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Splish splash

Above, baby Adelaide enjoyed the water at the Roush Park splash pad Thursday evening. At right, Cash McLeod beat the heat racing through the water fountains. (Photos by Sydney Kent)



Flooding fills tunnels to Detroit airport, forces water rescues in Ohio, Las Vegas

By MIKE HOUSEHOLDER and SAMANTHA HENDRICKSON
Associated Press

ROMULUS, Mich. (AP) — Heavy rain flooded an Ohio highway where people were rescued from their cars, covered the Las Vegas Strip with water and temporarily closed a busy airport terminal outside Detroit.

Parts of the western United States have been deluged in recent weeks with rain from Tropical Storm Hilary, and much of the central U.S. was beaten down by deadly sweltering heat. In Hawaii and Washington, emergency crews battled catastrophic wildfires.

Areas in southeast Michigan got over 5 inches of rain by Thursday morning, resulting in street flooding in the Detroit area, including tunnels leading to Detroit Metropolitan Airport in the suburb of Romulus, officials said. Officials reopened the airport's McNamara Terminal Thursday afternoon.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer activated the

State Emergency Operations Center on Thursday evening to provide support to affected communities "as they respond to the impacts of flooding."

A few hours earlier Thursday, Mitzi Hale and her three sons ate some snacks out of a vending machine as they awaited word on the status of the terminal.

The 42-year-old from Brighton and her sons — 10, 13 and 20 — were to board a mid-morning flight to Florida. They were scheduled to visit Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom theme park on Friday before embarking on a Disney cruise through the Caribbean, beginning on Saturday.

Making matters worse: The quartet had the same vacation booked for November of last year, but missed out due to a tropical storm that struck the region.

"We're just having flashbacks," said Hale, who lives in Brighton, Michigan, located between Detroit and Lansing.

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Norwell reviews successes and room for growth

By HOLLY GASKILL

Looking into a new school year, the Norwell Community School board is also looking back at the district's previous successes and needs.

Tuesday, during a strategic planning session, each school principal shared data from the previous year.

In 2023, 184 students graduated from the district and another received a Certification of Completion. Norwell High School Principal Kam Meyer reported these graduates earned a total of 1,290 college credits, an estimated \$350,000 cost savings, and 107 students passed an Advanced Placement exam, possibly earning additional college credit. There are now 40 dual-credit opportunities within the school, and Meyer stated the school hopes to add two more dual-credit courses.

However, two students did not graduate, with one dropping out due to lack of interest and another transferring districts and not re-enrolling. The class graduated 16 students from the alternative school, but Meyer emphasized that the administration is focused on identifying student needs early to provide support and graduation pathways.

For the middle school, Principal Andrew Enderle highlighted the school's test scores, which exceed state averages, but not at a level Enderle would like to aim for. Statewide, 26.6 percent of seventh grade students are categorized as proficient in math and language arts on the ILEARN test. At NWS, 44 percent of seventh grade students are proficient.

"In my mind, it's hard for me to grasp that a 30 percent passing rate is what our target should be," Enderle said. "I want to push us in the direction of being a comparative ... to look at some schools who are at the top of the passing rate because we have to get there. We have a 20 percent margin demand gap (to that level) — and that's a huge margin, but somebody's doing it the right way."

Enderle said the school is implementing an intervention block in the school schedule and high school credit opportunities, as well as implementing data systems to identify school and student needs.

Lancaster Elementary Principal Ginger Butcher and Ossian Elementary Principal Theresa Casto also shared state testing data, which similarly showed passing

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Man pleads guilty to child molestation

By SYDNEY KENT

A Bluffton man may spend the rest of his life in prison after allegedly repeatedly molesting his granddaughter.

Carter Talmidge Arnold, 66, pled guilty to child molesting, a Level 1 felony, and molesting a child under 14-years-old, a Level 4 felony, in the Wells Circuit Court last week. As part of the plea agreement, 16 additional charges were dismissed.

According to a probable cause affidavit, Arnold's 13-year-old granddaughter allegedly reported that Arnold would bribe her with drinks and snacks after he touched her inappropriately. He also threatened she would not be able to get off of the bus at his house anymore if she did not consent to the abuse, which would cause her to have to switch schools. She said Arnold also allegedly suggested he would include her 8-year-old sister in the abuse as her sister grew up.

The victim told her friends

about the ongoing sexual abuse that would take place at Arnold's home after school. Her friends reported this to the school counselor.



Carter Talmidge Arnold

Arnold admitted to the allegations to officers investigating the case. He confirmed he created a bartering system where he would give his granddaughter candy, jewelry, and art supplies in exchange for enduring the abuse. Arnold also allegedly told officers he "tried not to" and that he has been single for over 20 years.

Upon conviction, a Level 1 felony carries a penalty of 20-40 years in prison. A Level 4 felony carries a possible prison sentence

(Continued on Page 2)

Maui County sues utility, alleging negligence over fires

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Maui County sued Hawaiian Electric Company on Thursday over the fires that devastated Lahaina, saying the utility negligently failed to shut off power despite exceptionally high winds and dry conditions.

Witness accounts and video indicated that sparks from power

lines ignited fires as utility poles snapped in the winds, which were driven by a passing hurricane. The Aug. 8 fires killed at least 115 people and left an unknown number of others missing, making them the deadliest in the U.S. in more than a century.

Hawaii Electric said in a statement it is "very disappointed that Maui County chose this litigious path while the investigation is still unfolding."

The lawsuit said the destruc-

tion could have been avoided and that the utility had a duty "to properly maintain and repair the electric transmission lines, and other equipment including utility poles associated with their transmission of electricity, and to keep vegetation properly trimmed and maintained so as to prevent contact with overhead power lines and other electric equipment."

The utility knew that high winds "would topple power poles, knock down power lines, and

ignite vegetation," the lawsuit said. "Defendants also knew that if their overhead electrical equipment ignited a fire, it would spread at a critically rapid rate."

A drought in the region had left plants, including invasive grasses, dangerously dry. As Hurricane Dora passed roughly 500 miles south of Hawaii, strong winds toppled at least 30 power poles in West Maui. Video shot by a Lahaina resident shows a downed power line setting dry grasses alight.

Firefighters initially contained that fire, but then left to attend to other calls, and residents said the fire later reignited and raced toward downtown Lahaina.

With downed power lines, police or utility crews blocking some roads, traffic ground to a standstill along Lahaina's Front Street. A number of residents jumped into the water off Maui as they tried to escape the flaming debris and overheated black

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Outside

Another scorcher today, chance of storms tonight

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Low 68	Low 57	Low 55

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Pancakes at The Plaza Saturday morning at 9

A Pancake Breakfast will be offered at Bluffton's Parlor City Plaza Saturday morning beginning at 9 a.m., by the members of the Chamber Connect Group.

Funds from the fund-raising event will be donated to Alive & Well.

Items for sale from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. will include hand made bows, doll clothes, pressed flower art, rope coil baskets, fall home decor, crocheted apparel and plushies, soaps, bath bombs, car freshies, stationary journals, Papparazzi jewelry, local produce and home-made baked goods (cookies, breads, rolls) and much more.

Vendors to be present will include Country Homestead Baking, Freds Family Produce, Redneck Oasis, Johnsons Homestead Produce, Sunny Vibes Soaps, KookieNow by Shay, Leah Crochets, Divine Shine, Pressed In, Craft Paper Commons and Brooke's Bow Boutique.

Legislators wrestle high health care costs in interim task force

By WHITNEY DOWNARD

High health care costs dominated much of the discussion during this year's legislative session and a three-hour meeting Wednesday continued the debate during the interim.

But action in the sphere is slow-moving, as demonstrated by an introduction from the Indiana Department of Insurance (IDOI) to the Health Care Cost Oversight Task Force. Much of the onus of new health care regulation falls on the relatively small agency, as outlined by IDOI Commissioner Amy Beard.

She detailed new positions created by the department and the pursuit of outside contracts to comply with rules established back in 2020 to regulate Pharmacy Benefit Managers and establish an All-Payer Claims Database to compare prices for common procedures at competing hospitals.

"We want to make sure that we have the right expertise," Beard said of the hirings. "The (All-Payer Claims Database) is going to be a repository of data that will lead to more transparency, theoretically, and help with health care costs."

