

# Groton Daily Independent

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## UpComing Events

### Tuesday, Feb. 8

Girls Basketball hosting Tiospa Zina with JV game at 6 p.m. followed by Varsity.

Boys Basketball vs. North Central at Edmunds Central with JV at 6:30 p.m. followed by Varsity.

### Wednesday, Feb. 9

LifeTouch picture re-take day at Elementary School

### Thursday, Feb. 10

Basketball Double Header at Milbank. 4 p.m.: Girls JV at elementary gym, Boys C game at Armory; 5 p.m.: Girls C game at elementary gym, Boys JV at Armory. 6:15 p.m.: Girls Varsity at HS Gym, 7:45 p.m. Boys Varsity at HS Gym.

### Friday, Feb. 11

Rushmore Challenge Debate at Harrisburg

### Saturday, Feb. 12

9 a.m.: State Junior High Wrestling at Pierre  
Basketball Doubleheader with Moberidge-Pollock in Groton. Girls JV at 1 p.m. followed by Boys JV, Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity

Rushmore Challenge Debate at Harrisburg

### Monday, Feb. 14

GBB at Flandreau Indian - JV at 5 p.m. followed by varsity

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

### Tuesday, Feb. 15

Boys Basketball at Sisseton

C game at 5 p.m. in the Practice Gym; JV at 5 p.m. in the varsity gym followed by Varsity game

Junior High Boys Basketball hosts Tiospa Zina. 7th



Grade at 5:30 p.m. followed by 8th grade game.  
City Council meeting, 7 p.m.

### Wednesday, Feb. 16

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla.

**Groton Daily Independent**  
**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**  
**Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460**

**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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## **Bragg leads Ronalli past Groton Area**

Madelyn Bragg put in 25 points as Aberdeen Roncalli defeated the Lady Tigers Monday night in Groton, 50-24.

The Cavaliers led at the quarterstops at 18-7, 29-12 and 43-18.

Gracie Traphagen led the Tigers with eight points while Alyssa Thaler had seven, Allyssa Locke had four, Jerica Locke three and Kennedy Hansen and Jaedyn Penning each had one point.

Adding to the Cavalier's tally were Morgan Fiedler with 11, Olivia Hanson 10 and Allie Morgan and Ava Hanson each had two.

Groton Area made nine of 51 in field goals for 17 percent, three of eight from the line for 38 percent, had 10 team fouls and six turnovers.

Roncalli made 20 of 42 in field goals for 47 percent, eight of 11 from the line for 73 percent, had eight team fouls and eight turnovers.

Roncalli won the junior varsity game, 33-20. The Cavaliers led at the quarterstops at 9-2, 17-7 and 22-15.

Faith Traphagen and Jaedyn Penning each had four points, Laila Roberts and Mia Crank each had three, Kennedy Hansen and Rylee Dunker each had two points and Jerica Locke and Elizabeth Flihs each had one point.

Ava Hanson led the Cavaliers with 12 points while Rylee Voeller each had 10, Claire Crawford had five, Maddie Huber four and Ella Hanson had two points.

Groton Area won the C game, 27-21. The Cavaliers had a 7-6 lead after the first quarter, but then Groton Area took over and led at halftime, 20-9, and 25-19 after three quarters.

Rylee Dunker led Groton Area with 11 points while Laila Roberts had seven, Brooklyn Hansen and Emily Clark each had three points, Elizabeth Flihs had two and Talli Wright added one point.

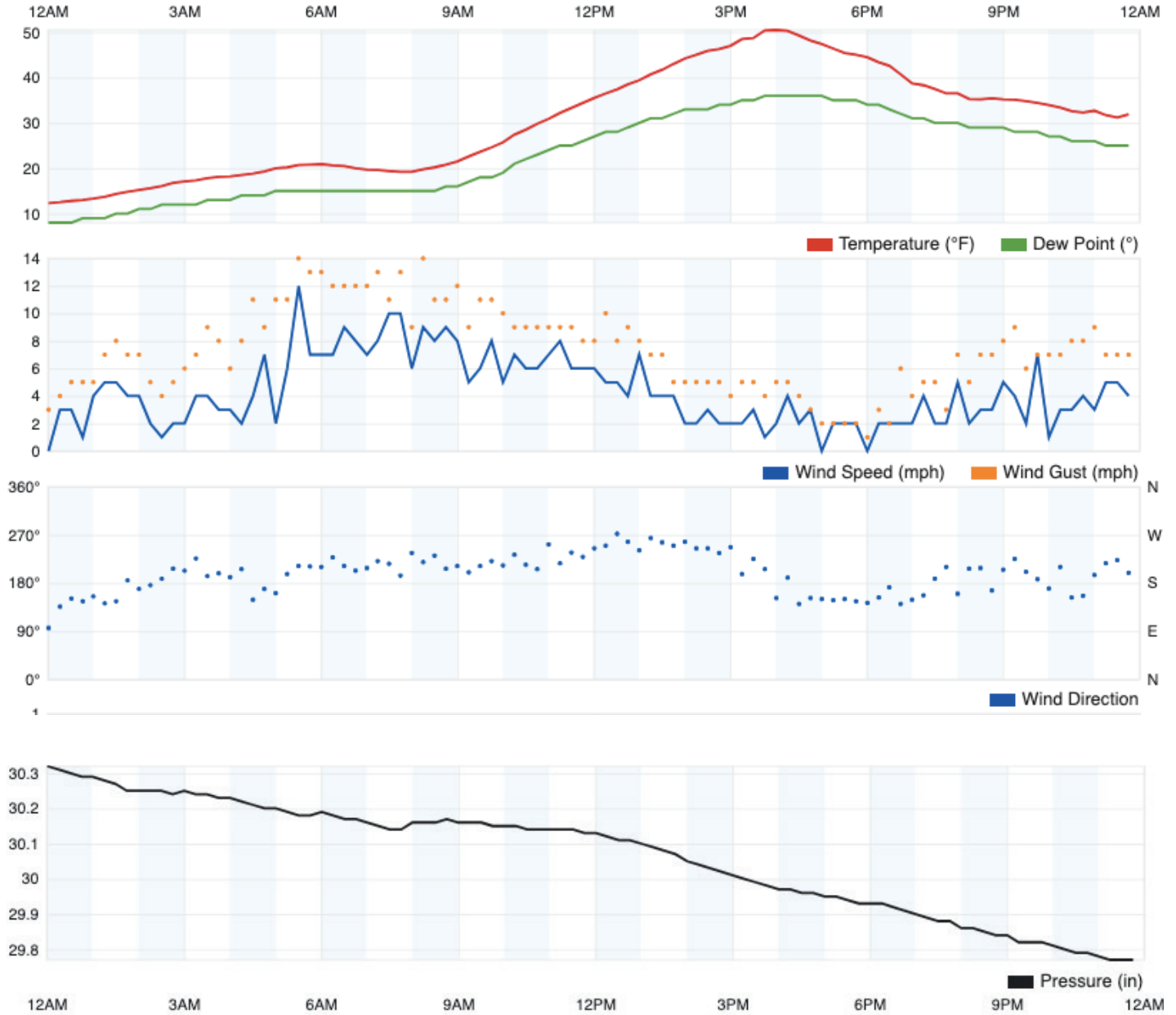
Rylee Voeller led the Cavaliers with 14 points followed by Kathryn Olivier, Sophia Feickert and Claire Crawford each had two points and Reese Henrich added one.

All three games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. The JV and C game were sponsored by Steve and Betty Dunker. The varsity by Allied Climate Professionals with Kevin Nehls, the John Sieh Agency, Groton Ford, Dacotah Bank and Bary Keith at Harr Motors.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

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Today



Mostly Sunny and Windy

High: 40 °F

Tonight



Blustery. Mostly Cloudy then Chance Snow

Low: 27 °F

Wednesday



Partly Sunny and Breezy

High: 33 °F

Wednesday Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 15 °F

Thursday



Chance Snow then Rain/Snow Likely and Breezy

High: 44 °F

## Gusty Winds and Scattered Chance of Precipitation Today

Wind Gust

	2/8 Tue								2/9 Wed	
	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	Maximum	
Aberdeen	29	37	46	49	47	38	30	30	49	
Britton	21	25	33	43	40	36	30	30	43	
Eagle Butte	32	40	45	49	47	40	32	29	49	
Eureka	25	37	46	51	48	40	31	30	51	
Gettysburg	28	37	45	51	48	39	31	31	51	
Kennebec	30	36	43	46	45	37	29	29	46	
McIntosh	36	44	52	55	53	45	37	35	55	
Milbank	22	26	32	38	36	35	29	26	38	
Miller	30	38	45	47	47	36	29	29	47	
Mobridge	28	37	45	48	46	38	30	30	48	
Murdo	30	38	46	49	49	40	32	29	49	
Pierre	23	32	40	46	46	37	25	24	46	
Redfield	26	35	41	45	46	37	28	29	46	
Sisseton	29	32	40	43	43	39	32	31	43	
Watertown	25	31	38	41	40	37	33	29	41	
Wheaton	23	25	30	35	36	33	29	29	36	

\*Table values in mph

Probability of Precipitation

	2/8 Tue							
	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am
Aberdeen	2	4	9	6	7	16	24	
Britton	2	1	5	18	19	14	13	25
Eagle Butte						1	1	2
Eureka			2	6	5	7	7	11
Gettysburg			1	5	2	3	7	2
Kennebec	6	0	0	1	1	1	3	6
McIntosh				2	1	4	4	0
Milbank			1	12	12	15	16	14
Miller	3	2	2	6	5	3	11	5
Mobridge				2	2	5	7	0
Murdo	5	0	0	1	1	1	3	5
Pierre	4	0	0	2	1	2	7	5
Redfield	2	3	3	11	7	4	10	18
Sisseton	2	0	3	30	32	21	15	34
Watertown				32	30	23	12	25
Wheaton	1	0	1	21	28	25	14	18

\*Table values in %

Visit [www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr) for a detailed local forecast



Wind gusts from 35 to 55 mph expected today across the forecast area with scattered chances of precipitation starting midday through tonight.

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## Today in Weather History

February 8-9, 1909: Sioux Falls and the surrounding area experienced one of the largest snowfalls on record. Officially the storm dropped 21" of snow in Sioux Falls. Unfortunately, the snowfall was accompanied by high winds, which created large drifts.

