt, it's not hard to see why some Jan. 6 defendants may have received excessively severe penalties.

If Trump draws appropriate distinctions and uses his clemency powers carefully — a big if — he can mitigate those injustices.

Solve Drone Mystery With Israeli Tech

HE surge in sightings of unidentified flying objects along the East Coast — including above nuclear power plants and the US Capitol — has panicked residents, frustrated local officials and raised serious national security concerns.

While these aerial objects may prove to be harmless, their mysterious origins and unexplained nightly intrusions underscore the increasing threat posed by unmanned aerial systems, or UAS. As drone tech advances faster than countermeasures, the United States must deploy more robust detection, tracking and mitigation technologies, especially around critical infrastructure and sensitive sites.

Some of the most effective tools for addressing this challenge may come from an unexpected source: Israel, which has honed cutting-edge tech advances during its ongoing war.

Israel has been at the forefront of counter-drone technology due to its unique security needs. Yet even the most technologically advanced countries have vulnerabilities that constantly require new solutions.

On Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas laid the groundwork for its assault on southern Israel by using inexpensive commercial drones to drop explosives on cameras and communications infrastructure along the Gaza border. Since then, Israel has faced an array of malicious drone infiltrations.

In July, Houthi operators in Yemen flew an Iranian-made UAV more than 1,200 miles and crashed it into a residential apartment building directly behind the US embassy's Tel Aviv branch, killing an Israeli civilian in his bedroom. Days later, Hezbollah published video footage captured by its reconnaissance drones of Ramat David Airbase, at which the terrorist group launched missiles in September and October. Most recently,

AARON KAPLOWITZ

tions — and can also identify their make, model and operators.

R2 technology has been deployed in Israel to identify drone threats around cities and above critical infrastructure, and its system could certainly give US officials a powerful tool to help solve their aerial mystery. Long-term, R2's tech provides a strategic solution to be layered into America's air defense systems, alongside existing detection methods. NATO recently invited R2 to participate in a multi-layered counter-UAS exercise alongside prime global defense companies.

Perhaps the most theatric of Israel's counter-drone innovations is Robotican's Goshawk system, an aerial interceptor designed to hunt down and neutralize enemy drones. Goshawk uses an autonomous drone equipped with nets that it automatically releases to

L Israel's war has proven to be a sandbox for testing modern defense innovation. **J**

Hezbollah slammed a kamikaze drone into Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's private home.

In anticipation of unmanned enemy threats, Israeli startups have pioneered systems designed to detect and neutralize drones in real time. These technologies have been improved over the past 14 months of defending Israel's skies against UAS incursions.

Rogue drones often evade traditional detection technologies. Radar and camera systems work well on clear days and in non-urban environments, but less so in urban areas, non-line-of-sight conditions and inclement weather.

They also have a high false-alarm rate, often misidentifying birds and other objects as small drones. And its hardware is heavy and expensive, limiting wide deployment.

R2 Wireless, an Israeli startup founded by electrical engineers, has developed advanced systems that can passively detect drone communication signals. This scalable software solution enables operators to pinpoint drones in all environments and under all condi-

capture drones in midair, minimizing collateral damage while ensuring that the intercepted drone can be analyzed for intelligence.

As drone usage becomes more widespread, the need for unmanned traffic management systems is becoming indispensable. Airwayz has developed a platform that can coordinate more than 1,000 drones at a time in a complex environment. This technology not only brings order to drone traffic, but can also predict flight paths and behaviors to sound early warnings of suspicious drones.

Of necessity, Israel's war has proven to be a sandbox for testing modern defense innovation, including the ability to combat the complex challenges presented by drone warfare.

The mysterious drone sightings highlight a growing vulnerability. The US would be wise to tap Israel's battle-tested drone defenses for a modernized approach to safeguarding America's airspace and protecting our communities.

Aaron Kaplowitz is president of the US-Israel Business Alliance.

he Post Puzzle Page



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PAR SCORE 145-155 BEST SCORE 208

West dealer

Bridge

IXI	Word Score	RACK 4
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Directions: Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word using scoring directions at right. 7 Letter words get 50 point bonus. "Blank" used as any letter have no point value. All the words are in the Official SCRABBLE players Dictionary, 4th Edition.

Word Force PROCURED

RACK 2

RACK 3

From the word or phrase above, form AT LEAST 16 five-letter words, without using more than one form of the same word. For example, drink or drank (not

ANSWERS IN TOMORROW'S POST Yesterday's word:

	KEFLECTEL	,
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creed	deter	fleet
creel	elder	freed
defer	elect	

↑ 5 ♥ A K J 8 4 ♦ K 10 8 5 **♣** 6 5 2 ♣ Á J 10 SOUTH 73

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Pass	4 \land	All Pass	

Opening lead - ♥ K

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"Written your letter to Santa Claus?" I asked Cy the Cynic jovially in the club lounge.

"I have," Cy replied sourly. "I said I would like a fat bank account and a skinny body. Not like last year when he got the two backwards."

Cy struggles with his weight - and also with losing regularly in our penny games. He was declarer at today's four spades, and West led the king and ace of hearts. Cy ruffed, drew trumps and led a club to dummy's king. East took the ace and returned the jack. The Cynic took dummy's queen and next led the queen of diamonds for a finesse. West won and led a club to East's ten for down one.

"I can make it by leading the ace and a second diamond," Cy shrugged, "but how was I to know?"

Cy's play was wrong. East needs one good card for his raise to two hearts. If Cy starts the diamonds and finds East with the king, he will still make the contract since West will surely hold the ace of clubs.

West would always defeat the contract by shifting to clubs at Trick Two, but that defense wasn't clearly indicated.

Wonderword

How to play: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and Circle their letters only. Do not circle the word. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

DR	INKI	NG I	ECC	OCTI	ONS						Solu	tion:	6 le	tters
Т	R	0	S	E	Р	В	0	U	1	L	L	0	Ν	W
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S	Ε	Α	Α	Т	S	Ε	R	0	F	L	0	0	S	Α
Т	L	Ν	R	D	L	Ε	M	0	Ν	1	D	0	Α	Ε
Т	Т	1	Ν	Т	D	Α	В	R	L	0	Ν	R	Ε	Н
R	Ε	1	0	E	X	Ε	C	Е	W	В	Ε	Ε	S	S
Α	R	L	U	R	L	Ε	D	1	Ε	G	L	G	E	Α
D	N	Α	R	M	Α	N	L	S	N	V	В	Α	1	M
1	0	В	1	E	Α	Ν	Ε	1	1	Α	D	Ν	R	G
Т	M	R	S	D	D	P	G	Т	М	М	Т	0	R	Ν
1	Α	Ε	Н	1	1	D	Α	Е	U	0	M	0	Ε	1
0	Ν	Н	U	C	R	M	1	1	K	L	M	Ε	В	Т
Ν	Ν	Q	Е	1	1	Ε	S	U	F	Ν	1	Α	R	Т
Α	1	R	Е	Ν	E	V	L	0	S	S	1	D	Н	U
L	C	D	S	E	Т	Α	R	Т	Ν	E	C	Ν	0	C

Added, Berries, Blend, Boil, Botanical, Bouillon, Chamomile, Cinnamon, Concentrate, Cutting, Dandelion, Dilute, Dissolve, Dried, Extract, Fennel, Fluids, Forest, Ginger, Heat, Herbal, Infuse, Lemon, Liquid, Mash, Medicine, Milk, Nourish, Oils, Orange, Oregano, Plant, Recipe, Rinds, Rose, Sage, Season, Simmer, Teas, Traditional, Vitamins, Wood Yesterday's Answer: Workshop

For WONDERWORD apps, books & more, visit Wonderword.com, or call 1-855-232-2367.

POSTSU DOKU

To solve a Su Doku, you must put a number from 1 to 9, in each empty box.

Each number must appear once in each horizontal row, as well as in each vertical column and in each of the 3-by-3 grids. Impossible? Not once you get the hang of it. Tips and in depth strategies at

www.SudokuWiki.org



NYPOST.COM/GAMES

Solutions on Page 38

© Syndicated Puzzles

	Very Easy #6,767 ▼								
2	4						5		
			4	8	6		2		
6						4	3	1	
		4	1		7	3			
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Mick Crossword

- 1 At the stern

- 1 At the stern
 4 Revolutionary tool?
 9 Ebbs
 15 Place to pick up trinkets and tchotchkes
 17 Action hero with amnesia
- 18 Physician who specializes in perioperative care 20 Use one's gray matter

- 21 Change 22 Start of a protestor's cry, per-
- haps 23 Pair

- 23 Pair
 24 Pretzel shape
 25 package
 26 Prefix with thermal
 28 One who never draws a blank?
 31 Fried turnovers
 34 Taking after
 35 Seafood paella option
 36 Supports
 40 "Sweet!"

- 41 Genre with retrofuturistic tech-

- 41 Genre with retroluturistic technology
 43 Tribute act
 47 __ latte
 48 Toss, slangily
 49 Big stretches
 50 Not awesome
 52 Convent figure
 53 Like some orange juice
 55 Tricolor cat
 58 "You're not fooling me!," or
 what 18-, 28-, and 43-Across might
 say?
- Wild 18-, 28-, and 43-ACF say? 61 Haitian language 62 Mooches 63 "__ you right!" 64 Darts about 65 Speed Wagon maker Down 1 Amazon berry 2 Slush

- 10 Classless one 11 Summer mo. 12 Like some elders
- 14 Dog for pheasant hunters

- 16 "That didn't escape my atten
- 19 Director Preminger
- 24 Joshes 25 Fastener 26 Glam rock? 27 Australian avian
- 28 Light wood 29 26-Down weight 30 Classless one?
- 32 To date 33 Approach 36 Crime novelist Gerritsen 37 Place to order rolls
- 38 "Music for Airports" composer
- 38 Music for Airports Compo-Brian 39 Big Country 41 Visit on the way 42 Link-shortening service 43 Critics of good-faith efforts
- 44 Canon 45 False front 46 Depend (on) 50 Heavy hammers 51 Red Muppet 53 Propulsion aid
- 54 Versatile vehicles, for short



PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

- (C) 2024 Tribune Media Services 55 Tech review site acquired by Ziff Davis in 2024
- 56 Give up 57 Ish
- 57 ISII 59 End of a congressional address 60 Retailer that sells crampons and chalk bags

Donald Trump has

pledged to "save"

to ban it by Jan. 19

company. Owner

will not sell.

Chinese-owned video-

Congress passed a law

unless it's sold to a US

ByteDance has said it

sharing app TikTok after

Dow Down Jones **1**123.03 Indust. Avg. 42,326.87

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Apple's beef

Apple on Wednesday hit out at Meta, saying Meta's numerous requests to access the iPhone maker's software tools for its devices could impact users' privacy and security, underscoring the rivalry between the tech giants.

Ram hybrid

Stellantis said on Wednesday it would move up the launch of a new hybrid version of its best-selling Ram pickup truck ahead of an electric version, citing slowing EV demand.

Cocoa puff\$

Cocoa prices hit record highs Wednesday as fears escalated that there would be more demand than supply of the chocolate ingredient for a fourth successive season.

Airbag probe

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said on Wednesday it won't yet seek a recall of airbag inflators in about 50 million US vehicles assembled by 13 automakers and will conduct $further\ investigation.$

Epic fails

Two directors of Epic Games appointed by Chinese gaming and social media firm Tencent Holdings resigned from the Fortnite maker's board after the Justice Department's Antitrust Division voiced concerns, the department said Wednesday.

Source: Reuters



MAKE IT A DON DEAL

Brokered sale could keep TikTok in US: expert

By THOMAS BARRABI and JAMES FRANEY

President-elect Donald Trump could keep his pledge to "save" Tik-Tok — and still address national security concerns that spurred Congress to authorize a ban — by brokering a sale of the Chinese-owned app to a US buyer, experts told The Post.

China-based ByteDance has until Jan. 19 to completely divest its stake in TikTok or face a total US ban of the app. In a last-ditch scramble to nix the law, ByteDance and TikTok have appealed to the Supreme Court - and cozied up to Trump in the hope that he can somehow intervene.

The Supreme Court agreed to take up the case on Wednesday and has scheduled oral arguments for Jan. 10 — just nine days before the ban takes effect.

A US appeals court previously rejected TikTok's bid to block the law in a 3-0 decision, which suggests the company faces an uphill battle to win a late reprieve.

If Trump agrees that TikTok should remain online in the US and decides to get involved, a full divestiture is the only realistic path forward, according to Michael Sobolik, senior fellow at American Foreign Policy Council and author of "Countering China's Great Game."

"If you really want TikTok to operate in the United States, and if you want it to operate safely for Americans, then there needs to be a complete separation from its parent company," Sobolik said. "And there cannot be any sort of ownership or control, direct or indirect, from a foreign adversary government. I don't think there's any alternative."

Trump — who led the original push to ban TikTok during his first term said at a Monday press conference that he has a "warm spot in my heart" for TikTok and would "take a look" at the situation. Soon after, Trump at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida met with TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew.

<u>'Very valuable platform'</u>

Details from the meeting have yet to emerge. It's unclear whether the talks between Trump and Chew yielded any progress.

Representatives for TikTok and the Trump transition team did not return requests for comment.

Brokering a deal will be no easy feat. TikTok has insisted it is not for sale and argued that the tight divestment window made finding a buyer impossible, even if it were inclined to sell.

Save our shtick!

China also has said it will resist any attempt to force a TikTok sale — and Beijing has export controls to stop the sale of its algorithm.

Still, the looming deadline "creates a great opportunity for a winwin situation" if Trump can hammer out a deal, according to Rep. John Moolenaar (R-Mich.), chairman of the House Select Committee on China, which led the charge on the ban-or-sale bill.

"President Trump is a great negotiator. He loves America. He loves our national security," Moolenaar told The Post. "He also recognizes that TikTok is a very valuable platform, and I think he will be able to put together a coalition of people who want to see this app continue in the United

States, but do it in a secure way."

The Justice Department described TikTok as "a national-security threat of immense depth and scale" that functions as a Chinese spying and propaganda tool on US soil, capable of secretly manipulating content served to users through its recommendation algorithm and mass data collection such as location tracking, among other risks.

TikTok has argued that the saleor-ban law is unconstitutional.

But Chinese router may get routed

The US government is weighing a ban on a popular brand of Chinese-made home Internet routers over fears that their links to cyberattacks pose a nationalsecurity risk, according to a

TP-Link, the manufacturer

of high-speed cable modems, routers, range extenders and smart home devices that has grabbed a 65% market share in the United States, is the subject of several investigations being overseen by several federal agencies, according to The Wall Street Journal.

The departments of Commerce, Defense and Justice have all opened probes into the company, sources told the Journal.

A ban on sales of TP-Link products could come sometime next year — after President-elect Donald Trump takes office, the outlet said.

A division of the Commerce Department has even issued a subpoena to TP-Link, according to the report. TP-Link is the top choice on Amazon, and powers web communications for the Defense Department and other agencies.

The company has won market dominance partly through lower prices, as its routers are cheaper than competitors' - often by more than half, according to market data. Ariel Zilber

Joe's parting shot on pol stox

President Biden has declared his support for banning sitting members of Congress from trading stock — an eleventh-hour pivot after four years of silence over the controversy.

"Nobody in the Congress should be able to make money in the stock market while they're in the Congress," Biden told the "More Perfect Union" podcast.

"I don't know how you look your constituents in the eye and know because of the job they gave you, gave you an inside track to make more money," Biden said, adding: "I think we should be changing the law."

The interview was conducted by Faiz Shakir, a political adviser for Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), and published by A More Perfect Union, a pro-labor advocacy organization.

It's unclear what impact Biden's statement could have, coming only a month before his term ends.

Biden had previously declined to take a position on congressional

stock trading. His fellow Democrat, former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, initially opposed proposals that lawmakers and their spouses be banned from trading stocks.

Pelosi, who is married to venture capitalist Paul Pelosi, insisted that her husband makes stock trades independently and that she has no involvement. She said in December 2021 that there is a "free market" that members of Congress "should be able to participate in." *Ariel Zilber*



Ad-verse reaction

House probes mega merger over lefty cartel ties

By TAYLOR HERZLICH

US Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) on Wednesday launched a probe into the merger of two advertising giants over their ties to an anti-conservative cartel that sought to defund news outlets, The Post has learned.

The House Judiciary Committee chairman sent letters to the CEOs of Omnicom and Interpublic Group — which were founding members of the left-leaning World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) and its now-defunct Global Alliance for Responsible Media (GARM) initiative — as part of an antitrust investigation.

The committee ordered the companies to preserve documents and all contact with the WFA and GARM and provide information to the House, according to letters obtained by The Post.

In the letters, the House also demanded Omnicom

US Rep. Jim Jordan (right) wants to probe the merger of two advertising behemoths and their link to the defunct Global Alliance for Responsible Media, founded by Rob Rakowitz (below).

Omnicom

Omnicom

and Interpublic reveal what precautions they have taken to avoid repeating GARM's anticompetitive history, and disclose any politically partisan "brand safety" initiatives with which their company is involved.

The committee requested the answers be sent to them by the afternoon of Jan. 7.

The disclosure of the probe comes after The Post's Charles Gasparino exclusively reported this week that the deal could

attract scrutiny from the Trump antitrust department, Federal Trade Commission and FCC over the agencies' use of the controversial rating services.

An antitrust case can be made if federal officials can

prove that there is a deal by the raters to skew their grades to appease left-leaning executives in the ad business, sources said.

Omnicom and Interpublic did not immediately respond to The Post's requests for comment.

Omnicon's acquisition of rival Interpublic, announced earlier this month, would create the largest ad agency in the world with more than 100,000 employees and nearly \$25 billion in yearly revenue.

The committee is investigating whether the merger would crush competition, especially among conservative voices, as it earlier this year found GARM did.

GARM claimed rightleaning platforms spread "harmful content" and deprived them of advertising revenue by badmouthing them to more than 40 major companies, according to the letters and The Post's previous reporting.

Nippon's US Steel bids fail

Despite a steady stream of meetings and calls with US officials, and three revamped proposals to assuage national security concerns, Nippon Steel has failed to garner approval from a powerful panel reviewing its \$14.9 billion bid for US Steel, a letter seen by Reuters shows.

The letter, sent Saturday, sets the stage for President Biden, who has long opposed the deal, to block it. The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), which reviews deals for national security risks, has a Monday deadline to approve the deal, extend the review, or recommend Biden scuttle it.

If the agencies that make up the panel remain at loggerheads, as the letter states, they will refer the matter to Biden to take action.

The history of outreach since early September — including four in-person meetings with CFIUS, three phone calls, including one on Friday with the Treasury and Commerce department secretaries, as well as the three proposed mitigation agreements — is contained in a letter dated Saturday sent to Nippon Steel by CFIUS that has not been previously reported.

It shows the lengths the companies have gone to try to win approval on the controversial merger, even as the letter signals the deal is likely doomed. Reuters

Observer to Tortoise

The owner of Britain's Guardian newspaper confirmed Wednesday that it has sold The Observer, the world's oldest Sunday newspaper, to Tortoise Media for an undisclosed fee.

The Scott Trust, which owns the Guardian Media Group, said in a statement that Tortoise Media is purchasing The Observer through a combination of cash and shares.

The Observer was founded in 1791 and became part of the Guardian Media Group in 1993. *AP*

Opioid script suit vs. CVS Homebuilding boost

The Department of Justice on Wednesday announced a lawsuit accusing CVS of filling and billing federal health insurance programs for illegal opioid prescriptions, contributing to a nationwide epidemic of opioid addiction and overdose.

The newly unsealed complaint in Providence, RI, federal court alleges that, from October 2013 to the present, CVS filled prescriptions for dangerous quantities of opioids and dangerous combinations of drugs and provided early refills, violating the Controlled Substances Act.

The DOJ said the violations were driven by company performance metrics, and that in some cases patients died of overdoses shortly after filling illegal prescriptions.

"We strongly disagree with the allegations and false narrative within this complaint," a CVS repsaid.

Reuters

US single-family homebuilding rebounded in November as the drag from hurricanes faded, but the threat of tariffs on imported goods and potential labor shortages from mass deportations of immigrants could hamper new construction

The report from the Commerce Department on Wednesday showed only a slight increase last month in permits for the future construction of single-family homes, suggesting that residential investment will probably not contribute much to economic growth in the fourth quarter. Higher mortgage rates even as the

Federal Reserve has been lowering borrowing costs remain a constraint for the housing market, with promised tariffs and expulsions of undocumented immigrants by President-elect Donald Trump seen worsening the situation. Reuters



ELLIOTT HILL "Under the microscope."

Nike CEO needs new game plan

Two months into his tenure as Nike CEO, Elliott Hill gets his first shot Thursday to convince investors he can rescue the flailing sportswear company after a year stained by layoffs and cratering sales.

Platitudes from Hill will not be enough, analysts say, when Nike reports quarterly earnings.

To satisfy markets, Hill must lay out a plan to boost innovation, repair relationships with retailers and steady sales at a brand weathering the loss of market share to nimbler competitors such as Deckers' Hoka and On.

"He's really under the microscope because he's given himself so much time to come up with a structure and a game plan," said Jay Woods, chief global strategist at investment banking firm Freedom Capital Markets, referring to Nike's decision to postpone its November investor day as Hill settled into his role.

Nike did not respond to a request for comment.

Analysts say they understand a turnaround will take a few quarters. *Reuters*

'Prinx' recalling 541K winter tires

A company that sells replacement winter tires is recalling more than 541,000 of them in the US because they don't have enough snow traction to meet North American standards.

Prinx Chengshan Tire North America is recalling more than 100 sizes of Fortune Tormenta and Prinx Hicountry tires with three-peak mountain snowflake symbols on the sidewalls. They passed European standards. *AP*

CUT & RUN SCARED

Fed makes trim, but Dow plunges on '25 outlook

By TAYLOR HERZLICH

The Federal Reserve slashed interest rates as expected Wednesday, but signaled fewer cuts than originally forecast for 2025 — sending the Dow spiraling more than 1,100 points.

The Fed cut rates by 25 basis points to the 4.25%-4.50% range and its summary of economic projections (SEP) indicated it will make rate cuts totaling a half percentage point by the end of 2025 given the solid labor market and the recent stall in lowering inflation.

Policymakers had previously hinted at possibly four rates cuts for next year.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said policymakers want to see more progress on bringing inflation down as they consider the path of future rate cuts, as inflation has exceeded year-end projections.

Inflation currently stands at 2.7%, above the Fed's target of 2%.

"As we think about further cuts, we're going to be looking for progress on inflation. We have been moving sideways on 12-month inflation," Powell told a news conference after the two-day meeting.

"As we go forward, we're going to want to be seeing further progress on bringing inflation down, and keeping a solid labor market."

Powell's comments led to a rout in the markets, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average plunging 1,123.03, or 2.6%, to close at 42,326.87. It was the 10th straight day the blue-chip index had finished

Slash and burn Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said policymakers want to see more progress on bringing inflation down as they consider the path of future rate cuts, but the weak forecast sent the Dow Jones Industrial Average careening by 2.6%. **Dow Jones** Industrial verage 43.500 43,000 We have been Close moving sideways on 42.326.87 42,500 1.841.91 12-month inflation. - Fed Chair Jerome Powell

in the red, the worst skid since 1974.

The S&P 500 lost 178.45 points, or 2.95%, to end at 5,872.16, while the Nasdaq Composite nose-dived 716.37 points, or 3.56%, to 19,392.69.

"Santa came early and dropped a 25-bps rate cut in the market's stocking, but accompanied it with a note saying there would be coal next year," Chris Zaccarelli, chief investment officer at Northlight Asset Management, said in a note.

Powell said it has "been a bit frustrating" that inflation is taking longer to cool than policymakers expected — but he added the economy has performed better on unemployment and inflation than many people would have expected just a few years ago.

"If you look at the changes to the statement of economic projection, they really had no choice," said Ellen Hazen, chief market strategist at F.L.Putnam Investment Management in Wellesley, Mass.

"So as you look at all the changes that they made, it's very clear that the economy is running a lot hotter than their previous projection. And that has got to contribute to their desire to potentially pause."