A new law requires the department to gather and analyze information from non-profit hospitals and compare prices to Medicare as well as licensing PBMs. But results won't appear before the committee before December 2024.

Task force co-chair Sen. Chris Garten, R-Charlestown, noted that the latest budget included substantial funding increases to support the department's growth. When asked, Beard said the next key step would be securing personnel.

A nuanced, multi-pronged problem

Wednesday's meeting included presentations from two experts, Indiana University professor Nir Menachemi and Ball State economist Mike Hicks. Both discussed the need to transition from fee-for-service — a health care model that critics say incentivizes more transactions over quality of care — to value-based service.

But Menachemi focused his efforts on bolstering the state's lagging public health while Hicks pointed to hospital monopolies as a key culprit.

"I think there's a lot ... to think about on the importance of prevention, as opposed to (just) curative care," Menachemi said. "How healthy someone is, is a function of their behaviors ... (and) Indiana is frequently ranked low on health rankings."

In contrast to peers, Hoosiers smoke at higher rates and exercise less — both areas public health is designed to combat — and Menachemi applauded legislators for boosting public health in the most recent legislative session.

He said that total Hoosier health care costs and premiums were roughly around the national average.

"Would we benefit from more competition? No question, yes. I still don't think that's the (only) issue here," Menachemi said.

Or a simple solution

In contrast to Menachemi's recommendation for a multi-stakeholder collaboration to tackle a multi-pronged issue, Hicks called it fairly simple.

"It's easy to miss the forest for the trees," Hicks said. "... I'm going to say right up front: Indiana has a serious hospital monopoly problem."

He pointed to five or six major non-profit hospital chains he said had stifled competition through acquisitions and mergers, pushing costs higher in Indiana than prices were for comparably unhealthy states.

"It cannot be just health care outcomes that are driving this car," Hicks said. "... This is not health care spending in Indiana, these are the profits to IU Ball Memorial Hospital (in Muncie) that go directly to Wall Street and cannot be reinvested in our businesses and our standing operations."

According to data he analyzed from the Indiana Hospital Association, giving birth in Muncie could cost four times as much as a delivery in nearby Anderson — or \$20,397 versus \$5,029.

INCIDENTS

City:
Wednesday, 4:06 p.m., 1100 Echo Lane. Caller reported young girl running from the school and picked up by silver SUV. Officer informed caller it was related to another call and they were aware of situation.

Wednesday, 7:06 p.m., West Wabash and North Williams streets. Caller reported broken mirror leaning against trash can. Officer moved it to the rear side of the can.

Wednesday, 7:07 p.m., 1700 South Sutton Circle Drive. Caller advised two kittens with collars got out of his house and were found at Family Farm and Home. Before the caller could claim them, someone else did.

Wednesday, 7:29 p.m., Hoosier House Restaurant. Caller reported hitting a curb and concrete post with vehicle, needed accident report.

Wednesday, 7:35 p.m., Sherwood Drive and Stogdill Road. Caller reported chickens in the road.

Wednesday, 8:56 p.m., Save On Liquor South. Caller reported ongoing harassment and threatening from 2 men.

Wednesday, 9:10 p.m., Les Gerber Insurance. Caller reported van with handi-

Police Notebook

cap plate parked in parking lot. Man was homeless and had been drinking. Advised to move the vehicle once he is sobered up, given Pastor Neils number for some help.

Thursday, 2:54 a.m., 100 Capri Court. Welfare check requested for man walking and screaming. Unable to locate.

Thursday, 6:47 a.m., 1100 West Central Avenue. Report of telephone pole sparking and arching.

County:
Wednesday, 6:00 p.m., 700 East 300 North, Bluffton. Caller reported a scam via phone call. Woman spent the better part of a day purchasing \$13,500 in gift cards and giving private information to scammer. The scammer reportedly told the woman she would have to go to jail if she didn't provide the information.

Wednesday, 6:51 p.m., West 100 South and South 300 West. Driver reported he attempted to avoid a cat in the road and his vehicle swerved into a ditch. No injuries reported.

Wednesday, 8:25 p.m., near 1800 East 200 South, Bluffton. Caller reported an argument. Nothing physical.

Thursday, 9:49 a.m., 4300 West Oak Road, Markle.

Caller reported a fraudulent credit card account opened in her name.

Ossian:
Thursday, 6:17 a.m., 11000 North 200 West, Ossian. Originally a 911 hangup, caller made contact with officer and stated he was in a verbal argument with his brother and did not need assistance.

Thursday, 8:02 a.m., Norwell High School. Subject sleeping in driving lane; appeared to have been there all night and possibly involved in a car accident. Subject was safe.

ACCIDENTS
City:
Wednesday, 3:40 p.m., Ind. 1 and CR 800. Juan Rodriquez Montalvo advised his vehicle ran into construction arm and he had to back up, colliding with Terry Puritans Chevy Impala. Puritan reported he honked his horn as Montalvo reversed, however, he did not hear him. Damages not exceeding \$5,000.

Thursday, 6:57 a.m., Ind. 1 and Willowbrook Trail. Troy Snider was slowing in traffic when Bruce Prater's Toyota Highlander collided with the rear end of Prater's Chevy Malibu. Damages not exceeding \$10,000.

Thursday, 7:20 a.m.,

Main Street and Dustman Road. Laura Fletcher was driving south on Main Street and failed to observe the broken stoplight. Fletcher's Jeep Grand Cherokee collided with Maxwell Babcock's Honda Accord.

Thursday, 7:50 a.m., Ind 1. Thomas Wold was driving on Ind. 1 and failed to observe the broken stoplight. Wold's Chevy Cruz collided with Eugene Hill's Dodge Ram. Damages not exceeding \$10,000.

County:
Thursday, 7:58 a.m., 600 East and 100 North. Kristy Lenwell was driving straight on 600 East when a deer entered the roadway from the West. Lenwell's Honda Pilot struck the deer causing front end damage to the vehicle. Damages not exceeding \$5,000.

Wednesday, 2:15 a.m., Ind 1 and 800 North. Korinna Schindler activated her turn signal and edged over into the extra lane on Ind. 1 in order to turn right on 800 North. Mallory Craighead stated she didn't see this but only saw brake lights suddenly. The driver's side of Craigheads vehicle sideswiped the passenger side of Schindler's vehicle. Damages not exceeding \$10,000.

Experts optimistic about state's fiscal footing

Lawmakers look to cut taxes

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Indiana's budget chiefs offered a measured sense of optimism on the state's finances at a potentially transformational task force's first meeting — as Republican-aligned speakers pushed for big moves on taxes and Democrat lawmakers expressed frustration with the group's structure.

The Interim State and Local Tax Review Task Force will examine Indiana's corporate tax, individual income tax, property tax, sales tax, and others. Policy recommendations are due to the General Assembly ahead of the 2025 budget-writing session.

"Perhaps this will be the beginning of the discussion to overhaul, in a major way, the tax structure of the Hoosier State," Chair Travis Holdman, R-Markle, said Wednesday. "Perhaps we'll find that it isn't the will of the Legislature or our constituents to do much more than tweak the work ... done over the last couple of decades."

Financial outlook

Indiana has consistently stuck to balanced budgets, in which the state spends less than it collects in taxes — something the Office of Management and Budget Director Cris Johnston said was a priority.

Tax collections have outperformed state estimates in recent years, State Budget Director Zac Jackson said.

Indeed, the state's surpluses triggered automatic taxpayer refunds in 2021 and 2022, and prompted lawmakers to make large one-time payments toward pension liabilities and other

causes.

The mismatch is expected to stabilize over the biennium, according to Jackson's slides. But some developments may endure.

While the state typically has had between \$1.8 billion and \$2 billion in reserves on hand, Jackson said the "new normal" may be in the \$2.7 billion to \$2.9 billion range.

But Jackson also noted large increases in funding for K-12 tuition, higher education, Medicaid, the Department of Child Services and the Department of Corrections over the last decade. Payments to a pre-1996 teacher's pension fund have also swelled, but only through one-off supplemental checks.

Overall, he said the state had been proactive about funding its pension liabilities and tackling deferred maintenance.

Indiana Public Retirement System Executive Director Steve Russo said the state's pension funding progress demonstrated "how the impossible can become possible," but suggested maintenance strategies for the pre-96 fund to avoid more big appropriations decades down the line.