February 8, 2000: A very warm air mass was over central and northeast South Dakota, where record highs were set in Aberdeen, Pierre, and Sisseton. Aberdeen rose to 62 degrees, Sisseton rose to 53 degrees, and Pierre rose to a warm 69 degrees.

1835 - A severe cold wave gripped the southeastern U.S. The mercury dipped to 8 above at Jacksonville FL, and to zero at Savannah GA. Orange trees were killed to the roots. (David Ludlum)

1936 - The temperature at Denver CO plunged to a record 30 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1956: From February 1-8, heavy snow fell over the Panhandle of Texas. Snowfall amounts include 43 inches in Vega, 24 inches in Hereford, and 14 inches in Amarillo. The storm caused 23 deaths and numerous injuries. It snowed continuously for 92 hours in some locations.

1968: The highest 1-day snow at the Savannah Airport in South Carolina occurs on this date when 3.6 inches of snow fell. Records began in 1871.

1985 - Blue Canyon, CA, set a 24-hour February snowfall record by receiving 42 inches of snow from February 7th-8th.

1987 - A powerful storm produced blizzard conditions in the Great Lakes Region. Winds gusted to 86 mph at Janesville WI and Cleveland OH received 12 inches of snow. North winds of 50 to 70 mph raised the water level of southern Lake Michigan two feet, and produced waves 12 to 18 feet high, causing seven million dollars damage along the Chicago area shoreline. It was the most damage caused by shoreline flooding and erosion in the history of the city of Chicago. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Arctic air invaded the north central U.S. Hibbing MN reported a morning low of 30 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1989: Mammoth traffic jams in the Los Angeles area as freak snow struck California. The snow was reported from the beaches of Malibu to the desert around Palm Springs.

1990 - Unseasonably mild weather prevailed across the south central and eastern U.S. Twenty-two cities, including five in Michigan, reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 53 degrees at Flint MI surpassed their previous record by ten degrees, and the high of 66 degrees at Burlington IA exceeded their old record by eight degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

2005: Snow falls on the Jordanian capital and surrounding regions, blocking roads and closing schools. Parts of northern Iran and Tehran were paralyzed after being hit by several days of record snowfall, with dozens of flights canceled and critical roads also cut off.

2009 - Snow falls at levels above elevations of 11,000 feet on the Big Island's Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea in Hawaii. The Weather Doctor

2013: A nor'easter produced heavy snowfall over the New England states. In Boston, Massachusetts, total snowfall reached 24.9 inches, the fifth-highest total ever recorded in the city. New York City officially recorded 11.4 inches of snow at Central Park, and Portland, Maine, set a record of 31.9 inches. Hamden, Connecticut, recorded the highest snowfall of the storm at 40 inches.

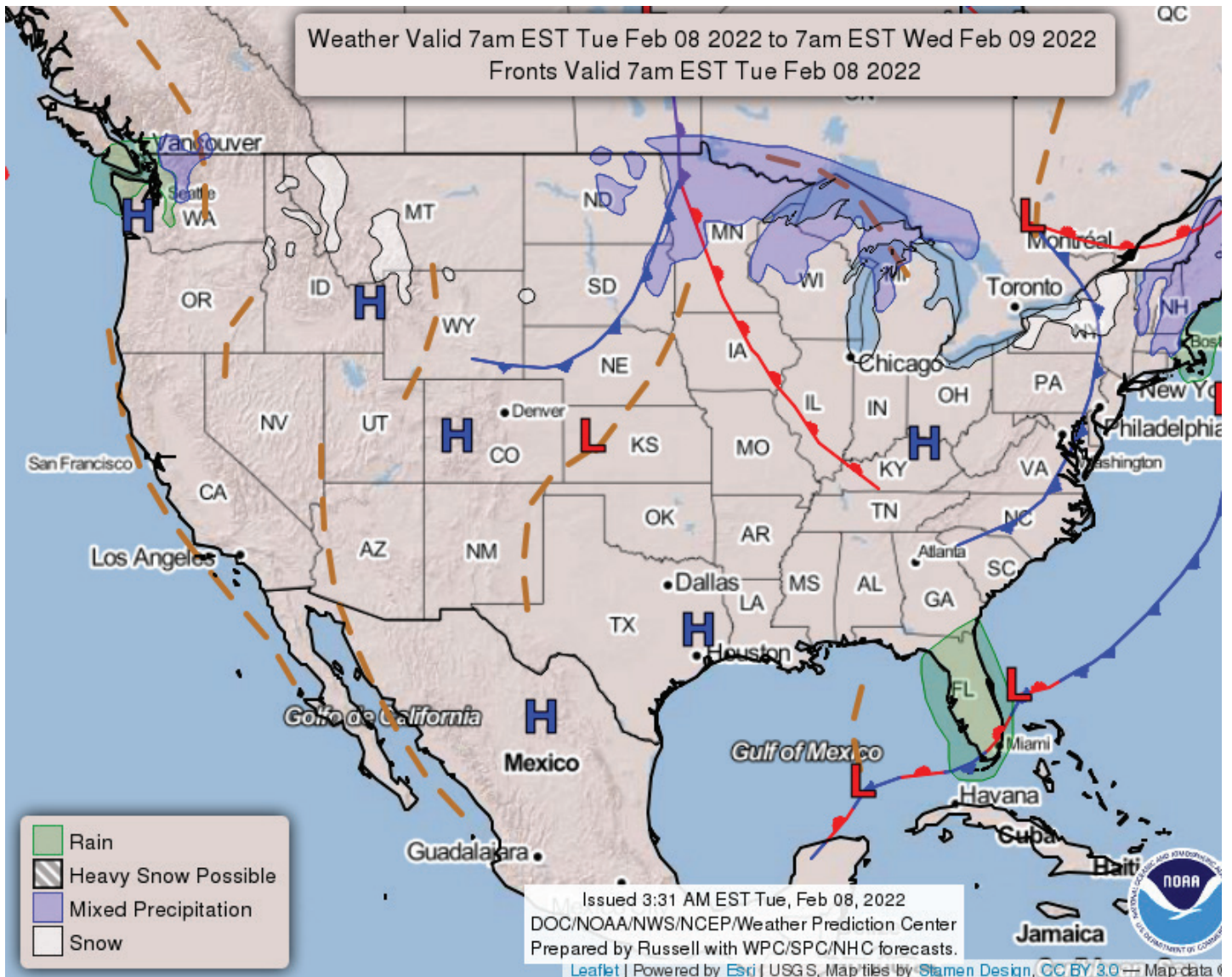
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 51 °F at 3:56 PM**  
**Low Temp: 12 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Wind: 15 mph at 5:31 AM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

**Record High: 62 in 2000**  
**Record Low: -46 in 1895**  
**Average High: 27°F**  
**Average Low: 4°F**  
**Average Precip in Feb.: 0.16**  
**Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00**  
**Average Precip to date: 0.71**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.59**  
**Sunset Tonight: 5:50:55 PM**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:40:46 AM**



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## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

There are many things in the Bible that we do not understand. There are other things in the Bible that we think we understand. There are many things in the Bible that we cannot understand. But there are many things in the Bible that we do understand but simply choose to do nothing about.

So, what's the problem?

If we want to know a person, we must spend time with that one. And more than anything else the Bible is about a Person. So, if we want to know that Person, we must spend time in the Bible. Now, there are two vital facts here. The Bible was given to us by men who God inspired to write it. Because it is God's inspired Word, we need His Spirit to illuminate it for us. But we cannot expect Him to illuminate it for us unless we are willing to allow His Spirit to open our eyes to see Him as He is in His Word.

A child was born blind and spent years unable to see the world around him. Researchers finally found a way to restore his sight. Not knowing what the outcome would be, the surgeons were cautious not to give him too much hope. The day finally arrived when they were to remove his bandages. They led him to a window that overlooked a flower garden. When the bandages were removed, he stood in amazement and said, "Mom, why didn't you tell me how beautiful the flowers are?"

"I tried," she said, "but you have to see them for yourself." So, it is with God. We must see Him for ourselves.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to see You as You are - in all Your loveliness - as we find You in Your Word. Open our eyes to really see. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:18

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## 2022 Community Events

- 01/30/2022 84th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)  
01/30/2022 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am – 1pm, Groton Community Center, 109 N 3rd St, Groton,  
04/09/2022 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)  
04/09/2022 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/23/2022 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/24/2022 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/07/2022 Lions Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
St John's Lutheran Church VBS 9-11am  
05/30/2022 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
Transit Fundraiser at the Community Center 4-7pm (Thursday Mid-June)  
06/17/2022 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm Start  
06/18/2022 Groton Triathlon  
Ladies Invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration 10am Start  
07/04/2022 Firecracker Couples Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start  
(4th of July)  
07/10/2022 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar 11am-1pm at the Groton Legion  
Baseball Tourney  
07/21/2022 Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start  
How can we... "Love Groton"? United Methodist Church 9:30am  
Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20  
Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm  
08/05/2022 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm  
08/12/2022 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament  
United Methodist Church VBS 5-8pm  
Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot  
09/10/2022 Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm  
09/11/2022 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm  
Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/14/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am (2nd Friday in October)  
10/01/2022 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm  
10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)  
10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/12/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course  
Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm



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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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News from the  Associated Press

## Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Arlington 60, Dell Rapids St. Mary 51

Chamberlain 59, Lyman 25

Colman-Egan 49, Baltic 44

Flandreau 75, Madison 39

Grant County, N.D. 59, Lemmon 48

Hill City 38, Lead-Deadwood 20

Mitchell Christian 50, Sunshine Bible Academy 31

Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 59, Chester 50

St. Thomas More 57, Custer 30

Wagner 69, Ethan 50

Waubay/Summit 49, Wilmot 46, OT

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Baltic 85, Colman-Egan 50

Bridgewater-Emery 46, Scotland 45

Canton 59, Irene-Wakonda 48

Dell Rapids St. Mary 70, Arlington 56

Howard 61, Menno 26

Lennox 69, Tri-Valley 50

Mitchell Christian 66, Sunshine Bible Academy 33

Potter County 73, Stanley County 50

Wagner 74, Ethan 73

Webster 60, Tiospa Zina Tribal 50

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) \_ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Monday:

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$31 million

Powerball

05-15-38-47-65, Powerball: 10, Power Play: 3

(five, fifteen, thirty-eight, forty-seven, sixty-five; Powerball: ten; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$147 million

## Griesel layup lifts North Dakota St. past South Dakota 76-74

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Sam Griesel's layup with three seconds left earned North Dakota State a 76-74 win over South Dakota on Monday night.

