

Local

A big win – and a game plan

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Men's basketball

The Mountaineers head to Texas Tech

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OBITUARIES

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Squires, Michael Godfrey Jr., Donald

COLLEGE

WVU BOG selects next university president

BY DAVID BEARD

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WVU's Board of Governors has selected a new university president and green-lighted start of construction for the new Pride Practice Facility for the Mountaineer Marching Band.

The BOG voted to approve the new president pick during a Thursday executive session and announced the vote Thursday evening. BOG chair Rick Pill said, "At a time when the higher education landscape is changing, we think that this person can best lead West Virginia University – the state's flagship university – forward and serve as its 27th president."

Pill said the BOG will announce the identity of the new president after a contract is signed.

MetroNews reported on Friday afternoon that Coastal Carolina President Michael Benson was chosen, based on sources revealing this to columnist Hoppy Kercheval.

Kercheval posted on X, "Interesting side note on WVU's next president Michael Benson: He is a native of Utah, as is current president Gordon Gee. However, Gee was not involved in the search or the decision."

Ogden News statehouse reporter Steven Adams reposted Kercheval's post and added a note that Gee wrote the forward to Benson's book, "College for the Common Wealth."

Asked if Kercheval's report was correct, WVU said on Friday afternoon, "We have nothing to add at this point to last night's news release."

House of Delegates Speaker Roger Hanshaw and UMass Chancellor Javier Reyes, who was the former dean of the WVU business school, were the other two candidates, Kercheval reported.

Interim Provost Paul Kreider

SEE BOG, A-3

INFRASTRUCTURE

Star City seeking urgent assistance from DOH

BY BEN CONLEY

BConley@DominioPost.com

Star City Public Works Director Phillip Davis isn't typically one to say, "I told you so."

But the truth of the matter is, he did tell them so.

Two years ago, when a crew with the West Virginia Division of Highways was finishing up repairs on a sinkhole in the parking lot of the former Texas Roadhouse location (now Mountain State Brewing), Davis pointed out that a nearby DOH stormwater outlet was going to be a problem.

"He said they'd take a look at it, but it never got any farther than that," Davis said.

And so, over the last two years or so, water flowing down Monongahela Boulevard has been collected, channeled

beneath Star City's North Main Street and dumped at the road's edge.

The soil supporting North Main has slowly eroded away until a portion of the asphalt surface is now suspended in air over an open cavity.

"There's supposed to be an extension on that pipe; probably a 20-foot extension. It's what we would call an 'elephant trunk.' The purpose is to take that water and release it farther down the hill away from the road," Davis said, explaining the extension separated at some point years back and was never replaced.

"They installed all of that and they were made aware of the situation roughly two years ago. Now we're at the

SEE URGENT, A-2

PREPARE FOR TAKEOFF



Ron Rittenhouse/The Dominion Post

These geese get ready to take off from their chilly swimming spot off of Cobun Creek Road. After several days in the teens, with Real Feel temperatures in the single digits, the area will see a bit of a warm-up over the weekend. Look for lows in the 20s today, with the mercury rising into the 40s. Sunday will see similar temps, and the thermometer could reach into the low 50s by Monday. We may get a little sunshine over the weekend, as well.

POLICY

W.Va. Senate passes religious/philosophical exemptions to school-age vaccine requirements

BY STEVEN ALLEN ADAMS

For The Dominion Post

CHARLESTON – After a three-day delay, the West Virginia Senate approved Friday a bill to allow parents and guardians to cite religious or philosophical concerns to get out of the state's mandatory immunization requirements for school-age children, but not without bipartisan opposition.

Senate Bill 460, relating to vaccine requirements, passed the Senate Friday morning in a 20-12 vote with two senators absent. The bill now crosses the hall to the House of Delegates for review.

SB 460, introduced on behalf of Gov. Patrick Morrisey, would allow parents and guardians to object to the requirements of

the state's program for compulsory immunization of public and private school children by citing a religious or philosophical belief.

"I want to make it clear no one is taking away anybody's vaccines," said Senate Health and Human Resources Committee Chairwoman Laura Wakim Chapman. "I think vaccines are safe, they do prevent disease, and I encourage everybody to get vaccinated unless somebody has a religious or philosophical issue to it. Simple as that...I know of no person in this body who is anti-vaccination, but there are real harms being done by our law as currently written and this bill is done to fix those harms."

Morrisey signed an executive order in January ordering the Bureau of Public Health and the state health officer to establish a process for religious and philosophical exemptions to school-age vaccines, citing the Equal Protection for Religion Act approved by the Legislature in 2023.

SB 460 would officially codify Morrisey's executive order. The bill, as amended by the Senate Health and Human Resources Committee, would allow the parent or guardian to present a written statement to the administrator of the child's school or operator of a state-regulated child care center that the mandatory vaccination requirements cannot be met because it

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Ron Rittenhouse/The Dominion Post
A DOH stormwater outlet has eroded the soil from beneath Star City's North Main Street, exposing a gas line.

URGENT

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point where that road is going to start caving in. It's become very, very dangerous," he said. "That's where we stand right now. We're trying to get [DOH] involved and get this taken care of before somebody gets hurt, or worse."

Davis and Star City Mayor Sharon Doyle were supposed to meet with a DOH representative at the site on Friday but that meeting was pushed to Monday due to weather. "We're on the books for Monday, and fingers crossed that meeting goes through because this is a very dangerous situation," Doyle said. "It's a

main entry and exit for the residents and businesses on Brewer Hill. It's not the only way in and out, but it's heavily used." North Main is already cracking under the strain. In addition to making the road unstable, the erosion has now exposed a gas line. The town has cones in

place reducing the street to a single lane. "We don't have concrete barriers or anything. Honestly, it would be scary to even put that kind of weight on there. We're asking the state road to maybe come out and put some barricades up so nothing will happen," Davis said.

SENATE

FROM PAGE A-1

conflicts with the religious or philosophical beliefs of the parent, legal guardian, or emancipated child.

The Senate's two lone Democratic members joined with 10 Republican members to oppose SB 460, citing the state's strong school-age vaccination rates for keeping the spread of communicable diseases low. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, West Virginia's MMR vaccine coverage rate for the 2023-2024 school year was 98.3%, slightly above the healthy people target of 95%. That's up from 95.6% during the 2022-2023 school year, and above West Virginia's MMR coverage rate during the 2019-2020 school year of 98.2%.

"The public safety, the public health, and the eradication of disease is certainly a compelling state interest," said state Sen. Joey Garcia, D-Marion. "I think the constituents that have reached out to me fear that this is going to cause a strain on our health system, a strain on our families, and again possibly the worst of the worst: the death of somebody who is vulnerable, who's immunocompromised, and who otherwise needs the support."

"I believe in childhood immunizations; I believe they work for the vast majority of people," said state Sen. Robbie Morris, R-Randolph. "The philosophical exemption is a problem with this bill. If we go down the route of allowing people to opt out of public health and public safety requirements

because they don't like them, I feel that is a slippery slope."

The committee substitute for SB 460 would prohibit parochial and religious schools from setting their own immunization requirements, requiring these schools to also accommodate the religious and philosophical exemptions cited by parents and guardians.

Several senators on both sides of the political aisle raised concerns with this provision following a statement Wednesday from the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston stating it would defend its constitutional rights to continuing mandating immunizations in its schools.

"Religious liberty for me, but not for thee," said state Sen. Ryan Weld, R-Brooke. "What this bill does...is that it uses the power of the state - the power of government - to dictate to a church how it can operate itself. A church can no longer say we operate the school and we're going to do so in a manner that we see fit. This uses the power of the state to dictate to a church."

"We know there's going to be a lawsuit over this bill," said Senate Minority Leader Mike Woelfel, R-Cabell. "We know that, among other parties, the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston has signaled through its press release that it will go to court to protect its religious freedom, its right of religious expression, and its right to control the enrollment and administration of its schools."

The bill allows children to continue to participate in extracurricular activities and it allows for civ-

il suits against schools that discriminate against these students due to not being vaccinated. State Sen. Mike Oliverio, R-Monongalia, asked whether the civil suit provision could mean a religious school could be compelled to admit an unvaccinated student against the school's religious beliefs.

"If a Catholic school... were to have a family show up for school and they indicate that they're going to avail themselves of the state law for a philosophical or religious exemption, are you saying that the school would be required to admit those children," Oliverio asked Woelfel.

"Yes...the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston would be compelled to take unvaccinated students under this," Woelfel said.

State Code requires children attending school in West Virginia to show proof of immunization for diphtheria; pertussis; tetanus; polio; measles, mumps, rubella (MMR); varicella; and hepatitis B unless proof of a medical exemption can be shown. West Virginia only provides for a narrow medical exemption to immunizations. Some form of mandatory immunization law has been on West Virginia's books for 88 years.

State Sen. Tom Takubo, R-Kanawha, is a pulmonologist and an executive with WVU Medicine. The vote on SB 460 was postponed until Friday at Takubo's request, who was at a conference on the opioid crisis in Florida for most of the week. Takubo said a petition was submitted to the Senate by more than

6,500 parents opposing SB 460. He also cited dozens of state medical, health care, and education associations that oppose the bill.

"There are few things we can't fix in the Legislature...one good thing about that is we always have the ability to come back. We can pretty much fix anything that we mess up on. You can't bring back a child...You will never take that pain away from a parent who has lost a kid from a preventable childhood disease that we haven't seen here in many, many decades."

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 30 states offer a religious exemption to mandatory immunization requirements, while 13 states offer both a religious and philosophical exemption. And two states - Louisiana and Minnesota - do not specify whether a non-medical immunization exemption needs to be for religious or personal reasons.

"We're kind of in the middle there sticking out like a sore thumb," Chapman said, holding up a map showing the five states with no religious or philosophical exemptions. "This law is not something crazy that anti-vaxxers want. This is bringing us up with 45 other states that realize that religious beliefs need to be respected and...it's safe and effective for public health to allow these children to have a religious or philosophical exemption."

Steven Allen Adams can be reached at sadams@newsandsentinel.com

TRAFFIC

University Town Centre lights coming online early next week

BY BEN CONLEY

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The years-long effort to place traffic lights at two dangerous University Town Centre intersections is coming to an end.

Granville Mayor Patty Lewis told The Dominion Post that the tentative plan is to get temporary signage in place warning drivers of the new traffic signals, which will be flashing yellow on Monday. Then, on Tuesday, the lights would switch to normal function.

"That's the plan as of this afternoon," Lewis said Friday. "Of course everything is based on timing, and we don't know how the weather is going to be."

The push for new lights stretches back to September 2021, when Lewis approached the commission about two problem areas

— one where University Town Centre Drive passes between Walmart and the WVU Medicine facility, and another at the bottom of the hill, between Granville Square and Sesame Drive, which provides access to Chick-fil-A, Wendy's, Panda Express, etc.

The lights were paid for through a three-way deal between Granville, the Monongalia County Commission and developer WestRidge, each providing \$400,000.

Additional concrete and blacktop work needs to be finished up at both intersections in the coming days. That work will be followed by final striping.

"We're just excited to finally get those lights up and running," Lewis said. "It's been a long time coming."

COURTS

Judge cancels Mayor Adams' trial and leaves corruption charges intact

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A federal judge has adjourned the corruption trial for New York City Mayor Eric Adams and appointed counsel to advise him on how to handle the Justice Department's request to drop charges against the Democrat. The order issued Friday by Judge Dale E. Ho means he won't decide before mid-March whether

to grant the request to drop the charges against the embattled mayor of the nation's largest city. At a hearing Wednesday, a government lawyer cited an executive order by President Donald Trump as he defended the request to drop charges. Adams confirmed then that he accepted that charges could later be reinstated because he is sure of his innocence.

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All advertising (display and classified) published in The Dominion Post is subject to the applicable rate card, copies of which are available from the advertising department, The Dominion Post, 1251 Earl L. Core Road, Morgantown, WV 26505. The Dominion Post reserves the right not to accept an advertiser's order. Only publication of an advertisement shall constitute final acceptance of the advertiser's order. For final rates or complaints, contact the advertising department.

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HOME DELIVERY/CUSTOMER SERVICE: 304-291-9456

Circulation Manager.....Barry Price
Office hours: 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday

Subscription rates: 6 weeks, \$31.50; 13 weeks, \$68; 26 weeks, \$126.50; 52 weeks, \$250
Single copies: Daily, \$2; Sunday, \$3
SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NONREFUNDABLE.

POSTMASTER: Address all communications, change-of-address notices, undeliverable mail and subscription orders to The Dominion Post, 1251 Earl L. Core Road, Morgantown WV 26505.

USPS 159680

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Dominion Post is printed five days a week - Wednesday through Sunday, with e-edition publication seven days a week at www.dominionpost.com.

The Dominion Post is a member of the Associated Press. Periodicals postage paid at Morgantown, WV 26505.