And Indiana has maintained highest-possible AAA credit ratings from the three big rating agencies for well over a decade. The designation means Indiana qualifies for the lowest interest rates possible — even if it's paid for recent projects in cash.

Indiana Finance Authority CEO Jim McGoff said Indiana's credit strengths include strong reserves, oversight, management, liquidity, flexibility and more — along with low debts and a lower cost of

living.

Indiana does have \$2.8 billion in outstanding debt, however, according to McGoff's slides.

Making proposals

Two non-government witnesses also testified — both conservative-leaning, and both with suggestions.

Americans For Prosperity Senior Fiscal Policy Fellow Kurt Couchman, who called taxes "deadweight losses on society," said Indiana should cut its state income taxes and rely more heavily on its sales taxes.

Couchman suggested "adjusting" the rate and broadening the range of things taxed, asserting that the approach would "strongly support greater opportunity, increased prosperity and more vibrant communities."

Democrats pushed back, arguing that the sales tax is "regressive," meaning that lower-income people spend a larger percentage of their salaries than higher-income people on sales taxes.

"A regressive tax system that satisfies Americans for Prosperity, a conservative political advocacy group founded by the Koch brothers, should not be the baseline that informs the policy outcomes of the task force," said Sen. Fady Qaddoura, D-Indianapolis.

Couchman also recommended reexamining spending programs and tax credits, and cracking down on tax increment financing districts — a mechanism commonly used by local governments. And, Couchman said, Indiana should consider ditching its biennial budgeting process in favor of what AFP calls a "structurally balanced" format spread across more years.

Former state Sen. Brandt

Hershman, who was deeply involved in fiscal policy during his 18-year tenure, advocated to get rid of the corporate tax.

He said that tax was volatile and easy for better-resourced companies to avoid, and that because the revenue goes to the state, ditching it wouldn't impact local governments.

Hershman also encouraged lawmakers to keep in mind the basic purpose of taxes, to link spending policy with outcomes, and seek bipartisanship.

"In 2010, we found ways to agree, and I hope you're able to do so as well," he said.

Democrat quibbles and what's next

Four pairs of Senate Republicans will lead research groups focused on each of the broader task force's policy areas, drawing criticism from Democrats of both chambers.

"I ask you to rethink your position on this and put a minority member in an appropriate place on each of those committees," Rep. Ed DeLaney, D-Indianapolis, told Holdman.

Qaddoura also asked for greater geographic diversity, noting that — although central Indiana is a significant portion of the state's population and tax base — just one of the Republican research group leaders represents the region.

Holdman said that to participate, lawmakers need only contact their colleagues leading the research groups.

Democrats additionally advocated for greater ideological diversity in non-government witnesses, with some pushing Americans for Prosperity's Couchman on a range of policy differences.

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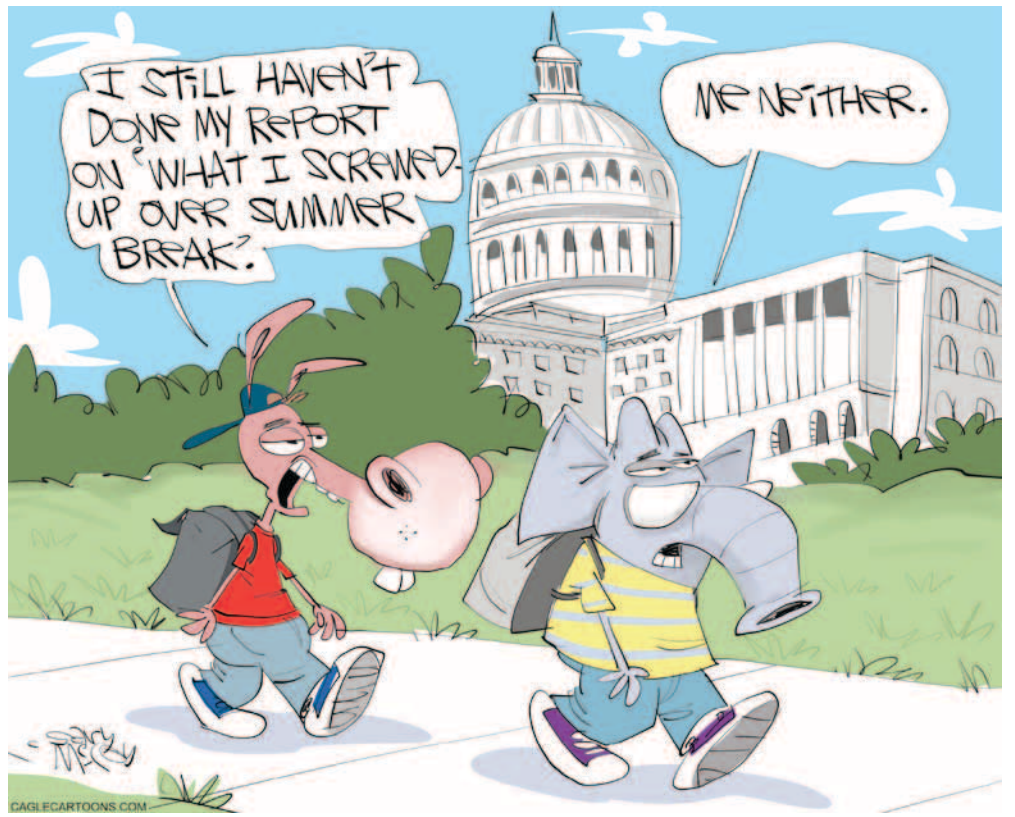
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Back to School time - a look through cartoonists' eyes...



Other Opinions

The threat to make Joe Biden testify

Hunter Biden made big money abroad by dropping the name of his powerful father, and the same tactic seems to have nearly helped him to evade tax and gun charges. Correspondence between federal prosecutors and Mr. Biden's lawyer has been leaked to the press, and it shows the depth of the case's political taint.

After news reports last fall suggested federal agents had enough evidence to prosecute, Mr. Biden's lawyer, Chris Clark, decided to bring up the big guy. "President Biden now unquestionably would be a fact witness for the defense in any criminal trial," he wrote to David Weiss, the U.S. attorney for Delaware, according to Politico. "This of all cases justifies neither the spectacle of a sitting President testifying at a criminal trial nor the potential for a resulting Constitutional crisis."

This is clarifying about the kind of pressure that Mr. Weiss was under not to bring a serious case. That isn't all: Through last fall and this spring, Politico adds, Mr. Clark "sought meetings with people at the highest levels of the Justice Department," including "the head of the Criminal Division, the head of the Tax Division, the Office of Legal Counsel, the Office of the Solicitor General, Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco and the attorney general himself."

Most such entreaties failed, but Mr. Clark finally secured an April 26 meeting with Mr. Weiss and Associate Deputy Attorney General Bradley Weinsheimer. "Please advise," Mr. Clark had written to Mr. Weinsheimer, "whether you would be the appropriate person to hear our client's appeal, in the event that the U.S. Attorney's Office decides to charge Mr. Biden."

Emails the next month show Mr. Biden's attorneys working with Mr. Weiss's staff on a deal that would have required no guilty plea by Hunter. That appears to have changed days after IRS agent Gary Shapley went public saying the investigation into Mr. Biden had been hampered by politics. Then Mr. Biden agreed to plead guilty to tax misdemeanors, but with a broad provision for future immunity that eventually fell apart under questioning by the judge.

Mr. Weiss is still on the case, now as a special counsel, but how does Attorney General Merrick Garland possibly think that the public can trust his judgment after this fiasco?

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Mark Miller, Opinion Page Editor

Opinions expressed on this page do not necessarily represent the views of this newspaper.

Single women are the odd men out, politically speaking

America's political parties are the oldest and third-oldest in the world, and they have competed for votes among a population that has been diverse since colonial times. If you have any doubts about that, consult David Hackett Fischer's 1989 classic "Albion's Seed" on how settlers from different parts of the British Isles brought distinctive "folkways" to the different seaboard colonies and the Appalachian backwoods.

Since none of these groups has ever come close to constituting a majority of Americans, the partisan competition has usually been fierce and (except for the brief and misnamed "era of good feelings") unending. And fluctuating.

Regional differences have long been obvious: Differences between North and South produced the Civil War. But in recent elections, the Midwest has voted more like the South than like the Northeast or the West.