In September, the Fed issued an outsize, half-point

interest rate cut — its first cut that big since 2020 — on "greater confidence" that inflation was calming toward the bank's 2% goal and that a weak job market posed a greater risk.

The Fed removed its language about "greater confidence" and cut rates again in November by a quarter point.

The third cut comes amid a mixed bag of economic data.

Inflation up 2.7%

The Consumer Price Index showed inflation rose 2.7% in November — heating up for the second month in a row and above the 2.6% seen in October, according to the Labor Department.

Consumer spending remained relatively unharmed. Retail sales jumped 0.7% in the same month, beating forecasts of 0.6%, and October's retail sales figure was revised up to 0.5% from 0.4%, according to the Census Bureau.

However, an unsteady labor market has raised some cause for concern as President-elect Donald Trump has called for the Fed to lower rates at a quicker pace.

"It looks like some early worries about tariffs could be creeping into the Fed's projections. They're penciling in fewer rate cuts in 2025, slightly higher inflation, and a modest increase in the unemployment rate," said Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management in Menomonee Falls, Wis. With Wires

Teamsters threaten Amazon strike

Pressure is building on Amazon.com to come to the bargaining table with the Teamsters Union as thousands of workers threaten to strike during the retailer's busy holiday selling season.

Workers in New York City, southern California and Skokie, Ill., voted in recent days to authorize a strike should Amazon fail to bargain with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

On Wednesday, the union said workers at an Atlanta Amazon facility became the eighth to vote in favor of striking, and the union has threatened to call a strike at any time.

The Teamsters, which claim to represent 10,000 US Amazon workers at 10 facilities, have said Amazon has ignored their requests to meet to reach a con-

tract, despite setting a Dec. 15 deadline.

With over 700,000 workers at around 1,000 warehouses scattered around the US, a strike is unlikely to cripple Amazon's operations, but such a walkout in the final few days before Christmas could create supply-chain hiccups and send a signal that the Teamsters intend to inflict financial harm.

would likely be unwilling to meet or negotiate with the Teamsters as it could open the door to further organizing efforts.

"Amazon clearly has developed a strategy of ignoring their workers' rights to collectively organize and negotiate," said Benjamin Sachs, a Harvard Law School professor of labor and industry.

Reuters

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21)

Put your own needs first today, because once the Sun leaves your sign on the 21st you could find that you no longer have the clout to push ahead with plans that other people do not approve of. Use your power while you've still got it.

Y CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20)

Your best time of the year is just days away and if you are smart vou will be making plans left, right and center. Keep telling yourself there is nothing you cannot do and no one you cannot impress. Believe it deeply enough and it will be true.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)

You will achieve more in the long term if you get together with people who share your aims and ambitions rather than going your own way each and every time. There is power in numbers and with the right

DISCOVER MORE ABOUT YOURSELF AND WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS AT SALLYBROMPTON.COM

people by your side you will be invincible.

HISCES (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

Your highly developed sixth sense rarely if ever gives you bad guidance, so if it is now warning you to take care on the work front that is exactly what you must do. The sad fact is not all your colleagues want to see you succeed.

ARIES (March 21-April 20)

The sooner you realize that ambition is not a dirty word the happier you will be. Cosmic activity in and around the career area of your chart over the next few days will encourage you to get the better of those you think of as rivals.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21) Your beliefs may seem to be set in stone but the planets indicate they will go through a number of far-reaching changes over the next few days. If you can learn to look at life from a slightly different angle you'll be amazed by what you discover.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21)

You don't have to be assertive to prove that you are as tough as other people. On the contrary, you will impress others more if you hold back a bit today and stay on good terms with partners, colleagues and, yes, your rivals too.

CANCER 90 (June 22-July 23)

You need to get into the habit of allowing other people to make decisions for you. When the Sun moves into your opposite sign at the weekend

even those you are close to will want to flex their muscles a bit. Let them. It can't hurt you.

(July 24-Aug. 23)

If you push yourself too hard between now and the weekend you could regret it later when you find your energy levels take an unexpected dip. Map out your schedule for the next few days and make sure you leave yourself plenty of free time.

VIRGO (Aug. 24-Sept. 23)

You have so much to look forward and although vou might not quite believe that now you will start to believe it when the Sun moves into the most dynamic area of your chart on the 21st. Life is good and about to get even better.

<u>\(\Omega\)</u> LIBRA (Sont (Sept. 24-Oct. 23)

If you aim to cooperate rather than compete over the next 24 hours you will accomplish so much more, especially in oneto-one situations where you have not always had the best of things in recent weeks. Be more of a team player Libra.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22)

Anyone who tells you what to think and how to feel will be left in no doubt that their opinions are not wanted. Just be careful they are not trying to play a double bluff on you by suggesting the opposite of what they truly desire.

BIRTHDAY THURSDAY

Some of your passions may be baffling to friends and colleagues but to you they make perfect sense, so give yourself permission to act in ways that not everyone will approve of and make the next 12 months truly special - for you at least!

TODAY

10:24a 11:08p

10:36a 11:03p

10:28a 11:12p

TODAY

39/25/pc

44/27/pc

37/22/pc

37/24/pc

41/26/pc

34/23/pc

35/23/pc

43/26/pc

42/25/pc

39/24/pc

39/25/pc

40/26/pc

TODAY

62/49/c

34/18/c

55/39/r

69/57/s

45/38/s

49/34/r

64/52/s

63/46/pc

47/21/pc

47/37/pc 57/34/pc

68/45/c

31/16/pc

19/16/sn

59/53/pc

74/64/pc

47/33/sn

55/37/r

64/36/pc

2:03p

2:00p

10:52p

2:05p

1st

1:59a

1:50a

10:08a

11:45a

2:05a

TOMORROW

11:55p

2:51p

2:48p

11:44p

12:37p

2:53p

TOMORROW

30/26/sf

37/27/sf

28/21/sf

31/24/sf

33/28/sf

28/22/sf

29/21/sf

32/28/5

34/27/sf

30/23/sf

33/26/sf

30/25/sf

33/20/sn

TOMORROW

65/58/s

65/36/5 60/46/sh 38/26/pc

44/35/pc

69/55/pc

49/43/r

42/29/c

65/54/pc

53/47/sh

46/22/pc

49/42/sh 51/32/s

68/47/c

21/17/sn

46/43/pc

88/77/pc

57/42/pc

76/64/s

54/40/c

39/34/c

1st

11:15a

11:25a

2:45a

2:36a

10:59a

12:13a

2:52a

11:19a

AccuWeather Visit AccuWeather.com

Post Weather Report Friday

Thursday

Today: Breezy and cooler with clouds and sun. High 42 to 48.

Tonight: Partly cloudy. Low 30 to 36.

Saturday

A snow shower High 31 to 37. Evening Colder. Low 16 to 22.

Sunday

Tomorrow:

Cloudy with a

spots. High 36

Tomorrow

night: A little

snow at times. Low

to 42.

snow shower in

Very cold. High 24

Evening Clear; very cold. Low

Almanac

YESTERDAY'S CONDITIONS AT CENTRAL PARK THROUGH 6PM Temperature

High: 53, Low: 42, Mean: 48

Departure from Normal Yesterday: +9 degrees

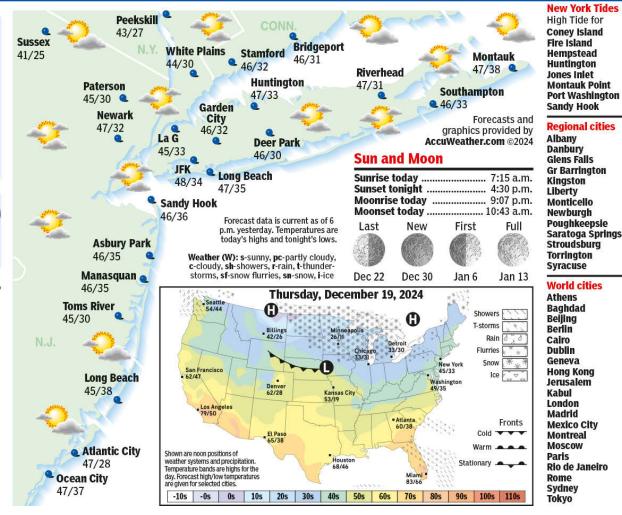
Precipitation

Yesterday: 0.00", Month: 2.38", Year: 44.22", Normal year to date: 47.90"

Heating Degree days yesterday17 Total for the month (normal)456 (437) Total since July 1 (normal)1020 (1223) Last season to date..... Wind Chill (at noon yest.) UV index (for Thu.) 2 (Low) Humidity (at noon) 45% SNOW

Yesterday

Month to date (normal) trace (2.4") AQI rating: (for Thu.)Moderate



December

19,

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Monday: Friday 2:30PM Mon @Work: Friday 2:30PM Tuesday: Monday 2:30PM Wednesday: Tuesday 2:30PM Thursday: Wednesday 2:30PM Friday: Thursday 2:30PM Saturday: Friday 2:30PM Sunday: Friday 2:30PM

PAYMENTS We Accept

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The New York Post reserves the right to edit, reclassify, reject or cancel an ad at any time. We can only give appropriate credit, not to exceed the cost of the ad, for credit, not to exceed the cost of the ad, for one insertion. We are not liable for com-plete omissions. Any discrepancies must be brought to our attention within 30 days of the first day the ad runs, in order to receive consideration for credit.

Christmas

Early Deadlines for Classified

Publication Date

Wednesday, Dec 25th to Thursday, Dec 26th

Ad Deadline

Tuesday, Dec 24th 11:00AM

We will be closed on Wednesday, December 25th. **Enjoy Your Holiday!**

NEW YORK POST

Legal Notices published in all NYS counties.

FINANCE & BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES PET PLACE

Thriving Bakery in good condition in Luzerne County, Pa Modern, up-to-date equipment. Two buildings, one with tenants. Parking Great Num-bers. Owner retiring Just 2 hours from NYC. Call Joseph Gilroy Realtor at (570) 288-1444

REAL ESTATE

ROOMS UNFURNISHED

Room for Rent, Jackson Heights. is the title and then the description can be: Microwave, fridge, and bath-room shared, private entrance. Sin-gle room rent is \$1000 the same amount for the deposit. Must be em-ployed, call or text Sunny # 347-299-4591.

All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 as amended in 1988 which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicapped, familial status, or national origin, or intention to make such or national origin, or intention to make such complain of discrimination, call HUD toll free to expend the such properties of the such complain of discrimination, call HUD toll free the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275. Or, call the Anti Discrimination of New York (Fer Housing Agency for the 5 Boros of New York) at 178-422-066, or The New York City Commission of Human Rights hotline at 212-306-7500.

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NOTICES

FORECLOSURE NOTICES

NOTICE OF SALE

SUPREME COURT COUNTY OF QUEENS, SC PARK LANE II, LLC, Plaintiff, vs. WALI AHMED, ET AL., Defendant(s)

Pursuant to an Order Confirming Referee Report and Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale duly entered on November 22, 2022, I, the undersigned Referee will sell at public auction at the Queens County Supreme Courthouse, on the second floor in Courtroom 25, 88-1 Sutphin Boulevard, Jamaica, NY 11435 on January 10, 2025 at 10:00 a.m., premises known as 35-20 Leverich Street Unit B226 a/k/a Unit a.m., premises known as 35-20 Levericon Street Unit B226 a/k/a Unit 226, Jackson Heights, NY 11372. All that certain plot, piece or parcel of land, with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, situate, lying and being in the Borough and County of Queens, City and State of New York, Block 1270 and Lot 1111 together with an undivided 0.6091 percent interest in the Common Elements. Approximate amount of judgment is \$647,245.66 plus interest and costs. Premises will be sold subject to provisions of filed Judgmen Index #724727/2020.

Austin I. Idehen, Esa., Referee

Vallely Law PLLC, 6851 Jericho Turnpike, Suite 165, Syosset, New York 11791, Attorneys for Plaintiff

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Classified **Autos Wanted Listings**

LEGAL NOTICES

LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Notice of Formation of Bower Dish. Articles of Organization file with Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 08/29/2024. Office location: Columbia County. SSN designated as agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upor whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to UNITED STATES CORPORATION AGENTS, INC.: 7014 13TH AVENUE SUITE 202 BROOKLYN NY 11228 Purpose: Any lawful purpose

QUEENS COUNTY LEGAL NOTICE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE

OF NEW YORK COUNTY OF OUFFNS DITECH FINANCIAL LLC F/K/A GREEN TREE SERVICING LLC.

MARLON LLOYD, ET AL. NOTICE OF SALE NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

pursuant to a Final Judgment o Foreclosure entered in the Office of the Clerk of the County o Queens on August 10, 2018 wherein DITECH FINANCIAL LLC F/K/A GREEN TREE SERVICING LLC is the Plaintiff and MARLON LLOYD, ET AL. are the Defendant(s). undersigned Referee, will sell at public auction at the QUEENS COUNTY SUPREME COURT, 88-11 SUTPHIN BLVD, COURTROOM 25 JAMAICA, NY 11435, on January 10, 2025 at 10:00AM, premise known as 100-35 200TH ST HOLLIS, NY 11423; and the following tax map identification 10867-50

ALL THAT CERTAIN PLOT, PIECE OR PARCEL OF LAND, WITH THE BUILDINGS AND IMPROVEMENTS THEREON ERECTED, SITUATE LYING AND BEING IN THE BOROUGH AND COUNTY OF QUEENS, CITY AND STATE OF NEW YORK

Premises will be sold subject to provisions of filed Judament ndex No.: 703059/2021. Warren S Hecht, Esq. - Referee. Robertson Anschutz, Schneid, Crane & Partners, PLLC, 900 Merchant Concourse, Suite 310, Westbury New York 11590, Attorneys fo Plaintiff. All foreclosure sales wil be conducted in accordance with Covid-19 guidelines including, but not limited to, socia distancing and mask wearing *LOCATION OF SALE SUBJECT TO CHANGE DAY OF ACCORDANCE W COURT/CLERK DIRECTIVES. WITI

NOTICES

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY

nypost.com

Notice of Formation of Loophole Productions LLC. Articles of Organization filed with Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 11/19/2024. Office ocation: Albany County. SSNY designated as agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to Registered Agents Inc: 418 Broadway STE R, Albany, NY, 12207. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

QUEENS COUNTY

LEGAL NOTICE
SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF QUEENS U.S. BANK, N.A.

-against-NANIVE DESTIL, ET AL.

NOTICE OF SALE
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to a Final Judgment of Foreclosure entered in the Office of the Clerk of the County of Queens on February 1, 2019, wherein U.S. BANK, N.A. is the Plaintiff and NANIVE DESTIL, ET AL, are the Defendant(s). I, the undersigned Referee, will sell at public auction at the QUEENS COUNTY SUPREME COURT, 88-11 SUTPHIN BLVD, COURTROOM 25 JAMAICA, NY 11435, on January 10, 2025 at 10:00AM, premises known as 197-17 JAMAICA AVENUE, HOLLIS, NY 11423; and the following tax identification: 10466-91.

ALL THAT CERTAIN PLOT, PIECE OR PARCEL OF LAND, WITH THE BUILDINGS AND IMPROVEMENTS, THEREON ERECTED, SITUATE I YING AND BEING IN THE FOURTH WARD, BOROUGH AND COUNTY OF QUEENS, CITY AND STATE OF NEW YORK

remises will be sold subject to provisions of filed Judgment Index No.: 710371/2024. Cheryl J Kinch, Esq. - Referee. Robertson Anschutz, Schneid, Crane & Partners, PLLC, 900 Merchants Concourse, Suite 310, Westbury New York 11590, Attorneys for Plaintiff. All foreclosure salés will be conducted in accordance with Covid-19 guidelines including but not limited to, social distancing and mask wearing. *LOCATION OF SALE SUBJECT TO CHANGE DAY OF ACCORDANCE W WITH COURT/CLERK DIRECTIVES.

LLC Formation Notices All NYS Counties



Place your notice in NYP classifieds. Email Karen at kinscho@nypost.com

NEWYORK POST

FIRST: Mile pace; \$13,000; claiming Monaco Hanover (JBartlett) Buchannon Hanover (DDube) Snouze U Louze (JStratton)
Cold Creek Felipe (Brennan)
I B Lovin (ANapolitano)
Victor Cruise (ASiegelman)
Caughtinalandslide (JMarhn) 4-1-4 10-1 5-4-4 20-1 20-1 8 Cellmate (BHolland) 1-3-1 8-1 SECOND: Mile pace; \$14,000; cond

Yonkers entries for Thursday

Stealing (GBrennan) 3-8-3 Energysource (ANapolitano) 1-3-6 Mahone Seelster (JMarohn) 4-6-2 Roger Rabbit (JStratton) 3-4-4 Mufasa As (BHolland) 2-7-5 Los Ballykeelamigo (DDube) 5-7-1 PassiontePrmse (ASegelmn) 3-5-2

b Los Ballykeelanigo (Dubue) 5-r-1 20-1
8 Be Different (JBartlett) 7-5-4
1FITH: Mile Pace; S15,000; claiming
1 Lyons Pegasus (Napolitano) 3-r-4 6-1
2 Prince Of Tides (GBrennan) 2-4-1 2-1
3 Big Dream Fella (BHolland) 8-1-3 5-2
4 Vespa N (ASiegelman) 6-2-2 5-1
5 Smokin By N (ASiegelman) 6-2-2 5-1
6 Maribank Road (Dbube) 6-5-3 20-1
SIXTH: Mile Pace; S16,000; claiming
1 High On Rockmroll (BHolland) 7-r-5 20-1
SIXTH: Mile Pace; S16,000; claiming
1 High On Rockmroll (BHolland) 7-r-5 12-1
1 Donnttellmenow (ANapolitan) 5-8-3 8-1
3 Eminem Hanover (SSmith) 6-6-4 20-1
4 Flip My Chip (UStratton) 1-5-1 9-5
5 Music Hall (GBrennan) 7-1-1 9-2
5 J B Gram (JBartlett) 2-1-5 2-1
7 Fall In Line (DDube) 6-7-5 20-1
8 He's Special (JMarohn) 3-r-7 20-1

Yonkers results

FIRST-1-mile pace; 15000clm; purse \$12,000

FIRST-1-mile pace; 15000clm; purse \$12,000
TRACK: CONDITION-GD OFF: 7:07 TIME28.4; 1:00.4; 1:29.2; 1:57.2
4 Bttorbucklup(BHIInd) 16.00 7.20 3.10
3 Rose Run X-Con (JStratton) 14.60 3.30
2 Italian Delight N (G Brennan) 2.10
6 Exacta (4/3) \$74.25 6 Triple (4/3/2) \$195.75
5 \$.10 Superfecta (4/3/2/5) \$50.00
SECOND-1-mile pace; fm20000clm; purse \$13,000

SECOND-1-mile pace; fm20000clm; purse \$13,000
TRACK: CONDITION-GD OFF: 7:25 TIME27-4; 57.1; 1:26.0; 1:56.0
3 Nutrinbuthbst(BHIInd) 12.00 4.20 3.70
6 Sale El Sol (G Brennan) 5.40 3.70
6 Sale El Sol (G Brennan) 3.50
■ Exacta (3/4) \$31.75 ■ Triple (3/4/6) \$127.25
■ \$1.0 Superfecta (3/4/6/5) \$30.00 ■ Daily
double (4/3) \$46.75

THIRD-1-mile pace; fm20000clm; purse \$13,000

TRACK: CONDITION-6D OFF: 7:43 TIME
27.4: 57.3: 1:26.3: 1:56.3

2 Betri-Wtchit(ASglmn) 11.60 6.90 4.10

Fortunada (A Napolitano) 3.20 2.40

1 Pink Ruby (J Stratton) 2.20

Exacta (2(5); \$20.90 • Triple (2/5/1) \$55.25 • \$.10 Superfecta (2/5/1/4) \$13.05

FOURTH-1-mile pace; fmn2bnm4pm; purse

\$17,000

TRACK: CONDITION-GD OFF: 8:03 TIME28.0; 57.4: 1:26.0; 1:54.0

8 KatesUp(ANapoltano) 48.20 11.20 6.50

4 Kiss My Cheek (6 Brennan) 2.90 2.20

5 Pasta Delight (8 Holland)

6 Exacta (8/4) \$117.75 ° Triple (8/4/5) \$377.50

\$.10 Superfecta (8/4/5/3) \$49.30 ° \$1 Pick 3
(3/2/8) \$341.50 ° \$1 Pick 4 (4/3/2/8) \$8,083.00

Scr: Fated Future, Twin B Empress.

FIFTH-1-mile trot: nw2hnmt4: nurse \$17,000

FIFTH-1-mile trot; nwZbmmt4; purse \$17,000
TRACK: CONDITION-GD OFF: 8:24 TIME29.0; 59.4; 1:29.0; 1:58.3
6 TegunHnover(JBritt) 2.40 2.10 2.10
5.70 3.30
5 The Thing Is (N Karna) 3.80

■ Exacta (6/3) \$5.00 ● Triple (6/3/5) \$19.30 ● \$.10 Superfecta (6/3/5/4) \$7.52 ● \$1 Pick 3 (2/8/6) \$170.75 Scr: Honoloulou.

SIXTH-1-mile pace: 15000clm: purse \$12,000 TRACK: CONDITION-GD OFF: 8:43 TIME-27.0; 56.0; 1:25.2; 1:56.2 3 DightfulTrror(/Strttn) 24.40 11.40 3.40 4 Quatrain Blue Chip(SSmith) 40.80 18.80

1 B Cool Fool (J Bartlett) 2.10 ■ Exacta (3/4) \$432.00 ■ Triple (3/4/1) \$472.00 ■ \$.10 Superfecta (3/4/1/2) \$496.90 ■ \$1 Pick 3 (8/6/3) \$106.75

SEVENTH: Mile trot; \$35,000; Invitational

Herodotus (ASiegelman) 3-2-2 By The Book (JRandall) 1-2-2 Southwind Coors(GBrennan) 1-5-6 Cantstop Yankee (JBartlett) 7-3-1 Torrone (BHolland) 4-3-5

A Callistop Tanee Control (ANApolitano) 1-6-15
5 Torrone (BHolland) 4-3-5
6 Keg Stand (ANapolitano) 1-6-15
8 Stormont Divide (JStratton) 2-5-1
EIGHTH: Mile pace; \$13,000; claiming
1 That Dog WillHunt (Holland) 2-3-2
2 Cleveland BMiki(PLachance) 6-6-3
1 Last Pound (Marohn) 4-8-4
4 Laz (ANapolitano) 1-1-5
5 Wolftrax (GBrennan) 3-3-2
6 Twiggs Pub (DDube) 6-6-3
7 Vandalism (SSmith) 7-5-7
8 Chin In Blue (STratton) 3-3-3

7 Vandālism (SSmith) 7-5-7 20-18
Chip In Blue (IStratton) 3-4-3 20-1
NINTH: Mile trot; \$18,000; claiming
1 Unforgettable (JBartlett) 2-1-1 8-5
2 BluebirdBishop (ANapolitan) 1-2-6 3-1
3 Austral Hanover (GBrennan) 4-3-3 5-1
4 Ice Breakers K (DDube) 6-5-2 20-1
5 Kenobi (ASiegelman) 5-4-4 20-1
6 Brookview Darius (JStratton) 1-3-4 4-1
7 Willy Walton (Bholland) 2-3-5 9-2
8 PeFree Wheeling (SSmith) 1-1-5 15-1
TENTH: Mile trot; \$22,000; cond
1 Yo Beth D (PLachance) 2-3-2 3-1

2 leer it (GBrennan) 6-1-1 3 Ferretti (ANapolitano) 1-2-5 4 Unevergonnagethis (JStrttn) 3-4-1 5 All Star Swan (JBartlett) 1-2-1 6 Mississippi Storm (BHolland) 1-5-8 7 Street Gossip (ASiegelman) 1-2-4 8 Domovo (JMarohn) 8-2-1 ELEVENTH: Mile pace; \$14,000; cond

C-Bet Hanover (DDube) 2-8-4 Hickfromfrenchlick (Strattn) 1-6-8 SouthbeachHanover(BHIInd) 1-2-7 Real Willey (GBrennan) 2-2-6 Chantee (PLachance) 6-6-2

SouthbeachHanover(BHIInd)
Real Willey (GBrennan)
Chantee (PLachance)
Ocean Ridge N (JBartlett)

7 Shotguninthehotsun (Npltn) 7-5
TWELFTH: Mile pace; \$12,000; cond

(PLachance) 2-3-2 (GBrennan) 6-1-1

(ASiegelman) 5-8-4 12-1 (BHolland) 4-5-6 5-1

Yo Beth D I Get It

Cahoots Thrasher

SEVENTH-1-mile trot; w5bnm7; purse \$20,000

SEVENTH-1-mile trot; Wsohmfr, purse \$20,000

TRACK: CONDITION-6D OFF: 9:01 TIME28.4; 58.4; 1:28.0; 1:57.2

Imanandover(DDube) 14.00 4.90 4.90

Lucky Mum (NASiegelman) 2.70 2.40

Nottingham () Marohn) 5.80

Exacta (4/8) 28.50 © Triple (4/8/2) \$162.50

\$.10 Superfecta (4/8/2/1) \$57.35

Scr: Atta Girl Dani. EIGHTH-1-mile pace; fm20000clm; purse \$13,000 TRACK: CONDITION-GD OFF: 9:19 TIME-

29.0; 58.3; 1:27.2; 1:56.3 4 RseTheAnte(JMrohn) 4.40 2.80 2.40 RoyaltysDremer(ANpoltno) 2.70 2.20 Prove Em Wrong (J Bartlett) 3.40 Exacta (4/2) \$5.90 ● Triple (4/2/1) \$18.40 ● \$.10 uperfecta (4/2/1/3) \$3.62 ● \$1 Pick 3 (3/4/4) \$204.00

NINTH-1-mile trot: nw2bnmt4: purse \$17,000

NINTH-1-mile trot; nw2bnmt4; purse \$17,000
TRACK: CONDITION-GD OFF; 9:42 TIME28.4; 59.2; 1:28.2; 1:57.4
6 Kovu As (1 Marohn) 12.60 2.80 2.10
5 Chipper Dale (1 Bartlett) 2.10 2.10
1 Nautilius B (1 Stratton) 2.10
5 Exacta (6/5) \$7.30 6 "pick 6 (68.3/44/6) \$37.50 6 "pick 5 (68.3/44/6) \$37.50 6 "pick 5 (68.3/44/6) \$37.50
Scr: Premier Victor, Seven Summers.