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OBITUARIES

Donald Eugene Godfrey, Jr.

Donald Eugene Godfrey, Jr., affectionately known as Don, passed away Thursday, February 20, 2025, at the age of 68, while at Mon Health Medical Center in Morgantown. The cherished son of Donald E. Godfrey, Sr. and Christine Osecky Godfrey, he was born November 3, 1956, in Morgantown, a place he was proud to call home throughout his life.



Don graduated from University High School in 1975 and later from West Virginia University, where he earned his degree in physical education and safety.

His passion for athletics and education was exemplified through his dedicated career as a Phys Ed teacher, adored by students at various elementary schools, finally retiring from Cheat Lake Elementary in 2024.

An inspirational figure in the local sports community, Don touched many lives as a basketball coach at Suncrest Middle School and softball and volleyball coach at University High School. His love for the game extended onto the court, where he proudly officiated basketball games for both college and high school leagues over an admirable span of 40 years.

Don's commitment to his faith was evident as a member of the Riverside United Methodist Church.

His spirit was further illuminated through his unwavering support of the West Virginia University, Steelers and Pirates teams, endearing him to fellow sports enthusiasts.

His kindness and friendly nature left a lasting impression on those who

were fortunate enough to cross paths with him.

Don is survived by his loving father, Donald E. Godfrey, Sr.; his mother, Christine Godfrey; his sister, Ruth Godfrey; aunt, Helen Selensky; and many beloved cousins.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made, in Don's memory, to the Westside Senior Center, 500 Dupont Road, Morgantown, WV 26501; or the Chestnut Mountain Ranch, 244 Ponderosa Ponds Road, Morgantown, WV 26508.

Friends may gather in McCulla Funeral Home from 2 to 5 Sunday, February 23, and again from 10 until the 11 a.m. funeral service Monday, February 24, with Pastor Jim Weber officiating. As a lifelong Mountaineer fan, to honor his memory, all are invited to wear their favorite WVU Mountaineer attire to both the visitation and funeral services.

Burial will follow at Beverly Hills Cemetery.

Condolences may be sent to the family at www.Mcculla.com



Michael Luther Squires

Michael Luther Squires, 62, of Morgantown, passed away Wednesday, February 19, 2025, in his home. Michael was born May 20, 1962.

McCulla Funeral Home is providing assistance, with any information regarding his family please

call the funeral home at (304) 291-3458.



NATION

AP sues 3 Trump administration officials, citing freedom of speech

Associated Press

The Associated Press sued three Trump administration officials Friday over access to presidential events, citing freedom of speech in asking a federal judge to stop the blocking of its journalists. "We'll see them in court," the White House press secretary said in response.

The lawsuit was filed Friday afternoon in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., 10 days after the White House began restricting access to the news agency. It was assigned to U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden, a Trump nominee.

The AP says its case is about an unconstitutional effort by the White House to control speech — in this case not changing its style from the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America," as President Donald Trump did last month with an executive order.

"The press and all people in the United States have the right to choose their own words and not be retaliated against by the government," the AP said in its lawsuit, which names White House chief of staff Susan Wiles, deputy chief of staff Taylor Budowich and press secretary Karoline Leavitt.

"This targeted attack on the AP's editorial independence and ability to gather and report the news strikes at the very core of the First Amendment," the news agency said. "This court should remedy it immediately." The Constitution's First Amendment guarantees freedom of the press, speech and religion and bars the government from obstructing any of them.

Leavitt said that she learned about the lawsuit Friday while driving from the White House to an appearance at the Conservative Political Action Conference.

"I wanted to get the White House counsel on the phone before taking this stage to see what I



President Donald Trump speaks to reporters in the Oval Office of the White House, Feb. 13, 2025, in Washington.

can and cannot say but, look, we feel we are in the right in this position," she said. "We're going to ensure that truth and accuracy is present at that White House every single day."

Trump directly cited AP's editorial decision

In stopping the AP from attending press events at the White House and Mar-a-Lago, or flying on Air Force One in the agency's customary spot, the Trump team directly cited the AP's decision not to fully follow the president's renaming.

"We're going to keep them out until such time as they agree that it's the Gulf of America," Trump said Tuesday.

This week, about 40 news organizations signed onto a letter organized by the White House Correspondents Association, urging the White House to reverse its policy against the AP. They included outlets like Fox News Channel and Newsmax, where many of the on-air commentators are Trump supporters.

While AP journalists have still been allowed on White House grounds, they have been kept out of the "pool" of journalists that cover events in smaller spaces and report back to its readers and other reporters. The AP has been part of White House pools for more

than a century.

The lawsuit said the AP had made "several unsuccessful efforts" to persuade the administration that its conduct was unlawful. Julie Pace, AP's senior vice president and executive editor, traveled to Florida this week to meet with Wiles.

The AP Stylebook is a sticking point

In an email to AP, Wiles said the news organization was targeted because its influential stylebook is used as a standard by many journalists, scholars and students across the country, the lawsuit said. She said the administration was hopeful the name change would be reflected in the AP Stylebook "where American audiences are concerned."

The Stylebook is used by international audiences, as well as those within the United States. The AP has said that its guidance was offered to promote clarity, and that even though Gulf of Mexico will continue to be used, journalists should also note Trump's action to change the name.

A Trump executive order to change the name of the United States' largest mountain back to Mount McKinley from Denali is being recognized by the AP Stylebook. Trump has the authority to do so because the mountain

is completely within the country he oversees, AP has said.

Wiles also wrote to the AP that its stylebook's influence "has been misused, and at times weaponized, to push a divisive and partisan agenda," according to the lawsuit.

In an Axios story last week, Budowich noted other AP Stylebook entries that have rankled some conservatives. They include the decision to capitalize Black but not white in racial references, guidance on gender-affirming medical care and direction not to use the term "illegal immigrants."

In a radio interview with Fox News' Brian Kilmeade on Friday, Trump referred to the Associated Press as "radical left lunatics." He said that "Associated Press is a third-rate outfit with a first-rate name."

He said "just about everybody" accepted the Gulf of America name change but "AP wants to be cute." There has been a mixed response from other news organizations: The New York Times and Washington Post are continuing to use Gulf of Mexico, while Fox News has switched to Trump's choice. Google Maps is using Gulf of America for users in the United States.

BOG

FROM PAGE A-1

praised the board during the Friday morning BOG meeting. "Thank you so much for your commitment and diligence." He also thanked the presidential search committee and its chair, Patrice Harris, who also serves as BOG vice chair.

Practice facility

The BOG on Friday morning approved construction of Phase I of the Pride Practice Facility, with this phase budgeted at \$1,662,000.

The facility will be constructed at Med Center Field on the Health Sciences campus, along W.Va. 705 next to the Mountaineer Station parking garage.

Phase 1 is creation of an artificial turf field and relocation of the band tower. The field will be named Don Wilcox Field. The practice facility FAQ page calls Wilcox "a dear man whose marching band leadership and legacy are unmatched to this day."

Construction is scheduled to begin March 1 and expected to be completed in July in time for the start of fall band camp. When the Pride isn't using the field, WVU said, it will be used for intramural sports.

The site is already lit for nighttime use.

The FAQ page notes that the College of Creative Arts Development Office



David Beard/The Dominion Post

Board members listen to a presentation.

and the WVU Foundation began fundraising for the facility nearly five years ago. About \$1.25 million has been raised and the money will still support this project in the new location (it was set for a time to be constructed at Mylan Park but WVU announced the relocation to Med Fields in March 2024).

The money raised thus far is in the WVU Foundation account to be used for turf field and facility construction costs, the FAQ page says.

Addressing uncertainty

President Gordon Gee addressed the board about the uncertainty that's arisen from federal measures to trim the \$1.83 trillion deficit and to federal and state measures to dismantle social justice programs that some say lean

too far left.

"I want to thank the faculty and staff for their patience as we work through these complex issues that we are seeing at both the state and the national level," he said. "In these changing times our university appreciates more than ever the loyal support provided by our alumni, faculty, staff and students."

In this context, Gee reminded the BOG of the mid-February announcement that WVU was reaffirmed as an R-1 university, the highest research ranking.

WVU is one just 187 universities, among 4,500, to attain that designation, he said. In 2023, the year used for the classification, WVU expended more than \$246 million on research, with more than \$100 million of that from federal agencies.

But on Feb. 7, the National Institutes of Health announced that it will reduce indirect cost recovery at research institutions to a flat 15% from any previously negotiated rates. This affects new grants, as well as existing grants, WVU said.

WVU previously explained that direct research costs cover researcher salaries, student stipends, supplies and some equipment. Indirect costs cover the university's expenses for heat and air, building maintenance, chemical and radiation safety and disposal, library access, IT access, cybersecurity, human subjects and animal welfare support, centralized research facilities, and the administration and oversight of awards to ensure that funds are spent appropriately and responsibly.

Gee said Friday that WVU leaders are working with the state's Congressional delegation regarding the cut. "Our university, unlike some, does not benefit from indirect costs."

WVU projects it would lose about \$12 million in research dollars, he said, "which will significantly limit our research enterprise. ... We have every confidence that we can make a very strong case" for demonstrating WVU's unique situation.

Helen V. Smith



Gathering

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Is Trump ready to leave Europe to its own devices?

European allies knew their relationship with the second Trump Administration would be challenging. Even so, the shocks they've received from Washington in recent days constitute a crisis. The warning, more or less: Shape up or the Americans are shipping out.

Start with the Ukraine war. This is the largest military conflict on European soil since 1945, and the Continent's leaders recognize the stakes for their security. But Mr. Trump's message is that the U.S. doesn't care what Europeans think about how the war should be resolved.

Mr. Trump spoke on the phone to Russian President Vladimir Putin last week about ending the conflict, a development that caught Europe by surprise. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced, also without consulting allies, that Ukraine shouldn't expect to regain territory lost during Russia's first incursion in 2014. Asked at a conference whether Europeans would play a role in peace talks, Mr. Trump's Ukraine envoy Keith Kellogg said "that is not going to happen."

These are slaps to North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies whose security is threatened by Mr. Putin's imperial ambitions and that have contributed cash and equipment toward Ukraine's defense. The insults also recognize reality, however: Too many European governments, especially the largest, have been too slow and stingy in providing support to Kyiv either for lack of strategic conviction or decades of spending on welfare instead of their militaries.

The Trump Administration appears unwilling to let Europe leverage its noisy but dilatory contributions to the Ukraine war into a seat at the negotiating table. Much of Mr. Trump's approach to peace talks is all wrong for America's own interests, including Mr. Hegseth's hint that the U.S. could agree with the Kremlin to reduce American troop numbers in Europe. But Europe has chosen to put itself in the position of taking others' decisions about its security rather than making its own.

Which is what we take to be Team Trump's bigger theme in Europe last week. At a summit on artificial intelligence in Paris, Vice President JD Vance offered a bracing warning that Europe will leave itself behind in the next industrial revolution if it overregulates today's frontier technology. Europeans aren't accustomed to being told so bluntly by U.S. officials that Europe is impoverishing itself with its dirigisme, but someone had to say it.

Then in Munich Mr. Vance delivered a more surprising rebuke when he asserted that Europe's biggest security danger is "the threat from within." He cited a political culture that aggressively tamps down on dissent, often in the name of combating "misinformation" or other ills such as racism, as mainstream politicians worry their power will be eroded by insurgent parties of the right and left. The subtext is that if Europeans expect Americans to defend Europe for the sake of democracy, Europe needs to be recognizably democratic.

These interventions have triggered howls across Europe, sometimes with reason: German politicians have cause to be aggrieved at Mr. Vance for expressing veiled sympathy for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party a week before an election. It was a mistake, since he undermined center-right Friedrich Merz, who's likely to be the next chancellor and is much more pro-American than the AfD.

Yet in general Europeans are glumly conceding the Trump team has a point, at least on Ukraine and defense matters. French President Emmanuel Macron is convening an emergency summit of key European leaders this week to discuss their approach to Ukraine talks. They should heed Mr. Kellogg's exhortation that the way for Europe to play a role is "coming up with concrete proposals, ideas, ramp up (defense) spending."

On the latter point, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said this weekend he'd overrule his own chancellor of the exchequer and insist defense spending rise to 2.5% of GDP, rather than the Treasury's preferred 2.3% goal. Yet military leaders think more is needed, and even this goal has no deadline and will involve messy politicking in an economy that's barely growing and when the government finances are a mess. Hence Mr. Vance's exhortations about the importance of economic growth.

A U.S. withdrawal from Europe would be a historic mistake, and damaging to American interests. But after last week Europe is on notice that Mr. Trump may be willing to leave the Continent to its own devices. Europe needs to act accordingly, and an economic revival and greater investment in its own defense are essential and urgent.