Racial and ethnic differences have often been critical. Black Americans voted almost unanimously Republican, when they were allowed to vote, from the 1860s to the 1930s. Since the 1960s, they have voted almost unanimously Democratic — though that may be changing lately.

And "whites," treated as a uniform group by many analysts these days, used to have sharp divisions. New England politics for most of the 20th century was a battle, at the ballot box and in birth rates, between Yankee Protestant Republicans and Irish Catholic Democrats.

By the 1990s, evangelical Protestants emerged as a heavily Republican group, and in the 2010s, white college graduates (especially those with post-graduate degrees) as a heavily Democratic group.

And then there is the gender gap, the difference between male and female voters, which became statistically significant in 1980. In the years since, and despite the quip attributed to Henry Kissinger that "there's too much fraternizing with the enemy," it has grown wider.

But not uniformly. As American Enterprise Institute's ace polling expert Karlyn Bowman together with Ruy Teixeira have pointed out, it's more of a marriage gap.

The exit poll in the almost even 2022 House (Republicans won the popular vote 50% to 47%) shows that married men voted 59% to 39% Republican, and unmarried men also went Republican by a smaller but significant 52% to 45% margin.

Married women, however, also voted Republican by a landslide 56% to 42% margin. So, why was the election so close? Because unmarried women favored Democrats 68% to 31%.

Note that married men and married women both made up 30% of the electorate. But there are a lot more unmarried women voters, 23% of the electorate,

than unmarried men, 16%.

That reflects not only longer female lifespans but also female dominance in higher education, with women making up 60% of college and university students these days, and the trend toward later first marriages.

The upshot is that about one-third of Democratic voters are single women, which helps explain, as the Washington Examiner's Conn Carroll points out, the 2012 Obama "Life of Julia" cartoons, which showed government helping unattached women through life.

In general, women are more risk-averse than men, and thus more supportive of welfare state measures and more reluctant to support military action. They are also, as we have seen on female-dominated campuses, more willing to suppress speech that is seen as irritating or hurtful. "Highly educated women," as Australian educator Lorenzo Warby writes, "are proving all too willing to trash other people's freedoms to protect their emotions."

Surveys show that, after 50 years of feminism, American women are increasingly likely to report themselves as unhappy, a characteristic especially marked in unmarried young liberal women with no religious connection.

Of course, happiness is a subjective condition, perhaps subject to change in definition over time. But it's hard to avoid the conclusion of economist Tyler Cowen that "current political debate in America cannot be understood without the concept of neuroticism — as a formal concept from personality psychology — front and center."

This finds reflection in Biden-era Democrats' disguised but firm support for abortion up to the moment of birth (for reasons of "mental health") and for their eagerness to suppress speech that ran contrary to extreme risk-averseness during the COVID pandemic.

Those with memories ranging back to the 1970s and 1980s will recognize these attitudes as contrary to the positions of liberal Democrats then, including Joe Biden himself, who supported restrictions on late-term abortions and opposed government suppression of dissenting speech.

All of which undercuts the crude feminist view that everything would be better if women's views prevailed and provides support for the view that engagement, sometimes respectful and sometimes abrasive, between diverse segments — blacks and whites, North and South, Yankees and Irish, married people and single women — provides a better route to sensible policy and a successful nation.



Michael Barone

Michael Barone is a senior political analyst for the Washington Examiner © 2023 creators.com

Today in History

By The Associated Press
Today is Friday, Aug. 25, the 237th day of 2023. There are 128 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On August 25, 1944, during World War II, Paris was liberated by Allied forces after four years of Nazi occupation.

On this date:
In 1718, hundreds of French colonists arrived in Louisiana, with some settling in present-day New Orleans.
In 1875, Capt. Matthew Webb

became the first person to swim across the English Channel, getting from Dover, England, to Calais, France, in 22 hours.

In 1928, an expedition led by Richard E. Byrd set sail from Hoboken, N.J., on its journey to Antarctica.

In 1958, the game show "Concentration" premiered on NBC-TV.

In 1981, the U.S. spacecraft Voyager 2 came within 63,000 miles of Saturn's cloud cover, sending back pictures of and data about the ringed planet.

In 1985, Samantha Smith, 13, the schoolgirl whose letter to Yuri V. Andropov resulted in her famous peace tour of the Soviet Union, died with her father in an airliner crash in Auburn, Maine.

In 2001, R&B singer Aaliyah was killed with eight others in a plane crash in the Bahamas; she was 22.

In 2009, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, the liberal lion of the U.S. Senate, died at age 77 in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, after a battle with a brain tumor.

Bailing on my birthday

Dear Annie: I'm turning 50 this year and plan on having a large party. Last year at my birthday, I told both my sisters that I was having this party and expected them to come. They both agreed to come.

I currently live in Tennessee and thought that telling my sisters a year in advance would be adequate notice. They both live in Pennsylvania. In the seven-plus years that I have moved away from Pennsylvania, neither of my sisters has visited me or even made an effort to visit. When my sister lived in Japan, I went over and visited her despite the financial struggle.

The date of my party is quickly approaching, and one of my sisters has told me she will not be coming. The other sister has not responded to me.

I'm absolutely devastated that my sisters will not come to this milestone birthday and at a complete loss that they seem so indifferent to my hurt feelings. How can I make them see how hurtful their behavior is? — At a Loss in Tennessee

Dear At a Loss: First things first, put yourself in both your sisters' shoes. They might be incredibly busy with work or with family. They might be too financially strained to afford air travel right now. Most importantly, they might be completely unaware of how much this birthday party means to you, especially if you have not followed up with them about it since last year. Try not to take this personally; there could be a host of reasons that your sisters are unable to attend.

The next step would be to communicate your feelings to them. Tell them how much you value their love and friendship. When you come from a place of love, rather than a place of anger or resentment, they will be able to see things from your side.

Dear Annie: I'm a 50-year-old mom who lives in rural Georgia. My mother is a social worker in northern Califor-

nia. My 10-year-old daughter loves her grandmother so much. We are planning a vacation to Myrtle Beach for my daughter's birthday celebration. I invited my mom to come with us. She said that she won't be joining but is instead going on a trip to Boston to see her friend.

She always says family is more important than friends. I know when I tell this to my daughter, she will be devastated that Grandma is skipping her birthday trip to see friends. — Distracted in Georgia

Dear Distracted: It sounds like the bond your mother and daughter have with each other is very close, which is special. It's not easy to deliver news you know will disappoint your little girl, but try to show your mother some grace as well. It's possible she had this trip booked far in advance of your Myrtle Beach plans, could not cancel her flight or hotel reservations, or wasn't able to coordinate a better alternative time with the friend she is visiting.

Suggest that your mother allot time for a video call on your daughter's birthday to join virtually in your festivities. Hopefully, this will tide everyone over until she is able to belatedly celebrate in-person next.

"How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?" is out now! Annie Lane's second anthology — featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation — is available as a paperback and e-book. Visit http://www.creatorspublishing.com for more information. Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.

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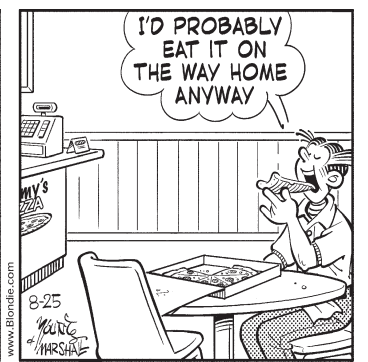
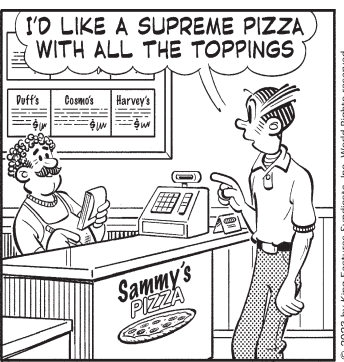
Dear Annie by Annie Lane



BEETLE BAILEY



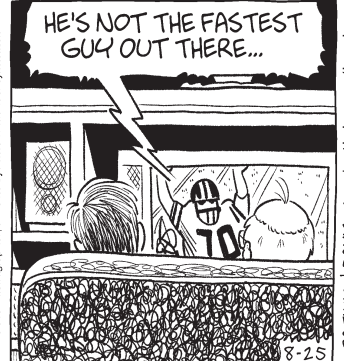
BLONDIE



ZITS



CRANKSHAFT



THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane

The LOCKHORNS



Daddy, still vacationing, is depicted by guest cartoonist little Billy.