Rocky Kreuser had a season-high 28 points plus 10 rebounds and Grant Nelson had 19 points for North Dakota State (17-8, 9-4 Summit League), which earned its fourth consecutive home victory. Griesel added 6 points and 10 rebounds.

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Tasos Kamateros tied a season high with 21 points for the Coyotes (13-10, 6-6). Mason Archambault added 16 points. Kruz Perrott-Hunt had 13 points.

The Bison improve to 2-0 against the Coyotes for the season. North Dakota State defeated South Dakota 74-62 on Jan. 27.

## South Dakota Senate OKs online sports bets ballot question

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A proposal to allow voters to decide whether to expand online sports betting across South Dakota narrowly passed the state Senate on Monday.

The proposal, which would put it to voters to amend the state constitution, passed by a single vote in the Senate, dividing Republicans who control the chamber. To get onto November ballots, the proposal still needs approval in the House and faces opposition from Republican Gov. Kristi Noem.

Lawmakers' push to expand sports betting comes two years after a constitutional amendment passed with 58% of the vote and allowed sports wagers to be placed in Deadwood. The tourist town in the Black Hills is famous for being the spot where Wild Bill Hickok was gunned down in 1876 while playing poker in a saloon. It has become a force in South Dakota's tourism industry since gambling was legalized there in 1989.

The proposed constitutional amendment would allow people to place sports bets anywhere in the state through mobile devices or electronic platforms, as long as the wagers are connected to a casino in Deadwood. The casinos would have to keep their computer servers within city limits.

Native American tribes also would be allowed to take online sports bets from anywhere in the state. The Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe voiced support for the proposal.

The Deadwood Gaming Association, which pushed to allow sports betting in the past, did not take a position.

Republican lawmakers argued that plenty of online sports betting is already happening in the state — just through companies that skirt state laws by registering outside the country.

"Sports wagering and gambling is here and it's very prevailing but with this vote we can have in the smartest and safest manner that will give South Dakota the most benefit," said Republican Sen. Kyle Schoenfish.

Opponents raised concerns that increasing access to sports betting would feed gambling addictions.

"When you can gamble away the income for your family to put food on the table, that's a problem," said Republican Sen. Wayne Steinhauer. "We're trying to finance our state on the backs of those that have a problem."

The U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way in 2018 for all states to offer legal sports betting, and nearly 20 states allow online wagers, including South Dakota's neighbor states of Iowa, Wyoming and Montana.

## Wagner police chief arrested for DUI, careless driving

A police chief in southern South Dakota has been arrested and charged with driving under the influence, according to court documents.

The Argus Leader reports Wagner Police Chief Timothy Lee Simonsen was arrested on Jan. 22 for DUI, careless driving and a seat belt violation

Simonsen's DUI charge was his first offense. he was released on a personal recognizance bond on Jan. 24, according to court documents.

## Northwestern Iowa woman shot last week has died; man charged

MILFORD, Iowa (AP) — Authorities say a woman who was shot last week in the parking lot of a northwestern Iowa medical staffing office has died, and a man arrested shortly after the shooting now faces a murder charge.

Shelby Wiozeschke, 25, died Sunday at a Sioux Falls, South Dakota, hospital where she was flown after

being shot twice Thursday morning, the Sioux City Journal reported.

The shooting happened in the parking lot of GrapeTree Medical Staffing in Milford, where Wiozeschke worked, police said. Wiozeschke — the mother of two boys, ages 5 and 3 — managed to call 911 and identified Christian Goynes-Yarns, 25, of Spirit Lake, as the person who shot her, police said.

Goynes-Yarns was arrested about 90 minutes after the shooting on suspicion of attempted murder. After Wiozeschke's death, prosecutors amended the charge to first-degree murder. He's being held in the Dickinson County Jail on a \$1 million bond.

Police said Goynes-Yarns has been questioned by police, but did not make any statements that would suggest a motive for the shooting.

## Committee kills bill to give tribes free parks access

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota House committee on Monday killed a proposal to grant tribal members free access to the state's parks and recreation areas and to provide free licenses to hunt and fish on non-tribal land.

The State Affairs Committee considered legislation offered by Rep. Shawn Bordeaux, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe who said he got the idea from similar legislation in Minnesota.

The committee merged Bordeaux's two proposals into one bill and voted 11-2 to kill it, KELO-TV reported.

Tribal governments got "raked over the coals" when the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1970s decided the U.S. government owed them \$105 million for taking the Black Hills, the Mission Democrat said.

Bordeaux said the free access and licenses would be limited to the nine tribes who have treaties with the U.S. government connected to land in South Dakota. He said tribal members' spouses and children would also have free access and licenses.

Scott Simpson, director for the state Division of Parks and Recreation, opposed the legislation.

"This is a user pay, user benefit system," Simpson said.

## Report: New strategy for opioids and a Cabinet-level leader

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. needs a nimble, multipronged strategy and Cabinet-level leadership to counter its festering overdose epidemic, a bipartisan congressional commission advises.

With vastly powerful synthetic drugs like fentanyl driving record overdose deaths, the scourge of opioids awaits after the COVID-19 pandemic finally recedes, a shift that public health experts expect in the months ahead.

"This is one of our most pressing national security, law enforcement and public health challenges, and we must do more as a nation and a government to protect our most precious resource — American lives," the Commission on Combating Synthetic Opioid Trafficking said in a 70-page report released Tuesday to Congress, President Joe Biden and the American people.

The report envisions a dynamic strategy. It would rely on law enforcement and diplomacy to shut down sources of chemicals used to make synthetic opioids. It would offer treatment and support for people who become addicted, creating pathways that can lead back to productive lives. And it would invest in research to better understand addiction's grip on the human brain and to develop treatments for opioid use disorder.

The global coronavirus pandemic has overshadowed the American opioid epidemic for the last two years, but recent news that overdose deaths surpassed 100,000 in one year caught the public's attention. Politically, federal legislation to address the opioid crisis won support across the partisan divide during both the Obama and Trump administrations.

Rep. David Trone, D-Md., a co-chair of the panel that produced the report, said he believes that support is still there, and that the issue appeals to Biden's pragmatic side. "The president has been crystal clear," Trone said. "These are two major issues in America: addiction and mental health."

The U.S. government's record is also clear. It has been waging a losing "war on drugs" for decades.

The stakes are much higher now with the widespread availability of fentanyl, a synthetic painkiller 80

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to 100 times more powerful than morphine. It can be baked into illicit pills made to look like prescription painkillers or anti-anxiety medicines. The chemical raw materials are produced mainly in China. Criminal networks in Mexico control the production and shipment to the U.S.

Federal anti-drug strategy traditionally emphasized law enforcement and long prison sentences. But that came to be seen as tainted by racial bias and counter-productive because drug use is treatable. The value of treatment has recently gained recognition with anti-addiction medicines in wide use alongside older strategies like support groups.

The report endorsed both law enforcement and treatment, working in sync with one another.

"Through its work, the commission came to recognize the impossibility of reducing the availability of illegal synthetic opioids through efforts focused on supply alone," the report said.

"Real progress can come only by pairing illicit synthetic opioid supply disruption with decreasing the domestic U.S. demand for these drugs," it added.

The report recommends what it calls five "pillars" for government action:

- Elevating the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy to act as the nerve center for far-flung federal efforts, and restoring Cabinet rank to its director.
- Disrupting the supply of drugs through better coordinated law enforcement actions.
- Reducing the demand for illicit drugs through treatment and by efforts to mitigate the harm to people addicted. Treatment programs should follow science-based "best practices."
- Using diplomacy to enlist help from other governments in cutting off the supply of chemicals that criminal networks use to manufacture fentanyl.
- Developing surveillance and data analysis tools to spot new trends in illicit drug use before they morph into major problems for society.

Also participating in the commission's work were high-level executive branch officials, including representatives from law enforcement, the departments of State, Treasury and Homeland Security, the intelligence community, and the White House.

In prepared statements, Republican commission members stressed the law enforcement response. "We must redouble our efforts to secure the border against illegal trafficking by targeting Mexican cartels flooding our streets with illicit opioids and force China's hand to crackdown on their pharmaceutical industry supplying cartels with the base compounds used to manufacture synthetic opioids," said Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich.

Trone said it's going to take cooperation from both political parties. "We have to take this toxic atmosphere in Washington and move past it," he said. "Because 100,000 people, that's husbands, sisters, mothers, fathers. As a country, we are better than that."

## Diplomatic shuttle: Macron in Kyiv after Putin talks

By SYLVIE CORBET and DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron brought his diplomatic effort to defuse the crisis over Ukraine to its capital of Kyiv on Tuesday, a day after hours of talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin yielded no apparent breakthrough.

Macron met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as fears of a possible Russian invasion mount. Moscow has massed over 100,000 troops near Ukraine's borders, but insists it has no plans to attack.

The Kremlin wants guarantees from the West that NATO will not accept Ukraine and other former Soviet nations as members, that it halt weapon deployments there and roll back its forces from Eastern Europe — demands the U.S. and NATO reject as nonstarters.

Western leaders in recent weeks have engaged in multiple rounds of diplomacy in the hope of de-escalating the tensions and preventing an attack. High-level talks have taken place against the backdrop of military drills in Russia and Belarus. On Tuesday, Russia's Defense Ministry said six large landing ships were moving from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea for exercises.

Macron's talks with Putin on Monday lasted more than five hours, and the French leader told reporters

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that they allowed him to ensure that "there's no degradation and no (further) escalation."

He said he did not expect Putin to make any "gestures", saying his objective was to "prevent an escalation and open new perspectives. ... That objective is met."

Putin said after the meeting that the U.S. and NATO have ignored Moscow's demands, but signaled his readiness to continue the negotiations.

NATO, U.S. and European leaders flatly reject the demands that they say challenge NATO's core principles, like shutting the door to Ukraine or other countries that might seek membership; but they have offered to talk about other Russian security concerns in Europe.

Putin warned that Ukraine membership in NATO could trigger a war between Russia and the alliance should Kyiv move to retake the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow annexed in 2014. In that case, he said, European countries would be drawn into a military conflict with Russia where "there will be no winners."