— The Wall Street Journal



America joins the jackals

As I watched election returns on the evening of Nov. 5, 2024, I was struck by the sense that Americans had missed the memo. Across the nation, in blue states as well as red, county after county showed a marked rightward shift. It was so seemingly normal. What do you do when groceries are much more expensive than four years ago, the border is flooded with immigrants? You vote for the other guy.

It has been only four weeks since Trump took the oath of office, and I wonder whether casual voters or even those who truly despised Joe Biden have taken onboard what they've done. The American republic is barreling toward a constitutional crisis as the president attempts to rule as an autocrat ("He who saves his country does not violate any law," he claimed), a heedless billionaire smashes through people's lives and complex systems he doesn't understand with sadistic glee, the Justice Department descends into corrupt bargains antithetical to the ethical standards upheld for two centuries, a Putin/Assad apologist sits atop our intelligence agencies, a conspiracy theorist/anti-vaccine fool directs our health agencies, and the United States is in the process of reversing 80 years of world leadership.

Let's focus on the global about-face, because however grievous the other depredations, they are, at least in theory, reversible. Abandoning world leadership is not.

Violating the understanding that Vladimir Putin's naked aggression made him a pariah among decent nations (he is an indicted war criminal), Trump engaged in a 90-minute phone call with him (over Volodymyr Zelenskyy's head), invited the dictator to visit the United States and suggested that Russia be asked to rejoin the G7. All of these marks of favor were offered in exchange for Putin doing what? Promising to withdraw troops? Returning the kidnapped Ukrainian children? Agreeing to cease targeting hospitals and power plants? No. For chatting on the phone with the world's most credulous narcissist.

Next, the out-of-his-depth weekend TV host-turned secretary of Defense offered two unilateral concessions to Putin by declaring that "The United States does not believe that NATO membership for Ukraine is a realistic outcome of a negotiated settlement" and that no U.S. troops would be part of any security guarantee to Ukraine.

Isolating Ukraine from Europe and keeping it out of NATO has been Russia's aim for 30 years. While NATO membership was not offered, it was never entirely rebuffed either -- until now. Though Pete Hegseth attempted to walk back his comments in the face of criticism, the damage was done. Before a single water glass was filled at the negotiating table, the United States conceded some of Russia's main aims. Besides, much worse damage was right around the corner, emanating from the vice president.

JD Vance delivered the most shameful address by an American leader to a European audience in living memory. Vance did not mention Russia's continuing aggression against Ukraine at all. Instead, he presumed to lecture America's allies on their supposed failure to uphold our shared values. How so? By restricting speech too harshly and -- the truly soul-crushing part -- being too intolerant of neo-Nazis. In sync with co-president Elon Musk, who has blessed the AfD as the only hope for Germany, Vance scolded the Germans for being unwilling to enter into coalition with a party that wants a "180-degree turnaround in the politics of remembrance" about the Holocaust, plans to deport all Muslims from Germany, and believes Germans should be proud of their soldiers from both world wars.

Not only is it morally bankrupt to ignore the fascistic aggression of Russia; it is

galling to watch an American leader who supported the attempted violent overthrow of our 2020 election and who has called for the president to defy the Supreme Court and rule as an autocrat to presume to speak as a small-d democrat. European diplomats exiting the meeting told the Financial Times that "America itself is now a threat to Europe."

All of that was a prelude to Trump's total betrayal of Ukraine -- and with it, America's global role. In a screed that mixed Kremlin talking points (Zelenskyy is a "dictator") with Trumpian grotesqueries (alleging that Ukraine, not Russia, started the war, that Zelenskyy was a "modestly successful comedian" who hoodwinked Biden into spending \$350 billion on defending Ukraine when the true figure is \$183 billion that Republicans and Democrats approved), Trump has surrendered Ukraine to its tormentors without so much as a backward glance. On the contrary, he's bursting with self-congratulation for this "negotiation to end the war with Russia" which "all admit only TRUMP ... can do."

What the world knows, and will not unlearn, is that the United States cannot be trusted. Faith in America, and in basic American decency and goodwill, has kept the peace for generations, but that is over. Nations that refrained from getting nuclear weapons because they were secure under the American umbrella will rush to get bombs. Nations that resisted China's bullying will make their accommodations. The Taiwanese can kiss their independence and their freedom goodbye. Formerly close allies will not share intelligence about impending terrorist threats.

That is what Americans did on Nov. 5. Voters were thinking about high costs. Perhaps they are beginning to see what a price we will all pay for that election.

Mona Charen is policy editor of The Bulwark and host of the "Beg to Differ" podcast. Her new book, "Hard Right: The GOP's Drift Toward Extremism," is available now.



MONA CHAREN

'In war, there is no substitute for victory'

In his 1951 farewell address to Congress and the American public (known as the "old soldiers never die, they just fade away" speech), Army General Douglas MacArthur said something the Trump administration should recall as it seeks to end the war between Russia and Ukraine: "... once war is forced upon us, there is no other alternative than to apply every available means to bring it to a swift end. War's very object is victory, not prolonged indecision. In war, there is no substitute for victory."

While MacArthur was referring to wars engaged in by the U.S., his philosophy could also be applied to the war between Russia and Ukraine.

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth appeared to let the cat out of the bag when he wrongly stated even before peace negotiations begin that Ukraine should

not expect to regain territory lost to Vladimir Putin's invasion of the sovereign nation. Putin has said he won't give an inch of Ukrainian land he has seized. European leaders have expressed alarm that they have not been consulted or included in negotiations, even while President Trump wants them to "do more" when it comes to helping Ukraine while simultaneously assisting in ending the war.

Has everyone forgotten what Neville Chamberlain told Adolf Hitler at their 1938 meeting in Munich? Chamberlain delighted the cunning Hitler, saying the fuhrer could keep the Sudeten-



CAL THOMAS

land (now the Czech Republic) he had invaded, thinking that would satisfy his ravenous territorial yearnings and bring "peace for our time." World War II came in large part because Hitler regarded the West as weak, preferring an illusory "peace" rather than his defeat.

When negotiating, especially with an evil adversary - Nazi Germany then and Russia's Vladimir Putin now - the worst strategy is to make concessions before talks formally begin. And to exclude Ukraine, the victim of the invasion, at least in initial talks, is like allowing an opponent in poker to have an extra ace.

President Trump promised to end the war on his first day in office, which seemed presumptuous, as well as impossible. It's now approaching his 30th day in office and the fighting continues.

Being a successful negotiator in business is one thing, as Trump thinks he has been. Doesn't he immodestly say that about himself? On the world stage it is quite different and more dangerous because lives are in danger, not just in Ukraine, but in other countries should Putin diagnose the West as lacking resolve and effectively giving him, as he might see it, a green light to invade other sovereign states in pursuit of his stated goal of "re-claiming" Russian territory lost following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Wall Street Journal columnist William McGurn is right when he asks "Will Ukraine be Trump's Vietnam? Consider the 1973 Paris Peace Accords. (National Security Adviser Henry) Kissinger won a Nobel Prize, but Saigon fell."

If victory is not the goal, what

else is there? General MacArthur characterized anything short of victory as "prolonged indecision." That lane only invites the spread of evil and harm to other nations if Ukraine's "allies" refuse to stand in the gap, or don't contribute enough to Kiev's protection.

If the Trump administration is not cautioned by what happened in 1938 when an evil monster was allowed to have his way with one state before invading others and launching the Holocaust, perhaps it needs another reminder of what occurred in 1973. Accommodating evil never ends well.

Readers may email **Cal Thomas** at tcaeditors@tribpub.com. Look for Cal Thomas' latest book "A Watchman in the Night: What I've Seen Over 50 Years Reporting on America" (HumanixBooks).

LITERACY

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library: An appeal to Indiana and plans for the annual fundraiser in Morgantown

BY JIM BISSETT

JBissett@DominionPost.com

Fostering literacy and critical thinking isn't a 9-to-5 job.

That's why Dolly Parton's Imagination Library set down some words for Mike Braun, the governor of Indiana, earlier this week.

Braun is asking lawmakers to consider a key edit in their state's proposed budget for this fiscal year.

Said document doesn't include a line item as it has in past years which would provide matching funds for the above literacy program the popular

Nashville singer established in 1995.

The organization issued a statement to the governor and lawmakers.

The statement, in part: "The beauty of the Imagination Library is that it unites us all – regardless of politics – because every child deserves the chance to dream big and succeed."

Across Indiana, the program is bankrolled in part by local United Way chapters, as is the case here.

A lack of matched funds, literacy proponents in the Hoosier State worry, could shelve the

program altogether.

Parton's library puts books in the hands of needy youngsters (free to them and their families) who may not receive them otherwise.

Braille and audio editions are included among the titles, regularly mailed to children across the nation from newborn to age 5.

The United Way of Monongalia and Preston Counties directs local effort here, with support by the state Department of Education and June Harless Center at Marshall University.

June 19 is the date for

this year's "Power of Purse" United Way fundraiser in Morgantown for the library. Locally, the United Way declined comment and the Harless Center didn't return calls in time for this story.

Meanwhile, stories are what got Lydotta Taylor, who has worked with Power of the Purse over the years, into all this.

She's a former teacher who is the founder and CEO of the EdVenture Group, a tech and professional development company in the University City.

As a young mom, she read aloud to her children

while they were growing up.

Back in her classroom days, she was always encouraging her students to crack open a book – and not just for serious learning.

Taylor also wanted them to enjoy the fun, escapist entertainment of simply digging into a good book.

"And I taught math and science," she said.

Parton said while she was motivated by the power of words and stories to start the program, she was also honoring her father, who was illiterate – which was both ironic

and poignant, the singer said.

Robert Lee Parton valued education, his daughter continued, but the patriarch was born into poverty and left school early to help provide for his parents.

That cycle continued in Sevier County, Tenn., in the house where Dolly grew up.

"Daddy couldn't read or write," she said, "and that was crippling to him."

In today's climate where books are being banned in schools, Parton doesn't want the book offerings crippled by ballots or a lack of bucks.

A big win - and a game plan



Ally Rader, a Child Passenger Safety Technician at WVU Medicine Children's, shows Young how to properly secure a car seat.

Custom Steelers F-150, child safety seat presentation at Neighborhood Ford Store

DPNews@DominionPost.com

When Olivia Young, of Morgantown, won the Official Truck of the Pittsburgh Steelers last month, she was just days away from another special happening in her family -- delivering her second son.

On Friday, Young received her custom F-150 from Neighborhood Ford Store at Ford of Uniontown. Her keys were

handed over by Joseph Thurby, chairman of Neighborhood Ford Store, who took the opportunity not only to celebrate, but to promote child travel safety information at the same time.

The event took place at Ford of Morgantown, located at 501 Mary Jane Wood Circle.

"We are happy to celebrate with Olivia and her family as she receives

her grand prize in the Toughest Truck, Toughest Team Sweepstakes – and in addition we are grateful to team with the Child Passenger Safety Technicians at WVU Medicine Children's Hospital to promote vital safety information regarding children traveling by car," Thurby said.

According to information from WVU Medicine, the National Safety Council

estimates car seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71% for infants younger than 1 year old and 54% for toddlers (1 to 4 years old) in passenger cars.

Although these numbers prove that the proper use of car seats is vital for children, there is an alarming rate of misuse, around 74%, according to the National Digital Child Seat Check Form.

MON COUNTY

'Trigger Happy' shoots, scores as dark comedy

WHEN ART TRIES TO POKE FUN AT BOTH SIDES OF THE POLITICAL DIVIDE, IT OFTEN ENDS UP IN A MIDDLE SPACE THAT DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING OF INTEREST. In her debut feature film, "Trigger Happy," which comes to VOD on Feb. 25, Tiffany Kim Stevens avoids that trap by creating a story with so many abrasive characters that you really can see just how many problems exist across the board.

George Decker (Tyler Poelle) is completely unhappy in his retro-future version of America. He works at a job he hates. He is struggling financially. And he resents his bread-winning wife, Annie (Elsha Kim). The only time he feels some sense of peace is on his walk to work when he stops at a billboard and daydreams about a trip to the Bahamas. But even that is ruined by a girl who shoots him in the knees with a BB gun. He feels stuck until he decides he will murder Annie for her insurance money. But in order to do that, he will need to figure out how to get around their friends Gemma (Christina Kirkman) and Mikey (Matt Lowe) in order to pull off the scheme.

"Trigger Happy" turns its satirical gaze at relationships, capitalism and politics with varying degrees of success. The political satire is decent – a woman on a soapbox with a megaphone declaring that you can only receive health care with the purchase of a gun – but beyond that, it seems a bit muddy. When the film focuses on things like relationships and consumerism, it is far more effective.

The performances in this are solid across the board, which is something because these characters are almost entirely unlikeable. Despite the fact that we don't want to root for any of the people in the film, there are still enough moments of hu-



ALISE CHAFFINS

manity for us to connect with them – a testament to the acting brought to the table.