TENTH-1-mile pace; 15000clm; purse \$12,000 TRACK: CONDITION-GD OFF: 10:00 TIME-

TRACK: COMDITION-6D OFF: 10:00 IMB-272; 58,2; 1;26,4; 1:56, 0 3 Record/Year/[Barrlett) 5.50 3.70 2.80 4 Just A Wrangler (JStratton) 10.40 7.30 6 Ben Solo (A Siegelman) 5.80 6 Exacta (3/4) \$19.00 © Triple (3/4/6) \$147.75 \$.10 Superfecta (3/4/6/1) \$40.30

ELEVENTH-1-mile pace: 20000clm: purse \$13,000

ELEVENTH-1-mile pace; 20000clm; purse \$13,000
TRACK: CONDITION-GD OFF: 10:14 TIME28.2; 59.1; 1:27.1; 1:55.0
5 ShdowInRed(JBritett) 2.80 2.30 2.50
4 Ostro Hanover (S Smith) 4.10
6 Exacta (5/1) \$3.35 \$17ple (5/1/4) \$27.00 \$
5.10 Superfecta (5/1/4/3) \$5.60 \$1 ate double (3/5) \$4.30 \$1 Pick 3 (6/3/5) \$26.00 \$1 Pick 4 (4/6/3/5,7) \$47.25
5.25 Packera Pollina Scr: Rockme Rollme

Total Handle-\$364,701.

POST SU DOKU **Puzzles on Page 32**

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NFL

10-1 9-2 8-1 2-1 5-1 6-1

7-5-7 20-1 3-4-3 20-1

1-2-5 12-1 3-4-1 5-1 1-2-1 2-1 1-5-8 6-1

6-1 2-1 7-2 9-2 4-1

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

Fast W L T Pct. PF PA 11 3 0 .786 445 310 v-Buffalo Miami 6 8 0 .429 276 312 4 10 0 .286 283 325 Jets e-New England 3 11 0 .214 238 337 South W L T Pct. PF PA 9 5 0 .643 328 300 y-Houston 6 8 0 .429 280 329 Indianapolis e-Jacksonville 3 11 0 .214 263 377 e-Tennessee 3 11 0 .214 254 379 W L T Pct. PF PA North x-Pittsburgh 10 4 0 .714 336 265 Baltimore 9 5 0 .643 418 332 Cincinnati 6 8 0 .429 399 387 3 11 0 .214 239 356 e-Cleveland W L T Pct. PF PA West y-Kansas City 13 1 0 .929 329 259 Denver 9 5 0 .643 336 247 L.A. Chargers 8 6 0 .571 294 247 2 12 0 .143 245 376 e-Las Vegas

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East	W	L	T	Pct. PF PA						
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Dallas	6	8	0	.429 298 380						
Giants	2	12	0	.143 208 328						
South	W	L	Т	Pct. PF PA						
Tampa Bay	8	6	0	.571 403 326						
Atlanta	7	7	0	.500 293 342						
New Orleans	5	9	0	.357 309 312						
e-Carolina	3	11	0	.214 247 418						
North	W	L	Т	Pct. PF PA						
x-Detroit	12	2	0	.857 459 282						
x-Minnesota	12	2	0	.857 369 252						
Green Bay	10	4	0	.714 379 287						
e-Chicago	4	10	0	.286 266 308						
West	W	L	T	Pct. PF PA						

8 6 0 .571 310 338

8 6 0 .571 315 313

7 7 0 .500 314 306

San Francisco 6 8 0 .429 314 320 e-Eliminated from playoffs

x-clinched playoff spot /-clinched division

Thursday

L.A. Rams

Seattle

Arizona

Thursday Night Football: Denver at L.A. Chargers, 8:15pm

Saturday

Houston at Kansas City, 1pm Pittsburgh at Baltimore, 4:30pm

Sunday

L.A. Rams at Jets, 1pm **Giants** at Atlanta, 1pm Arizona at Carolina, 1pm Detroit at Chicago, 1pm Philadelphia at Washington, 1pm Tennessee at Indianapolis, 1pm Thursday Night Football: Cleveland at Cincinnati, 1pm Minnesota at Seattle, 4:05pm Jacksonville at Las Vegas, 4:25pm New England at Buffalo, 4:25pm San Francisco at Miami, 4:25pm Sunday Night Football: Tampa Bay at Dallas, 8:20pm

Monday

Monday Night Football: New Orleans at Green Bay, 8:15pm

Soccer

FIFA Intercontinental Cup Real Madrid 3, Pachuca 0 English Carabao Cup
Arsenal 3, Crystal Palace 1
Newcastle United 3, Brentford 1
Liverpool 2, Southampton 1 Coppa Italia
AS Roma 4, Sampdoria 1
Atalanta 6, Cesena 1
French Ligue 1 Paris Saint-Germain 4, AS Monaco 2 Spanish LaLiga Espanyol 1, Valencia 1 Villarreal 1, Rayo Vallecano 1

College Football

Boca Raton Bowl at Boca Raton, Fla.: James Madison 27, W. Kentucky 17 LA Bowl at Inglewood, Calif.: UNI V 24. California 13

NFL Injury Report

THURSDAY: BRONCOS AT CHARGERS

DENVER

Out: RB Jaleel McLaughlin (quad), CB Riley Moss (knee). Full: DL John Franklin-Myers (foot), DT D.J. Jones (finger), CB Pat Surtain II (ankle). LOS ANGELES

LOS ANGELES
Out: TE Will Dissly (shoulder), CB Cam
Hart (concussion). Questionable: TE
Hayden Hurst (hip), G Zion Johnston
(ankle), DB Elijah Molden (knee), DL
Otito Ogbonnia (pelvis), LB Denzel
Perryman (groin). Full: QB Justin
Herbert (ankle), Full: CB Kristian
Fulton (knee). Fulton (knee).

SATURDAY: TEXANS AT CHIEFS

HOUSTON DNP: DL Folorunso Fatukasi (ankle). WR John Metchie III (shoulder), OL Juice Scruggs (foot), TE Cade Stover (illness). Limited: LB Del*Shawn Phillips (foot), RB Joe Mixon (ankle). Full: QB Davis Mills (shoulder), G Nick Broeker (hand).

KANSAS CITY

DNP: DB Chamarri Conner

Concercion), T.D. L. Humphyice

(concussion), T D.J. Humphries (hamstring). **Full:** WR Hollywood Brown (shoulder), C Creed Humphrey (ankle), K Harrison Butker (left knee), QB Patrick Mahomes (ankle), T Jawaan Taylor (knee).

STEELERS AT RAVENS

PITTSBURGH DNP: S DeShon Elliot (hamstring), QB Justin Fields (abdominal), DT Cameron Heyward (NIR-rest), CB Donte Jackson (back), WR George Pickes (hamstring), LB Elandon Roberts (NIR-rest). **Limited:** LB T.J. Watt (ankle), DT Larry Ogunjobi (groin). **Full:** LB Patrick Queen (NIR-rest).

RAI TIMORF BALTIMORE
DNP: RB Justice Hill (NIRpersonal), WR Nelson Agholoro
(concussion), CB Jalyn ArmourDavis (hamstring), WR Diontae
Johnson (NIR-personal). Limited:
OLB Odafe Oweh (ankle), WR
Rashod Bateman (foot), G Daniel
Faalele (knee), S Ar'Darius
Washington (ankle). Full: S
Sanoussi Kane (hamstring), OLB

Sanoussi Kane (hamstring), OLB Adisa Isaac (hamstring), CB T.J. Tampa (ankle).

SUNDAY: GIANTS AT FALCONS

NEW YORK DNP: LB Brian Burns (ankle/neck), LB Patrick Johnson (knee), LB Bobby Okereke (back), OL Aaron Stinnie (concussion), DB Greg Stroman (shoulder/shin), Limited: DB Tae Banks (rib), DB Dane Belton (knee), Banks (rib), DB Dane Belton (knee), OB Tommy DeVito (concussion), DL Cory Durden (shoulder), DB Cor'Dale Flott (quad), DB Art Green (shoulder), TB Chris Manhertz (ankle), WR Malik Nabers (knee/foot), DL Rakeem Nunez-Roches (neck/shoulder), TB Dru Phillips (shoulder), WR Wan'Dale Robinson (shoulder), OL John Michael Schmitz (ankle), RB Tyron Tracy (ankle). Full: LB Dyontae Johnson (ankle), OL Justin Schlottmann (fibula). Austin Schlottmann (fibula).

Austin Schlottmann (fibula).
ATLANTA
DNP: WR Casey Washington
(concussion), DL Demone Harris
(illness/neck). Limited: WR Darnell
Mooney (NIR-rest), WR KhaDarel
Hodge (ribs), TE Ross Dwelley
(ankle), TE Charlie Woerner (quad),
DL Zach Harrison (NIR-rest). Full: T
Kaleb McGary (elbow).

RAMS AT JETS

LOS ANGELES mited: CB Cobie Durant (chest)

DNP: CB Michael Carter II (back), G Alijah Vera-Tucker (ankle), DL Quinnen Williams (hamstring). **Limited:** RB Braelon Allen (back), RB Isaiah Davis (back), CB Brandin Echols (shoulder), OL Morgan Moses (knee), LB Quincy Williams (knee). **Full:** DL Leki Fotu (knee), OL Xavier Newman-Johnson (groin), CB D.J. Reed (groin).

CARDINALS AT PANTHERS

ΔRIZONA

ARIZONA
DNP: RB trey Benson (ankle), OL
Paris Johnson Jr. (knee), LB Jesse
Luketa (thigh), LB Mack Wilson Sr.
(concussion). Limited: OL Kelvin
Beachum (NIR-rest), S Joey Blount
(knee), LB Zaven Collins (neck), CB
Elijah Jones (ankle), DL Roy Lopez
(ankle), CB Max Shelton (shin), CB
Sean Murphy-Bunting (hand), K Mat

Prater (left knee), DL Darius Robinson (calf).

CAROLINA DNP OLB Jadeveon Clowney (illness/neck), S Sam Franklin Jr. (neck/personal), S Xavier Woods (NIR-rest), WR Xavier Legette (hip), RB Chubba Hubbard (NIR-rest), OLB D.J. Wonnum (NIR-rest/knee), LB Josey Jewell (NIR-rest), WR Adam Thielen (NIR-rest), CB Jaycee Horn (NIR-rest), DE A'Shawn Robinson (knee). Limited: WR David Moore (concussion). Full: RB Raheem

Blackshear (chest). BROWNS AT BENGALS

CLEVELAND DNP: DB Martin Emerson (concussion), DT Shelby Harris (elbow), TE David Njoku (hamstring). **Limited:** CB Cameron Mitchell (knee), WR Cedric Tillman (concussion). **Full:** WR Jerry Jeudy (knee), QB Jameis Winston (right shoulder). CINCINNATI

CINCINNATI
DNP: OT Orlando Brown Jr. (fibula),
DE Sam Hubbard (knee), DT Kris
Jenkins Jr. (illness), DT Sheldon
Rankins (illness). Limited: QB Joe Burrow (righ wrist/knee), G Alex Cappa (concussion), WR Tee Higgins (NIR-rest/knee), WR Charlie Jones (groin), S Geno Stone (shoulder). **Full:** G/OT Cody Ford (illness).

LIONS AT BEARS

DETROIT

DNP: DB Brian Branch (calf), T Taylor Deckers (NIR-rest), G Graham Glasgow (knee), RB David Montgomery (knee), C Frank Ragnow (NIR-rest), DT D.J. Reader (NIR-rest), DE Za'Darius Smith (NIRrest), WR Amon-Ra St. Brown (NIR-rest), G Kevin Zeitler (NIR-rest). **Full:** S Ifeatu Melifonwu (hand), LB Trevor Nowaske (concussion). **CHICAGO**

DNP OL Ryan Bates (concussion), DL Gervon Dexter Sr. (knee), OL Teven Jenkins (calf), OL Braxton Jones (concussion). **Full:** DL Darrell Taylor (shoulder), RB Roschon Johnson (concussion).

JAGUARS AT RAIDERS

JACKSONVILLE Limited: OL Ezra Cleveland (knee), OL Walker Little (ankle), OL Brandon Scherff (knee/shoulder), TE Brenton Strange (shoulder). LAS VEGAS DNP: G Jordan Meredith (ankle).

Limited: WR Jakobi Meyers (ankle), CB Sam Webb (back). Full: RB Alexander Mattison (neck), QB Aidan O'Connell (knee), QB Desmond Ridder (hip).

VIKINGS AT SEAHAWKS

MINNESOTA DNP: CB Fabian Moreau (hip), DL

Jalen Redmond (concussion). LIMITED: S Harrison Smith (foot), OLB Patrick Jones II (knee), T Brian O'Neill (knee), DL Harrison Phillips (knee), T David Quessenberry (oblique), Full: OB Stephon Gilmore (hamstring), TE Josh Oliver (wrist). SEATTLE DND: PB 7ach Charl Limited: S Harrison Smith (foot),

DNP: RB Zach Charbonnet (oblique), TE Brady Russell (foot), Obliques, Te Brady Aussen (1900), RB Kenneth Walker III (calf), WR DK Metcalf (shoulder), C Olu Oluwatimi (knee), DE Leonard Williams (foot/rest), CB Tre Brown (hamstring), G Laken Tomlinson (rest), WR Tyler Lockett (rest), NT Jarran Reed (rest). **Limited:** TE Noah Fant (knee), LB Ernest Jones IV (knee), LB Trevis Gipson (ankle). **Full:** T Abraham Lucas (knee), TE AJ Barner (shoulder), QB Geno Smith (knee), S K'Von Wallace (ankle).

PATRIOTS AT BILLS

NEW ENGLAND DNP: S Kyle Dugger (ankle/ illness), RB JaMychal Hasty (ankle), CB Marcus Jones (hip). Limited: WR Javon Baker (concussion), DT Christian Rammers (NIR other), CR Christi (concussion), DT Christian
Barmore (NIR-other), CB Christian
Gonzalez (shoulder), LB Anfernee
Jennings (knee), T Vederian Lowe
(shoulder), OL Cole Strange
(knee), LB Jahlani Tavai (groin),
OT Caedan Wallace (ankle), DE
Deatrich Wise Jr. (foot).
BUFFALO
Limited: CB Rasual Douglas
(knee), S Damar Hamlin (rib), LB

Matt Milano (biceps/groin), S Taylor Rapp (neck), WR Curtis Samuel (rib), LB Dorian Williams (elbow), Full: T Spencer Brown (neck), DT DeWayne Carter (wrist), WR Amari Cooper (wrist), TE Dalton Kincaid (knee), TE Quintin Morris (shoulder/groin), DE Dawuane Smoot (wrist).

EAGLES AT COMMANDERS

PHILADELPHIA
DNP: RB Saquon Barkley (NIR-rest),
OL Mekhi Becton (NIR-rest), WR A.J.
Brown (NIR-rest), DB Sydney Brown (concussion), OL Landon Dickerson (knee/rest), OL Lane Johnson (NIRrest), OL Cam Jurgens (NIR-rest), OL Jordan Mailata (NIR-rest), WR

Jordan Mailata (NIR-rest), WR
DeVonta Smith (back)/rest).
Limited: DL Bryce Huff (wrist). Full:
WR Britain Covey (neck), QB Jalen
Hurts (left finger).
WASHINGTON
DNP: G Sam Cosmi (illness), TE
Zach Ertz (concussion/NIR-rest), K
Zane Gonzalez (NIR-personal).
Limited: DT Jonathan Allen
(pectoral), S Jeremy Chinn
(concussion), C Michael Deiter
(ankle), DE Clelin Ferrell (knee/
NIR-rest), LB Frankie Luvu (NIRrest), WR Luke McCaffrey
(shoulder), WR Terry McLaurin
(NIR-rest), DT Daron Payne (back).
Full: OLB Dante Fowler Jr. (groin). Full: OLB Dante Fowler Jr. (groin).

49ERS AT DOLPHINS

SAN FRANCISCO DNP: DT Mailek Collins (illness), RB Isaac Guerendo (foot/ hamstring), T Trent Williams (ankle). **Limited:** DE Nick Bosa (hip/oblique), LB Dre Greenlaw (achilles/knee), T Jaylon Moore (hip), S Malik Mustapha (chest), G Mick Zakeji (illness). Full: G Aaron Mick Zakeji (illness). Full: G Aaron Banks (elbow), S Ji'Ayir Brown (groin), LB Demetrius Flannigan-Fowles (knee), S Talanoa Hufanga (wrist), LB Dee Winters (neck).

MIAMI
DNP: T Terron Armstead (knee),
DT Calais Campbell (rest), WR Dee
Eskridge (knee), LS Blake Eskridge (knee), LS Blake Ferguson (illness), WR Tyreek HIII (wrist/rest), T Kendall Lamm (back), S Jordan Poyer (rest), WR Jaylen Waddle (knee), Limited: LB Bradley Chubb (knee), FB Alec Ingold (ankle), QB Tua Tagovailoa (hip), Full: RB De*Vone Achane (arris) LB Campray Coold (knee) (groin), LB Cameron Goode (knee).

BUCCANEERS AT COWBOYS

TAMPA BAY DNP: LB K.J. Britt (ankle), WR Mike

Evans (rest), QB Baker Mayfield (knee), TE Cade Otton (knee), WR (knee), TE Cade Otton (knee), WR Sterling Shepard (foot), S Antoine Winfield Jr. (knee), T Tristan Wirfs (foot/knee). Limited: S Mike Edwards (hamstring), RB Bucky Irving (back/hip), S Christian Izien (groin), S Tykee Smith (knee). Full: DL William Gholston (knee), WR Kameron Johnson (ankle). DALLAS DNP: T T I Bass (thigh), CB Trevon

DALLAS

DNP: T TJ Bass (thigh), CB Trevon
Diggs (knee), G Chuma Edoga
(ankle), MLB Eric Kendricks (rest/
calf), DT Mazi Smith (back), OLB
Nick Vigil (foot). Limited: FS Malik
Hooker (ankle), WR CeeDee Lamb
(shoulder), CB Jourdan Lewis
(elbow), DB Juanyeh Thomas
(knee), DB Donovan Wilson
(elbow). Full: C Cooper Beebe
(concussion), RB Rico Dowdle
(knee), G Tyler Smith (ankle).

TITANS AT COLTS

TENNESSEE
DNP: WR Tyler Boyd (foot), K Nick
Folk (abdomen), LB Luke Gifford
(concussion), LB Kenneth Murray
(hamstring), RB Tony Pollard
(ankle), LB Otis Reese (ankle), DT Jeffery Simmons (NIR-rest), DT T'Vondre Sweat (shoulder), WR Nick Westbrook-ikhine (ankle), S Daryl Worley (calf). Limited: WR Colton Dowell (knee). Full: T Jaelyn Duncan (hamstring), CB Roger McCreary (shoulder).
INDIANAPOLIS
DNP: TE Mo Alie-Cox (hip, WR
Ashton Dulin (ankle), K Matt Gay
(neck), DE Laiatu Latu (illness), WR

Alec Pierce (concussion), WR Michael Pittman Jr. (back), LB E.J. Speed (knee). Limited: CB JuJu Brents (knee). Full: LB Jaylon Carlies (fibula/shoulder), C Ryan Kelly (knee), DE Tyquan Lewis (rib).

Far West Arizona 96, Samford 64

Gonzaga 102, Nicholls 72 New Mexico 78, VCU 71

South

Utah Valley St. 70, Idaho St. 56

Women's Coll. Hoops

East
Dartmouth 60, Lafayette 47
Oakland 55, Robert Morris 53
Stonehill 65, Northeastern 49
Stony Brook 67, Georgian Court 29
Syracuse 87, Binghamton 60

Auburn 68, Louisiana-Lafayette 51 Coastal Carolina 96, UNC-Wilmington 64 Davidson 84, UNC-Pembroke 53 Duke 93, Wofford 58

Georgia Tech 88, Rice 57 Grambling St. 94, Arkansas Baptist 52

Grambling St. 94, Arkansas Baptist 52 Lipscomb 113, Oglethorpe 38 Longwood 105, Webber International 38 Morgan St. 54, Presbyterian 41 Norfolk St. 68, Drexel 56 North Carolina 77, Florida 57 SE Louisiana 58, Nicholls 54 Tennessee 90, Memphis 75 Toledo 70, Troy 62

UAB 66, New Orleans 60 West Georgia 63, Alabama St. 46

Midwest
Bowling Green 64, Marquette 62
Cincinnati 67, Marshall 64
Detroit 65, Youngstown St. 58
Kansas St. 83, New Mexico St. 39
Northwestern 79, UNLV 76, OT

Omaha 84, Bellevue 53 Oral Roberts 76, Missouri 63 Saint Louis 69, Valparaiso 59 South Dakota 78, Mount Marty 74

Baylor 97, Utah Tech 34
Far West
Boise St. 74, Furman 65
Denver 64, W. Colorado 58
FAU 71, Georgia Southern 66, OT
Grand Canyon 82, Wright St. 69
UC Davis 65, Idaho 58
UC Riverside 74, Utah St. 59
Washington 64, N. Dakota St. 51
Wichita St. 100, CS Bakersfield 69

Southwest Baylor 97, Utah Tech 34

East Carolina 48, VCU 46

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic	W	L	Pct.	GB
Boston	21	5	.808	_
KNICKS	16	10	.615	5
NETS	10	16	.385	11
Philadelphia	8	16	.333	12
Toronto	7	20	.259	141/2
Southeast	W	L	Pct.	GB
Orlando	17	11	.607	_

Southeast	W	L	Pct.	GB
Orlando	17	11	.607	_
Miami	13	11	.542	2
Atlanta	14	13	.519	21/
Charlotte	7	19	.269	9
Washington	3	21	.125	12
Central	W	L	Pct.	GB

Cleveland	23	4	.852	-
Milwaukee	14	11	.560	8
Indiana	12	15	.444	11
Chicago	12	15	.444	11
Detroit	11	16	.407	12

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Souti	ıwest	W	L	PCt.	GB
Mem	ohis	18	9	.667	_
Hous	ton	17	9	.654	1/2
Dallas	5	17	9	.654	1/2
San A	ntonio	13	13	.500	41/2
New (Orleans	5	22	.185	13
North	west	w	L	Pct.	GB
Oklah	oma City	20	5	.800	_
Denve	er	14	10	.583	51/2
Minne	esota	14	11	.560	6
Portla	and	8	18	.308	121/2
Utah		5	20	.200	15
Pacif	ic	W	L	Pct.	GB
Phoe	nix	14	11	.560	_
Golde	n State	14	11	.560	_

15 12 .556

14 12 .538

13 14 .481

Sacramento Wednesday

L.A. Clippers

L.A. Lakers

No games scheduled.