"I'll have what she says I'm having."

My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



The opposite of fear is trusting in God and His unchanging love

Q: Many people in my life have gone through terrible times of illness, disasters of all kinds, and great disappointments. I've tried to be an encouragement to these friends and family, reminding them of God's promises that He will never leave or forsake us. I'm ashamed to say that now I'm facing some terrible news that threatens my health and ability to care for myself, and all my good encouragement to others is not bringing me relief. I feel like a hypocrite. What is the answer to overcoming this great despair? — S.E.

A: It has been said that anxiety and fear are like baby tigers: The more you feed them, the stronger

they grow. It is hard to trust God when danger threatens or everything seems to be collapsing around us. Fear can banish faith, but faith can banish fear. Faith isn't pretending our problems don't exist, nor is it simply blind optimism. Faith points us beyond our problems to the hope we have in Christ. True faith involves trust — trust in what Christ has done for us, and trust in God's goodness and mercy.

Certainly for the Christian, the opposite of fear is trusting in God and His unchanging love. Once we realize God is in control and He holds us in His loving hands, we can meet life's dangers and uncertainties with confi-

dence. After all, if we can trust God for our eternal salvation, can't we also trust Him for our lives right now?

The Bible says, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear" (Psalm 118:6). "The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11).

No situation is beyond God's control. Believe this: "Fear not the future; God is already there."

(This column is based on the words and writings of the late Rev. Billy Graham.)

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Solution time: 25 mins.

Completed crossword puzzle grid.

Yesterday's answer 8-25

Large crossword puzzle grid for the main puzzle.

Table with columns for date, channel, and program listings for various networks like ABC, CBS, NBC, etc.

Warriors beat Knights in battle at The Castle

By RYAN WALKER

Despite a first-set victory, the Norwell volleyball team lost in four sets (3-1) to Woodlan Thursday night at The Castle.

The Knights (3-2) came into the night swinging at an undefeated Warriors (5-0) squad, taking the first set 25-21. Woodlan entered the season with receiving votes in the IHSVCA preseason rankings.

In the second set, both teams continued to play even, but Norwell had a slight lead for the most part. The Warriors, though, took a late 18-16 advantage and never looked back — and eventually winning 25-19 to even the score 1-1.

The third set is where the match got out of hand for Norwell. Head coach Kayla Hunter needed two timeouts as her team held a 7-0 deficit, which turned into 12-0 and 15-0 before a point was given on a self-imposed Woodlan serve that hit the net.

Hunter said after the game that she thought her Knights came out strong and played more aggressively, but errors caught up to them by the third set, and Woodlan swooped in.

“I thought in the first we were way more on the attack, and we didn’t really let errors or their attacks really get to us,” Hunter said. “We just shook it off and got to the next one. After that, we kind of hung on to errors a little bit more, and we made a lot of errors toward the end.”

The score ended at 25-4, and it looked as if the fourth set would come easy, but the Knights got their swagger back.

Woodlan head coach Jerrid Rydell found his team down 12-9 and used a timeout with the Knights steaming with confidence again. However, what was said in that huddle clearly worked, as Woodlan would go on an 8-3 swing and take the lead.

Toward the end of the fourth, Norwell got closer, being down 22-20, but eventu-

ally fell with Woodlan scoring the last three points of the match.

“I thought we came out strong, and then I was pretty disappointed,” Hunter said. “Granted, (Woodlan’s) a solid team that has some hitters that could really put the ball away, but I don’t think we showed our best, especially towards the end.”

Woodlan was Norwell’s third preseason-ranked opponent in just the five games to start the regular season. The Knights defeated Heritage in a 3-2 comeback, who has also receiving votes while falling to 1A’s No. 1 Blackhawk 3-0.

There’s value in playing a tough schedule as the Northeast 8 Conference has three ranked schools, including 3A power Belmont, who has been to and has won state titles in recent history. Even though the IHSVCA ranks more schools than other sports, Norwell still has nine ranked opponents left in the regular season.

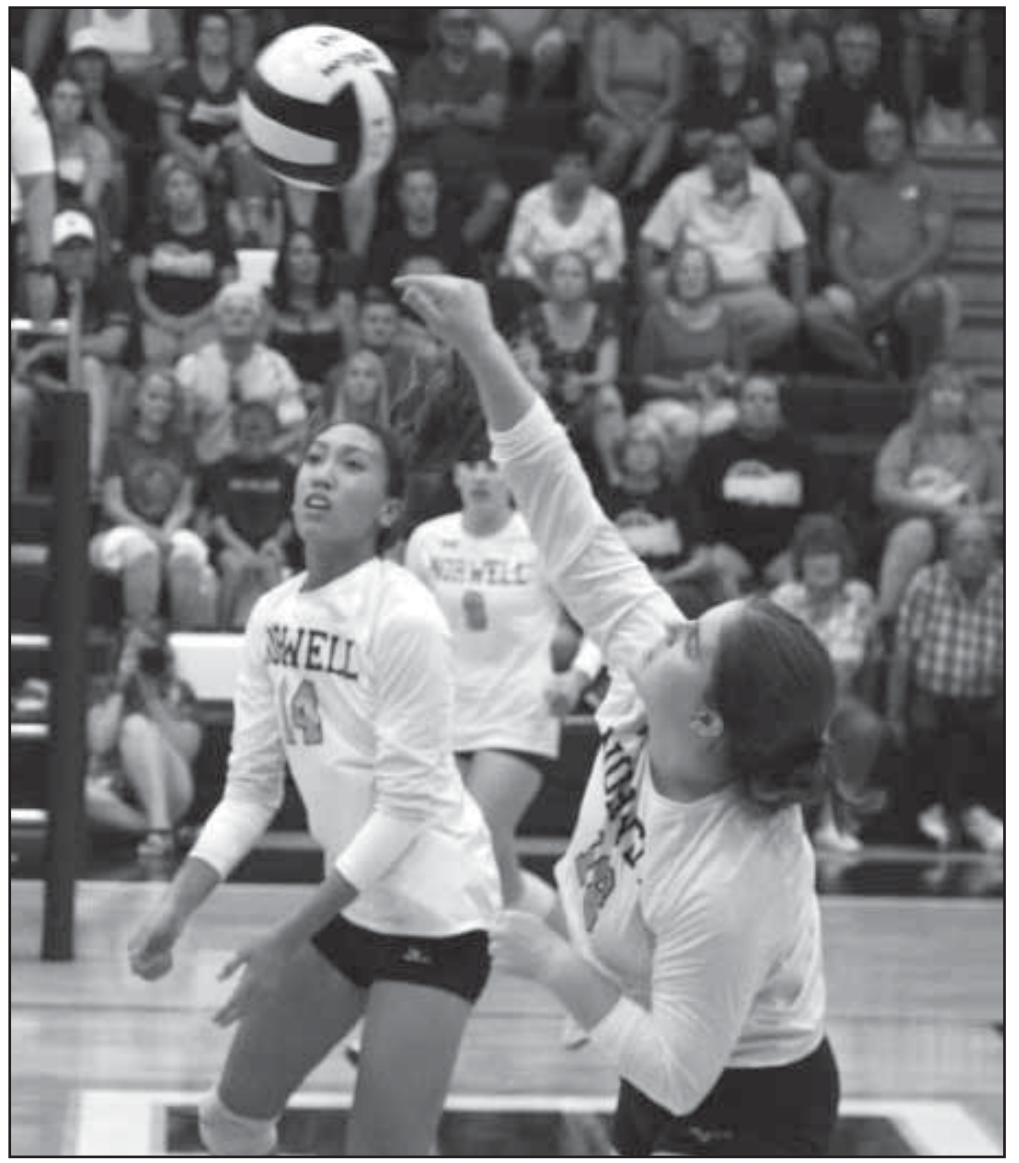
Hunter likes to see her team play against teams of high caliber to gain confidence that they can play in big games and stay up.

“You always want to play good teams, and I looked at our schedule, and we do play a lot of pretty solid teams at the beginning,” Hunter said. “Which has its pros and cons. I think it’s good for them. We obviously want to see good competition for us to be successful against a team like Heritage to get that confidence at the beginning.”