Where "Trigger Happy" really shines is as a dark comedy. The humor in this is often laugh-out-loud funny. One of the best scenes is a birthday party at the restaurant where George works. The commercial for the Wow! Sponge is a phenomenal riff on any number of "As seen on TV" style infomercials. And the most gruesome death in the film is likely to elicit a chuckle, even as you stare in horror at the screen.

The other positive of the film is its aesthetic. It has kind of a 50s look in the costuming and set design, but the characters have cell phones and drive modern cars. This blend of modern and retro is eye-catching and contributes to the uneasy feeling that pervades the film.

Some of the scatter-shot approach to satire definitely misses in this film, but the bulk of it lands and lands hard. If you need to like your characters to connect with a film, "Trigger Happy" probably isn't for you. But if you are willing to engage with these flawed characters, you may be pleasantly surprised.

Alise Chaffins is a Morgantown film critic and author. She is a member of several critics organizations, including GALECA, OFTA and IFSCA. You can connect with her on social media at @AliseChaffins and on her Substack at MacGuffin or Meaning.

IT HAS KIND OF A 50S LOOK IN THE COSTUMING AND SET DESIGN, BUT THE CHARACTERS HAVE CELL PHONES AND DRIVE MODERN CARS.

INTERVIEW

Director of 'Unbreakable Boy' shares experience working on film

EDITOR'S NOTE

Read a review of "The Unbreakable Boy" in Sunday's edition of The Dominion Post.

BY ALISE CHAFFINS

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"The Unbreakable Boy" opens in theaters this weekend. It tells the story of a boy with autism and osteogenesis imperfecta, often called brittle bone disease. The film is based on Scott LeRette's memoir of the same name about

parenting his son, Austin. The Dominion Post had an opportunity to talk with Jon Gunn, the film's director and co-writer.

When asked about choosing to adapt LeRette's book, Gunn said, "This book came across my desk, and I read it and was so charmed by it – by the voice and point of view of Austin, this kid who had brittle bone disease and autism and such an exuberant life. As a parent, I really

related to the struggles of feeling often like you're failing and how your own struggles and brokenness can maybe impact your children. And it was a wonderful balance for me at the time of a story that had joy and suffering and comedy and levity and heartbreak. I was looking for something to write that we could make when the world was sort of shut down. And so this was a small enough story. I wrote it very quickly.

(Zachary) Levi read it on a Friday, accepted it on a Saturday, and we just all fell in love with Austin and with this family."

Because autism plays prominently in the film, it was important for the crew to make Austin's story as authentic as possible. Gunn worked with the LeRettes and autism consultants during the script's writing and production.

In speaking about that

SEE SHARES, A-6

STATE

CASA counts in W.Va., Fairmont State study shows

BY JIM BISSETT

JBissett@DominionPost.com

FAIRMONT – A study released last week by Fairmont State University told a lot of people in the field what they already knew.

That is, West Virginia's Court Appointed Special Advocates – CASAs – are consistently known to generate measurable, positive outcomes for children and teenagers

in foster care across the Mountain State.

CASAs advocate for the above youngsters mired in abusive and neglectful circumstances in foster homes.

The study looked at a three-year span from 2019 to 2021, using numbers chronicled by the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System and the National Data Archive on Child

Abuse and Neglect.

“The results of this project demonstrate the positive difference their volunteers make for our state's most vulnerable children,” school president Mike Davis said.

A positive difference with one key caveat, however.

That is, CASA, which is all-volunteer, can't work – if CASA isn't there.

In counties where

CASA is a presence, 25% of children in foster care were more likely to be adopted or reunited with their families – opposed to the 3% of kids in counties not served by the advocates.

And close to 40% of foster children in a CASA county were more likely to be lifted from a neglectful home over the 7% of their counterparts at such addresses in such locales

not served.

Shanna Gray, who is CASA's state executive director, said she appreciates the study, both for what it shows, and for it doesn't – in the counties that are still outposts from the advocacy.

“This study reinforces the urgent need for sustainable funding to serve more children in every West Virginia county,” she said.

Meanwhile, Fairmont State University this past fall began offering unique academic outreach on its Locust Avenue campus for high school-aged youngsters still in foster care here.

Under the Middle College program, students can earn their high school diploma – and a two-year associate degree – at the same time.

Girl Scouts celebrate National Cookie Weekend at West Virginia legislature

DPNews@DominionPost.com

CHARLESTON – Almost 100 Girl Scouts celebrated the launch of National Girl Scout Cookie Weekend at the West Virginia State Capitol on Friday.

Caregivers and adult volunteers accompanied 88 youth members as they showcased projects, toured the facility and received a Girl Scout Day at the Legislature proclamation from the West Virginia House of Delegates.

Intended to highlight the power of Girl Scouting, the event provided an opportunity for elected representatives to explore the outcomes of participation, particularly in the Girl Scout Cookie Program.

“This event gives Girl Scouts firsthand experience with civic engagement and a unique exposure to the democratic process,” said Beth Casey, CEO of Girl Scouts of Black Diamond Council. “It also gives our state-wide representatives a chance to learn about the life skills girls gain through participation.”

Serving as the largest entrepreneurial program in the world, the Girl Scout Cookie Sale offers a wealth of invaluable entrepreneurial skills, including goal setting, money management, decision-making, people skills and business ethics.

Each box of cookies sold helps Girl Scouts develop an indomitable entrepreneurial spirit, gaining courage, confidence and character as they conquer new feats and embark on new adventures.

To celebrate National Girl Scout Cookie Weekend, Girl Scouts of Black Diamond Council is offering a free shipping promotion through Sunday.

Those interested in supporting local Girl Scouts as they reach their cookie-selling goals should contact a local troop or place an online order at <https://girlscouts.info/cookies>. A purchase of 12 boxes of cookies is required to claim free shipping.

For more information on local Girl Scout troops, visit bdgsc.org.

Vandalia Health Mon Medical Center receives Pathway to Excellence designation for positive work environment

DPNews@DominionPost.com

Vandalia Health Mon Medical Center announced it has received the Pathway to Excellence designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). This honor recognizes the hospital's commitment to creating a positive and supportive work environment where nurses can thrive professionally and provide exceptional patient care.

Mon Medical Center joins Vandalia Health Preston Memorial Hospital, which received the Pathway to Excellence designation in 2023, in being recognized for dedication to nursing excellence. This achievement highlights the commitment of Mon Health System facilities to fostering environments that prioritize the well-being and professional growth of their nursing teams.

“This designation reflects our unwavering dedication to our nursing team and their role in delivering outstanding patient care,” said David Goldberg, president and CEO of Mon Health System and Davis Health System - Vandalia Health Northern Region, and executive vice president of Vandalia Health. “Our nurses are at the heart of what we do, and this recognition validates our efforts across our health system to support them in their vital work.”

The Pathway to Excellence designation is awarded to health care organizations that demonstrate a culture of sustained excellence in nursing practice. Organizations earning this recognition meet rigorous standards set by the ANCC, ensuring nurses



Submitted photo

Vandalia Health Mon Medical Center staff gather to celebrate the hospital's Pathway to Excellence designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

are integral to decision making, are offered professional development opportunities, and have a workplace that promotes work-life balance and job satisfaction.

To achieve the Pathway to Excellence designation, Mon Medical Center underwent an extensive application and evaluation process. This included an anonymous survey of nursing staff to confirm alignment with Pathway standards of shared decision-making, professional development, safety, qual-

ity, well-being and overall leadership support.

“The Pathway to Excellence designation signifies that Mon Medical Center is a place where nurses feel valued, empowered and engaged,” said Dr. Krystal Atkinson, chief administrative officer and chief nursing officer of Mon Medical Center and chief nursing executive of Mon Health System. “It demonstrates our commitment to fostering an environment where our nurses can thrive and provide com-

passionate, quality care to our patients.”

Christine Daniels, associate chief nursing officer, Mon Medical Center, said, “We are proud to join the ranks of elite health care organizations nationwide recognized for their dedication to nursing excellence. This milestone exemplifies our hospital's mission to improve the health and well-being of our community through superior care, innovation and a culture of excellence.”

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The Dominion Post

SHARES

FROM PAGE A-5

aspect, Gunn said, “So many people are impacted or have somebody in their life who's got autism. And you know, there's the saying, ‘If you know one person with autism, you know one person with autism.’ These are all just different people with their own personalities and their own experiences, their own world views. Some people with autism are nonverbal, and some are very verbal. Austin happens to be very ver-

bal. I love that about him, because I'm very verbal, and he has such a great voice, and I love the way he talks, and I love the way he thinks.”

He also added, “I think in many ways, autism hasn't been represented very well in media or very often, and certainly not with the point of view and narration from a person with autism. So I'm hoping that it's received the way that we want it to be, but I will say that we took great pains to make sure that we brought in

as much perspective as we could from people with autism.”

As people head to theaters to see “The Unbreakable Boy,” Gunn is thankful for his time working on it. He hopes that audiences will come away understanding that sense of gratitude.

“For me, this is a story about gratitude. It's about a family struggling first of all because they weren't prepared. Scott was dealing with addiction in a lot of ways and

trying to figure out how to be a good parent. And in the process of doing all of these things, they have a child that helped them to see that every day can be the best day of their life. And so I hope people watch this film, because it's filled with joy, it's filled with laughter, it's filled with charm, and even in the difficulties and the breaks and the heartbreak, there's so much gratitude at the heart of this film, and so that's what I hope people take from it.”



“I believe the work I do makes life better for my patients.”
- Fatima Gatela

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Sports

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2025

B-1

COLLEGE BASEBALL

Griffin Kirn's journey from Division II to WVU ace continues

BY JUSTIN JACKSON

JJackson@DominionPost.com

Steve Sabins emphasizes two words in describing pitcher Griffin Kirn: ultimate trust.

That showed last week, as the Mountaineers (3-0) began the college baseball season with a three-game sweep over Jacksonville.

Kirn was the opening day starter. He pitched 5 2/3 innings and allowed just one hit and one run in a 4-2 win that gave Kirn his first Division I victory in his first game.

Kirn, a fifth-year senior, will get his second start at 2 p.m. today, as WVU travels to Nashville, Tenn. to begin a four-game series against Lipscomb (1-1).

Sabins then elaborated a bit more, saying there is so much riding on his first season as WVU's head coach with the Mountaineers facing possibly its highest expectations for a season than ever before.

His first ever starting pitcher was not going to be just some guy.

"He had everybody on the team believing in him," Sabins said. "If I didn't believe that, there's zero chance he's got the ball in that scenario."

As it turns out, Sabins' first starting pitcher was pitching at the Division II level last season.

Kirn, a left-hander, was on very few recruiting radars last summer coming out of private

liberal arts college Quincy (Ill.) University, which has an enrollment of around 1,500.

This story may sound familiar. It was just last season when WVU found pitcher Derek Clark from the Division II level and he developed into the Mountaineers' top pitcher and a ninth-round draft pick by the Los Angeles Angels.

SEE KIRN, B-2

WVU at LIPSCOMB

WHEN: 2 p.m. today
WHERE: Ken Dugan Field, Nashville, Tenn.
TV: ESPN+ (Online subscription needed)
WEB: dominionpost.com



WVU Athletics photo

WVU pitcher Griffin Kirn will get his second career start at the Division I level when the Mountaineers travel to Lipscomb at 2 p.m. today.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

WVU needs the best version of Amani Hansberry against No. 9 Texas Tech

BY JUSTIN JACKSON

JJackson@DominionPost.com

Amani Hansberry is a young man with options on a basketball court.

As the WVU forward began to describe some of them, the reaction from teammate Javon Small was priceless.

"The way most teams play ball screens with Javon, they either try to blitz it or isolate him to one side," Hansberry began. "I try to make contact with a guy guarding Javon to make sure the big has to pull with Javon. Now we've got two to the ball and we can play two against one on the backside with me and Jonathan Powell."

SEE HANSBERRY, B-2

WVU at TEXAS TECH

WHEN: 1 p.m. today
WHERE: United Supermarkets Arena, Lubbock, Texas
TV: ESPN+ (Online subscription needed)
RADIO: 100.9 FM
WEB: dominionpost.com



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

WVU forward Amani Hansberry is averaging 9.7 points and 6.2 rebounds per game this season.

PRO HOCKEY

4 Nations Face-Off shatters expectations

Associated Press

Canada won the 4 Nations Face-Off by beating the United States for the championship in an overtime thriller capped off by Connor McDavid's memorable goal that will be on highlight reels for decades to come.

In the grand scheme of things, the NHL, its players and the sport of hockey all came out as winners.