Thursday

Nets at Toronto, 7:30pm Knicks at Minnesota, 9:30pm Charlotte at Washington, 7pm Oklahoma City at Orlando, 7pm Utah at Detroit, 7pm Chicago at Boston, 7:30pm Atlanta at San Antonio, 8pm Golden State at Memphis, 8pm New Orleans at Houston, 8pm Clippers at Dallas, 8:30pm Indiana at Phoenix, 9pm Denver at Portland, 10pm L.A. Lakers at Sacramento, 10pm

Friday

Charlotte at Philadelphia, 7pm Milwaukee at Cleveland, 7:30pm Oklahoma City at Miami, 8pm

Utah 3, Canucks 2, OT

Vancouver 0	1	1	0 –	2
Utah 0	0	2	1 –	3

First Period: None. Penalties: None. Second Period: 1, Vancouver, Heinen 5 (Hughes), 12:39 (pp). Penalties: Brannstrom, VAN (Holding), 8:41; Kesselring, UTA (Interference), 10:44; Heinen, VAN (Hooking), 16:04; McBain, UTA (Tripping), 18:39.

Third Period: 2, Vancouver, Joshua 2 (Hughes, Blueger), 2:45. 3, Utah, Keller 11 (Hayton, Schmaltz), 9:02. 4, Utah, Guenther 14 (Keller, Cooley), 15:30 (pp). **Penalties:** Cole, UTA (High Sticking), 9:15; Myers, VAN (Cross Checking),

Overtime: 5, Utah, Sergachev 8 (Cooley), 4:47. Penalties: None.

Shots on Goal: Vancouver 4-10-10-3—

27. Utah 9-9-10-3—31.

Power-play opportunities: Vancouver 1 of 3; Utah 1 of 3.

Goalies: Vancouver, Demko 1-1-1 (31 shots-28 saves). Utah. Veimelka 6-7-2

A: 0 (18,300). T: 2:31.

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

I OI* Pt GF GA

Audiluc	**		VL_	rı	uı	un
Toronto	20	10	2	42	97	84
Florida	20	11	2	42	120	105
Boston	17	13	3	37	86	104
Tampa Bay	17	10	2	36	117	85
Ottawa	16	13	2	34	96	89
Detroit	13	14	4	30	84	98
Montreal	12	16	3	27	88	114
Buffalo	11	17	4	26	93	110
Metropolitan	W	L (0L*	Pt	GF	GA
Devils	21	10	3	45	114	87
Washington	21	8	2	44	118	83
Carolina	20	10	1	41	112	87
Carolina Pittsburgh	20 14			41	112 100	
		10	1	33 32		87 123 112
Pittsburgh Philadelphia Rangers	14	10 14	1 5 4 1	33	100	87 123 112 93
Pittsburgh Philadelphia	14 14 15 12	10 14 14 15 14	1 5 4	33 32	100 97	87 123 112
Pittsburgh Philadelphia Rangers	14 14 15	10 14 14 15	1 5 4 1	33 32 31	100 97 92	87 123 112 93

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Central	W	L	0L*	Pt	GF	GA
Winnipeg	23	10	1	47	123	87
Minnesota	20	8	4	44	99	86
Dallas	19	12	0	38	101	80
Colorado	18	15	0	36	108	114
Utah	15	11	5	35	94	90
St. Louis	15	15	3	33	85	102
Chicago	11	19	2	24	81	101
Nashville	9	17	6	24	72	98
Pacific	W	L	OL*	Pt	GF	GA
Pacific Vegas	W 20	L	0L*	Pt 43	GF 108	
Vegas	20	8	3	43	108	92 79 90
Vegas Los Angeles	20 18	8 9	3	43 40	108 94	92 79 90 96
Vegas Los Angeles Edmonton	20 18 18	8 9 11	3 4 2	43 40 38	108 94 102	92 79 90
Vegas Los Angeles Edmonton Vancouver	20 18 18 16	8 9 11 9	3 4 2 6	43 40 38 38 36 36	108 94 102 98	92 79 90 96 99
Vegas Los Angeles Edmonton Vancouver Calgary	20 18 18 16 15	8 9 11 9 11	3 4 2 6	43 40 38 38 36	108 94 102 98 87	92 79 90 96 99

OL*: Lost in OT (for 1 point)

<u> Wednesday</u>

Detroit 6, Philadelphia 4 Toronto 5, Dallas 3 Florida 6, Minnesota 1 Anaheim 3, Winnipeg 2 Utah 3, Vancouver 2, OT

Thursday

1/2

Devils at Columbus, 7pm St. Louis at Tampa Bay, 7pm Los Angeles at Philadelphia, 7:30pm Pittsburgh at Nashville, 8pm Seattle at Chicago, 8:30pm Boston at Edmonton, 9pm Ottawa at Calgary, 9pm Vancouver at Vegas, 10pm Colorado at San Jose, 10:30pm

Panthers 6, Wild 1

Florida	2	2	2 –	6
Minnesota	1	0	0 —	1

First Period: 1, Florida, Ekblad 2 (Samoskevich, J.Boqvist), 3:48. 2, Minnesota, Rossi 12 (Boldy, Kaprizov), 16:11 (pp). 3, Florida, Samoskevich 6 (Ekblad), 18:14.

Second Period: 4, Florida, Tkachuk 12 (Barkov,

Verhaeghe), 15:28. 5, Florida, Tkachuk 13 (Ekblad, Verhaeghe), 18:54 (pp).

remadu, vernaegne), 18:54 (pp).

Third Period: 6, Florida, Mikkola 4
(Reinhart, Lundell), 11:10. 7, Florida,
Luostarinen 4 (Rodrigues), 19:30.

Shots on Goal: Florida 8-15-10-33.
Minnesota 15-7-5-27.

Power-play opportunities: Florida 1 of

2; Minnesota 1 of 2. **Goalies:** Florida, Bobrovsky 15-6-1 (27

shots-26 saves). Minnesota, Fleury 6 1 (33-27). **A:** 17,423 (18,064). **T:** 2:39.

Ducks 3. lets 2

	_	7	_	_
Winnipeg	U	1	1 -	2
Anaheim		•	•	-
Ananeim	U		2 —	.5

First Period: None. Second Period: 1, Anaheim, Vatrano 8 (Gudas, Strome), 4:45, 2, Winnipeg,

(Gudas, Safonie), 4:43- Z, Wilnipeg, Vilardi 14 (Ehlers, Connor), 10:24 (pp). Third Period: 3, Winnipeg, Scheifele 18 (Connor), 4:13- 4, Anaheim, Vatrano 9 (Gudas, LaCombe), 15:14- 5, Anaheim, Terry 9 (Vatrano), 19:34.

Shots on Goal: Winnipeg 4-4-15—23. Anaheim 12-10-9—31. Power-play opportunities: Winnipeg 1

of 4; Anaheim 0 of 3. **Goalies:** Winnipeg, Comrie 3-5-0 (31

shots-28 saves). Anaheim, Dostal 7-8-3 (23-21). **A:** 16,260 (17,174). **T:** 2:30.

Men's College Hoops

East
Albany (NY) 74, Sacred Heart 66
Binghamton 62, Mercyhurst 60 CCSU 64. Fairfield 63 George Washington 82, Lafayette 62 Georgetown 81, Creighton 57 La Salle 77, Fairleigh Dickinson 72 Le Moyne 80, Dartmouth 76 Manhattan 80, Wagner 66 Mass.-Lowell 78, Stonehill 67 Mount St. Mary's 80, LIU 72 Saint Joseph's 84, American 57 Temple 62, Davidson 61 UConn 94, Xavier 89, OT UMass 77, Northeastern 72 Vermont 75, Miami (Ohio) 67

South

Bethune-Cookman 77, South Florida 69 Chattanooga 99, Tenn. Wesleyan 52 ETSU 84. Elon 58 Furman 100, Montreat 75 Georgia Tech 91, UMBC 82 Louisiana-Lafayette 68, Appalachian St. 62 Memphis 64, Virginia 62 Oklahoma 87, Michigan 86 Queens (NC) 73, Mercer 66 SC State 85, SC-Upstate 70 UAB 96, Alabama A&M 67 UNC-Wilmington 79, Florida Gulf Coast 66 Vanderbilt 105, The Citadel 53 William & Mary 93, Richmond 87

Midwest
Alabama 97, North Dakota 90
Bradley 66, San Francisco 64
Illinois St. 81, N. Illinois 60 Indiana St. 84, Murray St. 74 Loyola Chicago 72, Canisius 60 Marguette 80, Butler 70 Michigan Tech 72, Green Bay 70 Missouri St. 61, Lincoln (Mo.) 49 Ohio 78, Austin Peay 58 Wofford 74, Saint Louis 71 Youngstown St. 80, Wright St. 70

Southwest East Texas A&M 68, Abilene Christian 67 Houston 78, Toledo 49 North Texas 83, MVSU 42 Oklahoma 87, Michigan 86 Oklahoma St. 66, Tarleton St. 61 Texas A&M-CC 117, SW Adventist 63 Texas-Arlington 80, Evansville 54

Red Wings 6, Flyers 4

Philadelphia Detroit	_	-	2 – 2 –	
Elect Berledet	Made de la late	17		

First Period: 1, Philadelphia, Konecny 16 (Farabee, Couturier), 1:06. 2, Detroit, Compher 4 (Raymond, Larkin), 18:19 (pp). Penalties: Sanheim, PHI (Holding). 12:16; Tippett, PHI (High Sticking), 15:42.

Second Period: 3, Detroit, DeBrincat 13 (Kane), 10:15. 4, Philadelphia, Cates 3 (Foerster, Seeler), 10:40. 5, Detroit, Rasmussen 6 (Compher), 16:05. 6, Detroit, Veleno 2 (Fischer), 17:27. Penalties: None.

Third Period: 7, Philadelphia, Poehling 2 (Sanheim, Couturier), 3:50. 8, Philadelphia, Tippett 10 (Laughton, Drysdale), 5:39. 9, Detroit, Kane 4 (Seider), 7:22. 10, Detroit, Raymond 13 (Larkin), 18:48 (en). Penalties: Kane, DET (Hooking), 12:09.

Shots on Goal: Philadelphia 4-5-10-19. Detroit 11-7-6-24.

Power-play opportunities: Philadelphia 0 of 1: Detroit 1 of 3.

Goalies: Philadelphia, Ersson 6-4-2 (23 shots-18 saves), Detroit, Lyon 4-4-0 (19-15), A: 0 (20,000). T: 2:22.

Maple Leafs 5, Stars 3

Toronto	1	3	1 -
Dallas	1	1	1 –
First Period: 1 Dallas	Steel	4	(Bac

Rish Period: 1, Dallas, Steel 4 (Back, Stankoven), 5:14. 2, Toronto, Domi 2 (Rielly), 6:13. **Penalties:** Hintz, DAL (Cross Checking), 8:39; Timmins, TOR (Delay of Game), 15:21; Timmins, TOR

(Slashing), 18:02.

Second Period: 3, Dallas, Dadonov 8
(Johnston, Benn), 0:22. 4, Toronto,
Nylander 19 (Marner, Matthews), 5:15.
5, Toronto, Robertson 4, 5:31. 6,
Toronto, McMann 7 (Robertson), 11:01.

Penalties: Benoit, TOR (Holding), 7:17.
Third Period: 7, Dallas, Blackwell 3
(Dadonov, Heiskanen), 17:44. 8, Toronto,
Nylander 20 (Tavares), 18:17 (en). Penalties: Tavares, TOR (Elbowing), 11:42. Shots on Goal: Toronto 4-8-7—19.

Dallas 16-9-16-41. **Power-play opportunities:** Toronto 0 of 1; Dallas 0 of 4.

Goalies: Toronto, Woll 9-4-0 (41 shots-38 saves). Dallas, DeSmith 3-4-0 (6-6), Dallas, Oettinger 16-8-0 (12-8). **A:** 18,532 (18,532). **T:**

SPORTS SHORTS

NFL: Hutchinson aims for Super Bowl return

Lions defensive end **Aidan Hutchinson** told "The Squeeze" podcast Wednesday that he is aiming to return from a gruesome injury and in time for the Super Bowl, if the team gets there. He was leading the league with 7 1/2 sacks through five games when he broke his tibia and fibula two months ago against Dallas.

• Steelers star linebacker **T.J. Watt** was a limited practice participant Wednesday, three days after injuring his left ankle during a loss to the Eagles. Watt's status for Saturday's game against the Ravens has yet to be determined.

• All-Pro left tackle **Trent Williams**, who has missed the past four San Francisco games because of an ankle injury, is likely done for the season, 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan said.

NHL: Tkachuk's 2 goals lead Panthers past Wild

Matthew Tkachuk scored twice, Sergei Bobrovsky made 26 saves and the Panthers beat the Wild, 6-1, in St. Paul, Minn. Tkachuk has 13 goals this season and has scored eight times in his past eight games.

• In Dallas, **Nicholas Robertson** scored the go-ahead goal and assisted on another against his older brother Jason's team, William Nylander scored twice and the Maple Leafs beat the Stars, 5-3. The Maple Leafs won for the fourth time in five games.

NCAA: No. 24 UNLV beats Cal in LA Bowl

Hajj-Malik Williams passed for two touchdowns, Kylin James ran for another and No. 24 UNLV pulled away in the second half for a 24-13 victory over California in the LA Bowl in Inglewood, Calif.

● In Boca Raton, Fla., backup **Billy Atkins** threw for 181 yards and a touchdown in his first start since 2022, leading James Madison to the program's first bowl win after topping Western Kentucky 27-17 in the Boca Raton Bowl.

 No Iowa Hawkeyes women's basketball player will wear Caitlin Clark's No. 22 again. The number will be retired in a ceremony Feb. 2 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena, the Iowa athletic department announced Wednesday.



NEW YORK POST ACTION

The PUST Line

	NFL-Week 16	<u> </u>
	Thursday	_
Favorite	PTS (0/U)	Underdog
CHARGERS	2.5 (42)	Broncos
	Saturday	
CHIEFS	3.5 (41.5)	Texans
RAVENS	6 (45.5)	Steelers
	Sunday	
FALCONS	8.5 (42)	Giants
Rams	3.5 (46.5)	JETS
Lions	6.5 (48)	BEARS
BENGALS	7.5 (47.5)	Browns
COLTS	3.5 (42.5)	Titans
Eagles	3.5 (45.5)	COMMANDERS
Cardinals	4.5 (47)	PANTHERS
Vikings	3 (43.5)	SEAHAWKS
BILLS	14 (46.5)	Patriots
RAIDERS	1 (39.5)	Jaguars
DOLPHINS	1 (44.5)	49ers
Buccaneers	4 (48.5)	COWBOYS
	Monday	
PACKERS	14.5 (42)	Saints

THOREMS	= :::= (:= /	Janies
	NBA	
	Thursday	
Favorite	PTS (0/U)	Underdog
T'WOLVES	2.5 (214.5)	Knicks
RAPTORS	3.5 (218.5)	Nets
PISTONS	4.5 (227.5)	Jazz
Hornets	3.5 (226.5)	WIZARDS
Thunder	6.5 (209.5)	MAGIC
CELTICS	14.5 (243.5)	Bulls
ROCKETS	10.5 (217.5)	Pelicans
GRIZZLIES	3.5 (237.5)	Warriors
SPURS	1.5 (233.5)	Hawks
MAVERICKS	6.5 (227.5)	Clippers
SUNS	6.5 (233.5)	Pacers
Nuggets	8.5 (233.5)	TRAIL BLAZERS
KINGS	4.5 (231.5)	Lakers
	Wednesday	
KNICKS	9 (226.5)	Spurs
MAVERICKS	3.5 (227)	Timberwolves
CELTICS	8.5 (227.5)	76ers
WARRIORS	4.5 (234)	Lakers
SUNS	2 (227.5)	Nuggets

	<u>NHL</u>	
	Thursday	
Favorite	Money Line	Underdog
Devils	\$180-225	BLUE JACKETS
LIGHTNING	\$180-225	Blues
Kings	\$140-165	FLYERS
PREDATORS	\$125-150	Penguins
Kraken	\$120-145	BLACKHAWKS
Senators	\$115-135	FLAMES
OILERS	\$145-175	Bruins
GOLDEN KNIGHTS	\$135-165	Canucks
Avalanche	\$200-250	SHARKS

College Basketball Thursday

	i iiui suay	
Favorite	PTS	Underdog
GEORGIA	28.5	Buffalo
Oakland	1	CLEVELAND ST.
*Norfolk State	4.5	Alabama State
* Grambling State	6.5	Delaware State
Uc Irvine	3.5	BELMONT
TEXAS	34.5	New Orleans
WYOMING	15.5	Bellarmine
GRAND CANYON	29.5	Chicago State
NORTH ALABAMA	8.5	Charleston Southern
MOREHEAD ST.	5.5	Tenn Martin
Cal Irvine	3	BELMONT
ARKANSAS LITTLE ROCK	4.5	Siu Edwardsville
LINDENWOOD	1.5	Tennessee Tech
SE MISSOURI STATE	5.5	Eastern Illinois
SO. INDIANA	4.5	Tennessee St.
South Dakota	2.5	UTAH TECH
PEPPERDINE	6	Long Beach St.
SAINT MARY'S (CA)	20	Merrimack
*Uncasville, CT		

<u>College Football</u> Saturday-FCS Semifinals

Favorite	PTS	Underdog
S. Dakota St.	3.5 (47.5)	N. DAKOTA ST.
MONTANA ST.	7.5 (56.5)	South Dakota

NBA **Favorites to win 2024-25 divisions** SOUTHEAST **NORTHWEST** ATLANTIC **ODDS ODDS** ODDS Celtics -2000 Magic -150 Thunder -1600 Nuggets Knicks +850 Heat +185 12/1 76ers 750/1 Hawks +700 **Timberwolves** 20/1 1,000/1 Nets 1,000/1 Hornets Jazz 1,000/1 1,000/1 1,000/1 **Trail Blazers** 1,000/1 **Raptors** Wizards **CENTRAL ODDS SOUTHWEST ODDS PACIFIC ODDS** -2000 +115 Cavaliers Mavericks Suns +165 Bucks +900 Rockets +200 Warriors +165 **Pacers** 150/1 Grizzlies +275 Kings +700 Bulls 1,000/1 Spurs 125/1 Lakers +900 **Pistons** 1,000/1 Pelicans 1,000/1 Clippers 10/1

TOP PLAY

Knicks a good deal better

By MICHAEL ARINZE

Bragging rights will be on the line when the Knicks visit the Timberwolves on Thursday night.

This will be the first meeting between the two teams since a blockbuster trade involving three teams sent Julius Randle, Donte DiVincenzo, Keita Bates-Diop and a future first-round pick to Minnesota in exchange for Karl-Anthony Towns.

Thus far, the Knicks have gotten the better end of the deal. They're third in the Eastern Conference with a 16-11 record, while the Timberwolves are seventh in the West at 14-11.

One thing that's clear is that Towns has helped improve the Knicks' offensive efficiency, which has increased from 117.3 in the previous campaign to 119.7. Minnesota's offensive rating is

down more than three points from 114.6 to 111.

The Knicks simply look further along in their game plan with how they want to run their offense, as Towns helps provide better floor spacing while offering a legitimate perimeter threat.

Although the Knicks are slightly worse defensively than last season (113.1 vs. 112.4), that aspect of their game was always likely to require a bit more time to coalesce.

You could argue that the Knicks should be even better than their 16-11 record based on a Pythagorean expectation projecting the Knickerbockers should be closer to a 19-7 mark.

As a result, the current number has a slight value, with the Knicks catching 2.5 points, and an outright victory isn't entirely out of reach.