Madeline McCabe led the team with seven kills and three aces, Macie Saalfrank led with 17 assists, Jordyn Xayyachack with 16 digs, and Mallory Falls, Vanessa Rosswurm, and Saalfrank each had one block.

Norwell will play next at the Prairie Heights Invitational starting at 9 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 26.

sports@news-banner.com



Norwell’s Rebecca Settle (right) spikes toward Woodlan’s side in front of teammate Vanessa Rosswurm (left) during a match at The Castle. The Knights fell 3-1 in the game. (Photo by Ryan Walker)

High School Calendar

- FRIDAY, AUGUST 25**
 BOYS TENNIS: Blackhawk Christian at Norwell, 4:30 p.m.
 FOOTBALL: Norwell at Delta, 7:30 p.m.; Manchester at Bluffton, 7 p.m.; Southern Wells at Madison-Grant, 7 p.m.
SATURDAY, AUGUST 26
 BOYS TENNIS: Bluffton at JV Invitational at Norwell, 9 a.m.
 CROSS COUNTRY (CO-ED): Norwell, Southern Wells at Taylor University Invitational, 9 a.m.; Bluffton at Oak Hill CC Invitational, 10 a.m.
 GIRLS GOLF: Bluffton, Norwell, Southern Wells at Bi-County Meet at Timber Ridge, 8 a.m.
 GIRLS SOCCER: Norwell at Columbia City, 11:30 a.m.
 VOLLEYBALL: Norwell at Prairie Heights Invitational, 9 a.m.; Southern Wells hosts Raider 4-Way 1A Invitational, 9 a.m.
MONDAY, AUGUST 28
 BOYS TENNIS: Bluffton at Leo, 5 p.m.
 GIRLS GOLF: Concordia at Bluffton, 4:30 p.m.
 VOLLEYBALL: Northfield at Bluffton, 6 p.m.
TUESDAY, AUGUST 29
 BOYS SOCCER: Norwell at Belmont, 6:30 p.m.
- BOYS TENNIS:** Norwell at Carroll, 4:30 p.m.; Bluffton at Manchester, 5 p.m.
CROSS COUNTRY (CO-ED): Bluffton, Norwell, Southern Wells at Bi-County Meet at South Adams, 5 p.m.
GIRLS GOLF: Norwell at DeKalb, 4:30 p.m.; Bluffton at South Adams, 4:30 p.m.
GIRLS SOCCER: Belmont at Norwell, 6:30 p.m.
VOLLEYBALL: Southern Wells at Norwell, 7:30 p.m.; Bluffton at Marion, 6 p.m.
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 30
BOYS TENNIS: Bluffton at Wayne, 5 p.m.
VOLLEYBALL: Norwell at Wayne, 6:45 p.m.
THURSDAY, AUGUST 31
BOYS SOCCER: Jay County at Norwell, 6:30 p.m.
BOYS TENNIS: Norwell at Columbia City, 5 p.m.
GIRLS GOLF: Huntington North at Norwell, 4:30 p.m.; Heritage at Bluffton, 5:30 p.m.; South Adams/Woodlan at Southern Wells, 5 p.m.
GIRLS SOCCER: Norwell at Jay County, 5 p.m.
VOLLEYBALL: South Adams at Norwell, 7:30 p.m.; Manchester at Bluffton, 6 p.m.

Tigers swept by Eagles in V-ball

The Bluffton volleyball team was swept in three sets against Churubusco at home Thursday night.

The Tigers (1-5) lost 26-16 in the first set, 25-7 in the second, and 25-15 in the third.

Stat leaders were Isabella Stout with five kills and three aces, Haley Gibson with 11 assists, and Marly Drayer with 11 digs.

The junior varsity team also lost to the Eagles in two sets.

The JV team lost 25-16 in the first and 25-13 in the second.

Stat leaders were Madelyn Funk with five digs, Riley Roby with three aces, Isla Gibson with three kills, and Ella Broderick with one assist.

Bluffton will be at home in its next game against Northfield, with junior varsity starting at 6 p.m. Monday, Aug. 28, and varsity to follow.

No. 13 Notre Dame and Navy arrive in Ireland for opener

By KEN MAGUIRE
 AP Sports Writer

DUBLIN (AP) — Marcus Freeman has his new quarterback in Sam Hartman. The Notre Dame coach says he also has the ideal time to face Navy.

The Irish, ranked No. 13, will face the Midshipmen and their triple-option offense in the season opener Saturday at Aviva Stadium in Dublin.

“It’s a tremendous advantage to play Navy the first game of the year because the preparation that entails getting ready for them is obviously lengthy,” Freeman said.

Freeman begins his second full year as a head coach intent on a fast start. Notre Dame opened with a loss to Ohio State last year and followed it up by losing to Marshall at home. The Irish were also upset by Stanford in South Bend last season.

They might not get another mulligan — even in Ireland.

Stability at the quarterback position should help. Hartman threw for 38 touchdowns and 12 interceptions last year at Wake Forest. The graduate transfer was a three-year starter and holds the ACC career record for touchdown passes (110). He replaces Drew Pyne and Tyler Buchner.

“There’s no substitution for experience — none. I don’t care if you’re the head coach or the quarterback,” Freeman said. “That’s what gives me confidence in Sam Hartman. This ain’t his first rodeo.”

Navy coach Brian Newberry — making his head coaching debut — said disrupting Hartman is a top priority.

“If he knows what we’re doing, it’s going to be a long day,” said Newberry, who was promoted from defensive coordinator when Navy fired Ken Niumatalolo after back-to-back 4-8 finishes.

Hartman will have an experienced partner at center. Freeman confirmed on Thursday that starter Zeke Correll (ankle) will play.

THE SERIES

Notre Dame leads Navy 81-13-1 in a series that was uninterrupted from 1927-2019 before the pandemic and has won the last five. Notre Dame held on for a 35-32 victory last November.

This will be their third meeting in Dublin. The Irish won 50-10 in 2012 at Aviva Stadium and prevailed 54-27 in 1996 before a disappointing crowd of 38,651 at Croke Park; the locals during the first game were reportedly perplexed by Midshipmen doing pushups every time Navy scored.

Saturday’s game was originally scheduled for Dublin in 2020 but it was canceled because of the pandemic.

AT THE HELM

Newberry hasn’t named a starting quarterback but on Tuesday said senior Tai Lavatai “has separated himself as of late.” Lavatai and sophomore Blake Horvath are both listed atop the QB depth chart. Behind them is 5-foot-9 senior Xavier Arline.

“We’ve got three players that we can roll out at quarterback,” Newberry said. “In this system, you’ve got to have depth at quarterback.”

Lavatai was last year’s starter through eight games before a knee injury. Arline started the final four games, including against Notre Dame. Arline will “certainly have a role on Saturday, whether it’s at quarterback or at slot,” Newberry said.

FAST STARTS

Like Notre Dame, Navy is looking for a fast start. The Midshipmen have lost three consecutive season openers, including to FCS opponent Delaware 14-7 at home a year ago, when opponents outscored Navy 81-43 in the first quarter.

Navy’s offense hopes to be less predictable. Fullback Daba Fofana, who led the team with 769 rushing yards in 2022, said the backs have been working on pass-catching.

“Controlling the ball at the same time while getting some explosive plays to build some momentum is a key part of winning this game,” said Fofana, a physics major who played the cello in the Naval Academy orchestra during his first year in Annapolis.

SCARY MOVIE

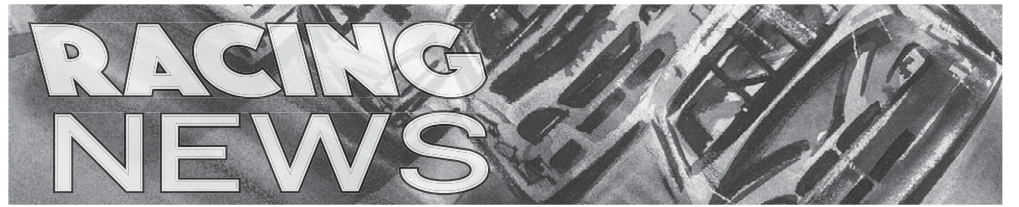
Who knew Freeman likes horror films? On the overnight flight to Dublin, the Notre Dame coach watched the second half of last year’s game against Navy, when the Midshipmen outscored the Irish 19-0.