The 4 Nations was a one-off tournament with no past and no future, a trimmed down version of a World Cup of Hockey staged because the best players in the world waited so long for something of its kind. With tens of millions watching across North America it exceeded all expectations, with play on the ice better resembling a Stanley Cup Final or the Olympics than the All-Star Weekend festivities it replaced.

"It was much more popular than even we would have imagined — it was getting so much attention from our whole continent," 4 Nations MVP Nathan MacKinnon said. "The 4 Nations caught on fire. I'm sure everyone didn't really know what to expect. Obviously questions about it being an All-Star Game, things like that. Obviously people didn't really know the player's mindsets coming in, and rightfully so. You never really know. But guys took this very seriously when you represent your country."

Given that a generation of players from McDavid and MacKinnon to Americans Auston Matthews and Jack Eichel never got a chance to represent their countries in so-called best-on-best play as professionals, it was clear in their minds they were taking it seriously. For many fans, it took seeing the opening game — Sidney Crosby's no-look pass to MacKinnon for a goal 56 seconds in and the frantic

SEE 4NATIONS, B-3

SWIMMING

Bridgeport takes gold in state championships

BY JOHN MCCABE

For The Dominion Post

Bridgeport and George Washington battled it out nearly until the end Friday to decide the boys' state swimming championships. However, the longer the evening went, the more distance the Indians put on their rivals.

In the end, Bridgeport pulled away from the Patriots and also the rest of the field to capture swimming gold. It marks the boys' third team title and first since 2019.

The Indians captured two individual titles on Thursday — Owen Guthrie in the 50 freestyle (20.69) and also the 100 freestyle, with a new state record in the 100 at 45.16. On Friday, the team swam to a title in the 200 freestyle relay — also a new state record at 1:27.41 — and then added yet another state record in the 400 freestyle

relay with a time of 3:13.72.

The state swimming championship is spread over two days. Half the events took place Thursday, with preliminaries in the morning and finals in the afternoon. The final five events — both preliminary and finals — were Friday, with champions being crowned for boys and girls for AAA schools and also AA/A schools.

Bridgeport captured the boys' AAA title, while Bridgeport and John Marshall High School tied to be named co-champions for the girls. In the Class AA/A division, Elkins won the girls championship. The Lady Tigers were the defending champions from the 2023-24 swim season and also were the girls overall high-point team at this year's event, turning in a dominating performance over two days. The boys small school

SEE SWIMMING, B-3



Photo by John McCabe

Morgantown High School freshman Ellie Perella swims in the 500 freestyle during Friday's events at the West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission State Swimming Championships at Peak Health Aquatic Center in Morgantown. Perella finished third overall.

CONNECT

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The Dominion Post

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SCOREBOARD

CALENDAR

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22
MEN'S BASKETBALL
West Virginia at Texas Tech, 1 p.m.
COLLEGE BASEBALL
West Virginia at Lipscomb, 2 p.m.
GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL
Parkersburg South at Morgantown, 1:45 p.m.
BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL
Preston at Bridgeport, 3 p.m.
Morgantown at Wheeling Park, 7:30 p.m.
Magnolia at Trinity, 1:30 p.m.
WRESTLING
Class AAA Region I tournament at UHS, All day

ON TV

AUTO RACING
1:30 p.m.: FS1 — NASCAR CRAFTSMAN Truck Series: The Fr8 208, Atlanta Motor Speedway, Hampton, Ga.
5 p.m.: CW — NASCAR Xfinity Series: The Bennett Transportation & Logistics 250, Atlanta Motor Speedway, Hampton, Ga.
BASEBALL
6 a.m.:MLBN — 2025 World Baseball Classic Qualifier: Chinese Taipei vs. South Africa, Taipei, Taiwan

COLLEGE BASKETBALL (MEN'S)

Noon: CBSN — Charleston at Drexel
CW — Florida St. at Louisville
ESPN — Tennessee at Texas A&M
ESPN2 — TCU at Cincinnati
FOX — Oregon at Wisconsin
12:30 p.m.: USA — Richmond at St. Joseph's
1 p.m.: SECN — Mississippi St. at Oklahoma
2 p.m.: ACCN — Georgia Tech at Boston College
BTN — Penn St. at Minnesota
CBSN — UNC-Wilmington at Hampton
ESPN — Iowa St. at Houston
ESPN2 — Wake Forest at NC State
ESPNU — Tennessee St. at Tennessee Tech
2:15 p.m.: CW — Pittsburgh at Notre Dame
2:30 p.m.: USA — Rhode Island at Saint Louis
3:30 p.m.: SECN — Mississippi at Vanderbilt
4 p.m.: ACCN — Clemson at SMU
CBS — Oklahoma St. at Kansas
CBSN — George Mason at VCU
ESPN — Georgia at Auburn
ESPN2 — Virginia at North Carolina
FS1 — Washington at Iowa
6 p.m.: ACCN — Virginia Tech at Miami
CBSN — Santa Clara at Washington St.
ESPN — Kentucky at Alabama
ESPN2 — Akron at Ohio
ESPNU — Murray St. at Bradley
FS1 — Boise St. at Nevada
SECN — Florida at LSU
8 p.m.: CBSN — San Diego St. at Utah St.
ESPN — Missouri at Arkansas
ESPN2 — Saint Mary's (Cal) at Gonzaga
ESPNU — Tarleton St. at UT Arlington
FOX — Duke at Illinois
FS1 — Butler at DePaul
8:30 p.m.: SECN — Texas at South Carolina
10 p.m.: CBSN — Colorado St. at UNLV
ESPN — BYU at Arizona
ESPN2 — California at Stanford

COLLEGE BASKETBALL (WOMEN'S)

Noon: BTN — Penn St. at Michigan
ESPNU — Kent St. at Ball St.
2:30 p.m.: FOX — Iowa St. at Baylor

GOLF

4:30 a.m.: GOLF — DP World Tour: The Kenya Open, Third Round, Muthaiga Golf Club, Nairobi City, Kenya
1 p.m.: GOLF — PGA Tour: The Mexico Championship, Third Round, VidantaWorld, Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico
3 p.m.: NBC — PGA Tour: The Mexico Championship, Third Round, VidantaWorld, Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico
10 p.m.: GOLF — LPGA Tour: The Honda LPGA Thailand, Final Round, Siam Country Club, Pattaya, Chon Buri, Thailand
4 a.m. (Sunday): GOLF — DP World Tour: The Kenya Open, Final Round, Muthaiga Golf Club, Nairobi City, Kenya

MLB

1 p.m.: MLBN — Spring Training: Pittsburgh vs. Baltimore, Sarasota, Fla.

NBA

8:30 p.m.: ABC — L.A. Lakers at Denver

NHL

12:25 p.m.: ABC — Minnesota at Detroit
3 p.m.: ABC — Washington at Pittsburgh
7 p.m.: NHLN — Carolina at Toronto

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

W. Va. Boys High School Basketball Poll W. Va. Girls High School Basketball Poll

CHARLESTON — The Associated Press high school boys basketball poll with first-place votes in parentheses and total points:

Table with columns for Class AAAA, Rec., Pts, Prv. and list of schools with their records and points.

Table with columns for Class AAA, Rec., Pts, Prv. and list of schools with their records and points.

Table with columns for Class AA, Rec., Pts, Prv. and list of schools with their records and points.

Table with columns for Class A, Rec., Pts, Prv. and list of schools with their records and points.

MLB

Yankees owner Hal Steinbrenner may support a salary cap proposal tied to payroll minimum

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — New York Yankees owner Hal Steinbrenner may support a salary cap proposal as long as it contains a provision mandating minimum payrolls.

"I have been on the record already saying that I would consider supporting a cap depending on what the cap is and contingent on the fact that there's also a floor so the clubs that I feel aren't spend-

ing enough money on payroll to improve their team would have to spend more," Steinbrenner said.

The Yankees had Major League Baseball's highest payroll for 15 straight years through 2013 but have not been the biggest spender since then.

MLB is the only one of the four major U.S. professional leagues without a salary cap but has had a luxury tax in place since 2003.

New Baltimore Orioles

owner David Rubenstein said in January he would support a cap. Bargaining will begin in about a year for an agreement to replace the five-year collective bargaining agreement with the Major League Baseball Players Association that expires in December 2026.

"In the last round of bargaining, we presented ways to address the concern being represented now and we were stonewalled at each turn — and

all without further restrictions on the system," players' association head Tony Clark said in a statement.

A cap proposal led to a 7 1/2-month strike that caused cancellation of the 1994 World Series and lost games in two seasons.

The Yankees have paid luxury tax in 20 of 22 seasons since the current tax was put in place, a total of \$452 million. The Dodgers are second at \$350 million, including \$200 million in the last four years.

GAME GLANCE

Associated Press

RECORDS: West Virginia Mountaineers (16-10, 7-8 Big 12), Texas Tech Red Raiders (20-6, 11-4 Big 12)

BOTTOM LINE: No. 9 Texas Tech hosts West Virginia after Darrion Williams scored 21 points in Texas Tech's 69-66 loss to the TCU Horned Frogs.

The Red Raiders have gone 13-2 in home games. Texas Tech is fifth in the Big 12 with 9.8 offensive rebounds per game led by J.T. Toppin averaging 3.1.

The Mountaineers are 7-8 against conference opponents. West Virginia scores 69.2 points while outscoring opponents by 5.0 points per game.

Texas Tech makes 48.2% of its shots from the field this season, which is 7.9 percentage points higher than West Virginia has allowed to its opponents (40.3%). West Virginia has shot at a 42.9% clip from the field this season, 0.9 percentage points higher than the 42.0% shooting opponents of Texas Tech have averaged.

The Red Raiders and Mountaineers face off Saturday for the first time in Big 12 play this season.

TOP PERFORMERS: Toppin is averaging 17.2 points and 9.2 rebounds for the Red Raiders. Chance McMillian is averaging 15.4 points over the last

10 games.

Javon Small is averaging 18.5 points, 5.5 assists and 1.7 steals for the Mountaineers. Toby Okani is averaging 9.6 points over the last 10 games.

LAST 10 GAMES: Red Raiders: 8-2, averaging 78.4 points, 32.6 rebounds, 15.7 assists, 6.2 steals and 2.7 blocks per game while shooting 44.5% from the field. Their opponents have averaged 68.8 points per game.

Mountaineers: 4-6, averaging 62.7 points, 27.7 rebounds, 14.1 assists, 8.1 steals and 3.0 blocks per game while shooting 41.7% from the field. Their opponents have averaged 64.0 points.

HANSBERRY

FROM PAGE B-1

It all sounds pretty complicated, to be sure, but Hansberry wasn't finished.

"If I happen to screen and Javon can get downhill, that's good," he continued. "If I screen and two (defenders) go to Javon and he kicks it to me for a three, that's good. If two go to Javon and (Powell) rotates, then that's one more, and that's good."

By this point, Small, who is sitting right next to Hansberry as he's speaking, can't hold in his smile any longer as he's listening to his teammate getting way too elaborate.

In any sense, Hansberry's more important option is the impact he had in the Mountaineers' 62-59 victory against Cin-

cinatti on Wednesday, and how much of a role he'll have at 1 p.m. today, as WVU (16-10, 7-8 Big 12) travels to No. 9 Texas Tech (20-6, 11-4).

It will be WVU's fourth game this season facing a top 10-ranked team on the road or on a neutral court. The Mountaineers are 2-1 in the previous three.

The 6-foot-8 Hansberry recorded his second double-double of the season with 17 points and 13 rebounds against Cincinnati.

The story behind that was options. He got off to a good start with seven points over the first six minutes of the game.

From there? "It was a little shaky," he admitted.

As WVU began to chip away at a six-point deficit in the second half, Hansberry nailed another 3-pointer, hit a couple

of free throws and then scored in the paint that gave the Mountaineers an eight-point lead with 1:30 remaining.

"I had to be more consistent and play my role for the team," he said. "I had to contribute to the win anyway I could."

The rebounds were critical. WVU has spent the entire portion of Big 12 play getting beat on the boards. Against Cincinnati, WVU finished plus-8 (40-32) and seven of Hansberry's 13 rebounds were offensive boards.

Which leads the Mountaineers into today's matchup against the highest-scoring team in the Big 12.

Hansberry will likely be matched up with Tech's J.T. Toppin, who is making a hard push for Big 12 Player of the Year honors.

The 6-9 Toppin has had four consecutive dou-

ble-doubles heading into the game, in which he's averaged 27 points and 12.8 rebounds per game.

He had 41 points in a double-overtime win against Arizona State and followed that up with 32 points against Oklahoma State.

Texas Tech is coming into the game after a loss, a 69-66 shocker on the road against TCU, but the Red Raiders are 13-2 this season inside United Supermarkets Arena.

If the Mountaineers are to pull off a shocker of their own, it will likely have something to do with Hansberry being the best option of himself.

"We have to stay poised, stay together," Hansberry said. "We know what we have to do to win in these situations. We've been there before. We let a few of them slip. We have to learn from our mistakes and play hard."