THE PLAY: Knicks +2.5

College bowl and playoff glance

Date	Bowl	Matchup (Line)	O/U	Location	Time, TV
Thurs.	New Orleans	Georgia Southern (-4.5) vs. Sam Houston	48.5	New Orleans	7:00, ESPN2
Friday	Cure	Ohio (-4.5) vs. Jacksonville State	56.5	Orlando, Fla.	Noon, ESPN
Friday	Gasparilla	Florida (-11.5) vs. Tulane	49.5	Tampa, Fla.	3:30, ESPN
Friday	CFP first round	Notre Dame (-7.5) vs. Indiana	52.5	South Bend, Ind.	8:00, ABC/ESPN
Sat.	CFP first round	Penn State (-8.5) vs. SMU	54.5	State College, Pa.	Noon, TNT
Sat.	CFP first round	Texas (-12) vs. Clemson	51.5	Austin, Texas	4:00, TNT
Sat.	CFP first round	Ohio State (-7.5) vs. Tennessee	46.5	Columbus, Ohio	8:00, ABC/ESPN
Monday	Myrtle Beach	UTSA (-10) vs. Coastal Carolina	55.5	Conway, S.C.	11:00, ESPN
Monday	Potato	Northern Illinois (-3) vs. Fresno State	40.5	Boise, Idaho	2:30, ESPN
Tuesday	Hawaii	San Jose State (-3.5) vs. South Florida	60.5	Honolulu	8:00, ESPN
Dec. 26	GameAbove Sports	Pittsburgh (-7) vs. Toledo	51.5	Detroit	2:00, ESPN
Dec. 26	Guaranteed Rate	Kansas State (-7) vs. Rutgers	50.5	Phoenix	5:30, ESPN
Dec. 26	68 Ventures	Bowling Green (-7) Arkansas State	50.5	Mobile, Ala.	9:00, ESPN
Dec. 27	Armed Forces	Oklahoma (-4.5) vs. Navy	43.5	Fort Worth, Texas	Noon, ESPN
Dec. 27	Birmingham	Georgia Tech (-2.5) vs. Vanderbilt	51.5	Birmingham, Ala.	3:30, ESPN
Dec. 27	Liberty	Arkansas (-2) vs. Texas Tech	54.5	Memphis, Tenn.	7:00, ESPN
Dec. 27	Holiday	Syracuse (-13.5) vs. Washington State	59.5	San Diego	8:00, Fox
Dec. 27	Las Vegas	Texas A&M (-3.5) vs. USC	51.5	Las Vegas	10:30, ESPN
Dec. 28	Fenway	North Carolina (-2.5) vs. UConn	54.5	Boston	11:00, ESPN
Dec. 28	Pinstripe	Nebraska (-2.5) vs. Boston College	45.5	The Bronx	Noon, ABC
Dec. 28	New Mexico	TCU (-13) vs. Louisiana	57.5	Albuquerque, N.M.	2:15, ESPN
Dec. 28	Pop-Tarts	Miami (-3.5) vs. Iowa State	55.5	Orlando, Fla.	3:30, ABC
Dec. 28	Arizona	Miami, Ohio (-3) vs. Colorado State	42.5	Tucson, Ariz.	4:30, CW
Dec. 28	Military	N.C. State (-5.5) vs. East Carolina	58.5	Annapolis, Md.	5:45, ESPN
Dec. 28	Alamo	Colorado (-3) vs. BYU	54.5	San Antonio	7:30, ABC
Dec. 28	Independence	Army (16.5) vs. Louisiana Tech	43.5	Shreveport, La.	9:15, ESPN
Dec. 30	Music City	Missouri (-3) vs. Iowa	40.5	Nashville, Tenn.	2:30, ESPN
Dec. 31	ReliaQuest	Alabama (-10.5) vs. Michigan	43.5	Tampa, Fla.	Noon, ESPN
Dec. 31	Sun	Louisville (-2.5) vs. Washington	49.5	El Paso, Texas	2:00, CBS
Dec. 31	Citrus	South Carolina (-9.5) vs. Illinois	47.5	Orlando, Fla.	3:00, ABC
Dec. 31	Texas	LSU (-1.5) vs. Baylor	59.5	Houston	3:30, ESPN
Dec. 31	Fiesta-x	SMU/Penn State vs. Boise State		Glendale, Ariz.	7:30, ESPN
Jan. 1	Peach-x	Texas/Clemson vs. Arizona State		Atlanta	1:00, ESPN
Jan. 1	Rose-x	Ohio State/Tennessee vs. Oregon		Pasadena, Calif.	5:00, ESPN
Jan. 1	Sugar-x	Notre Dame/Indiana vs. Georgia		New Orleans	8:45, ESPN
Jan. 2	Gator	Mississippi (-14.5) vs. Duke	52.5	Jacksonville, Fla.	7:30, ESPN
Jan. 3	First Responder	Texas State (-10) vs. North Texas	64.5	Dallas	4:00, ESPN
Jan. 3	Duke's Mayo	Minnesota (-6.5) vs. Virginia Tech	42.5	Charlotte, N.C.	7:30, ESPN
Jan. 4	Bahamas	Liberty (-1.5) vs. Buffalo	52.5	Nassua, Bahamas	11:00, ESPN2
Jan. 9	Orange	College football playoff semifinal		Miami Gardens, Fla.	7:30, ESPN
Jan. 10	Cotton	College football playoff semifinal		Arlington, Texas	7:30, ESPN
Jan. 20	CFP National Cham	pionship		Atlanta	7:30, ESPN

x-College football playoff quarterfinal

NEW YORK POST ACTION

Home Team Lineups HOME AWAY							
	TODAY December 19	FRI Dec. 20	SAT Dec. 21	SUN Dec. 22	MON Dec. 23	TUE Dec. 24	WED Dec. 25
	Minnesota 9:30 MSG, TNT WHSQ 880 AM	NO GAME	N.O. 8:00 MSG WHSQ	NO GAME	Tor. 7:30 MSG WHSQ	NO GAME	SAS Noon ABC ESPN WHSQ
B	Toronto 7:30 YES WFAN 660 AM/ 101.9 FM	NO GAME	Utah 7:30 YES WFAN	NO GAME	Mia. 7:30 YES WFAN	NO GAME	NO GAME
NEW YORK	NO GAME	Dal. 8:00 MSG WHSQ	NO GAME	Car. 12:30 MSG WHSQ	NJD 1:00 MSG WHSQ	NO GAME	NO GAME
	NO GAME	NO GAME	Tor. 7:00 MSGSN2 WHRU WRCN	NO GAME	Buf. 7:30 MSGSN WRHU WRCN	NO GAME	NO GAME
	Columbus 7:00 MSGSN	NO GAME	Pitts. 7:00 MSGSN	NO GAME	NYR 1:00 MSGSN	NO GAME	NO GAME
\$	NO GAME	Prov. 8:00 Fox	NO GAME	NO GAME	NO GAME	NO GAME	NO GAME

	Sunday	Sunday	
型型	Atlanta 1 p.m. TV- Fox Radio-WFAN 660 AM/101.9 FM	IETS .	Los Angeles Rams 1 p.m. TV- CBS Radio-WAXQ 104.3 FM

Today	's Spoi	rts on the Air	
NBA	7 p.m.	Thunder at Magic	TNT
	7:30 p.m.	Nets at Raptors WFAN (660 AM/1	YES, (01.9 FM)
	9:30 p.m.	Knicks at Timberwolves M	ISG, TNT, (880 AM)
NHL	7 p.m.	Devils at Blue Jackets	MSGSN
NFL	8:15 p.m.	Broncos at Chargers Pri	ne Video
College Football	7 p.m.	New Orleans Bowl: Georgia Souther vs. Sam Houston	rn ESPN2
College Basketball	5 p.m.	Alabama State vs. Norfolk State	ESPNU
	7:30 p.m.	Grambling vs. Delaware State	ESPNU
Golf	3:30 a.m. (Fri.)	DP World Tour: The AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open, 2nd Round	Golf
Tennis	6 a.m.	Next Gen ATP Finals: Round Robin	Tennis
	11 a.m.	Next Gen ATP Finals: Round Robin	Tennis
College Volleyball	6:30 p.m.	NCAA Women's Semifinals: Louisville vs. Pittsburgh	ESPN
	9 p.m.	NCAA Women's Semifinals: Nebraska vs. Penn State	ESPN
G League	Noon	Greensboro Swarm vs. South Bay Lakers	ESPNU
	1 p.m.	Stockton Kings vs. Iowa Wolves	NBATV
	2:30 p.m.	Grand Rapids Gold vs. Oklahoma City Blues	ESPNU
	3:30 p.m.	Raptors 905 vs. Rio Grande Valley Vipe	rs NBATV
	5 p.m.	Capital City Go-Go vs. Sioux Falls Skyforce	SPNEWS
	7:30 p.m.	Valley Suns vs. Westchester Knicks E	SPNEWS
Soccer	3 p.m.	UEFA Conference League: HJK Helsinki at Real Betis	CBSSN
Horse Racing	Noon	FanDuel Racing	MSGSN



ODDS & ENDS

NFL Thursday Broncos at Chargers odds and props

FULL-GAME MONEYLINE ODDS

FULL-GAME MONEYLINE	ODDS
Broncos	+120
Chargers	-145
1ST-HALF SPREAD	ODDS
Broncos +1	-115
Chargers -1	-105
1ST-HALF TOTAL	ODDS
Over 20.5	-105
Under 20.5	-115
FIRST TOUCHDOWN	ODDS
Gus Edwards	+600
Ladd McConkey	+800
Courtland Sutton	+850
Javonte Williams	+875
Kimani Vidal	12/1
Quentin Johnston	12/1
Bo Nix	13/1
Will Dissly	13/1
Justin Herbert	13/1
ANYTIME TOUCHDOWN	ODDS
Gus Edwards	+140
Gus Euwarus	T140
Ladd McConkey	+155
Ladd McConkey	+155
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams	+155 +175
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton	+155 +175 +180
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston	+155 +175 +180 +260
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly	+155 +175 +180 +260 +260
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly Audric Estime	+155 +175 +180 +260 +260 +310
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly Audric Estime Kimani Vidal	+155 +175 +180 +260 +260 +310 +310
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly Audric Estime Kimani Vidal Josh Palmer	+155 +175 +180 +260 +260 +310 +310
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly Audric Estime Kimani Vidal Josh Palmer PASSING YARDS	+155 +175 +180 +260 +260 +310 +310 +310
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly Audric Estime Kimani Vidal Josh Palmer PASSING YARDS Justin Herbert	+155 +175 +180 +260 +260 +310 +310 O/U 232.5
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly Audric Estime Kimani Vidal Josh Palmer PASSING YARDS Justin Herbert Bo Nix	+155 +175 +180 +260 +310 +310 +310 O/U 232.5 223.5
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly Audric Estime Kimani Vidal Josh Palmer PASSING YARDS Justin Herbert Bo Nix RUSHING YARDS	+155 +175 +180 +260 +260 +310 +310 O/U 232.5 223.5
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly Audric Estime Kimani Vidal Josh Palmer PASSING YARDS Justin Herbert Bo Nix RUSHING YARDS Gus Edwards	+155 +175 +180 +260 +260 +310 +310 O/U 232.5 223.5 O/U 33.5
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly Audric Estime Kimani Vidal Josh Palmer PASSING YARDS Justin Herbert Bo Nix RUSHING YARDS Gus Edwards Kimani Vidal	+155 +175 +180 +260 +260 +310 +310 O/U 232.5 223.5 O/U 33.5 27.5
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly Audric Estime Kimani Vidal Josh Palmer PASSING YARDS Justin Herbert Bo Nix RUSHING YARDS Gus Edwards Kimani Vidal Bo Nix	+155 +175 +180 +260 +260 +310 +310 O/U 232.5 223.5 O/U 33.5 27.5 19.5
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly Audric Estime Kimani Vidal Josh Palmer PASSING YARDS Justin Herbert Bo Nix RUSHING YARDS Gus Edwards Kimani Vidal Bo Nix RECEIVING YARDS	+155 +175 +180 +260 +310 +310 +310 O/U 232.5 223.5 O/U 33.5 27.5 19.5
Ladd McConkey Javonte Williams Courtland Sutton Quentin Johnston Will Dissly Audric Estime Kimani Vidal Josh Palmer PASSING YARDS Justin Herbert Bo Nix RUSHING YARDS Gus Edwards Kimani Vidal Bo Nix RECEIVING YARDS Ladd McConkey	+155 +175 +180 +260 +260 +310 +310 O/U 232.5 223.5 O/U 33.5 27.5 19.5 O/U



Q-SCHOOLED: Chargers WR Quentin Johnston (above) will have a tough time reaching his receptions prop of 3.5 on Thursday night against the tough Broncos secondary, writes Jacob Wayne, who also is picking the Under in the game.

By JACOB WAYNE

On Thursday night, the Broncos visit the Chargers in an AFC West battle with significant playoff implications. The Broncos can clinch a postseason berth with a win, while the Chargers will be well-positioned if they secure the victory. Here are my two favorite bets after line-shopping.

Under 42.5 points (-115 FanDuel)

The Chargers offense has cratered recently since J.K. Dobbins landed on injured reserve, rendering them rudderless in the run game. Since Week 13, they rank 30th in EPA/play and 31st in success rate despite two of their three opponents (the Falcons and Buccaneers) ranking below average in defensive EPA. On Thursday, they face the Broncos, who have the best defense in the NFL by EPA and third-best by weighted DVOA.

A significant problem for the Chargers has been their interior offensive line, which struggles in pass protection and run blocking. While the tackle duo of Rashawn Slater and Joe Alt has been outstanding, the interior has been a sieve. The Buccaneers blitzed Justin Herbert on 63.9 percent of his dropbacks last week, his second-highest rate in a game in his career, and the Broncos will follow suit with the fifth-highest blitz rate this season.

The Broncos' 31 points on Sunday didn't reflect their offensive production. They posted a 35 percent success rate in the game, which would rank dead last in the NFL this season. Denver's nonexistent run game (29th in DVOA) has resulted in a one-dimensional offense, and their most dynamic runner, Jaleel McLaughlin, is questionable on a short week.

Bo Nix struggled last week with three

interceptions against the Colts, and while he's done a good job of protecting the football for most of the year, those struggles could continue this week against Jesse Minter's well-schemed defense. The Chargers rank seventh against the pass by DVOA and should be in line for a bounce-back performance, contributing to a low-scoring game on Thursday night.

Quentin Johnston Under 3.5 receptions (+100 Bet365)

After Johnston caught five passes for the Chargers on Sunday in an extreme trailing game script, this looks like a tremendous sell-high spot. The Broncos have an elite pass defense and rely heavily on man coverage and blitzing, ranking fifth in man rate. Johnston has a 22.7 percent catch rate against man coverage, which ranks 107th out of 110 qualified wide receivers. He also ranks second in that sample with a 37.5 percent drop rate.

Patrick Surtain II is trending toward playing, which would be catastrophic for Johnston's production. Surtain plays 87 percent of his snaps on the boundary, so he'll likely see plenty of Johnston in this game, while Ladd McConkey primarily operates out of the slot. Surtain has been targeted on just 10.3 percent of his coverage snaps all season, the lowest rate of all cornerbacks with 250-plus snaps.

Johnston has cleared this receptions line in only 6 of 28 career games (21 percent). Even if we filter for games where he played on 60-plus percent of snaps, which he's projected to play here, he's still at just a 6-for-20 rate (30 percent) for his career. With Riley Moss also trending toward playing, expect Johnston to struggle against this elite Denver secondary.

By MADELINE KENNEY

The fog on the glass belonged to 9-year-old Alice Commans.

Her hands, body length apart, held up a hand-drawn poster that read, "Let's go Sirens!" Each corner contained a message for four of her favorite players, including Sarah Fillier, Alex Carpenter, Ella Shelton and Chloe Aurard.

SIRENS SCEPTRES

PWHL

When the final horn sounded on the Sirens' 4-2 win against the Toronto Sceptres and Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York" started to play, Commans had a few new friends by her side. Maybe they'll be teammates one day.

"It's incredible that we have this league," said Commans, who started playing hockey four years ago. "It's so fun. It's like you get to see girls play and then little girls like me get to dream about it."

The Sirens made their season debut Wednesday at Prudential Center, their permanent home for this season and beyond. For the players, it was an exciting and welcome change from last season, when New York played its home games at three different arenas.

Goaltender Corinne Schroeder said Wednesday night "certainly" felt like a home game, where the Sirens had home-ice advantage.

"It was really nice to be able to drive ourselves to this game rather than have to stay in hotels," Schroeder said. "I think it helps us feel like we're at home, we're not on a specific schedule, we can create our own home game-day schedule."

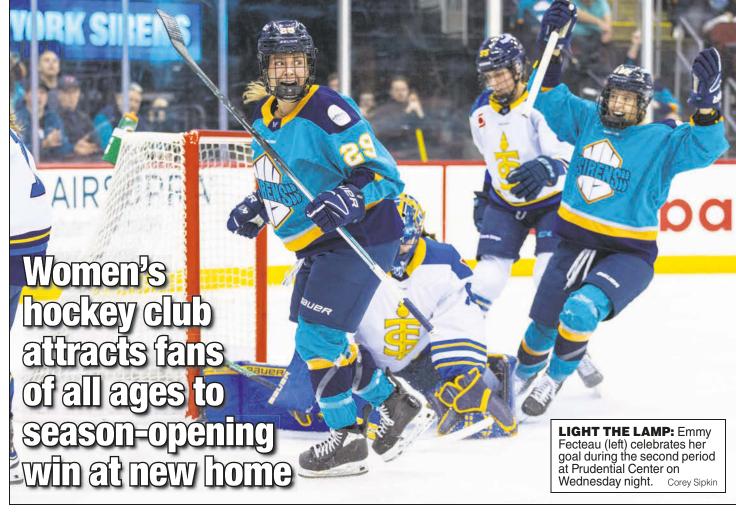
The night started with Newark mayor Ras Baraka cranking the turquoise horn to sound the siren.

The first period was very much back and forth between New York and Toronto, though neither team scored.

During the first intermission, Amanda LeVine, a new Sirens fan, said she was hoping to see more action — goal scoring — moving forward.

In the second period, the Sirens delivered - not once, but four times, sending the home crowd into a frenzy.

It was the usual suspects who set up New York's first goal of the night. Fillier passed the puck to



RENS' SONG

Carpenter, who set up Noora Tulus for her first goal of the season.

Fans jumped onto their feet and raised their fists in the air as Britney Spears' "Gimme More" blared from the arena speakers.

High-fives and fist bumps were exchanged. A chorus of "wee-woo" chants echoed from one section to another.

Fans would follow a similar ritual three more times when Emmy Fecteau, Micah Zandee-Hart and Jaime Bourbonnais each scored their first goals of the season to give the Sirens a 4-0 lead by the end of the second period.

While the 2,700 fans scattered around Prudential Center's lower bowl were mostly lively, section 12, 13 and 14 was the rowdiest bunch.

Aubrey Dearen, of Manhattan, sat amongst the chaos in section 13. She and her friend, Jenna Travis, wore matching Sirens hard hats that they made from a Monster Inc. costume from Spirit Halloween. The red beacon light on the

Karaban leads UConn past Xavier in OT

top of each of their heads lit up when the Sirens scored.

Eric Tao, of Bergen County, is a proud father of two girls hockey players and sat a few rows behind Dearen and Travis.

"I grew up wanting to play for the Leafs," said Tao, who's originally from Toronto. "The fact that we have a women's league that they can aspire to, it means the world to me. Because all boys grow up going, 'I want to play in the NHL.' But the girl couldn't — until

now. They go, 'I want to play in the PWHL.' They say it all the time. I'm like, 'Wow, that's amazing."

The Sirens are hoping to build off Wednesday's momentum as the season continues on. It'll take time for them to establish a place within New York's saturated sports market.

But if there's one thing all New Yorkers can get behind, it's a winning team and the Sirens have their sights set on doing more of that this season.

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Associated Press

Alex Karaban had seven of his 20 points in overtime to lead No. 11 UConn to a 94-89 victory over Xavier in Hartford, Conn., Wednesday night in the Big East opener for both teams.

Solo Ball led the Huskies (9-3) with 22 points and Tarris Reed Jr. had 20, including four in OT. Reed also grabbed 13 rebounds.

Ryan Conwell had 23 points and Maddox finished

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

with 22 for Xavier (8-4).

No. 6 Alabama 97, **North Dakota 90**

In Grand Forks, N.D., Grant Nelson had 23 points and 10 rebounds in his return to his home state and Alabama (9-2) overcame Treysen Eaglestaff's 40 points to hold off North Dakota (4-9).

No. 9 Marquette 80. Butler 70

In Milwaukee, Kam Jones scored 23 points and Marquette (10-2, 1-0 Big East) committed just two turnovers in a victory over Butler (7-5, 0-1).

No. 14 Oklahoma 87, No. 24 Michigan 86

In Charlotte, N.C., Jeremiah Fears buried a 3-pointer with 11.5 seconds left and drew a foul, then calmly sank the ensuing free throw for a four-point play as Oklahoma (11-0) edged Michigan (8-3) in a

wild finish at the Jumpman Invitational.

Georgetown 81, Creighton 57

In Washington, Jayden Epps scored 21 points as Georgetown (9-2, 1-0 Big East) beat Creighton (7-5,

Manhattan 80, Wagner 66

Wesley Robinson had 20

points in Manhattan's (5-5) victory over Wagner (6-5) on Staten Island. The Seahawks were led in scoring by Ja'Kair Sanchez, who finished with 16 points.

Mount St. Mary's 80, **Long Island 72**

In Brooklyn, Dola Adebayo's 16 points helped Mount St. Mary's (7-4) defeat Long Island University (4-10). The Sharks were led by Malachi Davis, who had 23 points and four assists.

By MADELINE KENNEY

Nyara Sabally towered over the nurses as she walked down the fifth-floor hallway at HSS Lerner Children's Pavilion on Wednesday morning.

When she made it into the first pediatric patient's room, she empathized with the young girl who sat on the edge of the hospital bed.

"It doesn't seem like it was that long ago I was here," said Sabally, who is familiar with the hospital. She tore the ACL in her right knee twice while in college and missed her rookie WNBA season in 2022 after follow-up surgery at HSS.

Sabally has since subdued those concerns and earned her spot in the Liberty's future plans after she put on an epic performance to help win Game 5 of the WNBA Finals.

She recorded 13 points and seven rebounds in the Liberty's title-clinching overtime win, and that showing may have played a part in why she is not a Golden State Valkyries player now.

WNBA teams were allowed to protect six players from the Valkyries' expansion draft earlier this month. Golden State ultimately took forward Kayla Thornton from the Liberty.

Sabally said she was flying when the Valkyries' picks were announced and she learned the Liberty lost Thornton when

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Finals hero set to help Libs' pursuit of repeat

Saba'metrics



the plane landed.

"Obviously, I was very sad," said Sabally, who sent Thornton a heartfelt message. "K.T. has a special place in my heart, so it was still very rough. But I would have picked her, too. She's a great person to pick to start a new team."

Thornton's departure leaves a major hole on the bench that has

its eyes on a repeat. Sabally should have a larger role in 2025, and she didn't rule out the possibility of general manager Jonathan Kolb getting a player to help fill the void on the wing.

One free agent who pops into mind is Sabally's older sister and two-time WNBA All-Star Satou Sabally, who has spent the past five star Nyara Sabally (far right) on Wednesday visited with children at the Hospital for Special Surgery, where she had a procedure on her knee.

Brandon Todd/New York Liberty

seasons with the Dallas Wings.

"Obviously I would love for her to come play with me," Sabally said. "But that's a decision she'll make for herself."

Sabally has been staying busy since winning the WNBA title.

She and Liberty teammate Leonie Fiebich made an appearance on the popular German soccer show "das aktuelle sportstudio" last month. She also repped the Liberty at the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade.

Wednesday's hospital visit was just one of her several responsibilities as part of the Liberty's "season of giving" community giveback campaign. Sabally was hoping to bring some holiday cheer to children and their families in the in-patient unit on the hospital's fifth floor. She handed out Liberty bags, Seafoam bracelets and autographed photos, and offered words of encouragement.

"It's really cool to see the patients. ... I know how it is after surgery, you're kind of feeling a little down," Sabally said. "So just giving them a little joy, especially around this time being in a hospital isn't that much fun. So a little something, just to put a smile on somebody's face just goes a long way."

The visits got Sabally thinking

The visits got Sabally thinking about her own injury journey up to this point. She pushed through three grueling knee rehabs and believes she's better after facing that adversity.

"I feel like that's one of the strongest characteristics that I have [is] perseverance, because I've had so many injuries and there was always something," Sabally said. "It is really hard to look forward and to look past all the injuries, but it really is something I feel like I've grown at a lot.

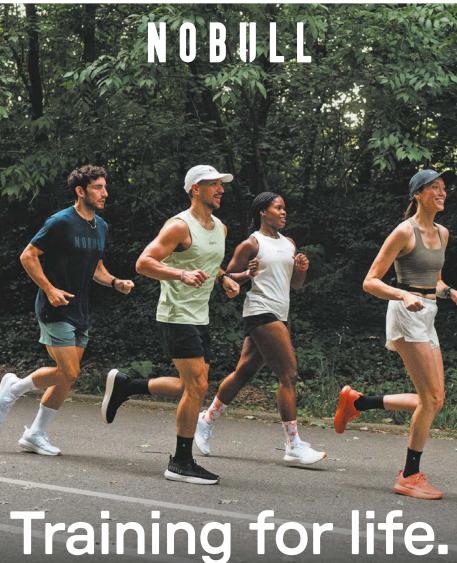
"I always say I'm not glad it happened, but it really shaped me into the person I am now. ... It has a way of working itself out."

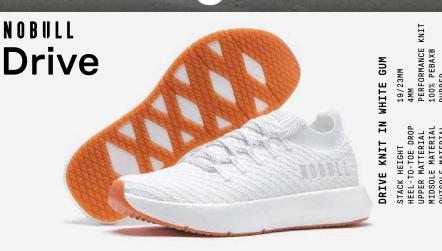
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Storm face first road challenge

T. JOHN'S has mostly held serve so far. The Johnnies have won the games they was supposed to, and have usually done so in empathic fash-

Their nine victories have come by an average of 21.6 points. Their two losses, to projected NCAA Tournament teams Baylor and Georgia, were decided by a grand total of four.

They pass the eye test. They look the

part. They have strong metrics, ranked 13th in KenPom and 27th in the NET rankings, the sorting tool the selection committee uses to differentiate They are slotted in the top 21 in both offensive and defensive effi-

But now the schedule stiffens for the first time since the trip to the Bahamas a month ago. For the first time, in fact, St. John's will play a road game, and it will do so in one of its houses of horrors, to face Providence at typically hostile Amica Mutual Pavilion (formerly the Dunkin' Donuts Center). On New Year's Eve, the Red Storm visit Creighton, another place that historically has not been kind to this program. St. John's last won at Providence with fans in the stands in 2015. It previously left Omaha victorious in 2019. The aforementioned opponents are weaker than they were last season, in part due to injuries and stars leaving for

Among the reasons the Johnnies fell short of the NCAA Tournament a year ago were their struggles on the road, a 5-6 record highlighted by three losses by four points or fewer. This team feels different. It is more athletic, it has more scoring options and it is far better defensively. It doesn't have a bad loss on its résumé like last year's dismal setbacks to Michigan and Boston College.