U.S. President Joe Biden has said that any prospect of Ukraine entering NATO "in the near term is not very likely," but he and other NATO member nations and NATO itself refuse to rule out Ukraine's entry into the alliance at a future date.

Biden met in Washington on Monday with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who also will travel to Kyiv and Moscow on Feb. 14-15.

Biden vowed that the Nord Stream 2 Russia-to-Germany gas pipeline, which has been completed but is not yet operating, will be blocked "if Russia invades, that means tanks and troops crossing the border of Ukraine again." Halting the pipeline's operation would hurt Russia economically but also cause supply problems for Germany.

Scholz warned Moscow that "a lot more could happen than they've perhaps calculated with themselves" in case of an invasion.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned Russia that an invasion of Ukraine will only make NATO stronger, but said he still believes "principled and determined diplomacy" could defuse the crisis.

Writing in The Times of London, Johnson urged allies to finalize plans for heavy economic sanctions that would come into effect if Russia crosses the border into Ukraine.

He said the U.K. is ready to bolster NATO forces in Latvia and Estonia as he prepared to meet the Lithuanian prime minister in London on Tuesday to show support for the Baltic nations.

Johnson said he was considering dispatching RAF Typhoon fighters and Royal Navy warships to southeastern Europe. Britain said Monday it is sending 350 troops to Poland to bolster NATO's eastern flank. It already has sent anti-tank weapons to Ukraine.

More than 100 U.S. military personnel have arrived in Romania ahead of a deployment of about 1,000 NATO troops expected in the country in the coming days, Romania's Defense Minister Vasile Dincu said, adding that "it won't be long before the rest of the troops arrive."

U.S. officials have said that about 1,000 alliance troops will be sent from Germany to Romania, a NATO member since 2004. Romania borders Ukraine to the north.

U.S. officials have portrayed the threat of an invasion of Ukraine as imminent — warnings Moscow has scoffed at, accusing Washington of fueling tensions.

Russia and Ukraine have been locked in a bitter conflict since 2014, when Ukraine's Kremlin-friendly president was ousted, Moscow annexed Crimea and then backed a separatist insurgency in the east of the country. The fighting between Russia-backed rebels and Ukrainian forces has killed over 14,000 people.

In 2015, France and Germany helped broker a peace deal, known as the Minsk agreements, that ended large-scale hostilities but failed to bring a political settlement of the conflict. The Kremlin has repeatedly accused Kyiv of sabotaging the deal, and Ukrainian officials in recent weeks said that implementing it would hurt Ukraine.

After meeting Macron, Putin said without elaboration that some of the French president's proposals could serve as a basis for a settlement of the separatist conflict, adding that they agreed to speak by phone after Macron's visit to Kyiv.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Kyiv was "with interest anticipating the signals" Macron

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brought from Moscow and "open to dialogue," but also will not cross its own "red lines."

## Olympics Live: Dutch speedskater Nuis defends Olympic title

BEIJING (AP) — The Latest on the Beijing Winter Olympics:

Kjeld Nuis of the Netherlands has become the first speedskater since 1994 to successfully defend his Olympic title in the men's 1,500 meters, edging countryman Thomas Krol at the Beijing Games.

Krol, the reigning world champion, broke the 20-year-old Olympic record in his race Tuesday. Nuis went even faster in the very next pair, crossing the line with a blistering time of 1 minute, 43.21 seconds.

There were still three pairs to go, but no one came close to the Dutch duo. Nuis took his country's third gold in four events at these Games, while Krol's runner-up finish of 1:43.55 gave the Netherlands a total of six medals in a competition that is shaping up as another rout for the Big Orange Machine.

The bronze went to South Korea's Kim Minseok, who was more than a second behind the winner in 1:44.24.

Nuis became the first repeat 1,500 champion since Norway's Johann Olav Koss won his second straight gold at the 1994 Lillehammer Games. The only other back-to-back champions were Clas Thunberg of Finland in 1924 and 1928, and Yevgeny Grishin of the Soviet Union in 1956-1960.

The Americans again came up short of their first individual Olympic speedskating medal since 2010. World Cup leader Joey Mantia got off to a strong start but couldn't hold his pace through a race that requires both speed and endurance. He wound up sixth in 1:45.26.

Quentin Fillon Maillet of France has won decisively in the 20-kilometer individual biathlon, adding a gold medal to the silver he won in the mixed relay over the weekend.

Fillon Maillet has dominated the biathlon world lately. He's had 10 World Cup podium finishes this season. Half of those were wins.

Now he's also an Olympic champion.

He missed two of 20 targets Tuesday and finished the course in 48 minutes, 47.4 seconds. Anton Smolki of Belarus shot clean, hitting all 20 of his targets but coming in 14.8 seconds behind the Frenchman.

Defending individual Olympic champion Johannes Thingnes Boe of Norway also missed two targets and took the bronze medal.

Andrew Blaser is quickly learning about the perks that come with being an Olympian.

He's got tons of new free gear.

He's getting an invitation to the White House.

And his favorite singer took notice of him on social media.

The U.S. skeleton athlete and Olympic rookie already has something to celebrate at the Beijing Games. His favorite singer-songwriter — the actress and Grammy winner Sara Bareilles — gave him a shoutout on Instagram on Tuesday.

Blaser shot his shot on Monday, tagging Bareilles on Instagram and telling her "you are my favorite musician... will you watch me in the Olympics?" And he got his reply a few hours later, when Bareilles told him "I am rooting for you."

He was beaming all the way through his training runs on Tuesday.

"Greatest thing that ever happened to me," he said. "I listen to her every day when I'm warming up."

Top-seeded Ester Ledecka of the Czech Republic has defended her Olympic snowboard parallel giant slalom title. She will now switch over to ski racing to try and defend her super-G crown.

Four years ago in South Korea, Ledecka became the first competitor to win gold in two different sports at the same Winter Games. She has a chance to repeat the feat in China.

Ledecka beat Daniela Ulbing of Austria for gold along the side-by-side course at Genting Snow Park.

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Gloria Kotnik of Slovenia earned the bronze.

Benjamin Karl of Austria held off Tim Mastnak of Slovenia for gold in the men's race. Russian athlete Vic Wild picked up the bronze.

Sweden won the bronze medal in mixed doubles curling, bouncing back from a semifinal blowout to dominate Britain 9-3 in six ends in the third-place game.

One day after losing 9-1 to Italy, Almida de Val and Oskar Eriksson picked up four points in the second end, stole three in the third and took single points in the fourth and fifth despite lacking the last-rock advantage called the hammer.

Jennifer Dodds of Britain made an easy draw to collect two points in the sixth end, then partner Bruce Mouat immediately bumped fists with the Swedes to concede the match with two ends to play.

De Val and Eriksson hugged and the handful of Swedes in the mostly empty Ice Cube broke into a cheer. It is the fifth straight time Sweden has reached the Olympic curling podium, including a gold in women's and a silver in men's four years ago in Pyeongchang.

Italy, which went unbeaten in the round robin, and reigning bronze medalist Norway play for the gold later Tuesday night.

South Korea's Olympic team leader has suggested bias by judges kept the country's short-track skaters out of the men's 1,000-meter final.

The South Korean team called a news conference Tuesday, one day after judges disqualified its skaters from each semifinal in Beijing. They included world record holder Hwang Dae-heon, who won his semifinal, then was disqualified for causing contact with a rival.

The judges' rulings meant the final included three Chinese skaters and two brothers who have a Chinese father and skate for Hungary.

South Korean team official Yoon Hong-geun says "sport needs to guarantee fair play in order for the entire human race to gain hopes, dreams and courage."

In the rough-and-tumble of Olympic short-track racing, South Korea is a traditional power. South Korean skaters won three of eight gold medals at home in the 2018 Winter Games in Pyeongchang.

Yoon apologized to the Korean public for Monday's results asking "for your forgiveness that I haven't fulfilled the dreams, hopes and wishes of 50 million Korean people."

Nathan Chen has set the world record during his short program at the Beijing Olympics, scoring 113.97 points to break the previous mark set by longtime rival Yuzuru Hanyu and putting himself in position to win his long-sought gold medal.

The third skater from the end, Chen opened with a perfect quad flip, breezed through the triple axel that sometimes gives him problems and drilled a quad lutz-triple toe loop that by itself scored more than 21 points.

His total was more than five points head of Yuma Kagiyama, who sits in second place, and nearly 20 points ahead of Hanyu, the two-time Olympic champion who bailed on his opening quad attempt during a calamitous short program.

All that's left for Chen, whose poor short program four years ago cost him a medal opportunity in Pyeongchang, is to hold onto his lead through Thursday's free skate at historical Capital Indoor Stadium.

Another Russian women's hockey player has tested positive for the coronavirus after playing against Canada.

Russian Olympic Committee team coach Evgeny Bobariko tells state news agency RIA Novosti that Polina Bolgareva tested positive.

The forward played against Canada in a game Monday which was delayed because of virus concerns on both teams before the Russians and Canadians agreed to start the game in masks. The Canadians kept



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their masks on and won 6-1.

The Russians removed theirs at the start of the third period.

Bobariko says the team found out about the positive test after arriving back at the Olympic village following the game.

Russia has eight players unavailable in Beijing because of the virus and another player was left in Moscow after a positive test. Bobariko says "I don't know how it's happening."

American-born figure skater Zhu Yi, who gave up her U.S. citizenship to compete for China at the Beijing Winter Olympics, has faced abuse on Chinese social media after crashing into a wall in the team event.

Twitter-like Sina Weibo said it had suspended 93 accounts and deleted 300 abusive posts about the Olympian. She was born in California to Chinese parents and won a U.S. national novice title as Beverly Zhu. Messages mocked her for falling while others criticized her for not being fluent in Chinese.

She has also faced criticism from conservative political figures in the United States because of her change of sporting allegiance.

"I am relieved because (there is) a lot of pressure and people are expecting a lot," Zhu said after competing Monday. "Honestly, I've trained really hard and I think the main thing is coping mentally."

Zhu finished last in the short program and China placed fifth in the competition, which was won by Russia, with the U.S. taking silver and Japan bronze.

China's official Xinhua News Agency offered its support in a tweet, saying: "For young skaters of China, they need time and tolerance to play better in the future. Don't cry, Zhu Yi. We are with you."