KIRN

FROM PAGE B-1

Sabins isn't quite ready to put Kirn into that same type of projection, but he's getting closer.

"There's a hell of a lot more to prove," Sabins said. "He's got five innings under his belt against a team that's not even in our conference. There's so much more to prove and he has to continue to get better."

What Sabins has proven in his time previously as WVU's recruiting coordinator, and now as the head coach, is there is literally no area of baseball that won't be researched in trying to find players to bring to Morgantown.

Sure, the easy route would be to scout the future stars on the U.S.A. national teams, the players every college coach is scouting.

It's not that Sabins is scared off from that type of recruiting competition, but there is a sense of reality that goes along with it.

"If we pretend that West Virginia is the same institution as everybody else trying to compete for national titles, we will finish second more times than not," he said.

And so, the work has to be put in, whether that means finding a player like Sam White from Canada or diving into the transfer portal for Division II pitchers like Clark and Kirn.

"I'm very proud of that," Sabins said. "If you want to have elite talent here, you have to buy low and sell high.

You have to find markets that aren't tapped and go to places others aren't willing to go. You have to research things differently."

That research led Sabins to Kirn, who joins outfielder Kyle West as WVU players on this season's roster who began

their career at the Division II level.

At Quincy last season, Kirn was 8-1 with a 2.96 ERA. He was 22-8 over his career with the Hawks.

"That's been our philosophy over the last decade. There's no stone unturned, whether it's

Division II or III, junior college, Puerto Rico or Canada," Sabins said.

"We have to work harder to find players in different ways. We don't limit ourselves too much. We're making sure we don't miss any hidden gems at West Virginia."

Advertisement for West Virginia Fishing, Hunting & Outdoor Sports Show. Includes dates (March 1st & 2nd), location (Mylan Park Morgantown, WV), and a list of vendors and products like guns, camp grounds, and outdoor apparel.

MLB

Corbin Burnes strikes out all 3 batters he faces in spring training debut

Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Four-time All-Star Corbin Burnes had a stellar spring training debut for the Arizona Diamondbacks on Friday, striking out all three Colorado batters he faced. The 2021 National League Cy Young Award winner needed 16 pitches to retire Brenton Doyle, Kyle Farmer and Ryan McMahon, and even got some help from the new Automated Ball-Strike System. “It’s good to get our there,” Burnes said. “Good to knock some rust off, get out there and have a relatively quick one.” Catcher Gabriel Moreno asked for a review on a low fastball to Farmer that was called a ball, and the call was overturned for strike three after replay showed it just caught the bottom of the strike zone. Burnes’ looked to be in good shape with a fastball that ap-

proached 95 mph. The right-hander requested to start the Cactus League opener, saying he likes to get on the mound as much as possible during the spring. “The more time I can get on the mound in game situations, the more comfortable I feel, and the better I can prepare for the season,” Burnes said. Burnes signed a surprising \$210 million, six-year deal with the D-backs in December. In retrospect, the partnership wasn’t that odd — Burnes lives in the Phoenix area and has a young family that he wants to be around as much as possible. Burnes, who turned 30 in October, was 15-9 with a 2.92 ERA last year for Baltimore, which acquired him from Milwaukee in a trade. He’s been an All-Star in each of the past four seasons.

SWIMMING

FROM PAGE B-1

award went to Elkins as well. The state title for John Marshall is the first in the school’s history. Fairmont Senior finished as runner-up in the big-school division for the girls. **Local swimmers** Several Morgantown High swimmers had a strong Friday in the pool. Junior Christian Hammer, coming off an individual state title in Thursday’s 100 butterfly, finished second in the 500 freestyle with a time of

4:56.01. Mohigans freshman Ellie Perella also had a strong showing in the 500 free, finishing third at 5:19.82. Teammate Avery Householder, a junior, was fifth at 5:34.59. In the 200 freestyle relay, the boys team of Lincoln Alugbuo, James McGinnis, Owen Gregory and Hammer finished fourth at 1:35.64. Morgantown’s girls team of Maya Nalakan, Avery Householder, Audrey Kurilchick-Green and Ellie Perella finished third in the 400 free relay while the boys’ squad of Alugbuo, Gregory, McGinnis and Hammer finished fourth.

4NATIONS

FROM PAGE B-1

pace at which Canada and Sweden were skating up and down the rink — to believe this was going to be worth watching. Then people watched. With U.S. ratings numbers for the final still pending, Sportsnet reported 10.7 million people across Canada watched Thursday night — over a quarter of the country’s total population — after the six round-robin games averaged 4.6 million viewers in North America and 10.1 million tuned in to the first U.S.-Canada game. In a series of social media posts, former NFL player J.J. Watt raved, “It’s just incredible how much of a home run 4 Nations has been for the NHL and hockey in general” and said friends who had never watched the sport before were reaching out asking about plans to watch and what to eat during it. “Definition of growing the game,” Watt said. “Much, much respect for how much effort, energy and passion (players) poured into this tournament. That’s what’s made it so special. The best in the world going all-out for pure pride.” The next chance they will get is a year away at the 2026 Olympics in Milan, the return of the players to that stage after the NHL skipped in 2018 and pulled out at the eleventh hour in 2022 because of pandemic-related scheduling problems. Commissioner Gary Bettman billed the 4 Nations featuring the U.S., Canada, Sweden and Finland as an appetizer for Milan. The level of play — and the result — set the stage perfectly for the Americans to again challenge Canadian hockey superiority, with the Swedes, Finns, Czechs, Slovaks, Germans and maybe even the Russians also in the mix for Olym-

pic gold. “I’ll always remember this feeling when it’s next year,” U.S. winger Brady Tkachuk said after losing 3-2 in the final. “Everything happens for a reason and I think this year, this moment can really motivate us going into next year.” For now, Canada remains unbeaten over the past 15 years in tournaments with the NHL’s top talent involved, extending its winning streak to four, with a title at the 2016 World Cup of Hockey and gold medals at the 2014 and 2010 Olympics before this. Crosby has been a part of all of this, plus an unbeaten run at the 2015 world championships, and played through injury at the 4 Nations because of how special the occasion was. “Every opportunity you get to wear the Canadian jersey and compete in this event, it’s something new, but I think you saw the hockey that was on display,” Crosby said. “It was pretty incredible. Happy for this group. We came together in a short period of time and found a way to get it done.” In the buildup to the final, Canada coach Jon Cooper said anyone expecting it to be more like an All-Star Game “was sorely, sorely mistaken.” It was, in fact, a collection of All-Stars, but the final product was anything but. Even before Canada’s players and coaches got their gold medals and trophy, it was clear the event put together over the past year-plus attracted new fans to the NHL and the sport of hockey better than anyone could have anticipated. “I hope they love it,” McDavid said. “It’s a great game, it’s a great sport and I hope we put on a good show these last couple days and gained some fans, ultimately. You can’t ask for a better show than that.”

NBA

Nuggets have a shot at first 10-game win streak under coach Malone, but Lakers stand in the way

Associated Press

DENVER — Michael Malone took a pragmatic stance on his team’s current nine-game winning streak. “It beats the alternative,” the Denver Nuggets coach said. Can’t argue there as Malone stands on the brink of a memorable career moment. For all that Malone, the franchise’s all-time winningest coach, has accomplished over his 10 seasons in Denver — namely, winning an NBA title in 2023 — his Nikola Jokic-led squads have never won 10 in a row. All that stands in the way is LeBron James, Luka Doncic and the Los Angeles Lakers tonight. Denver hasn’t lost at home to the Lakers since April 10, 2022. “It’s really important to stack wins. That’s the most important thing,” Malone said after a 129-115 win over Charlotte on Thursday. “Whether you played great or you didn’t play great, we won. But there’s a lot to clean up.” Should Denver emerge



AP photo

Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic, left, drives to the basket as Charlotte Hornets forward Moussa Diabate defends in the second half of an NBA basketball game Thursday, in Denver. victorious today, it would mark the seventh 10-game win streak in franchise history. The team record is 15 by the 2012-13 Nuggets who were led by coach George Karl. The current streak began on the heels of a three-game skid and with a 137-134 win over the 76ers in Philadelphia on Jan. 31. It’s carried up to and now through the All-Star break thanks to a sluggish win over a Hornets team playing without LaMelo Ball. Of the

on Gordon (calf) return against the Hornets. Know how much they converse about the streak? “Not at all,” Gordon said. “We just talk about playing a good brand of basketball and playing the right way — playing smart. “You want to be playing your best basketball in April, May and June, and so now’s the time to make that climb.” Jamal Murray echoed that thought. Murray has certainly found his shooting groove, going for 55 points in a win over Portland before the break and 34 against the Hornets right after the layoff. “It’s not going to come down to X’s and O’s,” said Murray, whose team currently resides in second place in the Western Conference, trailing Oklahoma City by eight games. “It’s just who’s more ready to play and who wants to win more. That’s what I think it comes down to. I like the motivation of the team to try and get that one seed.”

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MLB

New York Yankees drop ban on beards, 49 years after it was imposed

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — The New York Yankees dropped their ban on beards Friday, 49 years after it was imposed by owner George Steinbrenner, in a move aimed to improve player recruitment as the team tries to win its first World Series title since 2009.

Current owner Hal Steinbrenner, son of The Boss, announced the change Friday before the team's spring training opener. He called the ban "outdated" and "somewhat unreasonable."

"This generation, the vast majority of 20, 30s-in-to-the-40s men in this country have beards," Steinbrenner said during a news conference, flanked by general manager Brian Cashman. "It is a part of who these younger men are. It's part of their character. It's part of their persona. Do I totally relate to that? It's difficult for me. I'm an older guy who's never had a beard in his life but it's a very important thing to them. They feel it defines their character."

George Steinbrenner announced the facial policy during spring training in 1976, mandating

no long hair or beards — mustaches were allowed. Players complied but some pushed boundaries by going unshaven or letting hair fall over their collars.

"My dad was in the military. He believed that a team should look in a disciplined manner," Hal Steinbrenner said. "Very important to my father, but again (for) my father, nothing is more important than winning and that's in the back of my mind."

Hal Steinbrenner, who succeeded his father as controlling owner in November 2008, said he had considered the issue for a decade and discussed the contemplated change recently with Yankees stars Aaron Judge, Giancarlo Stanton and Gerrit Cole in one-on-one meetings. Steinbrenner then issued a statement Friday morning that "we will be amending our expectations to allow our players and uniformed personnel to have well-groomed beards moving forward."

Cashman said CC Sabathia hesitated because of the hair policy before signing with the Yankees ahead of the 2009 season



AP photo

New York Yankees pitcher Gerrit Cole takes part in pickoff drills during a spring training baseball workout Thursday, in Tampa, Fla.

and the agent of a player contemplating a minor league contract this off-season wasn't sure his client would be willing to shave.

Cashman said some current players had told him of the facial hair ban: "It's not what I want. It's not my preference, but I will honor the rules of the land."

As recently as Monday, the Yankees had left re-

mindors on the clubhouse chair of each player to arrive clean shaven the following morning for photo day.

All-Star closer Devin Williams, acquired in an offseason trade from Milwaukee, had hair on his chin for his photo. Williams, eligible for free agency after this season, had a beard when he played for the Brewers.

"The New York Yankees

are different," Cashman said. "This is obviously a special place in baseball history. That logo has a lot of meaning behind it and we want our past and our present players to recognize that, and the future players to recognize that. So ultimately there's still going to be things that we're going to hold onto that are important for us, but I think as just Hal said more important-

ly is always trying to be a championship-caliber franchise and chasing winning."

Outfielder Alex Verdugo was forced to trim his previously long hair when he was traded to the Yankees ahead of the 2024 season. Clay Holmes and Gleyber Torres arrived at spring training this year with beards after leaving the Yankees.

"It's somewhat surprising just because of how long the rule's been around," Holmes said.

George Steinbrenner, who bought the Yankees in 1973, died in 2010.

"I have nothing against long hair per se," George Steinbrenner said in 1976, according to The New York Times. "But I'm trying to instill certain sense of order and discipline in the ballclub because I think discipline is important in an athlete."

The Cincinnati Reds banned facial hair in 1902 and under general manager Bon Howsam started strict enforcement in 1967. The ban was lifted by owner Marge Schott in February 1999 at the behest of outfielder Greg Vaughn, who had just been acquired from San Diego.

PRO HOCKEY

Ovechkin's record chase, Columbus outdoor game and trade deadline await down stretch of NHL season

Associated Press

The NHL season resumes with 14 games on Saturday and 10 more Sunday with every team in action at least once this weekend coming out of the break for the massively successful 4 Nations Face-Off.

The puck drops for the playoffs on April 19. The league's 32 teams are set to play in a total of 422 games before the four-round race for the Stanley Cup begins in earnest.