“You get angry sometimes when you watch it,” Freeman said at Aviva Stadium a few hours after the team’s flight landed. “We let our foot off the pedal. We were making mistakes that (were) effort-based. That’s the one thing that can’t happen in our program.

“Both sides of the ball in the second half didn’t play up to our standard,” he continued. “It was a great reminder that if you give them a chance, they’re going to take advantage of it. They will not quit.”

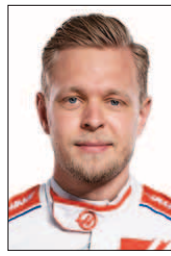
Navy also arrived Thursday morning. The game begins at 7:30 p.m. local time (2:30 p.m. Eastern), so both teams will fly back on Sunday.

The Irish host Tennessee State the following Saturday. Navy is off next Saturday.



Haas F1 team keeps drivers Magnussen and Hulkenberg for the next season

KANAPOLIS, North Carolina (AP) — The Haas Formula One team is sticking with veteran drivers Kevin Magnussen and Nico Hulkenberg for next year.



Kevin Magnussen



Nico Hulkenberg

Magnussen last season had one pole position and 25 points, but this season has only two points from two 10th-place finishes.

Team principal Guenther Steiner kept faith with the Danish driver, and expected a jump in performance from both next year.

“I’m delighted (Magnussen will) return for what will be his seventh season in Haas colors. With 113 starts for our team alone, we know where his strengths lie,” Steiner said.

“Nico’s simply slotted in without fuss or fanfare and proved himself to be a valuable member of the team. He’s approaching 200 starts in Formula One and we’re very happy to be the beneficiary of that experience.”

Despite a disappointing campaign so far this year, Haas said on Thursday it was giving Magnussen and Hulkenberg a second season together.

The American-owned team was eighth in the constructors’ championship with 11 points as the season resumes this weekend at the Dutch Grand Prix.

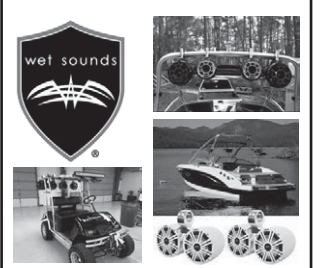
Hulkenberg secured the team’s best finish with seventh place at the Australian GP in April and also collected three points by finishing sixth in a sprint race at the Austrian GP in July.



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News-Banner Scoreboard

BASEBALL

American League

Table with columns W, L, Pct, GB for American League teams: Baltimore, Tampa Bay, Toronto, Boston, New York, etc.

Thursday's Games

Game summaries for Thursday: L.A. Dodgers 6, Cleveland 1, 1st game; Tampa Bay 5, Colorado 3; etc.

National League

Table with columns W, L, Pct, GB for National League teams: Atlanta, Philadelphia, Chicago, New York, Washington, etc.

L.A. Dodgers 9, Cleveland 3, 2nd game; Chicago Cubs 5, Pittsburgh 4, 10 innings; Cincinnati at Arizona, late

Friday's Games: Washington (Adon 1-0) at Miami (Garrett 7-4), 6:40 p.m.; Chicago Cubs (Hendricks 5-6) at Pittsburgh (Keller 10-8), 7:05 p.m.; etc.

7:05p.m. Saturday's Games: Fort Wayne at Great Lakes, 5:05 p.m. (Game two to follow)

Dallas at Phoenix, 6 p.m.

BASKETBALL

WNBA

Table with columns W, L, Pct, GB for WNBA teams: x-New York, x-Connecticut, Atlanta, Washington, Chicago, Indiana, etc.

TRANSACTIONS

Thursday's Transactions

Major League Baseball transactions: CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Recalled C Korey Lee from Charlotte; CLEVELAND GUARDIANS — Sent C Zack Collins outright to Columbus; etc.

The Classifieds

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

King Classic Sudoku

9x9 Sudoku grid with some numbers filled in.

Difficulty: ★★★★★ 8/25

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FOR SALE

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EMPLOYMENT

Help Wanted: L.A. Dodgers at Cleveland, sus.

LENGERICH MEATS logo and contact information for Lengerich Meats.

Help Wanted

HELP TO KEEP up with rental homes, 260-565-3780.

ALH Building Systems advertisement for help wanted positions, including 1st shift competitive wages and full-time employment opportunities.

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Services: WE DO CONCRETE coatings. Garages, offices, dog kennels, patios and more. Call for free estimate, 260-296-2427.

Services

ADVERTISE YOUR SERVICES every day in Wells County's most popular daily marketplace! A 20 word, line classified for 2-months is \$97.

This Week's Garage Sales

3998 SE ST. Rd. 116, Sat., 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Artifacts, tackle, outdoor stuff, men's clothes, furniture, collectibles, hanging lamps, DVDs. No early sales.

RENTALS

Office Space Rental: OFFICE OR RETAIL space. Ready for you with new flooring and paint. 1,188 sq. ft. of open space that can be divided to whatever your needs are.

Lottery Numbers

Thursday's Drawings HOOSIER LOTTERY: Cash 5 — 10-16-24-26-39; Cash4Life — 09-13-23-30-51, Cash Ball: 01; Quick Draw Midday — 01-06-08-20-28-33-36-37-40-41-43-48-49-60-61-64-66-68-76-77, BE: 08; Daily Three-Midday — 04-09-09, SB:00; Daily Three-Evening — 06-03-00, SB:02; Daily Four-Midday — 07-02-05-04, SB: 00; Daily Four-Evening — 03-09-04-07, SB: 02; Quick Draw Evening — 03-04-05-10-16-19-23-24-25-27-28-29-36-37-39-45-56-58-63-64, BE: 05; Hoosier Lotto — Estimated jackpot (for Saturday): \$29.8 million; MEGA MILLIONS — Estimated jackpot (for Friday): \$52 million; POWERBALL — Estimated jackpot (for Saturday): \$345 million.

Public Sale Calendar

AUGUST 26 - 9 a.m. - Multiple consignors. 6632 N. 500 W., Decatur, IN. Personal property: Seeburg jukebox, Husqvarna Z-248F zero turn mower, furniture, electronics, toys, jewelry, antiques, collectibles, ephemera, advertising items, glassware, hand & power tools, Gene Stratton Porter collection, 500+/- collection of Star Wars, TMNT, Marvel & DC characters and more! Preview Aug. 25, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Wiegmann Auctioneers, wiegmannauctioneers.com, 260-447-4311.

BIDDING ENDS AUGUST 27 (Online Only Auction) - Mildred and Ann Dee Ferguson, sellers. Lifetime collection of country primitives and collectibles including brass school bells, oil lamps, arrow heads, antique furniture, extensive collection of precious stones and gems, antique slanted display case, crocks, appliances and much more. *This is a large auction with many unique items! The Steffen Group Inc., Pat Carter, sale manager, 260-824-3006, www.steffengrp.com.

AUGUST 27-SEPTEMBER 1 (Online Only Auction) - Mildred and Ann Dee Ferguson, sellers. Spacious 5 bedroom, 2 full baths, split level located in Northern Wells County. 7.22+/- acres with over 40 varieties of trees on the property, 30'x40' pole barn, updated septic system. "Explore the potential." Open house: Aug. 29 from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m., 314 W. 1200 N., Ossian, IN. Pat Carter, sale manager, The Steffen Group Inc., 260-824-3006, www.steffengrp.com.

Public Notices

NOTICE: The following will be sold for charges: 815 W WASHINGTON ST BLUFFTON ON 09/12/2023 @ 10:00 AM: 2002 YAMAHA JYAVM01E12A043212 \$2,300.00; 2007 VOLVO YV4CY982771382545 \$2,095.00

SUDOKU ANSWER

9x9 grid with the solution to the King Classic Sudoku puzzle.

Swiss Village, Inc. Berne, IN. Now Seeking: PRN LPN/RN. Swiss Village, Inc. is now seeking an LPN or RN to work on an as-needed basis in Healthcare. Candidates must be a graduate of an accredited School of Nursing and currently licensed in the State of Indiana as a Licensed Practical Nurse or Registered Nurse.