Beijing Olympic organizers say there are 32 athletes in isolation facilities after they tested positive for the coronavirus and they're spending an average of seven days in isolation.

Brian McCloskey, chairman of the expert medical panel for the Beijing Games, says as many people will be let out of isolation as possible, but only when it's safe. He says 50 athletes have been discharged from isolation and that the vast majority of athletes in isolation are well and do not require any medical treatment.

The disclosure came after complaints by athletes and teams about inedible food, dirty rooms and a lack of training equipment and internet access. Organizers have acknowledged that isolation is already a difficult situation for athletes and say they are working to quickly address any problems.

McCloskey noted that people who were infected can continue testing positive intermittently for a long time, even if they're not contagious. But he said previously infected people might also be testing positive because they were re-infected, and are able to spread the virus.

Mexican figure skater Donovan Carrillo is advancing to the next round of competition at the Beijing Olympics, a first for the country.

The 22-year-old, who was born and raised in Mexico, is the first male skater from his country to compete at the Olympics in 30 years.

He had a solid performance in his Olympic debut, set to music by Santana. He earned a career-best score of 79.69.

Carrillo will skate again in the free skate event on Thursday against powerhouses like American Nathan Chen and Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu.

He said he was most excited to pull off a quad toe loop at the start of his performance, and is already thinking about his own growth ahead of the Milan-Cortina Olympics in 2026.

Two-time Olympic figure skating champion Yuzuru Hanyu bailed out of the opening quad salchow of his short program at the Beijing Games, a massive mistake that could make an easier path to gold for American rival Nathan Chen.

Hanyu was just seconds into his program when he set up for the first of two quads in his program. But he never came close to trying the four-revolution salchow, landing to an audible gasp from the small crowd inside Capital Indoor Stadium.

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The missed element has a base score of 9.70 points, meaning he lost all of them. He earned 95.15 for second among those that had performed, though Chen and the rest of the medal contenders were still to come.

The 27-year-old Hanyu, one of the biggest sports stars in Japan, is trying to become the first man to win three straight figure skating gold medals since Gillis Grafstrom of Sweden in 1928.

Defending champion Matthias Mayer of Austria is in first place in the men's super-G at the Beijing Games and is on the brink of capturing a third Olympic gold medal with only lower-ranked skiers remaining.

Ryan Cochran-Siegle of the United States is 0.04 seconds behind in second and World Cup super-G leader Aleksander Aamodt Kilde of Norway is 0.42 behind in third.

Mayer broke Norway's 16-year grip on the men's Olympic super-G title when he won in 2018. That was four years after winning the downhill in Sochi.

The 31-year-old Mayer also claimed bronze in the men's downhill on Monday.

Marco Odermatt of Switzerland was among the favorites but he lost control of his skis on a turn and skied out. Odermatt was slower than Kilde at the final checkpoint before he went out.

Kilde leads this season's super-G standings over Odermatt.

The International Ski Federation says five jumpers were disqualified from the mixed team competition at the Beijing Olympics because their jumpsuits were too big and offered an aerodynamic advantage.

FIS says no one filed an official protest after the jumpsuits were inspected during the competition.

German silver medalist Katharina Althaus and Japanese star Sara Takanashi were among the five women whose suits violated rules in the Olympic debut of an event that featured two women and two men on each team.

Slovenia won gold on Monday night while Russia and Canada earned silver and bronze in surprises as four nations expected to contend for medals were hurt by the disqualifications.

FIS says the suits that violated rules were produced exclusively for the Olympics and were not tested in advance, an opportunity that just a few nations took advantage of before arriving in Beijing.

Norway had two jumpers, Silje Opseth and Anna Odine Stroem, with jumpsuits that didn't pass inspection. Austria's Daniela Iraschko Stolz was also disqualified.

Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai sat with International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach and watched American-born Chinese freeskier Eileen Gu win gold at the women's big air event Tuesday.

Peng appeared a day after delivering a controlled interview in Beijing that touched on sexual assault allegations she made against a former high-ranking member of China's ruling Communist Party.

Her answers — delivered in front of a Chinese Olympic official — left unanswered questions about her well-being and what exactly happened.

Bach said he and Peng spoke with athletes at the Big Air Shougang venue for about 30 minutes, and the pair was seen together in the stands.

Bach said Peng told him that she was going into quarantine later Tuesday and planned to exit the closed Olympic coronavirus bubble.

NBC says comedian Leslie Jones is free to give her commentary about the Olympics on social media after a misunderstanding with some of her posts.

NBC spokesman Greg Hughes said Monday night that some of Jones' videos featuring Olympic footage were blocked because of a "third-party error."

"We have resolved the situation. She is free to do her social media posts as she has done in the past," Hughes told The Associated Press. "She is a super fan of the Olympics and we are super fans of her."

Some of Jones' posts were blocked because of increased policing of recorded video displayed on social media platforms. In 2014, NBC agreed to a \$7.75 billion deal with the International Olympic Committee

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for rights through 2032.

Jones took to social media Monday morning saying that she might give up live tweeting the Beijing Games. "I love the athletes and they love me doing it. And I know y'all love it. But now it's just gotten too hard. And no one is fighting for or with me. Soooo I guess I'll leave it to the professionals," Jones wrote on Twitter and Instagram.

The U.S. ski team says American skier Nina O'Brien has sustained a compound fracture of her left tibia and fibula after falling toward the end of the women's giant slalom at the Beijing Games.

Monday's race had to be delayed for about 15 minutes when O'Brien slid across the finish line at the end of her second run. She was screaming in pain after stumbling through the last gate as her skis crossed in front of her.

O'Brien was taken to hospital in Yanqing for "an initial stabilization procedure" and the team says she will return to the U.S. for further evaluation and care.

The 24-year-old O'Brien had been sixth fastest after the opening run.

American-born Eileen Gu of China cranked out the first 1620 of her career on her final jump, stunning France's Tess Ledeux and earning the first of what she hopes will be three gold medals in women's free-style big air.

Nicknamed the "Snow Princess," Gu is among the biggest local names at the Beijing Games. She's a medal favorite in big air, slopestyle and halfpipe. Her first stab at gold came down to the last round.

Ledeux is the only other woman to ever land a 1620 -- 4 1/2 spins -- in competition, and she stomped one out with a slight wobble on the landing in Round 1.

Gu hinted after qualifying Monday that she might be able to match Ledeux. With everything on the line, she did.

The 18-year-old from San Francisco shrieked when she landed the jump, then dropped to her knees when her score of 94.50 was announced.

Ledeux tried to improve on her second run in Round 3, coming into the jump backward for a switch 1440. She was shaky on the landing, though, clearing the way for Gu's gold.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki wore a Team USA pin and brought a Team USA water bottle to the daily White House briefing.

She noted that the administration did not send a diplomatic delegation to the Olympics because of the "ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and other human rights abuses."

"At the same time, we wanted to note that Team USA has our full support. We're behind them. We're watching from home. We want to thank them and their families for everything they've sacrificed over the course of time."

Psaki described herself as a "Olympics-obsessed person," and she mentioned figure skater Nathan Chen — "we're going to watch him" — snowboarder Chloe Kim and skier Mikaela Shiffrin, who fell in her first event, the giant slalom, and was disqualified, but expects to compete in additional races.

A second Finland men's hockey player has been taken to an isolation hotel after testing positive for the coronavirus in Beijing.

Goaltender Jussi Olkinuora has joined forward Marko Anttila in isolation. The Finnish Olympic Committee confirmed Olkinuora was taken Monday and that Anttila remains there.

A spokesman for the Finnish Olympic Committee says Olkinuora and Anttila recovered from COVID-19 last month and tested negative to travel to Beijing. Neither Olkinuora nor Anttila have reported any symptoms.

The Finnish Olympic Committee is unsure when either player could be released. The team plays its first game Thursday.

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## Praise for Eileen Gu breaks Chinese social media

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Two American-born athletes competing for China. Two radically different reactions from Chinese social media to their performances at the Winter Olympics.

As freestyle skier Eileen Gu won her gold medal in the big air competition on Tuesday, praise for the San Franciscan quite literally overwhelmed the Chinese internet.

Sina Weibo, the massive social network that is similar to Twitter, found its servers temporarily overloaded, according to Chinese media. Of the top 10 trending topics on the platform, five were dedicated to adoration for the 18-year-old champion.

"Gu Ailing is a genius young woman right?" was one trending topic, referencing her Chinese name.

"Dad was Harvard, Mom was Peking University, Stanford, Grandmother was an athlete. She's beautiful and classy," said one post recirculated 86,000 times.

It was a stark contrast to the reception received by another U.S.-born athlete competing for China, figure skater Zhu Yi, who a few days prior came under attack on social media after she crashed into a wall during the team event. Zhu finished last in the short program and China placed fifth in the competition, which was won by the Russian team, with the U.S. taking silver and Japan bronze.

Weibo said it had suspended 93 accounts and deleted 300 abusive posts about the Olympian, who was born in California to Chinese parents and won a U.S. national novice title as Beverly Zhu. Messages mocked her for falling while others criticized her for not being fluent in Chinese.

"There's no next time," wrote one Weibo user, under a video of Zhu crying at the end of her performance. "How shameful." That comment was liked more than 45,000 times.

"Go back to America," read another comment accompanied by a U.S. flag emoji.

The anger toward Zhu was likely fueled by an episode a few weeks earlier, when she qualified to compete at the Olympics.

She beat out two other skaters for the last spot on the Chinese team, which many fans felt should have gone to another young skater, Chen Hongyi, who had more competitive experience. It caused enough of a controversy at the time that the Chinese figure skating Olympic selection committee issued a statement defending the decision.

As online criticism of Zhu crested, Gu came to the defense of her teammate. "Making mistakes and pressure are all part of sports," Gu said at a news conference after her victory.

The two athletes are competing at a politically fraught moment, with a foot in each of two countries that have been clashing on a variety of issues, from economics to the lockup of China's ethnic Uyghur minority population in the western Xinjiang region to the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although Gu's decision to compete for China has gotten outsized attention, what she and Zhu are doing is fairly common in the international sporting arena. Zhu gave up her U.S. citizenship in order to compete for China in Beijing. It's unclear whether Gu has done the same; she has never commented publicly on the question of her citizenship.