"There's still a lot of hockey left to be played," center Pierre-Luc Dubois of the Eastern Conference-leading Washington Capitals said Friday. "Some teams their playoff races will start with 18 games left and some will start with 10, but I think the pace really goes up pretty soon."

Alex Ovechkin's pursuit of Wayne Gretzky's career goals record, the outdoor game between the Columbus Blue Jackets and Detroit Red Wings at Ohio State's Stadium, the March 7 trade deadline and various injury situations coming out of the 4 Nations are among the things to watch down the stretch.

Ovechkin's GR8 chase

The Capitals captain in his 20th season is 16 back of passing Gretzky's mark of 894 goals that long seemed unapproachable. Coach Spencer Carbery expects again to see Ovechkin, now 39 years old, refreshed and ready to roll.

"I just am expecting for him to be a real impactful player for us in these last 27 games of the season," Carbery said. "He looks great. He's got tons of energy. It feels like he had a real good break to be able to get some work in but also get mentally refreshed for this last little stretch."

The odds are still against Ovechkin breaking the record this season. BetMGM Sportsbook still favors him not getting there.

Ovechkin scored 15 goals in his final 27 games last season, a pace that would tie Gretzky. But it also might be foolish to bet against the greatest scorer of this — and soon



AP file photo

Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin (8) celebrates after scoring his 767 NHL career goals during the third period of an NHL hockey game against the New York Islanders, Tuesday, March 15, 2022, in Washington.

any — generation.

"Everyone's excited about it, looking forward to it," teammate Dylan Strome said. "It's going to be tough to get it this year, but if anyone can do it, I think it's him."

Taking it outside

The Blue Jackets are set to play in an outdoor game for the first time in franchise history March 1 when they host the Red Wings at Ohio Stadium. The site of so many college football rivalry games between Ohio State and Michigan is also a nice chance to showcase a surprise season of success for Columbus.

With top defenseman Zach Werenski and new coach Dean Evason leading the way, the Blue Jackets are firmly in contention and getting captain Boone Jenner back after missing the first three-quarters of the season following shoulder surgery.

"I haven't had this much fun playing hockey in a long time and being around a group of guys," Werenski said during the 4 Nations tournament. "We're just enjoying it. We're having fun. We're working hard. We've all bought into our team game. No one cares who has the success."

The Red Wings are also in the race — one point ahead of Columbus — thanks to a midseason coaching change that paid big dividends. Detroit has won 15 of 21 games since Todd McLellan replaced Derek Lalonde behind the bench, and duking it out with the Blue Jack-

ets puts an even brighter spotlight on the Stadium Series game between them.

Trade season

There was a flurry of moves before the 4 Nations, with Colorado, Carolina and Chicago completing a three-team blockbuster that sent Mikko Rantanen and Taylor Hall to the Hurricanes and Martin Necas to the Avalanche, the New York Rangers landing J.T. Miller from Vancouver and Dallas acquiring Mikael Granlund and Codi Ceci in a trade with San Jose.

But there's plenty more in that vein to come before the 3 p.m. EST deadline on March 7.

The New York Islanders have a big decision to make with big center Brock Nelson, a pending unrestricted free agent who seems unlikely to resign. They are four points back of the second and final wild-card spot in the East, and 82-year-old general manager Lou Lamoriello's uncertain future makes it impossible to know what will happen with Nelson.

Seattle's Yanni Gourde likely won't play until the deadline after surgery to repair a sports hernia, but he is also a player who, like Nelson, could be a nice rental addition for any contender looking to add at the deadline. Options on defense are much sparser, but Philadelphia is open for business on big Finn Rasmus Ristolainen and Montreal could get a significant return for hard-nosed Cup winner David Savard.

NBA

With Wembanyama's season now over, everyone waits for what's next

Associated Press

The French sports newspaper L'Equipe published a photo of Victor Wembanyama across the entirety of its front page on Friday, the San Antonio star looking down with his hands on his hips.

"Coup D'Arret" was the headline in big, white letters. The translation, in this case, means Knock-out Blow.

For now, yes, Wembanyama's season has been dealt a knockout blow. Deep vein thrombosis in the right shoulder is the diagnosis, meaning he has a blood clot. The Spurs, in consultation with their medical team, quickly determined that Wembanyama will not play again this season. That's the bad news. The good news is that those same doctors have told the Spurs that they believe this is not a career-threatening issue.

"I know Victor loves to play the game," acting Spurs coach Mitch Johnson said. "You saw how he competed during All-Star weekend. And he wants to be with his teammates. I know that. He'd want to finish this thing out."

All the Spurs have said, in terms of specifics about Wembanyama's health, is that the diagnosis was DVT and that they are hopeful of a full recovery. But the location of the clot — Wembanyama's upper body — might provide a good reason for the optimism.

There is a type of DVT that appears when a blood vessel in someone's upper arm can be compressed by a rib (the top rib is removed in some cases to relieve the compression, if that is the cause) or a muscle. The Spurs have not said if that is the sort of issue that Wembanyama is currently dealing with, but if that is the case then the belief that he could be ready to play again in a few months would seem valid.

Doctors will determine, if they haven't already, how the clot formed and why it is in his shoulder. Most importantly, they will ascertain if the clot was unprovoked (which would be bad) or provoked (which would be good and would likely rule out a genetic issue).

"You just wish for him to be healthy, period,"



AP photo

A fan wears the jersey of San Antonio Spurs center Victor Wembanyama as the Spurs and Phoenix Suns prepares to play an NBA basketball game in Austin, Texas, Thursday.

Spurs guard De'Aaron Fox told TNT in the on-court postgame interview after San Antonio — in its first game since the diagnosis — beat Phoenix on Thursday night. "No matter if he's able to play basketball or not, you just want him to be healthy."

It has been a season with major health issues for the Spurs, affecting probably the two most important people in the organization. Gregg Popovich, the NBA's all-time win leader and longest-tenured current coach, had a stroke in early November; he's improving but has not coached since, which is why Johnson has assumed the acting role. And now, Wembanyama is sidelined as well.

The 7-foot-3 center from France was averaging 24.3 points, 11 rebounds, 3.8 blocks and 3.7 assists this season, well on his way to probably winning defensive player of the year and perhaps earning an All-NBA team nod as well.

Chris Paul came to San Antonio last summer to play for Popovich and play with Wembanyama. Fox was acquired in a trade earlier this month so he could team up with Wembanyama. Obviously, things have not gone as planned and San Antonio is facing a bit of a climb in the final seven weeks of the season just to get into the play-in tournament in the loaded Western Conference.

"I'm thinking about Vic," Phoenix All-Star forward Kevin Durant said. "I'm sure the whole basketball world is thinking about him right now. Somebody like that who has a strong mind, strong

will to go out there and recover and get better ... I don't even know Vic well, but I can just tell that's what he's about. That's his makeup. And I'm looking forward to seeing him back out there."

Plenty of athletes have dealt with the clotting issue before, and it is certainly not a one-size-fits-all problem.

Serena Williams came back to dominate women's tennis after a clotting issue following the birth of her daughter; Williams needed four surgeries to address the matter. Chris Bosh had to eventually retire from basketball after he was diagnosed with clots. In hockey, Tomas Fleischmann developed clots and went on to play for years afterward; Tomas Vokoun needed surgery to relieve his clotting problem and never played in the NHL again.

The earliest that Wembanyama might play a real game again is August, and that's if he decides to join France for the European championships — one of the biggest tournaments in the world. Wembanyama spoke at length last summer during the Paris Olympics about how much wearing his country's uniform means to him, so it seems logical that he would at least strongly consider participating if he was medically cleared to do so.

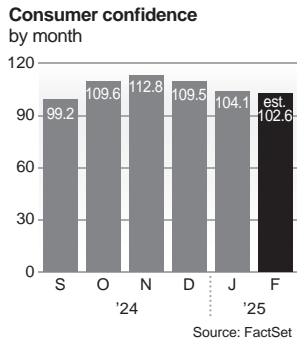
Boris Diaw, who spent time playing for San Antonio and is still beloved by the organization, runs the French basketball federation now. He's not speculating on EuroBasket, saying those questions are for the coming months.

Money&Markets

The Week Ahead

Confidence check

The Conference Board issues its latest consumer confidence report on Tuesday. Analysts expect consumer confidence continued slipping in February. The consumer confidence index measures Americans' assessment of current economic conditions and their outlook for the next six months. Confidence has remained relatively strong, along with consumer spending, despite pressure from inflation.



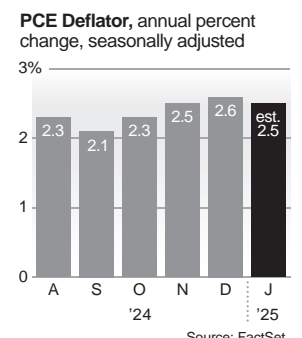
Housing barometer

The Commerce Department delivers its monthly snapshot of new U.S. home sales on Wednesday. Economists project that sales slowed slightly in January to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 680,000 homes. The sales pace rose in December. The broader housing market remains tight as consumers face historically high mortgage rates along with strong demand and not enough supply of newly-built and existing homes.



Eye on inflation

The Commerce Department releases closely watched consumer inflation data on Friday. Economists expect the report to show that inflation edged lower in January. The rate had cooled to 2.1% as of September, which is just above the Federal Reserve's preferred target of 2%, but has been mostly rising since then.



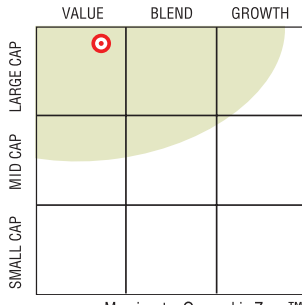
Quotable

"Sales are reportedly being hit by the uncertainty caused by the changing political landscape, and prices are rising amid tariff-related price hikes from suppliers." — Chris Williamson, chief business economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence

FundFocus

This fund "continues to enjoy a variety of advantages over its rivals, and it remains an appealing source of foreign large-value exposure," Morningstar says.

T. Rowe Price International Value (TRIGX)



CATEGORY: FOREIGN LARGE VALUE

Morningstar Rating: 4 stars. Assets: \$363 million. EXP RATIO: .87%. MIN. INIT. INVEST: \$2,500. PERCENT LOAD: N/L. HISTORICAL RETURNS: 1-YEAR +17.1/A, 3-YEAR +79/A, 5-YEAR +8.6/B

3 and 5-year returns are annualized. Rank: Fund's letter grade compared with others in the same group; an A indicates fund performed in the top 20 percent; an E, in the bottom 20 percent.

Unpopular tech titans

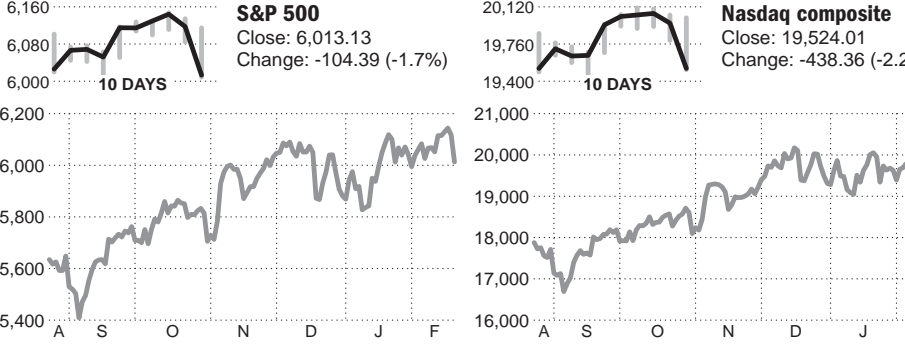
Two prominent U.S. tech executives are the world's richest men but are unpopular with most Americans. About 54% of U.S. adults say they have an unfavorable view of Elon Musk, and 67% view Mark Zuckerberg unfavorably, according to a Pew Research Center survey.



Americans have more negative than positive views of Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg

Table showing unfavorable/favorable views by party affiliation for Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg.

Republicans, Democrats far apart in views of Musk



StocksRecap

Table listing various stock indices and their performance: NYSE, NASDAQ, S&P 500, Dow Jones Industrial Average, etc.

Stocks of Local Interest

Large table listing individual stocks of local interest with columns for Name, Ticker, Price, Change, and other metrics.

Company Spotlight Celsius heats up

Celsius Holdings climbed to its biggest gain in more than four years Friday after the energy drink company posted better-than-expected earnings and announced the acquisition of Alani Nu, a drink company geared toward women.



Summary for Celsius Holdings (CELH) including Friday's close, total return, and market value.

Stocks

U.S. stocks fell sharply after reports showed worries that President Donald Trump's policies may be hitting the economy. The S&P 500 sank 1.7% Friday for its worst day in two months.

Table listing stock performance for Akamai Technologies, Rivian Automotive, and Allison Transmission.