But, it is also yet to record a major victory or face a road crowd. It blew an 18point lead to Baylor and really should've won that game in double overtime had the clock started on time or St. John's not missed so many key free throws. It didn't have much left in the tank in that loss to Georgia, its third game in four days.

The Johnnies seem to be rounding into form lately. Deivon Smith and Kadary Richmond, the major transfer additions, are starting to find their respective games. Zuby Ejiofor is becoming a star in the paint. RJ Luis has been a consistent scorer and Simeon Wilcher has found the touch from the perimeter.

St. John's recently crushed Kansas State and Bryant, and obliterated improved DePaul on Tuesday to open Big East play in a game coach Rick Pitino was certain would go down to the final few possessions. Pitino was right to not make too much out of the most recent win, as impressive as it was, because of how early in the season it is. Because of what lies ahead. Because this team is still very much unproven.

"Are we taking a quantum leap?" Pitino wondered on Tuesday. "We'll see when we play Providence on the road [on Friday] for the first Big

East road game in probably the toughest road environment in the Big

It can start to prove itself Friday night, and then II days later on New Year's Eve. Win the kind of games last

year's team lost. St. John's has shown to be a very good home team. Now, we'll see what this group can do on the road as the enemy.

A few other takeaways after Tuesday's win over DePaul:

- On Wednesday, St. John's announced sophomore wing Brady Dunlap will be out four-to-six weeks with a tear to the ulnar collateral ligament (UCL) in his left hand and will undergo surgery on Thursday. Pitino said he had been playing through pain since the win over Kansas State on Dec. 7. The sharpshooting, 6-foot-7 Dunlap had struggled of late after a fast start. In his absence, freshman Jaiden Glover should expect an increase in minutes. The 6-foot-4, fourstar recruit has impressed in limited action as a shotmaker who can also get to the rim. I thought his role would increase at some point, but now it will likely happen faster than expected.
- Even when Ejiofor has a quiet game, he impresses. While his 12-point, sevenrebound effort was down compared to recent performances, his defense was exceptional. Ejiofor set the tone for the strong defensive showing with three early blocked shots. His ability to defend guards on the perimeter really stood out on Tuesday. DePaul tried to create mismatches against the 6-foot-9 big man in pick-and-roll situations, but it didn't work. His mobility and athleticism for a player his size is uncommon. You could see the drop-off defensively on the interior when Ejiofor was on the bench. St. John's outscored DePaul by 25 points in his 24 minutes and by just three in the other 16.
- My weekly plea to see more of Ruben Prey. Good things happen when the 6-foot-10 Portuguese import is on the floor. He makes the right play and can defend multiple positions.

zbraziller@nypost.com

Mets add Canning to starting stockpile

By DAN MARTIN

Griffin Canning is the latest depth piece for the Mets starting rotation, The Post confirmed.

The Mets came to an agreement with the 28-year-old right-hander Wednesday on a \$4.25 million deal, pending a physical.

Canning was non-tendered by Atlanta earlier in the offseason following his arrival in a trade from the Angels in exchange for Jorge Soler.

He had been eligible for arbitration before being jettisoned by the Braves.

The second-round pick by the Angels in 2017 hasn't had much success in the majors, but is coming off a season in which he made a career-high 31 starts and pitched 171 ²/₃ innings.

had a 5.19 ERA and gave up an American League-high 99 earned runs. He'll join a Mets rotation that needs arms.

With that, though, Canning also

Kodai Senga, at the top, made just one start in the regular season due to injuries and they have Tylor Megill, David Peterson and Paul Blackburn returning.

With Luis Severino now with the A's and Sean Manaea still a free agent, the Mets signed Frankie Montas and then added ex-Yankee reliever Clay Holmes to the mix as he looks to transition into a starter.

Now they'll add Canning, who missed all of 2022 with a back injury before returning to start 22 games

with the Angels in '23 and then pitched a full season last year.



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By DAN MARTIN

Even after a flurry of activity over the past week, the Yankees roster has plenty of question marks, perhaps the biggest at first base — if Cody Bellinger doesn't end up there — and second base — if Jazz Chisholm Jr. doesn't get shifted from third.

General manager Brian Cashman said Wednesday that he remains engaged with the agents of most "above average" options available at the spots, as well as in the outfield.

And he said the list includes Pete Alonso.

Alonso is among the biggest free agents left and the Yankees are also engaged with Christian Walker, "He's you Goldschmidt, according YANKEES"

to sources. Santana and Goldschmidt wouldn't cost

as much, which may be to the Yankees' liking, given the price tags of Bellinger and lefty Max Fried.

Signing any of them would likely put Bellinger in center, with Aaron Judge moving back to right field and perhaps Jasson Dominguez in left, where he struggled in September.

The GM made clear Dominguez would play every day, either in the majors or at Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, depending on how

Alonso still a Yankee target with Bellinger

the rest of the offseason goes in The Bronx.

"I'd like to see Dominguez get his shot now," Cashman said. "He's young. He's got to earn it and retain it."

NOTES

The Yankees have also remained in contact with switch-hitting Anthony Santander,

who was primarily a right fielder with Baltimore and has minimal experience at first base.

➤ Aaron Boone said Devin Williams will be the regular closer after his arrival in a trade from Milwaukee last week.

The manager added that he talked with **Luke Weaver** about his potential role after Weaver emerged as a top closer in the latter part of the regular season and into the playoffs.

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Boone added that Weaver would still close games on occasion.

Both Williams and Weaver are eligible to be free agents following the season. Cashman said the team has not discussed extensions with either pitcher while they are still trying to put together the 2025 roster.

➤ While the Yankees look for infield help, Cashman said they haven't forgotten about **DJ LeMahieu**, who's coming off another miserable, injury-riddled season.

"He's a pro and he's gonna do everything in his power to be in position to contribute," Cashman said of LeMahieu, who has two years and \$30 million remaining on his contract.

— Additional reporting by Jon Heyman and Joel Sherman



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By BRIDGET REILLY

After Monday's atrocious loss, the Nets are playing clean

In what was their first game without veteran leader and point guard Dennis Schroder, who was traded Sunday to the

Warriors in what looks like a front-office tanking decision, the Nets crumbled the against Cavaliers and

ex-Nets coach Kenny Atkinson in a 130-101 loss at Barclays Center.

In exchange for Schroder, received De'Anthony Melton, who is sidelined the rest of the season following Dec. 4 surgery to repair a partially torn ACL; rookie Reece Beekman; three second-round picks; and a whole new style of basketball.

'We're trying to flush that game, learn from it, but, you know, we're trying to win tomorrow," Dorian Finney-Smith practice following Wednesday. "Coaches have

been telling us what we need to work on, especially defensively. We've got to start doing a better job defensively, keeping guys out of the middle of the paint and try to get a win tomorrow."

After committing 22 turn-overs (which Cleveland turned into 34 points), gifting the Cav-

Thursday

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NETS ** RX PX ORS

aliers 29 freethrow tempts, and allowing 24 second-chance points, the immediate holes appeared to be

the possession game and pace.

Those were the two points of focus for coach Jordi Fernandez in helping his team adjust.

"So, you add those things up and how can our execution be better," Fernandez said Wednesday. "Spacing, so we don't turn it over. Our techniques on defense, so we're not sending them to the line all the time. Finding bodies, especially now if we are bigger, there's no excuse for not finishing possession. So, all of those things that would've helped us, but now we cannot play that game no more.

"So, we're looking to the next

one. The guys have owned it. They have a great attitude about it. But, then we want to see how we perform for 48 minutes next game."

With Ben Simmons as the leading point guard, the Nets played what Fernandez thought was their fastest game Monday. Simmons is known to be effective in transition and for leading the charge to score fast-break points. It's a big change from Schroder, who would usually orchestrate the play toward the end of the shot clock.

The Nets put up 16 fast-break points against the Cavaliers' 21 on Monday, however there was a lack of ball care that led to the blowout.

"I think the pace was a positive. I know that game didn't feel positive at all, but especially the start of the game," Fernandez said. "Obviously, a lot of times space goes up if you turn it over a lot, especially if those turnovers come up early in the clock and they turn into a quick shot the other way. We do want to increase the pace, but not because we turn it over."

The Nets were once under-

sized this season with injuries to Day'Ron Sharpe, Trendon Watford, Nic Claxton and Noah Clowney.

Still, the second-chance points included in the Cavaliers' 38 points in the paint were a glaring issue on the stat sheet, as well as being outrebounded 42-35.

Though short-staffed in the backcourt, the adjustments bleed into the paint players as well.

"It just starts defensively. We got to guard guys," Finney-Smith said. "We got to take care of the ball. We turned the ball over, but it wasn't just the turnovers. It was the live-ball turnovers that led to dunks and wide-open 3s. We got to take care of the ball, and with our size, we got to rebound. Just win the possession game and get stops that can put us in transition where we can be pretty good."

The Nets have a chance to bounce back in new form this week against two of the league's worst teams — on the road against the Raptors (7-20) on Thursday then at home against the struggling Jazz (5-20) on Saturday.

breilly@nypost.com

Backcourt problems persist

By BRIDGET REILLY

The Nets will remain shorthanded in the backcourt for the near future.

While taking a big hit with the trade of Dennis Schroder to the Warriors on Sunday, the Nets are still waiting to have guards Cam Thomas and Ziaire Williams back to health as they both deal with lower body injuries.

Without giving a timeline, head coach Jordi Fernandez said the two are "progressing really well" and have been able to start shooting around at practice while adhering to a no-contact rule.

"They've been on the court, and that's a good sign. It also helps the rest of the group with the energy to see them on the court and to be basketball

NETS NOTES

players again," Fernandez said after practice Wednesday. "They've been able to shoot, and that's all they're do-

ing right now. It's step by step. You start making sure your body can afford certain things, and you start shooting on the court, because you still need your touch and all those things. ... Like I said, they're progressing. They're progressing and they're in good spirits and they'll keep taking steps."

Thomas has been out for eight games since suffering a strained left hamstring against the Warriors on Nov. 25.

"I'm just doing whatever the performance team has me doing. It's still early," Thomas said on Dec. 5 of his rehab process. "I'm just doing whatever they have me doing, just a little bit here and there. But it's all right."

Williams is dealing with a left knee injury and has missed five games.

➤ Trendon Watford has been ruled out for Thursday's game at Toronto after leaving Monday's Cleveland loss with a left hamstring injury. It's the same hamstring Watford pulled in the preseason that kept him out for 13 games. Fernandez isn't sure if a specific moment led to the injury, but said Watford will be evaluated following the Raptors game.

"No, not to my knowledge when it happened. I'm pretty sure our medical team knows but it's being addressed now. So, we'll have that evaluation,"

Fernandez said.

➤ Without Thomas and Williams, both **Keon Johnson** and **Shake Mil**ton have taken on a larger load for the Nets. It has grown even more after the loss of Schroder.

"I think it's a work in progress when you have to adjust to a new role and play more minutes," Fernandez said.

The Jets only had a walk-

through on Wednesday, so their

when MetLife Stadium might feel like Lambeau Field with a

high of 25 degrees in the fore-

injury report is an estimation but DT **Quinnen Williams**

(hamstring), CB Michael Carter II (back) and RG Ali-jah Vera-Tucker (ankle) are all

listed as not practicing. RB Braelon Allen (back), RB Isa-

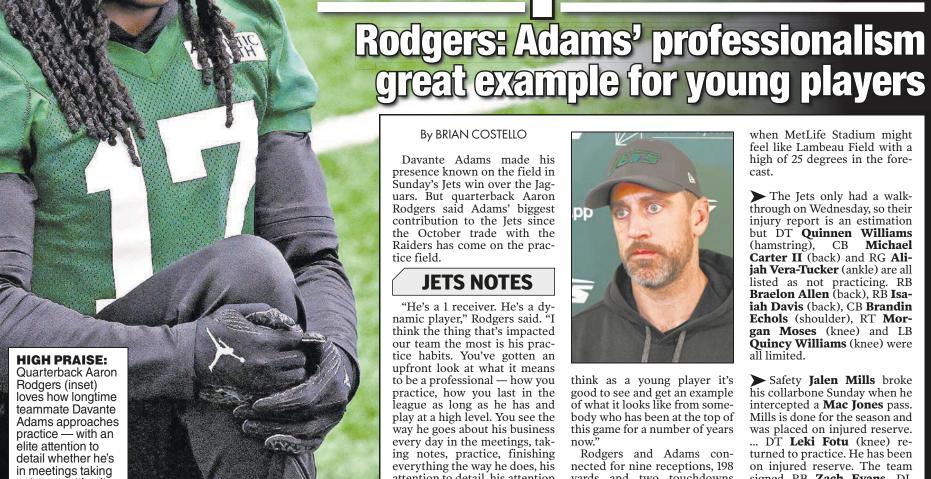
iah Davis (back), CB Brandin

Echols (shoulder), RT Morgan Moses (knee) and LB

Quincy Williams (knee) were

all limited. Safety Jalen Mills broke his collarbone Sunday when he intercepted a Mac Jones pass.

was placed on injured reserve. ... DT **Leki Fotu** (knee) re-



By BRIAN COSTELLO

Davante Adams made his presence known on the field in Sunday's Jets win over the Jaguars. But quarterback Aaron Rodgers said Adams' biggest contribution to the Jets since the October trade with the Raiders has come on the prac-

tice field. **JETS NOTES**

"He's a 1 receiver. He's a dynamic player," Rodgers said. "I think the thing that's impacted our team the most is his practice habits. You've gotten an upfront look at what it means to be a professional — how you practice, how you last in the league as long as he has and play at a high level. You see the way he goes about his business every day in the meetings, taking notes, practice, finishing everything the way he does, his attention to detail, his attention in the weight room. It's all the



think as a young player it's good to see and get an example of what it looks like from somebody who has been at the top of this game for a number of years

now.' Rodgers and Adams connected for nine receptions, 198 yards and two touchdowns against the Jaguars. The two

now face the Rams on Sunday

turned to practice. He has been on injured reserve. The team signed RB **Zach Evans**, DL Bradlee Anae and TE Neal **Johnson** to the practice squad.

Mills is done for the season and

Playoffs aren't pipe dream despite Isles' poor record

professionalism stuff that I

By ETHAN SEARS

notes or getting it

done in the weight

room. Bill Kostroun (2)

Record-wise, the Islanders are in their worst position through 33 games in over a

decade. Standings-wise, they've been given the good fortune of competing with a group of teams that do not appear to be much better than they

By any measure, the Islanders' 31 points through 33 games is abysmal, but with just three points between them and the Senators who currently occupy the

ISLANDERS NOTES

second wild-card spot there is still a legitimate chance of a turnaround, despite the club holding its worst record at this point in

getting into the playoffs by now was to hope for a mira-

Islanders' only chance of

the season since 2013-14. In other similar years, the

The 2021-22 season is the recent benchmark for a

nightmare start for the Islanders — whose year started off with a 13-game road trip, then a COVID-19 outbreak that essentially derailed their chances of a third-straight trip to the conference finals. It took them until Jan. 21 to play 33 games that season — a product of the long road trip being spaced over five weeks but with 34 points through that benchmark, the Islanders were already 14 points out of a playoff spot

with three games in hand. The 2016-17 Islanders were only one point better than the current group through 33 games, but were 12 points back of the last playoff spot at that point, and tied with the Sabres for last in the East.

Generally speaking, over the past decade, any team with a points percentage below .500 at this point in the season faced steep odds to make it. The Islanders, currently two wins below that mark — let alone an actual winning record - are extremely lucky to still have a legitimate chance at making it, even with nearly 50 games left on their schedule.

That luck, though, won't last forever if the wins don't start coming.

The Islanders waived Grant Hutton on Wednesday, per Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman, which could be an indicator that they are readying to activate **An-thony Duclair** off LTIR. Activating Duclair would require additional moves to get into compliance with the salary cap, but waiving at least one player — who turned out to be Hutton was a necessary precursor.

It is also a sign that management expects Isaiah George to get back in the lineup at some point soon after two healthy scratches. If the plan were not for George to play, it's unlikely Hutton would have been exposed, since George is exempt from waivers due to his entry-level contract.

The Islanders did not hold practice Wednesday after returning from Caro-

SCRATCH & IFS: After arriving with a whimper in his sixth, vear, dealt to Seattle for Will Borgen (below), a hird-rounder.

By MOLLIE WALKER

DALLAS — The Rangers retool has officially begun.

Kaapo Kakko was traded Wednesday to Seattle in exchange for defenseman Will Borgen, a third-round pick and a sixth-round pick in the 2025 draft, marking the end of the 23-year-old Finn's six-year tenure in New York.

The move helps the Blueshirts replenish some of their draft stock, as well as acquire some more depth on the back end.

Most importantly, however, Rangers president and general manager Chris Drury ensured that another disgruntled player didn't sit in the locker room for too long.

Kakko expressed immense frustration with serving as a healthy scratch in St. Louis, essentially saying that he didn't understand how it boiled down to him amid the Rangers' 3-11 downward spiral.

It's not the first time Kakko was a scapegoat for the Rangers lineup, after he was benched in Game 6 of the Eastern Conference final in the 2022 and 2024 playoffs. Two different head coaches, Gerard Gallant and Peter Laviolette, made the same decision two years apart.

The public display of unhappiness from Kakko was a clear indicator that it would probably be best for the Rangers to move on.

Plus, since Kakko is a pending restricted free agent and a year away

Kakko latest disgruntled Ranger traded, sent to Seattle for D-man, picks

WILL

from unrestricted free agency, the Rangers thought a trade was the best decision for both parties.

Kakko never quite lived up to where he was drafted as the No. 2-overall pick in 2019, but it wasn't for a lack of trying or opportunities. The chances he received in top-six roles were just never seized, which he consistently acknowledged over the course of his time with the Rangers.

Though it wasn't the first- or second-line minutes he envisioned, Kakko turned into an

effective third-liner who could be a possession machine. He was one of the Rangers' most consistent forwards this season and played his way into a spot on Team Finland for the NHL's 4 Nations Face-Off tournament in February.

ment in February.
Finishing with 330 games played for the Rangers, Kakko totaled 61 goals and 70 assists for 131 points.

Borgen, who turns 28 on Thursday, has been a target of the Rangers for some time.

Drafted 92nd overall by Buffalo in 2015, the Minnesota native has primarily been a bottom-pair defenseman in Seattle the past four seasons after

the organization selected him in the 2021 expansion draft.

After setting a career high in points last season with 25, Borgen's game has taken a drastic dip both offensively and defensively. He's currently a minus-nine on the season, and the more advanced defensive metrics don't paint a prettier picture.

BORGEN don't paint a prettier picture.
Similarly to how a change of be a scenery may benefit Kakko, the same can presumably be said for Borgen.

Bringing in Borgen also allows the Rangers to give rookie Victor Mancini more time to develop in his first full year of professional hockey. Mancini was assigned back to AHL Hartford after the Kakko trade was announced.

A veteran of 247 NHL games across six seasons, Borgen has accumulated nine goals and 46 assists.

mwalker1@nypost.com

Blueshirts' huge collapse has been 'all mental'

= Friday =

RANGÉRS

AT STARS

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(880 AM)

By MOLLIE WALKER

DALLAS — When a team, especially one in New York, is in a state of catastrophe, the pursuit of why runs rampant.

The Blueshirts are searching for their own answers. Everyone from the players to the coaching staff to the hierarchy.

There may not be a way to

sum it all up, but all there is left for president and general manager Chris Drury to do is begin working toward a possible solution.

A common denominator of the team's issues has been an off-kilter locker room, where there have now been two miffed players — Jacob Trouba (Anaheim) and Kaapo Kakko (Seattle) — who had to be shipped out partially due to their issues with the way head coach Peter Laviolette or Drury have moved during this remarkable fall from grace.

And as the Kakko trade was finalized Wednesday, Matt Rempe was also recalled from AHL Hartford.

Now, Will Borgen, the bottom-pair defenseman the Rangers acquired along with two 2025 draft picks in the Kakko deal with the Kraken, nor Rempe is going to be the savior. But it's a start toward reshaping a lineup for which deficiencies have long been masked, and are now getting majorly exposed.

There is more misinformation percolating around the Rangers than there are concrete reports.

It's been a frenzy of wanting to get in on chronicling the Rangers' downfall with all the juicy rumors they can get.

Yes, Sean Avery is going to New York. He's going to see the band Phish in concert at Madison Square Garden next weekend. No, there is no evidence the 44-year-old is in line for any sort of executive job with the Rangers.

As has been reported multiple times in this space,

there is no indication that changes are being contemplated behind the bench or in management at the moment.

This has become a war inside the Rangers' heads more than anything. Every day seems to bring another negative headline to creep into the team's psyche and mess with it further.

The fact that a good chunk of it hasn't had anything to

do with the disappointing on-ice product is clearly weighing even heavier on the locker

room.
"It's all mental at this point," Bra-

den Schneider said after the Rangers suffered their second loss to a last-place team in the span of nine days. "I think we want to do the right things and we're working to do the right things, and we're just a hair off. Just a little off the mark. I know everyone in here believes and everyone's working for the right things.

"We've just got to keep pushing through and hopefully we can break through the ceiling."

The real question here is: Where did the Rangers' mental strength go?

Just last season, this was a team that solved every game in front of them.

Now, the Rangers crumble at the first sign of adversity.

One bad goal or one bad play causes a complete and utter collapse. A turnover is ending up in the back of their net 10 out of 10 times.

This 3-11 skid has become a self-fulfilling prophecy that the Rangers just can't seem to shake.

What was once one of their greatest assets has become debilitating.

The only way to quiet the noise is in the standings. The Rangers know this, as does everyone else in the National Hockey League.

Until then, everyone will look to pick apart every square inch of the Rangers' downfall.

They're in control of their own destiny, not what's said on the outside.

By ETHAN SEARS

The good news, sort of, for the Islanders is that they have not blown a third-period lead recently.

But with all the talk around that, their game in the first period has suddenly become a problem spot.

Tuesday night's 4-0 loss to the Hurricanes marked the eighth straight game in which the Islanders allowed the opening goal, and it's become almost customary for the Isles to slowly wade their way into games while allowing opponents the upper hand.

"No," coach Patrick Roy said, asked if he had an explanation.

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"But at the same time, I know we want to score that first goal, but plenty of times when we gave up that first goal, we were back in the game. We were

tied or ahead going into the third period. It'd be nice to have the first goal, I agree with you."

The Islanders have allowed the first goal an NHL-leading 21 times overall. Though that is not necessarily as game-breaking a problem as their minus-22 goal differential in the third period

Slow starts have become latest headache for Isles

and overtime, the two combined don't create a pretty picture.

It is pretty tough to put together wins when the second period represents the only point in the game when the Islanders are consistently playing well — and indeed, the Islanders have just 12

victories in their first 33 games after getting their doors blown off by the Hurricanes on Tuesday night.

"We just need to pop the first one, I think it's

as simple as that," captain Anders Lee said after Sunday's loss to the Blackhawks — in which the Islanders went down 1-0 in the first, tied the game, then quickly gave up another goal before the end of the period. "The other team's gotten the first one of late. It feels like we're on our

heels. We just gotta go out there and go after that first one right away."

As to what exactly is causing

the lack of energy, the Islanders don't appear to have an explanation.

Roy said Sunday he felt like his team was ready at the start of the game, and two days later, hand waved the slow starts by saying the Islanders are frequently in the game during the third period.

It's true that these things are sometimes ran-

dom, but with the Islanders, the general theme of failing to put together a complete game has been a constant all season and, for that matter, was all of last season as well — whether the problem spot is the first or third period.

The standings are still provid-

ing the Islanders an opportunity, as they were just three points out of the last playoff spot on Wednesday despite a terrible record, but that is going to be fleeting if they don't start winning games.

As poor as the rest of the Eastern Conference is, relying on everybody else to keep losing is not a viable strategy.

The Islanders, who have not been above NHL .500 in nearly two months, can at least get back to that watermark by Christmas

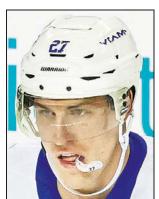
if they beat the Maple Leafs and Sabres in their two remaining games before the holiday break.