In a sign of today's highly polarized political climate, both Gu and Zhu have faced criticism from conservative political figures and right-wing media in the United States over of their change of sporting allegiance.

## White House: File your taxes to get full child tax credit

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

The Biden administration is kicking off an outreach campaign to get millions of families to file their taxes — so they can receive the second half of payments from the expanded child tax credit.

Vice President Kamala Harris, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and White House senior adviser Gene Sperling are hosting a virtual event Tuesday to encourage people to send their tax forms to the IRS, including those whose incomes are so low that they might not have traditionally filed.

Several lawmakers and nonprofits are taking part in the event, and there are plans to hold events in all

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50 states and Puerto Rico during the tax filing season, according to a White House official who insisted on anonymity to discuss the forthcoming plans.

As part of the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package, President Joe Biden increased the child tax credits to \$3,600 annually for each child aged 5 or under and \$3,000 for those who are age 6 to 17. The government began to send the payments out on a monthly basis starting last July, meaning that there are six months worth of payments waiting to be claimed by people filing their taxes.

The payments would come at a moment when families are coping with rising prices for food, gasoline and other goods relative to a year ago. Administration officials estimate that \$193 billion would go to 58 million eligible households that file taxes, meaning that families would receive credits on their taxes or refunds averaging \$3,330 from this provision.

Workers without children could also get additional help this tax season if they file. The relief package nearly tripled the earned income tax credit for workers without dependent children, meaning that 17 million people could receive credits worth \$1,500.

The expanded child tax credits were seen as slashing child poverty to the lowest levels on record. A recent analysis by researchers at Washington University in St. Louis and Appalachian State University found no evidence that the monthly payments caused parents to stop working, which was one of the criticisms by opponents of the expanded credit.

Biden pushed to continue the expanded child tax for another year as part of his "Build Back Better" agenda. But in an evenly split Senate, West Virginia Democrat Joe Manchin opposed the expanded credit out of concerns that its price tag could increase the deficit and worsen inflation.

## US-born freeskier Gu wins Olympic big air gold for China

By JAKE SEINER AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Eileen Gu amassed an army of cynics when she spurned Team USA to represent China at the Beijing Games.

Moments after the biggest run of her life, the 18-year-old freestyle skiing prodigy was asked about her status as a U.S. citizen, her feelings on Peng Shuai and the incessant hate she's received on social media.

"If people don't believe me, if people don't like me, then that's their loss," Gu said. "They're never going to win the Olympics."

Gu did just that, earning the first of what she and her many fans in Beijing hope could be three gold medals by cranking out the first 1620 of her career in her final turn, stunning Tess Ledeux of France to win the Olympic debut of women's freeski big air.

The American-born Gu had never landed the double cork 1620 — a move in which skiers spin 4 1/2 times while rotating twice off-axis while 20-some feet in the air. Not in practice. Not in competition.

Only with the weight of her adopted homeland right there on her shoulders.

"I want all the girls to break their boundaries," she said in Chinese, via interpreter. "I want them to think if Eileen can do it, I can do it."

A flood of interest in Gu's win briefly crashed the popular Chinese social media site Weibo, according to online technology and sports news sites in China. A crowd of spectators gathered spontaneously in front of a big TV screen in Wangfujing, a famed shopping district in central Beijing, on Tuesday morning.

"It's very cheering. She's of Chinese origin and has returned to China. I feel proud of her," said Beijing resident Jiang Yu, 36.

Capacity was limited at 5,000-seat Big Air Shougang — a shuttered steel mill that Beijing has converted into an eerie-yet-serene park, culture hub and sports center. The reaction still told the story.

The "Snow Princess" was ready for her crown.

Gu, whose mother is Chinese, estimates she's spent at least a quarter of her life in China. Her origin story, as she tells it, begins with the time she pitched the idea for China's first slopestyle ski event at age 9 — and won.

Since choosing to side with China in 2019, she has said repeatedly that her goal is to encourage girls and

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women to take up winter sports — aligning with China's pledge to inspire 300 million to hit the ice or snow. It's a status not unlike the public mantle Peng has held for years.

Peng, a three-time Olympic tennis player, sat in the stands with IOC President Thomas Bach as Gu cemented her gold. Peng made the rare public appearance a day after saying in a controlled interview that the sexual assault allegations she made against a former high-ranking member of China's ruling Communist Party were "an enormous misunderstanding."

Her responses — delivered in front of a Chinese Olympic official — left unanswered questions about her well-being and what exactly happened.

Asked if she shared international concern about Peng's safety, Gu skirted around the topic, saying she was "really happy" Peng attended and honored that a star from a major sport like tennis came to see "niche sports like freeskiing."

"I'm really grateful that she's, yeah, happy and healthy and out here doing her thing again," Gu said before a room full of Chinese volunteers and media, who hushed when Peng's name came up.

Gu also spun around questions about her status as an American. China does not allow dual citizenship, but it's unclear if the Stanford-bound Gu ever gave up her U.S. passport.

The decision seems to have been a lucrative one for Gu, whose second passion is modeling. Her face is on advertisements across Beijing, and she's been photographed for Vogue, Victoria's Secret, Louis Vuitton, Tiffany and more.

"I feel like sport is really a way that we can unite people," she said when asked about her citizenship. "It's something that doesn't have to be related to nationality. It's not something that can be used to divide people. We're all out here together pushing the human limit."

No denying, Gu pushed those limits Tuesday.

It was only a month ago that Ledeux became the first woman to land a 1620 in competition, stomping one down while taking gold at the Winter X Games. The French 20-year-old boldly pulled off another in the first of three rounds Tuesday, immediately setting the bar beyond where anyone else had previously reached.

Gu hit a clean double cork 1440 in her first run, then registered a safe-but-stylish double cork 1080 on Run 2. By the time her third jump came around, she was already assured of at least bronze.

Gu said she briefly considered trying to improve upon her 1440 but the math said the only way to close the gap on Ledeux was to go for the 1620.

She shrieked the moment her skis hit the landing, floating backward down what remained of the slope with her hands first over her head, then covering her face. She crumpled to her knees when her score of 94.5 was announced — good for a combined total of 188.25, just clear of Ledeux's 187.5. Swiss skier Mathilde Gremaud took bronze.

Ledeux tried to improve her switch 1440 with her last attempt but came up short. She said via interpreter that Gu is "extremely competitive" and an "amazing athlete," but she also grumbled that Gu had been in Beijing practicing at the Big Air Shougang venue for weeks before the Games — a perk of being with the host country.

"What I know is that she got lucky and that's only fair, she was able to train in the venues before everyone else and that probably made a difference today," Ledeux said.

Not that one more cynic was going to dash Gu's coming-out party.

"I'm not trying to keep everyone happy," Gu said. "I'm an 18-year-old girl out here living my best life. Like, I'm having a great time."

## China locks down southern city as omicron variant surges

BEIJING (AP) — China has ordered inhabitants of the southern city of Baise to stay home and suspended transportation links amid a surge in COVID-19 cases at least partly linked to the omicron variant.

Classes have been suspended, non-essential businesses closed and mass testing of residents ordered. Restaurants are only permitted to serve take-out. Traffic lights have been switched to red only to remind

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drivers to stay home.

As of Tuesday, 135 cases had been reported in the city — at least two of them found to be omicron, health authorities said.

The city has become the latest to be placed under lockdown in keeping with China's "zero-tolerance" approach to the pandemic. The policy requires strict measures be applied even when only a small number of cases have been found.

A major concern is preventing outbreaks during the ongoing Beijing Winter Olympic Games. No new cases were reported in the Chinese capital on Tuesday.

More than 30 athletes at the Beijing Olympics are in isolation facilities after testing positive for the coronavirus, organizers said Tuesday. The average stay in isolation is seven days.

Baise has an urban population of about 1.4 million, with another 3 million in the large surrounding rural area that abuts the Vietnamese border.

State media reported customs clearance at the crossing points of Longbang and Pingmeng were delayed, causing further disruptions to cross-border trade that have already inflicted major losses on Vietnamese fruit farmers who rely on the Chinese market for much of their revenue.

The first cases in Baise were reported Saturday at the tail end of the Lunar New Year holiday, when many Chinese travel vast distances to their hometowns. For the third year running, the government asked people to remain in place to avoid a major spread, although such calls had only a slight effect on the numbers of trips taken.

Despite the occasional regional outbreak, China has largely brought the pandemic under control through lockdowns, mass testing, case tracing, mask mandates and other strict measures. Almost 85% of the population is fully vaccinated, according to Our World in Data, although questions have been raised about the efficacy of Chinese vaccines, particularly against the omicron strain.

Chinese health authorities say the continuing emergence of outbreaks despite the high vaccination rate justifies the continued implementation of "zero-tolerance" policies and the quarantining of travelers arriving from abroad.

At the same time, lockdowns imposed in December and January on millions of residents of northern and central cities have been lifted.

China has reported a total of 106,524 cases of COVID-19, with 4,636 deaths. Currently, 1,473 people are in treatment for the disease.

## Chen delivers record short program to begin Olympic pursuit

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Nathan Chen had just shattered the world record for a figure skating short program, even throwing a defiant fist in a rare display of emotion, when he was asked how he'd spend the next 48 hours before his long-awaited Olympic coronation.

"I've been here a while," the 22-year-old American star replied with a shrug Tuesday. "I've got some clothes to wash. Some other things to clean around my room. Just ordinary chores, really. Nothing crazy."

He left the crazy — the downright stunning — on the ice of Beijing's historic Capital Indoor Stadium.

Wearing a confident smirk, Chen avenged his poor short program from four years ago at the Pyeongchang Games in the biggest way possible. He opened with a perfect quad flip, breezed through his often-vexing triple axel, then drilled his quad flip-triple toe loop combination before skating to a stop and delivering a right haymaker at the air.

His score was 113.97 points, nearly two more than the previous world record set by rival Yuzuru Hanyu, and six points clear of second-place Yuma Kagiyama headed into Thursday's free skate.

"I was just elated," said Chen, who helped the U.S. win team silver earlier this week. "At the last Olympics, both of the short programs didn't go the way I wanted. To finally get an opportunity to skate the programs I wanted feels really good."

Kagiyama drilled a pair of quads and a triple axel during his own dynamic short program to finish with

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108.12 points, while fellow Japanese skater Shoma Uno — the reigning Olympic silver medalist — was third with 105.90 points.