Railroads resist joining safety hotline for ability to discipline workers

By JOSH FUNK
AP Business Writer
 OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The major freight railroads say a disagreement over whether they will be allowed to discipline some workers who use a government hotline to report safety concerns has kept them from following through on the promise they made back in March to join the program after a fiery Ohio derailment prompted calls for reforms.

Unions and workplace safety experts say the idea of disciplining workers who report safety concerns undermines the purpose of creating such a hotline because workers won't use it if they fear retribution. Programs like this one overseen by the Federal Railroad Administration are especially important in an industry like railroads where there is a long history of workers being fired for reporting safety violations or injuries, experts say.

"Their opposition to this hotline — which only increases protection for public and workers — is just part of a decades-old effort to suppress reporting of injury and hazards so that they can appear to the public and regulators as safer than they are," said Debbie Berkowitz, who used to be a top-ranking official at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration during the Obama administration. "I mean, that's what this is all about."

But the head of the Association of American Railroads trade group, Ian Jefferies, said Thursday in a letter to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg that the railroads' concern is that the system could be abused by workers who try to avoid discipline by reporting situations a railroad already knows about to the hotline.

The rules of the hotline would provide immunity for workers who report any unsafe conditions the railroad doesn't know about. But the railroads want to be able to discipline workers in other situations.

"The crux of the current dispute centers on a significant nuance: situations where the employer is aware of a safety rule violation without any employee report — referred to as a 'known event' — but the employee reports the event anyway and therefore avoids discipline," Jefferies said.

For years, all the major freight railroads have resisted joining the safety hotline because of this concern and because they believe their own internal reporting systems are sufficient. But railroad unions have consistently said workers are reluctant to use the railroads' own safety hotlines because they fear retribution.

Amtrak and several dozen small railroads do use the government reporting program, but none of the big freight railroads have signed on to it.

The railroad trade group

said that a similar safety hotline used in the aviation industry allows workers to be disciplined if they report the same safety violation more than once in a five-year period. The railroads want a similar rule for their industry because Jefferies said "most if not all 'close call' events result from employees not adhering to established safety rules put in place by their employer, creating dangerous situations the consequences of which were narrowly avoided."

Rail unions bristle at that notion that workers are the problem. Vince Verna with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen union said it's clear that firing more workers won't solve all the safety problems in the industry. And railroad safety has been a key concern nationwide ever since a Norfolk Southern train derailed in East Palestine, Ohio, on Feb. 3.

"This is really old-school, tired rhetoric that blames the worker for the failures that are inherent in all complicated systems. Blaming the worker is exactly what leads workers to not report unsafe conditions in the workplace," said Verna, who serves on the committee of labor groups, railroads and safety regulators who have been trying to find a way to make this program work ever since Jefferies announced the railroads would sign on to it. That group is set to meet again next week.

CIA stairwell attack among flood of sexual misconduct complaints

By JIM MUSTIAN and JOSHUA GOODMAN
Associated Press

FAIRFAX, Va. (AP) — In a secluded stairwell at CIA headquarters last year, officer trainee Ashkan Bayatpour came up behind a colleague, wrapped a scarf around her neck and plainly spoke as he tried to kiss her on the mouth.

"There are many uses for this," the woman recalls him saying. "This is what I want to do to you."

Bayatpour was convicted Wednesday of a state misdemeanor charge of assault and battery in a case that was remarkable for breaking through the CIA's veil of ultra-secrecy and playing out in a public courtroom where it has emboldened a sexual misconduct reckoning.

At least two-dozen women have come forward in recent months with their own complaints of abusive treatment within the CIA, telling authorities and Congress not only about sexual assaults, unwanted touching and coercion but of what they contend is a campaign by the spy agency to keep them from speaking out, with dire warnings it could wreck their careers and even endanger national security.

"There are harassers everywhere and bosses that try to cover them up," said Kristin Alden, a Washington attorney who represents some of the women who have filed complaints. "But the whole nature of intelligence work — the culture of secrecy and people working under assumed names — really elevates the chilling effect of retaliation and isolation that victims feel."

Details of Bayatpour's July 13, 2022, stairwell attack have not been previously reported but were confirmed by The Associated Press through court records and by several people familiar with the case who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The 39-year-old Alabama native and former U.S. Navy intelligence officer has remained on the job for more than a year since the woman reported the assault to the CIA and nine months since she reported it to the FBI and local law enforcement.

Several of the woman's female co-workers attended Wednesday's proceedings, becoming emotional after Fairfax General District Court Judge Dipti Pidikiti-Smith found Bayatpour guilty, sentenced him to six months' probation and ordered him to surrender any firearms and stay away from the woman. His attorney has appealed.

The CIA declined to say whether Bayatpour has faced internal discipline, saying it does not comment on whether individuals are affiliated with the agency.

"This guilty verdict came despite and not because of the CIA," said Kevin Carroll, the attorney for Bayatpour's accuser. The AP does not identify victims of alleged sexual abuse or domestic violence.

Complaints to the CIA's Office of Equal Employment Opportunity about sexual harassment and discrimination this year have already doubled last year's total, detailing 76 separate incidents.

The top Democrat and Republican overseeing the

CIA, Virginia Sen. Mark Warner and Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, have called for a watchdog investigation and are considering hearings into why the agency has failed women in their ranks for so long. Since 2018, out of 290 total employment-related complaints, the agency has substantiated just a single case based on sex.

The congressional scrutiny prompted CIA Director William Burns in May to launch a series of reforms to streamline claims, support victims and more quickly discipline those behind misconduct. That includes hiring a psychologist steeped in victim advocacy to lead the agency's fledgling Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office and replacing the leadership of the CIA office where many of the women say they were discouraged from making complaints.

"Our officers deserve no less than our laser sharp focus on ensuring they have a safe and secure work environment," said CIA spokeswoman Tammy Kupperman Thorp.

Congressional aides told the AP they have interviewed or had contact with at least two-dozen women CIA employees this year. They described misconduct ranging from lewd remarks about sexual fantasies at after-work happy hours to a case in which a senior manager showed up at a subordinate's house at night with a firearm demanding sex. Some of the incidents go back years and took place as officers were on risky covert missions overseas, while others took place at CIA headquarters.

Petroleum asphalt remains in Yellowstone River after cleanup

By MATTHEW BROWN
Associated Press

REED POINT, Mont. (AP) — Two months after a railroad bridge collapse sent carloads of hazardous oil products plunging into Montana's Yellowstone River, the cleanup workers are gone and a mess remains.

Thick mats of tarry petroleum asphalt cover portions of sandbars. Oil-speckled rocks and bushes line the shore along with chunks of yellow sulfur, a component of crude. In the middle of the river downstream of the bridge, a tangle of black steel juts out of the water from a large piece of ruptured tank car.

The railroad, Montana Rail Link, in conjunction with federal and state officials last week halted most cleanup work and stopped actively looking for contaminated sites. They said falling river levels that have been exposing more pollution also make it harder to safely operate the large power boats used by cleanup crews.

Almost half of the 48,000 gallons of molten petroleum asphalt that spilled has not been recovered, officials said. That includes 450 sites with asphalt in quantities considered too small or too difficult for efficient removal, according to data provided to The Associated Press.

The spill extends more than 125 miles along a stretch of river popular among anglers and recreationists and relied upon by farmers to irrigate crops. Yellowstone National Park is upstream and not impacted.

The scope of remaining pollution was evident this week when viewed by boat downstream of the collapsed bridge, which has since been repaired. Asphalt could be seen on every river island visited, ranging from globs stuck on riverside vegetation and rocks, to thick mats of tar oozing across sandbars as summer temperatures heat it into a viscous liquid.

"What we've seen out there tells us that there should be a second phase of cleanup. They need to come back and they need to do a better job," said Wendy Weaver, executive director of Montana Freshwater Partners.

The nonprofit group focused on water protection has received reports of tar balls and other asphalt at more than 40 sites where cleanup workers previously passed through.

Elevated levels of a toxic component of oil known as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, have been detected in mountain whitefish downstream of the spill site, prompting an advisory against eating any caught along a 41-mile stretch of the Yellowstone. The contamination has not been conclusively linked to the derailment but the spilled asphalt contained PAHs, according to documents submitted to federal officials.

Test results on other fish species are pending, said Chrissy Webb with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks. At least eight snakes and 11 birds have been killed after encountering the sticky asphalt.

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