That, combined with the potential return of Anthony Duclair, would at least give them something to build on going into 2025

The closeness of the standings at the bottom of the East, though, is a curse as well as a blessing. If the Islanders keep losing, there's every chance they could find themselves at or near the basement of the standings during the festive period, with just five points currently between themselves and last-place Buffalo.

"We have to be better. We have to win games," Brock Nelson said Tuesday. "We're fortunate to still be in the mix. We all aren't happy with where we're at. We know we can be better and want to be better. A lot [better]. I think urgency's a big part of it."

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ANDERS LEE



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RETURN THE FAVOR

ARON Rodgers wasn't the has been forced to ponder saving himself and whatever remains of his Hall of Fame career.

He revealed Thursday that he would be amenable to serving as a bridge quarterback for the 2025 Jets — if Woody Johnson and the next regime would want him back. "If they ask me back and they

drafted a guy, I'd mentor the hell out of him if I was playing, and I'd try and play as well as I could to keep him on the bench," Rodgers said.

He has faced uncertainty in his career ... just never at age 41, and never after a season such as this

"I'm gonna take some time after the year, unless I get released right away," Rodgers said, "but I'll still take some time whether or not I want to play."

Enigma indeed.

A veteran head coach like Mike Vrabel might prefer him as his bridge quarterback, but others will likely view him only as a bridge over troubled waters and look to bite the \$49 million dead-cap bullet in 2025 and start anew.

future after the season, but if he decides to return, and the Jets want him, he would be willing to mentor a

Getty Images

young quarterback.

Rodgers would consider being bridge QB, if Jets want him back



enough for him to weigh taking another pay cut should it be a mandate from the new powers that be.

"I'm open to everything," Rodgers said.

Rodgers has been healthier and looked more like his former self the last weeks as opposed to his old self. Might he feel even better than he did at the start of this season another year removed from his Achilles surgery?

"Yeah it's possible ... might be sitting on the beach though," he said with a wry

He flirted with retirement at the end of his Green Bay football and without regret if push comes to shoving him out the

"There's a lot of things I'm proud of, a lot of things I'm frustrated of for the way the season's gone," Rodgers said. "But I'm proud of the work I put in. There were some rough days of rehab where I couldn't see getting back on the field. And so, to have played every game this season means a lot to me. ... To be 4-10 is really tough to deal with obviously late in your career.

"And there's a whole idea about not want to go out like this. I'm 41 years old, and I played a lot of good football over the years. The game's given me a lot, I gave the game a lot, and whatever happens after this, I'll feel real good about what I accomplished and the people I got to be around.'

He reiterated his desire to finish as a Jet.

"There's a lot of reasons why this would be a great opportunity, but I'm gonna see what happens," he said. "There's a lot of things yet to happen — they gotta hire a GM, gotta hire a head coach, and then whether or not I'm part of the conversation or whether or not

they move on. Whatever happens, I'll be taking my time and thinking about my future."

A cautionary tale for Rodgers: Kirk Cousins was benched for Falcons rookie Michael Penix Jr. for a desperate playoff push. Cousins signed a four-year, \$180M deal (\$100M guaranteed) after tearing his Achilles in Week 8 of the 2023 season, and eyebrows were raised when the Falcons drafted Penix with the eighthoverall pick. Cousins, 36, has been a shell of his former self (one touchdown and nine interceptions over his past five games).

"I love Kirk. I've been in touch with him during the rehab phase. It's tough coming off of an Achilles at any age," Rodgers said. "Also they drafted a kid. Obviously he had a really good start to the season. There's ebbs and flows in the year. There's not a lot of patience in this league.

"Kirk's played at a high level for a long, long time. So anytime there's a change, that's gotta be hard, so my heart goes out to him.

"I hope he keeps playing, I think he's got a lot of great football left in him and can play probably till he's 40, so I'm sure he'll feel even better next year than he did this year as he continues to get his legs all the way back, and I'm sure there'll be a team that wanted a guy who's proven he can play at a high level in the league."

He meant Aaron Rodgers as well.

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By BRIAN COSTELLO

Sauce Gardner is smiling again.

The Jets cornerback says he is having fun on the field again after trying to do too much earlier this season. Gardner has bounced back from some shaky games to play his best football in his past two games.

"My mental wasn't all the way there for whatever reason. It just wasn't there. That was it," Gardner told The Post on Wednesday. "I wasn't having as much fun. I was out there playing like I've got to make every single play. I've got to make plays for other people. I was playing like I can't make mistakes. The way that I am, I'm somebody who's always smiling and happy. I play my best when I'm smiling and I'm happy, because I'm having fun and I'm always being positive. I wasn't doing that at all."

Gardner drew very little criticism in his first two years, and he was named first-team All-Pro in each of those seasons. But this year he has come under fire for missed tackles and penalties, and not playing as well as he had in those first two seasons.

Sauce smiling again, and playing better as result

Sunday RAMS ... JESS



Line: Jets +3.5 • O/U: 46.5

The 24-year-old was affected by what he saw on social media, eventually deleting his X account to try to escape the negativity. But Gardner said he was his own harshest critic after he made mistakes.

"Anytime I see something about me missing a tackle or something like that, I'm really staying up at night myself already no matter if somebody says something or not," Gardner said. "That's just how I am. I want to make every single play. You could say that you're going to make mis-

takes, but that's just not my thought process. If somebody gets the ball on me, I'll be up at night for a while before I can go to sleep." Gardner has not had to

Gardner has not had to worry about sleepless nights lately. He has played his best football in his past two games against the Seahawks and Jaguars (he missed the game against the Dolphins with a hamstring injury). In those two games, Gardner had no missed tackles after missing 10 earlier this season.

Against the Seahawks, he matched up with DK Metcalf for much of the day and gave up two receptions for 28 yards on five targets. Last week in Jacksonville, he allowed just one reception for 9 yards on six targets, though he was called for two penalties. He intercepted Mac Jones to end

the game, Gardner's first interception in two years.

"These past two games have been the best two games of the season in my opinion for him," interim coach Jeff Ulbrich said. "I've just seen a rejuvenated spirit and focus, and it's the Sauce that we all love, as far as the way he's been preparing, and it's resulted in two really [good] back-to-back games, so just got to keep it going."

Gardner said his head began to clear during the bye week last month. Like everyone around the Jets, Gardner had high hopes for this season, and he is now dealing with his third losing season in a row.

"That bye week let me clear my mind. I really needed to reflect on how I could be better," Gardner said. "Everything just happened so fast. Next thing you know, boom, we're 2-and-something."

The firing of coach Robert Saleh after five games also had an affect on Gardner, who is close with Saleh.

"It definitely affected me. Like I said, they helped change my life," Gardner said of Saleh and former GM Joe Douglas. "It also brought an added pressure. It got to the point where literally people felt like we have another head coach, we can't make no mistakes."

Gardner is not going to be an All-Pro this year, but he has three more games to show what kind of player he is. Expect to see him smiling.

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More Jets / P. 47





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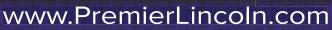
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O ONE knows.

If they say they know, they are kidding them-

selves

There are opinions and conjectures and theories and projections. You can predict and you can surmise.

But you do not know because no one does.

The Giants passed over Michael Penix Jr. in the 2024 draft and selected Malik Nabers. They took a wide receiver instead of a quarterback knowing they operate in a league where the quarterback is paramount and there are always far more receivers available. No one knows how history will look back on this decision.



Nabers was higher on the Giants' draft board than Penix. Nabers likely was the higher player on all the other 31 draft boards around the league.

We have an idea what Nabers is, and the early returns are extremely promising. With two catches this weekend in Atlanta, Nabers will break the Giants' rookie record of 91 receptions, set by Odell Beckham Jr. in 2014 and matched by Saquon Barkley in 2018.

We have no idea what Penix might become, and the first tangible clues arrive Sunday, when Penix makes his first NFL start. Wouldn't you know it, this debut comes against the Giants. The Falcons finally pulled the plug on veteran Kirk Cousins and started the clock for the on-field development of a lefty slinger of the football who might be able to use the depleted Giants defensive backfield as target practice.

The Giants tried to find Daniel Jones' successor in the draft, but they really never came close — as a trade up with the Command-



PENNINGER Giants come

NABERS who they passed up to take their now-star WR
ers to get Jayden Daniels was a optimistic expectations, showing medical train wreck, with two

ers to get Jayden Daniels was a pipe dream, and cursory discussions with the Patriots to move up for Drake Maye never went anywhere. Instead, the Giants continued what turned out ultimately to be a fruitless enterprise — providing weapons for Jones.

To be fair, this was not an approach that was roundly questioned. Taking a quarterback "just because" is no way to run a program, and the scouting reports on Penix and Bo Nix (No. 12 overall in the first round) were intriguing but hardly glowing. Nix has exceeded even the most

optimistic expectations, showing a steady hand as a Day 1 starter, guiding the Broncos to a record of 9-5, currently the No. 6 seed in the AFC playoff race.

Is Nix the long-term answer in Denver? We will see. If Giants general manager Joe Schoen selected Nix at No. 6, bypassing Nabers, the reaction would not have been mixed. It would have been overwhelmingly negative. Penix at No. 6 would have been

Penix at No. 6 would have been more palatable based on his fantastic 2024 season at Washington. Penix in four years at Indiana played in just 20 games and was a medical train wreck, with two separate ACL surgeries, one shoulder procedure and another knee issue. He transferred, shook off those injury woes, started 28 games and tossed 67 touchdown passes in two seasons for the Huskies.

"We never got to finish a season with him, I know that," line-backer Micah McFadden, a teammate of Penix in his four years at Indiana, said Wednesday after practice. "He never got to play in a bowl game or anything like that. He was a great dude, a great teammate. And he had a great

arm. Even in practice and stuff and even in games, we'd see a throw from him and be like, 'That's an elite throw, opposite hash, 15-yard out-route to the sideline, and it's on a rope.' So he's always sort of been that guy."

The Giants were worried about Penix's extensive injury history and his ability to stay healthy at the next level. Now they get to be the first NFL team to try to knock him around for 60 minutes. Penix gets thrown into the fire of a playoff race — the Falcons (7-7) are one game out of the final spot in the NFC.

It was always a bit bizarre for the Falcons to take Penix when they had Cousins on the front end of a four-year, \$180 million contract. Cousins, 36, looks shot, based on his most recent performances that led to his benching. Any team that wants to trade for him after this season would assume his \$27.5 million base salary, which is cut-rate for a legitimate starting quarterback. The Giants are 2-12 and on a nine-game losing streak. If Schoen or whoever is calling the shots cannot land Shedeur Sanders or Cam Ward at the top of the 2025 draft, would they make a run for Cousins? Probably not, but there is a whole lot of intertwining that can come into play

for him," McFadden said of Penix. "Everybody was assuming first round, it was just about when. I think everybody's reaction was surprised [it was the Falcons] because they had just gotten Kirk. It's the NFL, you never know what can happen." True enough. Just like no one

"We all kind of knew

the ceiling was very high

knows yet what Penix will become and if the Giants will regret not taking him when they had the chance.

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Quarterback carousel turns back to Lock

By JARED SCHWARTZ

Round and round she goes. Where she stops ...

The Giants quarterback carousel continues this week, as they're expected to return to Drew Lock for the start against the Falcons on Sunday, head coach Brian Daboll said on Wednesday. Since the Giants benched Daniel Jones coming out of their bye week, the same quarterback has started two consecutive games for the team just once.

"It's all a little bit different with each guy," Daboll said. "So, certainly, you'd like one guy in there the whole time, but that's not the reality." In Week 12, it was Tommy DeVito starting against the Buccaneers. But he hurt his arm in the game. Then it was Lock starting Week 13 against the Cowboys on Thanksgiving. Lock made it through the game then started the next week against the Saints but hurt his foot in that game. So DeVito started this past Sunday against the Ravens, though he suffered a concussion and was replaced in the game by Tim Boyle.

And now with Lock healthy again, it's back to him. DeVito is still in the concussion protocol, though he was on the field and was a limited participant in practice Wednesday. If DeVito clears the protocol,

he'll serve as Lock's backup with Boyle as the emergency third-stringer.

Lock this year has completed 51.1 percent of his passes for 414 yards, no touchdowns, two interceptions and a brutal 54.6 passer rating. He's also added 129 rushing yards and a touchdown on the ground.

"It's the job," Lock said. "Me and Tommy both came here not as a starter. You've got to be ready for your time to be the starter. It gets pulled back, you go back in, it gets pulled back, you go back in. It's part of the gig. You always want to be the guy out there. It stinks standing on the sideline. But sometimes that happens, and you've just got to be ready for your next one."

Sunday •

FALCONS

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Bright spots Nabers, Tracy, nearing NFL rookie history

By JARED SCHWARTZ

A notable conversation emerged this week between Malik Nabers and Tyrone Tracy Jr.

History is within reach for the pair of Giants rookies as both near 1,000 total yards from scrimmage. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, just two pairs of rookie teammates have each finished with 1,000 or more scrimmage yards in

a season — Abner Haynes (1,451 yards) and Johnny Robinson (1,069) in 1960 with the Dallas Texans (who later became the Kansas City Chiefs), and Reggie Bush and Marques Colston in 2006 with the Saints.

So much has gone wrong for the Giants this year, but it appears, at the very least, they have a receiver and running back combination to build on. For a team with barely any core, Nabers and Tracy represent the start of one, on offense at least.

"I was very aware of it," Nabers said after practice Wednesday. "I asked [Tracy] today how much he needs to get to his 1,000 all-purpose [yards]. He said he hasn't looked at it, but it got brought up to me.

"It shows how much gratitude, how much work we put in through the season. Everything hasn't gone our way, but the young guys have stepped up tremendously and been trying to make plays when we are there. And it's just a pat on both our backs."

As the No. 6-overall pick in the draft, Nabers' production has been expected

— he's hauled in 90 catches for 901 yards and four touchdowns, just one catch away from Odell Beckham Jr.and Saquon Barkley's franchise rookie reception record.

Tracy, a fifth-round pick after the Giants had already signed and planned to use Devin Singletary as the starting running back, has been a rare positive surprise. Tracy has 695 rushing yards and 220 receiving yards — good for 915 scrimmage yards — and

five total touchdowns.

"It means something to me, that one, that work you put in all throughout the year, through the offseason, it's paying off," Tracy said Wednesday. "And two, the satisfaction of [knowing]

you're doing the right things, you're preparing the right way, you're playing the right way. And then lastly, it gives you the confidence to understand you belong. That just because you're a rookie, you belong here."

Tracy's output has begun slowing down as he adjusts to a full NFL workload compared to the shorter college season, with 253 scrimmage yards in the past four games. If there's something he can prove, and to still watch for fans, it's that he's capable of handling a full workload.

Notably, this also is only Tracy's second season as a running back. He started as a receiver in college before making the transition his final two years at Purdue. It's provided him with a versatile skill set, and perhaps most importantly, a reason to believe he is just scratching the surface at the position.

"It feels good just to know that my skill set is valuable at this position, and what I can do is going to be used at this organization," Tracy said. "I feel good and I feel confident because I feel like I have a lot more to offer. I really do. I feel like I have a lot more I can do. I feel like I leave a lot on the field, just because I'm trying my best to make plays but also some games I may not be playing as free as I need to. That's just because I'm new at the position, so I'm still trying to figure my way out and learn while I'm playing.

"I feel like I'm just now getting started. I think there's a lot more coming soon."

Yes, there are two ways to look at Nabers and Tracy's production. Yes, that the Giants have been so reliant on two rookies doesn't paint a good picture for the rest of the offense or talent on the roster. Yes, some of it could simply be because the ball does need to go somewhere

Either way, it's given Nabers and Tracy plenty of playing time and helped fast-track their development. On one of the youngest teams in the league, they're emerging as needed leaders.

"I think that's huge," Tracy said. "When next year comes around, we're gonna know what to expect. ... Nothing is gonna be a surprise to us. When we get in a game, when we get into certain situations in the game, I feel like we've had so much happen to us within our first season that when things do happen later on, they're gonna look at us to answer or to lead. Yeah we're young, but at the same time, it's gonna benefit us. It's definitely gonna benefit us."

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Daboll plays it cool with heat on

By JARED SCHWARTZ

Brian Daboll stuck to his same script.

The Post's Paul Schwartz reported earlier in the week that Daboll, the team's head coach, and general manager Joe Schoen are not a package deal and could see different fates with their jobs after the season despite the two arriving together from the Bills in 2022. On Wednesday, Daboll responded to the notion he could be fired while Schoen keeps his job.

"I just focus on the things I can control," Daboll said.

N Y Post

Getty Images

Charles Wenzelberg;

Has there been enough separation of responsibilities where it would be fair

GIANTS NOTES

for Daboll to be fired but Schoen to be retained?

"We're just getting ready here for the Falcons," Daboll said.

Prior to the Giants' loss to the Ravens on Sunday, a plane flew over MetLife Stadium carrying the message: "Mr. Mara enough — we won't stop until you fire everyone." One week prior, before the team's loss to the Saints, a plane flew over the stadium with the message: "Mr. Mara enough — Plz fix this dumpster fire."

Daboll said that he spoke with co-owner John Mara

on Wednesday, though not about the report.

"Just a normal conversation," Daboll said. "We have good conversations every week."

Deonte Banks (ribs) and Cor'Dale Flott (quad) were limited participants in practice Wednesday and are expected to return for Sunday's game against the Falcons. Greg Stroman (shoulder/shin), who got his first start of the year last week with Banks and Flott out, did not practice Wednesday.

Wednesday. **Brian Burns** (ankle/neck), **Aaron Stinnie** (concussion protocol), **Bobby Okereke** (back) and **Patrick Johnson** (knee) did

not practice Wednesday.

▶ **Deion Sanders** said Wednesday that if the Giants have the No. 1 pick in the draft, "they're not going to give up that pick" and that his son, **Shedeur**, will be the No. 1 pick.

Malik Nabers was recorded over the weekend playing catch with Shedeur on the street in Manhattan with the latter in town to support Colorado teammate Travis Hunter at the Heisman Trophy ceremony.

Nabers responded to Sanders' latest comments on Wednesday.

"Deion is very confident in his son, but that's something upstairs that they've got to do," Nabers said. 54

Randle mum on emotion

By PETER BOTTE

Julius Randle was not as expansive with his answers as Donte DiVincenzo was about his first regular-season game facing the Knicks since the offseason trade to the Timberwolves for Karl-Anthony Towns.

Randle, a three-time All-Star in five seasons with the Knicks, offered mostly short responses about Thursday's matchup in Minnesota against his former team, calling it "another game" and that he's just going to "play basketball."

"I'm going to go home, play with my kids, going to eat some food ... and I'm going to sleep," Randle said. "I'm going to wake up in the morning, go to shootaround, probably get a little treatment. And then I'm going to shoot.

KNICKS NOTES

"And then I'm going to go home and have some breakfast, and then I'm going to go to the arena and play the game.'

Asked about Josh Hart's recent comments about the Knicks trying to find their identity without him and DiVincenzo, Randle replied, "Oh, you got to ask Josh about that. I don't play there anymore."

Randle did note that the biggest difference between Minnesota and New York is, "It's cold."

When told it's also cold in New York, he responded, "It's minus-4

Hart believes Randle and DiVincenzo will play with "a chip on their shoulder" against the Knicks.

"Whenever you get traded, no matter what it is, it's always tough, it's always emotional," Hart said. "You always have that sense of not being wanted. That's on both sides.

"I think 'Te and Ju probably felt that way. And KAT probably felt that way, and every time a trade happens, you feel, even if you're the big piece of the trade and another team wants you, you still feel a little chip on your shoulder and you still feel unwanted."

Jalen Brunson added that both former teammates "carry that [chip] regardless of who they play, honestly that's just who they are and that's their makeup."

The Knicks assigned rookies Pacome Dadiet and Ariel **Hukporti** to the Westchester Knicks to play in the G League showcase beginning Thursday in Orlando.



By PETER BOTTE

Donte DiVincenzo already has been back once to the Garden, jawing with the Knicks bench and needing to be separated from assistant coach Rick Brunson at the conclusion of a preseason game in October.

But DiVincenzo and teammate Julius Randle will face the Knicks in a game that counts for the first time, Thursday night in Minnesota, since they were dealt away in the blockbuster trade for Karl-Anthony Towns just before the start of training camp.

"I'm still in contact with those guys all the time. It's still family," DiVincenzo said Wednesday after the Timberwolves practiced in Minnesota. "I watch games and everything, but it's different, a different viewpoint if you will - more so just a fan of the guys that are over there.

"Wish them nothing but success, individually and collectively.

While Randle is averaging 20.1 points in his return from seasonending shoulder surgery, DiVincenzo has struggled to find his footing with the Timberwolves. He is posting just 8.3 points and shooting 35.3 percent from the floor and 31.9 percent from 3-point range in 25 games (two starts) after connecting at a 40.1 clip from long distance in his lone season with the Knicks.

"Donte is a good player," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. "He was terrific with us. So it's part of the game, and you just play. At the end of the day, it's what you do in totality."

Said DiVincenzo: "I think, a) it's not normal to make a trade the day before media day. Both sides, it takes time to adjust. Great things take time. On our side, I believe that, but also on their side. I think KAT's playing really well, but it's going to take

Tale of the tape

A look at how Karl-Anthony Towns (right), Julius Randle and Donte **DiVincenzo have fared compared** to their career averages since this offseason's blockbuster trade between the Knicks and Timberwolves:

KARL-ANTHONY TOWNS

SEASON	PPG	REB	AST	FG%	3PT%
2024-25	24.8	13.9	3.3	52.6	43.9
CAREER	23.0	11.0	3.2	52.4	40.0

JULIUS RANDLE

SEASON	PPG	REB	AST	FG%	3PT%
2024-25	20.1	6.8	4.0	48.3	34.8
CAREER	19.1	9.3	3.7	47.1	33.4

DONTE DIVINCENZO

SEASON	PPG	REB	AST	FG%	3PT%
2024-25	8.3	3.1	3.4	35.3	31.9
CAREER	10.4	4.3	2.8	42.3	37.2

Ex-Knicks reunite in Minnesota after preseason dustup

time to mesh, for other guys to adjust to what he does."

Josh Hart similarly said last week - and he and Jalen Brunson reiterated Wednesday - that DiVincenzo and Randle were a huge part of the Knicks' identity

last season. They acknowledged that the current squad is still trying to establish its identity despite a 16-10 start, and Towns averaging 24.8 points and 13.9 rebounds per game.

"Like İ said, it's an adjustment,"

Thursday KNICKS AT **TIMBERWOLVES**



9:30 p.m. **MSG, TNT** (880 AM)



DiVincenzo said. "KAT was here for, what was it, nine years? The guy was here for nine years. Same thing.

"When he leaves here, there's a hole, there's a void of what he brought. In the same way, even though I was there for a year, even though Julius missed half the year, he was there for five years. There's something when a guy spends that much time in an organization, they're around people, you just get accustomed to what you're going to get every single day. So coming here, just try to be yourself."

As for his dustup with the elder Brunson and the Knicks bench in the preseason, DiVincenzo said the incident is behind them.

"Family talks, family moves forward. That's it," said DiVincenzo — who also was a teammate of Jalen Brunson, Hart and first-year Knick Mikal Bridges at Villanova. "I wish them — obviously that situation, but every single person over there — I wish nonstop individual success, collective success.

"I want the same for everybody over here. That's all it is. Families talk and families move forward."

Brunson agreed with his close friend, saying, "That dude, I call [DiVincenzo] a little hothead, and he's always been that way. But I mean, that's my brother, and regardless of what happens, that's family.'

 Additional reporting by Stefan Bondy

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56

New York Post, Thursday, December 19, 2024



By DAN MARTIN

When Juan Soto bolted for the Mets, Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said one player was at the top of his wish list: Max Fried.

The Yankees then signed Fried to an eight-year, \$218 million deal, the largest contract in MLB history for a left-handed pitcher.

Fried was introduced at the Stadium during a news conference Wednesday as the centerpiece for this new-look Yankees team that's also added Cody Bellinger and Devin Williams in trades since Soto's departure.