As for their longtime idol, Hanyu bailed out of his planned opening quad salchow and received no points for the jump, a massive mistake that cost the two-time defending Olympic champion a shot at a third gold medal. Hanyu finished in eighth place with 95.15 points, a deficit so great that not even his planned quad axel in the free skate can make it up.

"I feel really shocked," said Hanyu, adding his skate may have hit a hole in the ice, "but I have one more chance."

The showdown between Chen and Hanyu had been building toward Tuesday for the past four years, ever since what Chen called a "disastrous" short program in Pyeongchang took him out of medal contention before he felt he had arrived.

Rather than taking a break afterward, Chen doubled down, working tirelessly with longtime coach Rafael Arutyunyan while simultaneously working toward his degree from Yale. He sharpened every aspect of his figure skating, from technical marks to his artistry, and he began to put together programs that nobody else had the nerve to try.

The short program he nailed in Beijing, with a base value of 36.27 points, was the hardest ever tried in competition.

Chen's ferociously steady build toward his second Olympics, a stretch that included three world titles and the most recent of his six national championships, contrasted starkly with the bumpy, injury-filled path that Hanyu took to Beijing.

After becoming the first man to successfully defend an Olympic title since American skater Dick Button in 1952, Hanyu took a break from the sport to rest ligament damage in his right ankle. He skipped the Grand Prix season in 2020 because of the pandemic, then missed this past Grand Prix season because of more issues with his right ankle.

But just when it appeared that Kagiyama and Uno had surpassed him, the 27-year-old Hanyu showed up at the Japanese championships in December and regained his crown, and his long-awaited showdown with Chen was on for Beijing.

It lasted about as long as it takes to lace up skates.

The preternaturally poised Hanyu, skating well before Chen, was seconds into his program when he set up for the first of two planned quads. But something was amiss the moment he took off, and Hanyu bailed out of the salchow to an audible gasp from the carefully separated crowd of a few thousand people.

The quad salchow carries a base value of 9.70 points; Hanyu was given none of them.

"Knowing how it feels to skate — not necessarily to your potential but not what you anticipate skating — it doesn't feel great, especially at an Olympics," said Chen, who can relate as well as anyone. "But you can never count Yuzu out. He's a two-time Olympic champion, and no matter what he does in the future, he's always going to be a figure skating icon."

As if to drive home Hanyu's extraordinary misstep, though, Uno was next on the ice and performed flawlessly. He landed his opening quad flip, then made a quad toe loop-triple toe loop combination look easy. And by the time Uno finished his program, set to a Vivaldi concerto, he had amassed 105.90 points and taken over first place.

"I had a chance to skate the short program for the team," said Uno, part of the bronze-winning Japanese squad, "and I think the experience helped me on this individual skate. I made some errors on jumps but I performed better."

Kagiyama gave Japan a second medal contender heading into Thursday when he landed his opening quad salchow and a quad toe loop-triple toe loop, then skated perfectly the rest of the way to "When You're Smiling" by Michael Buble.

Naturally, the performance left Kagiyama smiling as well.

"This is my first Olympic Games and to be honest with you, I thought I would be very nervous from beginning to end," he said. "I just thought I was having fun skating, and as for the jumps — I can't com-



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plain. My legs were giving up on me, a little minus for me if I was to score myself, but everything else was quite good.”

## **EXPLAINER: How China got blue skies in time for Olympics**

By CANDICE CHOI Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The blue skies greeting Olympic athletes here this month are a stark change from just a decade ago when the city’s choking air pollution was dubbed an “Airpocalypse” and blamed for scaring off tourists.

Beijing’s air still has a long way to go, but is measurably better than past years when smog often made it difficult to see nearby buildings and people wore masks to protect themselves from pollution, not COVID-19. The city’s notorious pollution also made news in 2016, when Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg posted a photo of himself jogging in the haze through Tiananmen Square with a smile on his face. Some mused on social media that he was trying to ingratiate himself with Chinese authorities.

Yet at this month’s Beijing Games, the air is clear enough for athletes to see the mountains surrounding the city.

A look at what’s behind the transformation.

### **WHAT CHANGED?**

After pollution hit record levels in 2013 and became a source of international attention and widespread public discontent, China launched an ambitious plan to improve its air quality and said it would fight pollution “with an iron fist,” according to a recent report from the Energy Policy Institute at Chicago. That was also around the time the country bid on this month’s Winter Games.

The ensuing efforts were similar to the measures China had previously taken to ensure clear skies for the 2008 Summer Games in Beijing, but on a larger scale, the report notes. Tougher emissions standards were imposed on coal-fired plants and the number of cars on the road was curbed to cut vehicle emissions. Local officials were given environmental targets, and coal-fired boilers in homes were replaced with gas or electric heaters.

The government’s reporting of air quality data also improved.

Jia Pei, a 30-year-old Beijing resident who enjoys exercising outside, said the improved air quality puts him in a better mood.

“In the past when there was smog, I would feel that I was inhaling dust into my mouth,” he said.

### **IS BEIJING’S AIR CLEAN NOW?**

Despite the progress, Beijing’s annual average air pollution last year was still more than six times the limit laid out by the World Health Organization’s guidelines.

And the concentration of coal-burning industries that still surrounds the city means it remains susceptible to bad air days, said Lauri Myllyvirta at the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air in Helsinki, Finland.

When those happen can depend on factors like car traffic or how much wind there is to blow away smog.

Still, Chinese officials hail the country’s achievements. Last year, they say there were 288 days of good air quality days in Beijing, compared to 176 days in 2013.

### **HOW IS HEALTH AFFECTED?**

The effects of air pollution can be visceral and include irritated eyes and difficulty breathing.

“You could hear people coughing all over because of it,” said Myllyvirta, who was living in Beijing until 2019.

Children, older adults and people with health conditions including asthma are more likely to feel the effects. The very fine particles that make up air pollution can get deep into people’s lungs and have been linked to health problems including irregular heartbeats and decreased lung function.

Poorer people might also be more vulnerable if they can’t afford air purifiers or need to work outdoors, said Guojun He, a researcher at the University of Hong Kong and co-author of the report from the Energy Policy Institute at Chicago.

### **WHAT’S NEXT?**

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China has committed to being carbon neutral by 2060. And though the country still relies heavily on coal for electricity, He said it has made significant progress in curbing emissions and is rapidly developing clean energy from sources like wind and solar.

"When it's possible, I think in general, the transition is going to be happening and it's actually happening right now," He said.

In the meantime, he noted the government can also take short-term measures when it wants, such as temporarily shutting down factories. That can help ensure clearer skies for big political or social events, like the Olympics.

## Group to restore bowling alley, crux of Orangeburg Massacre

By MICHELLE LIU Associated Press/Report for America

ORANGEBURG, S.C. (AP) — Big plans are being realized for a once-segregated bowling alley that stands dark and dusty 54 years after state troopers fired into a crowd of Black students in the killings now known as the "Orangeburg Massacre."

After years of neglect, the National Park Service is helping a non-profit group renovate the All-Star Bowling Lanes, remaking it into a fully-functional bowling alley with a civil rights theme.

South Carolina troopers fired into the crowd on the outskirts of the historically Black campus of South Carolina State University on Feb. 8, 1968, killing three and wounding another 28 with their bullets. But the shooting remains relatively unknown outside the state. Compared with the four students killed at Kent State two years later, it's a footnote in national narratives about 1960s protests.

Planners of the future Orangeburg All-Star Justice Center hope their renovation project will restore the space to the nation's memories of the civil rights movement.

"What we're going to have is a major national heritage site for Orangeburg, the state of South Carolina and the nation," said Ellen Zisholtz, president of the Center for Creative Partnerships, the nonprofit that purchased the long-empty building with about \$140,000 from an anonymous donor.

A board of community members, survivors of the shooting and activists of the civil rights era are providing input to shape the project. In their vision, the lanes are lit up, the lunch counter is bustling and every time someone bowls a spare or a strike, a screen above the lane supplies a fact about civil rights history. A digital display on the wall will name visitors who've made a commitment to seeking racial justice.

A \$500,000 grant to jumpstart the renovations came from the National Park Service, which has added the bowling alley to its African American Civil Rights Network. The grant is paying for architectural plans, a new roof, electric and plumbing repairs and maybe even some work on façade, Zisholtz said.

The board also hopes the project can jumpstart a revitalization of Orangeburg, a majority-Black town of about 13,000 with a 27% poverty rate.

Zisholtz opened the building's doors last month to Orangeburg residents who used their phones to illuminate high scores painted on a side wall and shoot portraits against a backdrop of empty lanes. Some described their relatives' involvement in the civil rights movement, and recalled memories of knocking down pins after the bowling alley was integrated.

"This is history," said Willie Dean Odom, who brought her children and grandchildren along. "I just wanted them to be a part of the memories, to see what it was like."

For those who lived through the shootings or grew up in its shadow, the project is a way to keep pushing for justice and to make sure the killings remain a part of South Carolina's story.

In 2003, then-Gov. Mark Sanford formally apologized on behalf of the state. On the federal level, the Justice Department has indicated as recently as December that it is still reviewing the killings.

But the state has never conducted its own formal probe or offered restitution to victims. State police claimed at the time that the protesters had fired at troopers first, though many of the wounded were shot in the back or the bottoms of their feet. An FBI investigation led to charges for nine troopers. They said they acted in self-defense, and a jury of 10 white and two Black people acquitted them.

Ultimately, the only person convicted was Cleveland Sellers, a Black activist who was shot in the shoulder

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and went to prison for seven months on rioting charges. He was pardoned 25 years later.

"We have to continue to tell the story until justice prevails in South Carolina," Sellers said. He was asked to speak at South Carolina State during a ceremony Tuesday to dedicate the busts of Samuel Hammond, Delano Middleton and Henry Smith, the three young students who were killed. Their likenesses have been installed in a monument on campus, the Smith Hammond Middleton Legacy Plaza.

On Tuesday's 54th anniversary, the public will have one more chance to set foot inside the All-Star Bowling Lanes before renovation work starts.

## Breonna Taylor case to resume after surgery, weather delays

By DYLAN LOVAN Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Jury selection in the trial of a former Kentucky police officer involved in the deadly raid that killed Breonna Taylor is scheduled to resume after a week of delays.