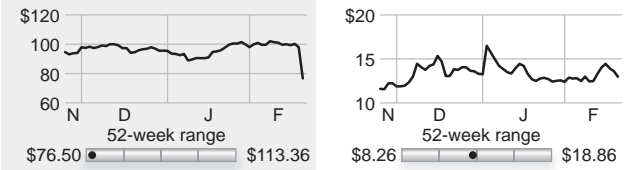


Table listing stock performance for Floor & Decor and Grid Dynamics.



Table listing stock performance for CarGurus and Booking.

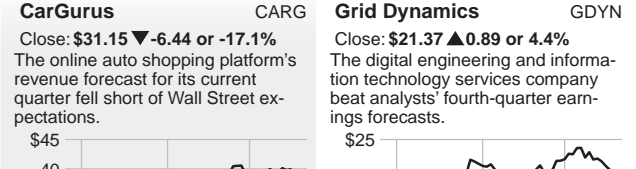


Table listing stock performance for Mercado Libre SA.



Table listing stock performance for various other stocks.

SOURCE: FIS

Interestrates

Table showing interest rates for various Treasury notes and bonds.

Table showing consumer rates for various loans and mortgages.

Table showing money market funds - national average.

Table showing money market funds - national highs.

Commodities

Table showing commodity prices for fuels, metals, and agriculture.

Table showing commodity prices for various agricultural products.

Foreign Exchange

Table showing exchange rates for major currencies like the British Pound, Euro, and Japanese Yen.

Table showing exchange rates for European, African, and Middle Eastern currencies.

Table showing exchange rates for Asian and Pacific currencies.

HINTS FROM HELOISE

Getting stuck-on food off your pots and pans

Dear Heloise: I occasionally have scorched food stuck in the bottom of a pan. Instead of trying to scrub away this brown stuck-on food, I put a little water mixed with dishwasher detergent in the pan. I then simmer this mix on a cooktop for a short time. It usually takes little effort to remove and is good as new. - Polly Hardin, Russellville, Ark.

expensive and includes free shipping. It's much safer to do business with a safe, secure seller than an unknown one who could possibly be a scammer or worse. Some are safe, but why chance it? - Jean Milici, Torrington, Conn.

TIRE TRACTION IN BAD WEATHER

Dear Heloise: I enjoy reading your column in the Winchester Star in Virginia. In snowy, icy weather, you can take heavy rubber floor mats and put them next to the front of your tires for traction until you get past the icy section where you are stuck. You can also use kitty litter.

For our sidewalks, my first husband would throw down birdseed. It would melt the ice on the spot. Birds will come eat up the fallen birdseed, so it helps the birds, too. Where there is a break in the ice, you can shovel it in there. Little thin mats won't help much for tire traction on ice. - Terry, in Winchester, Va.

ONLINE ADS

Dear Heloise: When I see pop-up ads on Facebook for an item of interest, I look for it on Amazon or another trustworthy retailer. Often the item is less

Send a money-saving or time-saving hint to Heloise@Heloise.com. I can't answer your letter personally but will use the best hints received in my column.

expensive and includes free shipping. It's much safer to do business with a safe, secure seller than an unknown one who could possibly be a scammer or worse. Some are safe, but why chance it? - Jean Milici, Torrington, Conn.

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

It is easy to see why an agitated state is considered unpleasant, unlucky and generally undesirable. However, do consider that such a state can also produce great beauty.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You're gathering talented collaborators, pouring yourself into your work and taking risks others would shy away from.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You may be taken aback by a sudden awareness of a responsibility you didn't realize you had. Chances are it's something you've been handling all along, but now, instead of acting on autopilot, you recognize the choice and control in this.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). The difference between innocence and ignorance is how it lands in the room. Innocence is charming; ignorance offends. Also consider that it may be unnecessary to have a reaction to others beyond a little kindness and/or a willingness to educate.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). All animals have their territorial zones, and you're no different. When someone enters your space unexpectedly, it's natural to bristle in defense.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Life is a buffet filled with your favorites, but if you try to have everything, you'll get a belly-ache. Instead, choose only the most nourishing option.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You have individuals within the same group working toward the same goal, yet each sees things from a unique perspective. Not only is this perfectly fine; it's preferred. Differences are what make

your group stronger and more resilient.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Some people develop crushes quickly and with little reason, but that doesn't mean their feelings are any less real in the moment.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Long ago, you set yourself up for good fortune, only to forget about it. Now, it's like discovering money at the bottom of your sock drawer - a delightful surprise from Past-You, just when you need it most.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). A solid protective instinct is a gift. Even if it has people acting in defensive ways, you can appreciate the fact that you might not know the whole story about why someone would behave in a certain way.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Your awareness of needing help is a strength, not a weakness, so don't hesitate to ask. It shows you know the scope of the work and are ready to collaborate where needed.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). While it's impossible to chase every fleeting whim, a certain shining inspiration will stand out from the rest. It will ignite your passion and deserve your full focus, promising something truly meaningful if you commit wholeheartedly.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You're determined to rewrite patterns and go forward into a fresh environment that supports you differently than you've been supported in the past. You're attracting people who reciprocate your energy and enthusiasm as you create something remarkable.

CROSSWORD

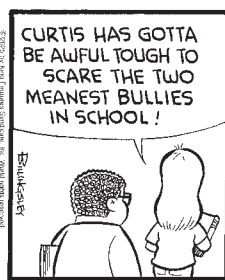
- ACROSS 39 Bother 40 Ran a marathon 42 Behave 44 "Dusk Till Dawn" 46 Struck with horror 49 Single-celled organism 53 Layer 54 Sorcery 56 - and rave 57 Metallic element 58 Turn a horse to the right 59 Whirlpool 60 Fiddling despot 61 Asner and Harris
DOWN 1 Stardom 2 Yemen neighbor 3 - of paradise 4 Makes a point 5 Concerns 6 - Today

Answer to Previous Puzzle

Grid with words: ALF, ADAMS, LAW, LOA, DT, GUP, AGO, AFT, ELUDE, RIM, STIPPLE, EAGLE, GOT, SCREEN, ALUM, BATHE, ROE, OBI, APOD, MUSH, GEL, RAY, ACUTE, DOTE, SEIZES, GUM, LATER, TIRED OUT, USA, ERATO, TSA, MEL, ARES, EEL, SLY, LOOMS, SSE

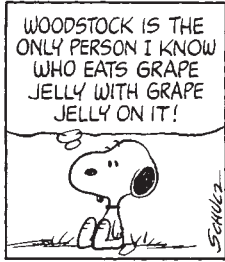
Large crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-61. Includes copyright notice: © 2025 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel Syndication for UFS

CURTIS



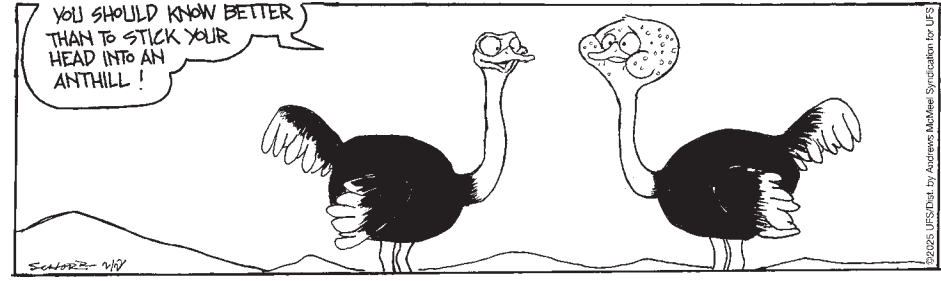
BY RAY BILLINGSLEY

PEANUTS



BY CHARLES M. SCHULZ

THE GRIZZWELLS



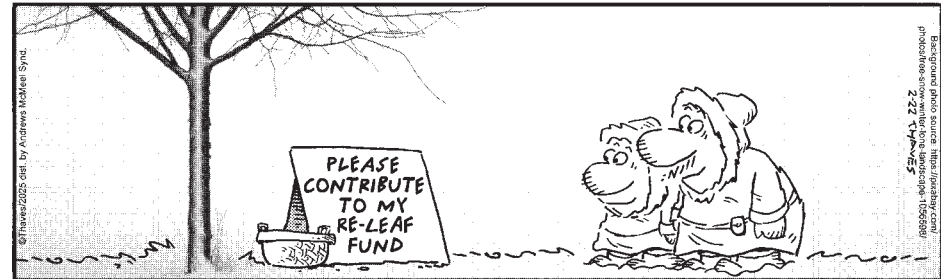
BY BILL SCHORR

BEETLE BAILEY



BY GREG, BRIAN & NEAL WALKER

FRANK & ERNEST



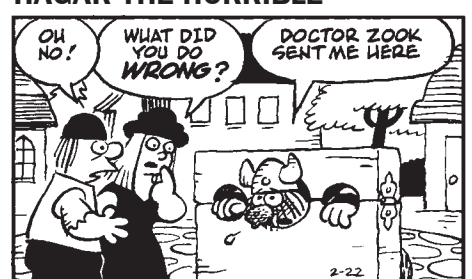
BY BOB THAVES

BORN LOSER



BY ART & CHIP SANSON

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



BY DIK BROWNE

JANRIC CLASSIC SUDOKU

Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and 3x3 block. Use logic and process elimination to solve the puzzle. The difficulty level ranges from Bronze (easiest) to Silver to Gold (hardest).

Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers 2, 7, 8, 6, 1, 6, 5, 6, 3, 1, 4, 9, 4, 3, 2, 5, 6, 5, 8, 3, 1, 9, 5, 7, 7, 2, 1, 9, 3.

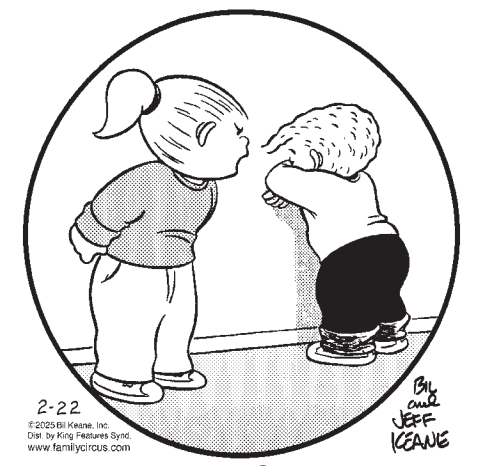
Rating: GOLD

Solution to the Sudoku puzzle: 3 6 8 9 5 1 4 2 7, 9 5 2 4 6 7 1 3 8, 1 4 7 8 2 3 9 5 6, 4 2 5 3 9 8 7 6 1, 8 7 9 5 1 6 3 4 2, 6 3 1 7 4 2 5 8 9, 5 8 4 6 7 9 2 1 3, 2 9 3 1 8 4 6 7 5, 7 1 6 2 3 5 8 9 4.

MARMADUKE BY BRAD & PAUL ANDERSON



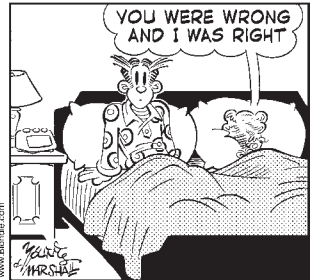
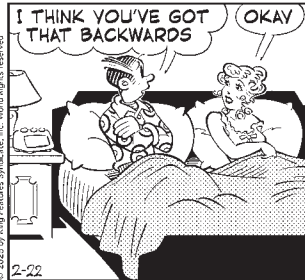
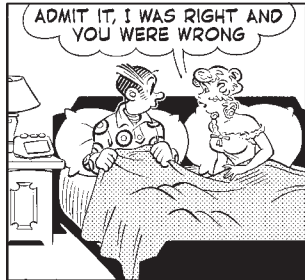
FAMILY CIRCUS BY BIL KEANE



"Then the huge, hideous monster, dripping slime and drool, rose from the swamp towards the screaming girls."

"It's Hide-and-Seek, Jeffy, not Hide-and-Peek!"

BLONDIE



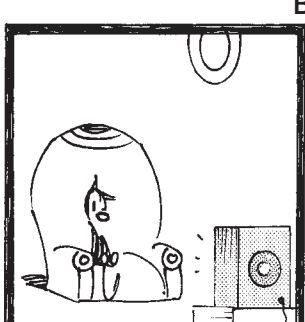
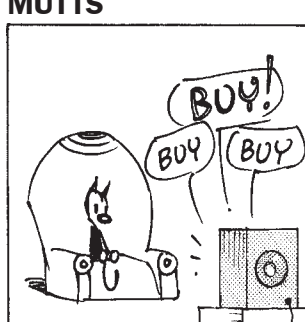
BY DEAN YOUNG & JOHN MARSHALL

GARFIELD



BY JIM DAVIS

MUTTS



BY PATRICK MCDONNELL