"We're defending our [American League] title with a whole different crew," Cashman said.

And they're not finished, as even with a new top-of-the-rotation lefty, a dominant closer and a slugger who can start either in center field or at first base, Cashman still has plenty of work to do, with the GM saying he remains engaged in the first base, second base and bullpen markets, because holes remain.

Yankees believe Fried isn't a mere consolation prize after losing Soto

But they are unlikely to make a more significant splash than bringing in Fried, who developed into a very effective starter with the Braves, albeit with some injury issues.

The Yankees like the 30-year-old's ability to throw a wide variety of pitches and the fact that he's got a bit of a different look than some of his hard-throwing counterparts.

However, he's exceeded 175 innings pitched just once and has been bothered by forearm, soft-tissue and blister issues.

The Yankees will take their chances.

"We feel like we added a championship piece to the rotation," manager Aaron Boone said.

"We're excited he wanted this opportunity," Cashman said. "He wanted New York.

He wanted to come here to join an already formidable rotation."

Cashman called Fried an "artist on the mound," as well as "a five-pitch pitcher who's evolved over the course of time. ... It's a big contract, no doubt about that."

The soft-spoken Fried — who said his first thought about what to do after signing his huge contract was to get food for his dog Apollo — said he is looking forward to the added pressure of pitching in The Bronx.

"Putting on pinstripes, responsibility comes with that," Fried said. "Last week, I was walking through the clubhouse and three words were put up on the wall: 'Prepare, compete and win.' I thought a lot about that. To me, as a player, it really reso-

nated with me. Winning is a big priority for me. I love playoff baseball."

Fried has plenty of experience pitching in October with the Braves, though he has a 5.34 ERA in his past 13 postseason appearances (12 starts).

The Yankees have already seen another high-priced free agent lefty struggle in his first year in The Bronx, with Carlos Rodon pitching poorly in 2023 before a bounce-back season in 2024.

Fried and the Yankees hierarchy believe there's a higher ceiling for the seventh-overall pick in the 2012 draft by the Padres out of high school.

When healthy, Fried typically has been effective since his 2017 debut, and he'll be slotted into a rotation that includes Gerrit

Bellinger wanted to follow dad in Bronx

By MARK W. SANCHEZ

Amid an offseason that has not been ideal, the Yankees found an ideal target.

In the aftermath of losing out on Juan Soto, among the Yankees needs were a first baseman and center fielder, hopefully with a strong glove; preferably a lefty bat with a

tendency of pulling the ball; probably someone with a history of playing in big markets (maybe even with some Yankees lineage); and, as they always hope, someone who wanted to be in pinstripes.

Cody Bellinger checked off every box.

The outfielder/first baseman was acquired on Tuesday, when the Yankees sent Cody Poteet to the Cubs and got back a player whose

only true downside was a contract that has two years and \$52.5 million remaining (with a player opt-out after next season, and with the Cubs responsible for \$5 million).

The Yankees were happy to land a gifted athlete who is a nearly perfect fit for the roster. The feeling apparently was mutual.

"He's a good baseball player and someone that wants to be here," general manager Brian Cashman said Wednesday at the Stadium, where the club introduced Max Fried. "Been hearing it for a long time, including his agent, Scott Boras, saying, 'Can you get him over here? He's driving me crazy. He wants to be a Yankee.'"

Bellinger's desire helped, but his game was a bigger factor to the Yankees.

The 29-year-old has authored one of the strangest active careers in the majors. He

arrived as a top prospect who lived up to the hype, NL Rookie of the Year in 2017 and MVP in 2019 with the Dodgers. His rise gave way to a plummet in 2021-22, when he was among the worst hitters in baseball (with a combined .611 OPS) that might have been related to November 2020 shoulder surgery. The one-time MVP was non-tendered by the Dodgers and signed with the Cubs, where he bounced back in

2023 with a much more contact-oriented approach and then dipped in 2024, when he posted a .751 OPS with 18 home runs in 130 games

If Bellinger — a lefty swinger who has pulled 43 percent of his batted balls through eight seasons — had played all his games in The Bronx last season, Statcast estimates he would have hit six more home runs.

"His swing is built for Yankee Stadium," said Cashman, who pointed out that the

Yankees essentially have 87 home games next season because Steinbrenner Field, where the Rays will be hosting games, is configured with the exact same dimensions. "He puts the ball in the air on the pull side."

"I really believe he's going to play up offensively in our yard," added manager Aaron Boone.

The swing fits and so does the glove. It is harder to find a center fielder than a first baseman, so the best bet would be that Bellinger plays the outfield and the Yankees add a first baseman, but his flexibility gives the team options.

Cashman said he still does not know where Bellinger will play, and Boone said Bellinger is willing to play anywhere.

"Talked to him [Tuesday] night at length," Boone said. "One thing he told me before I even broached the subject of where you're playing: He's like, 'By the way, don't worry about where you play me, I'll play wherever. Wherever you need me that night—center, left, first."

Bellinger, who officially will be introduced as a Yankee over Zoom on Thursday, appears to know what to say — perhaps because he learned from his father, Clay, a Yankees utilityman from 1999-2001.

Cashman, who had acquired the father, too, slipped once and referred to Cody as Clay.

Clay.

"He's definitely really excited for [Cody],"
Cashman said of Clay.

msanchez@nypost.com

Meeting set with Japanese star Sasaki

By MARK W. SANCHEZ

While introducing one starting pitcher on Wednesday, the Yankees revealed they remain in the sweepstakes to land another.

The Yankees will be granted an in-person meeting with young Japanese ace Roki Sasaki, general manager Brian Cashman said at a news conference welcoming Max Fried at the Stadium.

Sasaki and his agent, Joel Wolfe, had asked teams for virtual presentations as the first step in the unique

free-agency process. The Yankees submitted theirs and have become the first publicly known team to get its foot in the door.

Cashman said the in-person

meeting would be in California "soon" but declined to provide a date.

The Sasaki sweepstakes are unlike any other in Major League Baseball since Shohei Ohtani picked the Angels. Be-

cause Sasaki, a 23-yearold star righty who throws 100 mph and carries a devastating splitter, is not yet 25, he is classified as an international amateur. No team can blow him away with money, only able to offer the few million dollars in its pool for international free agents. Sasaki is

placed in the same bucket as the teenagers from Latin America whose earnings are capped.

ROKI

SASAKI

A front-of-the-rotation arm can be recruited but not bought.

"He's obviously a tremendous talent," Cashman said of Sasaki, whom he saw pitch in Japan. "It'd be nice to have Yankee Stadium be his home, but the decision will be up to him. All we can do is share everything and anything that we can about ourselves and what we provide."

It is unclear how many teams will meet with Sasaki, but Cashman & Co. already have made it further than they did when Ohtani made his way to MLB before the 2018 season. Ohtani declined to meet with any team on the East Coast, and the Yankees never were given a chance to attempt to woo the two-way superstar.

The Yankees have a shot at Sasaki — but no one knows how remote or likely the shot will be. Wolfe himself said at the Winter Meetings that he did not know what Sasaki will value in choosing his team. The

agent acknowledged it might be beneficial for Sasaki, who had negative experiences with Japanese media, to prioritize a smaller market, but the comment was more conjectural than factual.

Wolfe did provide a few clues that could boost the Yankees' odds, saying that Sasaki has "paid attention to how teams have done as far as overall success" and listed Masahiro Tanaka as one of Sasaki's pitching idols. Cashman declined to reveal whether Tanaka would be part of the Yankees' recruiting pitch.

If Sasaki does wind up in The Bronx, the Yankees likely would adopt a six-man rotation as has become customary with Japanese pitchers who are accustomed to pitching weekly.

"Impressive pitcher," pitching coach Matt Blake said of Sasaki. "Good athlete, good arm, obviously really good splitter."



for the Mets' 15-year, \$765 million deal.
"In Juan Soto's case, it's a generational talent that came off the board and we went in a different direction," Cashman said.

The Yankees had to wait until they got the Soto verdict before Cashman could sign another high-priced free agent, preventing him from bidding on lefty ace Blake Snell, as well as infielder Willy Adames. Both signed deals before Soto's decision.

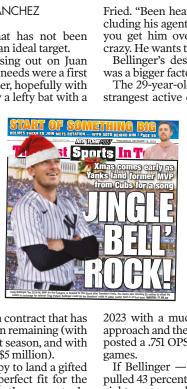
The trade for Bellinger gives the Yankees some flexibility, as Bellinger can play all three outfield spots, as well as first base.

But the Yankees likely will add at least another infielder, as well as more bullpen pieces

Then they'll hope to replicate the success they had last season, even without Soto.

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More Yankees / Page 45



WHAT TO WATCH

Hosted by Whitney Cummings (left), the new four-part game show "Fast Friends" puts pairs of the biggest **Friends**" fans against each other in a simultaneously novel and nostalgic competition. Shot in The "Friends" Experience:

The One in New York City, the show transports fans to iconic parts of the beloved sitcom's set.



STREAM IT OR SKIP IT

"Christmas Eve in Miller's Point" (AMC+) isn't always easy to like, but it's always easy to admire. The film can be doggedly strange in a way that's challenging and fascinating, ultimately landing on many keen, sincere observations of human behavior. OUR CALL: STREAM IT

DECIDER

WHAT TO

Shanna

Wanda

Shanna

Holloway (left)

her mother

Holloway (far

left) in "The Texas

Cheerleader

Murder Plot."

cheerleading

and Shanna

today. Below

left: Wanda

For more on your favorite TV and films, visit

Holloway.

Bottom far left:

opens up about

'Texas Cheerleader THREE CHEERS Murder Plot' daughter speaks out

By LAUREN SARNER

T wasn't so cheerful.

The unbelievable true story of a mom who got embroiled in a "murder-for-hire" plot — all to oust her daughter's cheer-leading rival — is chronicled in the new documentary, "The Texas Cheerleader Murder Plot."

The documentary, which premiered on ID and is streaming on Max, covers the 1991 case of Wanda Holloway, a churchgoing mother in Channelview, Texas, who was convicted of trying to hire a hit man to kill her daughter Shanna's cheerleading rival's mom, Verna Heath. (Per police, Holloway thought her daughter's rival, Amber Heath, would be too distraught to compete if her mother got killed.)

Shanna, now 47, told The Post that participating in this documentary was a "healing process" for her. She also said she hasn't spoken to Amber since the incident.

"I was 14 when it happened. So I was at that pivotal age where you're figuring out who you are and discovering yourself and what your interests are and what you're good at and start to think about the future a little bit," said Shanna.

She added, "When this happened, it just totally destroyed my personality. It changed it to where I became very introverted instead of ex-



Shanna, whose mother pushed her into cheerleading, recalled, "I wanted to disappear because I was so embarrassed and humiliated. It was shameful. It was traumatic, and I didn't deal with it for many, many years. And it affected me in all kinds

In conjunction with this documentary, Shanna also created a website called "Smile More, Worry Less" and online courses to help people with depression.

She said she "came through" the incident in which her mom

achieved notoriety, "although it almost killed me."

Shanna, who still lives in Texas and is now an educator with two sons, said that one of her biggest issues was the perception that "people were hating me" over this incident. "I'm sure that was aimed

more at my mom. That still hurt me, too... I was a victim in this,

and I had nothing to do with it like that... I was just thrust into it. And it was so bizarre and so unheard of. How do you even know where to start in order to deal with something like that?"

Holloway — dubbed "The Pom-Pom Mom" — is still alive and no longer in jail.

At the time, she was sentenced to 10 years in prison, but she received probation after serving just six months, per ABC13.

Shanna told The Post she doesn't

believe Holloway would have gone through with the hit man. "I can't know for sure, but I don't think so. I really do believe that she tried to get out of the situation and wasn't able to."

The documentary covers how Holloway allegedly reached out to her late former brother-in-law, Terry Harper, to see if he could arrange a hit. He then went to the Harris County Sheriff's Office, where he agreed to wear a wire and gather evidence against her.

Shanna, who still has a relationship with her mother, said Holloway is convinced that Terry set her up.

"[People] think that she's crazy or evil, and I think that's a misconception. I think everybody has a little crazy and evil in them to some degree and don't always get called out on it. But she's also got a really fun side to her. She's got that personality that draws you in, like the light in the room," Shanna explained.

She added, "She's not crazy. She's human. And she's got her good days and bad days, just like everybody else."

TRENDING NOW

Netflix announced an upcoming three-part docuseries directed by Floyd Russ about boxer **Mike Tyson** (below). "Having an opportunity to share my story through the reflective lens of my growth and maturity ... will be a challenging journey, yet a very [welcome] one," Tyson said in a statement, per the streamer.





ON PEACOCK

"Laid," a new comedy starring Stephanie Hsu (below).

ON PRIME VIDEO "**Beast Games**," a reality competition series based on YouTuber Mr. Beast's show.



19

What's on Tonight



The Polar Express: 3:45 p.m. on AMC. Tom Hanks, Leslie Zemeckis. A young boy's doubts are allayed when he is invited aboard a magical train to the North Pole.



The Mask: 8 p.m. on VH1. Jim Carrey, Peter Riegert. A shy bank clerk discovers a mysterious mask that transforms him into a daring superhuman trickster.

HALL

HGTV

HIST

NATGEO

NICK

OWN

SNY

SYFY

TBS

TCM

TLC

TNT

USA

VH1

WE

YES

НВО

MAX

HOLIDAY SALE

NEW SUBSCRIBER OFFER

TVLAND

PARMT



Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas: 8:20 p.m. on FREFRM. Jim Carrey,

Thursday December 19, 2024 SP = Spectrum, C = Cablevision, F = FiOS Movies Sports New 11:00pm SP C F **6:30pm** 7:00pm 10:30pm 11:30pm **CBS News** Inside Edition Entertainment Ghosts: Arondekar Nate Bargatze's Nashville **CBS News** (11:35) Late Elsbeth: Toil and Trouble Norah Tonight Christmas Christmas 11pm Show WNBC 4 4 4 NBC Nightly News 4 New Access Little Big Town's Christmas at the Opry Barry Manilow's A Very News 4 New (11:35) Tonight News York at 7 Hollywood Barry Christmas York at 11 Show (6:00) 6 O'Clock TMZ Hell's Kitchen: Harmony in Hell; Get a Clue The 10 O'Clock News **Good Night** Family Feud Extra (R) New York News (R) WABC ABC World Jeopardy! Wheel of The Great Christmas Light Fight: Families compete for Manhunt: Luigi Mangione and News (11:35) Kimmel News Fortune the Light Fight trophy and grand prize. the CEO Murder - A Live (R) Family Feud Family Feud True Crime **Dateline: Toxic** Dateline: Siren Song Family Feud Family Feud The News on My 9 (R) (R) News 11 11 11 PIX11 Evening Scrabble: Get Wordy With It Trivial Pursuit: Is There a 11 WPIX Seinfeld: The Seinfeld Sports The Big Bang PIX11 News at Ten News Nightly Theory Doctor in the House? Watch **BBC News** The PBS News Hour Leonard Cohen: Live in Dublin Shamrock Tenors: Live from Belfast Amanpour America NOVA Stories (R) **BBC News 21 WLIW** 21 21 (6:00) News The Earthshot Report (R) The Day WNYE 25 22 25 Report **Great Conversations** Food. Potluck Actors Feet Global Health Frontiers Artbound 31 WPXN 31 3 531 Chicago PD Chicago P.D.: Payback Chicago P.D.: Saved Chicago P.D.: Allegiance Chicago P.D. Chicago P.D.: Let It Bleed **Fugitivas** 41 WXTV 41 6 41 Noticiero La rosa de Guadalupe La Historia de Juana El precio de amarte Noticias Noticiero 16 12 Noticias Exatlón EU: All-Stars (7:58) Exatlón Estados Unidos: All-Stars: Part 2 La Familia: Un imposible Noticiero Noticias 55 10 10 Conners 55 WLNY Man 48 Hours Judge Judy Judge Judy Neighbor. Man News 8pm Neighbor. A&E 46 46 181 First 48 (R) The First 48 (R) First 48 Critical Minutes Alaska PD (10:01) Interrogation Raw (11:04) The First 48 (R) 54 43 231 (5:45) Christmas Vacation (1989) ★★★½ **AMC** Elf (2003, Holiday) Will Ferrell. PG ★★★ Elf (2003, Holiday) Will Ferrell. PG ★★★ BET 54 270 Martin Martin Martin Martin The Perfect Holiday (2007, Comedy) Morris Chestnut. PG ★½ BBCAM Point Break (1991, Action) Patrick Swayze. R ★★★ 71 101 189 Road House (9:45) Road House (1989, Action) Patrick Swayze, Ben Gazzara. R **BRAVO** 18 44 185 Vanderpump Southern Charm (R) Southern Charm (R) Southern Charm: Gone to the Dogs Southern Charm (R) Below Deck **CNBC** 15 24 102 Money Shark Tank Shark Tank Shark Tank Shark Tank Shark Tank 78 25 100 Situation Anderson Cooper 360° CNN NewsNight Laura Coates Live CNN Erin Burnett OutFront The Source with Kaitlan **Family Guy** COM 45 50 190 The Office The Office The Office The Office: Replacement The Office The Office The Office The Office The Office 49 31 250 Bluey Bia City (R) Big City (R) Moana Sing-Along (2017) PG Wizards (R) Wizards (R) (10:40) Miraculous (R) Bluey DIS DSC 27 120 Naked and Afraid XL: A Feast of the (R) Naked and Afraid XL: Cold Grudges Die Hard (R) Naked and Afraid XL: All In to Get Out (R) 24 51 196 Villains House of Villains House of Villains House of Villains Snoop's Fatherhood House of Villains Women's Volleyball Champ: National Semifinal 2 28 36 70 Women's Volleyball Champ: National Semifinal 1 **ESPN** Volleyball SportsCenter 30 for 30 35 74 ESPN BET L College Football: Georgia Southern Eagles vs Sam Houston State Bearkats. Live. ESPN Films Cops **FBN** 43 106 117 Bottom Cops Kudlow (R) Cops Cops Cops Cops Cops **FNC** 44 26 118 Spc. Rpt. The Ingraham Angle Jesse Watters Primetime Hannity Gutfeld! Fox News @ Night **FOOD** 50 97 164 H. Potter Harry Potter of Baking Harry Potter of Baking Christmas Cookie Christmas Cookie (R) Christmas Cookie (R) **FREFRM** 38 49 199 Dashing Through the Snow (2023) ★★½ (8:20) Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas (2000, Holiday) Jim Carrey. ★★½ The 700 Club (R) 400 99 83 Speak Live. ESPORTS WORLD FS1 ESPORTS WORLD CUP Big Noon Copa America 2024: Semifinal: Canada at Argentina. Copa: Final 10 40 53 (5.00) Iron Man 3 (2013, Action) ★★★½ Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle (2017, Action) Dwayne Johnson. Jumanji: The Next Level (2019) ★★★

'Tis the Season to be Merry (2021)

Andv

Bang

Loves Ray.

Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (2001) ★★½

The Mask (1994, Comedy) Jim Carrey. PG-13 ★★★

6 Schizophrenic Brothers

The Bettor

Mountain Men (R)

Andy

Bang

NBA Basketball: Oklahoma City Thunder at Orlando Magic. Live.

Loves Ray.

Brooklyn N NBA Basketball: Brooklyn Nets at Toronto Raptors. Live.

MSG Shorts

Fear Thy Neighbor (R)

The Rookie: Labor Day

23 171 123 Neighbor Fear Thy Neighbor (R) LIFE 62 45 140 The Rookie The Rookie MeTV 33 33 3 M*A*S*H M*A*S*H M*A*S*H 87 78 Pro Padel: The City's Cup: 2024 Finals MSG **MSG Plus** 48 88 80 NJ Devils NHL Hockey: New Jersey Devils at Columbus Blue Jackets. Live. 14 23 103 Ari Melber **MSNBC** The ReidOut MTV 20 53 210 Jersey (R)

40 47 128 (6:00) Pawn

65 162 121 Treasures

173 180 145 Hoarding

26 60 77 Jets Game

52 28 139 1000-lb (R)

3 37 51 Pregame

34 241 Andy

16 38 50 (6:00) SVU

53 89 76 Yankees

39 52 Bang

36 56 54 Men

6 121 252 SpongeBob

191 240 Leah's Perfect Gift (2024) Emily Arlook

64 98 165 Hunters (R) Hunters (R) Hunters (R)

Pawn Stars (R)

Mets Reprt

Bang

SVU

19 52 217 (6:00) Big Daddy (1999, Comedy) ★★½

511 301 400 Joker (2019, Crime) Joaquin Phoenix. R

531 371 420 (6:08) Mummy: Dragon Emperor (2008)

41 230 (6:00) The Black Stallion (1979, Family)

All in with Chris Hayes Jersey Shore: Family (R) Jersey Shore: Family Lost Treasures (R) Lost Treasures (R) SpongeBob SpongeBob SpongeBob SpongeBob Hoarding: Buried Alive Hoarding: Buried Alive Men Men

Amazin'

Loves Ray.

(7:50) Law & Order: SVU

Bang

1000-lb Sisters: Nothing

42 149 (6:12) Fred Claus (2007, Comedy) Vince Vaughn. ★★½

595 395 (6:10) Small Soldiers (1998, Fantasy) Lara God. 551 321 365 The Fabulous Four (2024, Comedy) Susan Sarandon.

Lost Treasures of Bible Friends Friends Hoarding: Buried Alive Ocean's Eleven (2001, Crime) George Clooney. PG-13 ★★★½ Mets Classics: New York Mets at Arizona Diamondbacks. Replay

Bang

Law & Order: SVU: Users SVU

Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga (2024, Action) Anya Taylor-Joy. R

Old School (2003) Luke Wilson. R ★★★

Hllbillies

NY Knicks

Hunters (R) Hunters (R) Hunters (R)

Mountain Men: Endurance

Acres

NJ Devils

Fear Thy Neighbor (R)

The Rookie: Dve Hard

Alex Wagner Tonight

Jersey Shore: Family (R)

Loves Raymond: Secret

Four Christmases (2008, Drama) Vince Vaughn. ★★½

17 48 180 Halloween Kills (2021) ★★½ (7:45) The Northman (2022, Action) Alexander Skarsgård, Nicole Kidman. R ★★★½ Grinch Babes in Arms (1939, Musical) Mickey Rooney. ★★★ 6 Schizophrenic Brothers

Strike Up the Band (1940, Musical) Mickey Rooney. 6 Schizophrenic Brothers 6 Schizophrenic Brothers NBA Basketball: New York Knicks at Minnesota Timberwolves. Loves Ray. Loves Rav. Oueens (10:20) Law & Order SVU Law & Order: SVU: Torch

Jets Game

Grinch

Single Single Single (10:42) Fred Claus (2007, Comedy) ★★1/2 Brooklyn N Yankees Hot Replay. Yankees Clash of the Titans (2010) PG-13 ★★½

Royal Christmas (2014, Romance) Lacey Chabert. NR

NHL Hockey Replay.

Fear Thy Neighbor (R)

The Rookie: The Choice

Lawrence O'Donnell

Mysterious Islands

Dexter: Original Sin

Hoarding: Buried Alive

Hogan

Ridiculous

Friends

NBA Basketball: New York Knicks at Minnesota Timberwolves.

Hogan

The Bettor

Ridiculous

Friends

Hunters (R) Hunters (R) Hunters (R)

(10:35) Mountain Men: Endurance (R)

Burnett

Friends

(10:45) Ambulance (2022, Thriller) R ★ ★ ½

The 11th Hour

Fear Thy Neighbor (R)

The Rookie: The Fugitive

Ridiculous Ridiculous

(10:58) Lost Treasures (R)

Hoarding: Buried Alive

Ocean's Thirteen (2007)

Rio (2011) Karen Disher.

Mets Classics Replay.

P. Mason

Friends

Oueens

Scott Pilgrim vs. the World (2010) Michael Cera. ★★★½ (9:53) Bachelorette (2012, Comedy) R ★★ (9:45) Escape from L.A. (1996, Drama) Kurt Russell. R Dungeons The Agency: Quarterback

Taylor Momsen. A spiteful, heartless creature concocts a plan to steal Christmas.

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