The first questioning of prospective jurors in Brett Hankison's wanton endangerment trial is slated to get underway on Tuesday. It was set to begin last week but was delayed by inclement weather and after Hankison had to have minor surgery.

The former officer is not charged in the death of Taylor, who was shot to death in a botched 2020 narcotics raid. But prosecutors said Hankison fired shots during the raid that went into a neighboring apartment, endangering others.

Two other officers who fired bullets that struck Taylor were not charged. Taylor's boyfriend fired a shot that struck one of those officers, Jonathan Mattingly, in the leg. The boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, said he feared an intruder was breaking into Taylor's ground floor apartment.

Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman who worked as an emergency medical technician, was shot multiple times. No drugs were found in her apartment, and the warrant used to enter by force was later found to be flawed. The case also shined a light on the use of "no knock" warrants, which were later banned in Louisville.

The jury pool was widened to about 250 because of heavy publicity surrounding Taylor's death and racial injustice protests that took place in Louisville throughout 2020. Prospective jurors will be questioned separately, about 20 a day, to find out if any cannot be impartial on the question of Hankison's guilt. Jury selection is expected to take multiple weeks.

Hankison has pleaded not guilty to three counts of first-degree wanton endangerment, a low-level felony that carries a prison sentence of one to five years.

Jefferson Circuit Judge Ann Bailey Smith denied Hankison's request last year to move the trial out of Louisville. He had argued that publicity surrounding the case would make it hard to seat an impartial jury.

## Turtles dying from eating trash show plastics scourge in UAE

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

KALBA, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The hawksbill sea turtle lay belly-up on the metal autopsy table, its shell ashen and stomach taut.

A week ago, the adolescent turtle washed up on a beach in Kalba, a city on the east coast of the United Arab Emirates. Once unspoiled, the coast of mangrove trees is now fouled by piles of trash dragged from nearby landfills. Strewn across the shore are plastic bags, packages, bottle caps — and far too often, dead turtles.

At first, Fadi Yaghmour, a marine expert who has examined some 200 turtles for the first research on the subject from the Middle East, extracted typical fare from the carcass — squid beaks and oysters.

Then, a culprit for the creature's demise became clear: shriveled balloons and plastic foam, some of the last things the turtle ate.

"It's probably malnourished," Yaghmour told The Associated Press last week as he worked. Plastic clogs turtles' intestinal tracts, he said, and can cause them to starve.

This turtle is one of 64 retrieved from the shores of Kalba and Khor Fakkan, in the wider emirate of

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Sharjah, to be analyzed in Yaghmour's lab. His team of researchers have published a new study in the Marine Pollution Bulletin that seeks to document the damage and danger of the throwaway plastic that has surged in use around the world and in the UAE, along with other marine debris.

When discarded, plastic clogs waterways and chokes animals — not just sea turtles but whales, birds and all sorts of life.

A staggering 75% of all dead green turtles and 57% of all loggerhead turtles in Sharjah had eaten marine debris, including plastic bags, bottle caps, rope and fishing nets, the study found. The only other research from the region, published in 1985, found that none of the studied turtles in the Gulf of Oman had eaten plastic.

"When the majority of sea turtles have plastics in their bodies, you know you have a significant problem," Yaghmour said. "If there's ever a time to care about turtles, it is now."

Turtles may have survived the mass extinction that killed off dinosaurs millions of years ago, but today they're disappearing around the world.

Hawksbills are critically endangered, according to the World Conservation Union, and green and loggerhead species are endangered. The three species are found in the Persian Gulf's warm, shallow waters, as well as the Gulf of Oman on the other side of the Strait of Hormuz.

Skyrocketing amounts of litter pollute the world's environment, with a seminal study in Science Advances five years ago estimating that 12 billion metric tons will pile up by 2050.

That's just one of the manifold threats that humans have created for sea turtles — including rising sea temperatures that bleach coral reefs, coastal overdevelopment and overfishing. But it's perhaps the most visible, as shown by the gruesome scene in the Kalba lab.

A massive amount of debris was found inside the dead turtles in Sharjah — 325 shards in one turtle, and 32 pieces of fishing net in another. They can cause deadly blockages, lacerations and gas to build up in the digestive tracts.

The study also found that green sea turtles were most inclined to eat drifting plastic bags and ropes, which resemble their diet of cuttlefish and jellyfish. Loggerheads ate bottle caps and other small pieces of hard plastic mistaken for tasty snails and other marine invertebrates. The youngest sea turtles, not as discriminating, ate the most plastic.

Conservationists in the UAE, including Yaghmour's team and others at Sharjah's Environmental and Protected Areas Authority, are seeking to protect the country's turtles from the threats. Community officers respond to constant reports of turtles in distress, rescuing the sick reptiles for rehabilitation.

"If we lose these turtles, the ecosystem will die," said Abdulkarim Vettan, Al-Qurum Mangrove Center's operational manager, pointing to one turtle whose flipper veterinarians amputated because it became caught up in a net.

The environmentalists face a daunting task in the oil-rich federation that's one of the world's highest carbon-dioxide emitters and trash producers per capita. Over the past decades, plastic use and waste surged as the UAE transformed at warp-speed from a parched desert pearling towns into a super-modern business hub known worldwide for its culture of consumerism.

Carbon-intensive desalination has driven much of the growth. The construction of Dubai's colossal artificial islands a decade ago dredged up sediment that destroyed the natural reef and turtle nesting sites along the coast, according to environmental studies from the time.

"Everything points toward major degradation and stress on the marine ecosystem of the Persian Gulf," said Christian Henderson, a Middle East political ecologist at Leiden University in the Netherlands. "The development of car-dependent urban regions has been extremely fast, without any kind of environmental consideration at all."

The UAE pledged last fall to have net zero carbon emissions by 2050, the first country among the oil-rich sheikhdoms to make the long-term commitment. The goal remains difficult to gauge and has met skepticism.

On Monday, Dubai announced it will begin charging a 25-fil (about 6 cents) fee on plastic bags, with the aim of outlawing them entirely in two years over environmental concerns.

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"The image of piecemeal environmental interventions is important politically, culturally and socially to the UAE," Henderson added. "But the kind of interventions that require genuine sustainability are not on the table because of the sacrifices that would be involved."

Meanwhile, experts say, the trash crisis grows and turtles pay the ultimate price.

## **In India, wearing hijab bars some Muslim students from class**

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — When the students were barred last month from entering their classrooms and told not to wear hijab, a headscarf used by Muslim women, they began camping outside the all-girls high school.

The story cascaded across the internet, drawing news crews to the front of the government-run school in Udupi district, in the southern Indian state of Karnataka.

Battle lines were swiftly drawn. The students began protesting outside the school gate and sat huddled in a group, reading their lessons. The school staff, which said the students were defying uniform rules, remained unmoved.

A month on, more schools have begun implementing a similar ban on hijabs, forcing the state's top court to step in. It will hear petitions filed by the protesting students on Tuesday and rule on whether to overturn the ban.

But the uneasy standoff has raised fears among the state's Muslim students who say they are being deprived of their religious rights. On Monday, hundreds of them, including their parents, took to the streets against the restrictions, demanding that students should be allowed to attend classes even if they are wearing hijab.

"What we are witnessing is a form of religious apartheid. The decree is discriminatory and it disproportionately affects Muslim women," said A. H. Almas, an 18-year-old student who has been part of the weeks-long protests.

So far several meetings between the staff, government representatives and the protesting students have failed to resolve the issue. The state's education minister, B. C. Nagesh, has also refused to lift the ban. He told reporters Sunday that "those unwilling to follow uniform dress code can explore other options."

For many Muslim women, the hijab is part of their Islamic faith. It has for decades been a source of controversy in some western countries, particularly in France, which in 2004 banned it from being worn in public schools. But in India, where Muslims make up almost 14% of the country's near 1.4 billion people, it is neither banned nor is its use restricted in public places.

In fact, women wearing hijab are a common sight in India, and for many of them, it symbolizes religious identity and is a matter of personal choice.

Because the debate involves alleged bias over a religious item worn to cover hair and maintain modesty, some rights activists have voiced concerns that the decree risks raising Islamophobia. Violence and hate speech against Muslims have increased under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist party, which also governs the Karnataka state.

"Singling out hijab for criticism is unfair and discriminatory. Those opposing it are on record decrying secularism and for openly espousing majoritarianism," said Zakia Soman, founder of a Muslim women's group, the Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan.

Others contend it underscores the potential isolation and marginalization of Muslims who feel Modi and his Hindu nationalist party are slowly isolating them, compounding an already growing unease felt by the minority community, in a multicultural country that has guarantees of religious freedom enshrined in its constitution.

"What we are seeing is an attempt to invisibilize Muslim women and push them out of public spaces," said Afreen Fatima, a New Delhi-based student activist. She said the ban is the culmination of a growing climate of hate against Muslims "which has now manifested itself in the physical realm."

The protests have drawn public condemnation, with the hashtag #HijabIsOurRight circulating widely on social media, but also led to a rather unexpected pushback.

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For the last week, some Hindu students in the state have started wearing Saffron-coloured shawls, a symbol of Hindu nationalist groups. They have also chanted praises to Hindu gods, while protesting against the Muslim girls' choice of headgear, signifying India's growing religious faultlines and bitter tensions between the country's Hindu majority and its large Muslim minority.

The events have prompted the state government to ban clothes it said "disturb equality, integrity and public order" and some high schools to declare a holiday to avoid communal trouble.

On Monday one of the schools yielded partially and allowed its Muslim students to attend class with a hijab but made them sit in separate classrooms. The move was heavily criticized, with Muslim students alleging the staff of segregating them on the basis of faith.

"It is humiliating," said Almas. "How long are we going to accept that citizens can be stigmatized because of their religion?"

## White House: Top scientist resigns over treatment of staff

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's top science adviser Eric Lander resigned, hours after the White House confirmed that an internal investigation found credible evidence that he mistreated his staff, marking the first Cabinet-level departure of the Biden administration.

An internal review last year, prompted by a workplace complaint, found evidence that Lander, the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy and science adviser to Biden, bullied staffers and treated them disrespectfully. The White House rebuked Lander over his interactions with his staff, but initially signaled Monday that he would be allowed to remain on the job, despite Biden's Inauguration Day assertion that he expected "honesty and decency" from all who worked for his administration and would fire anyone who shows disrespect to others "on the spot."

But later Monday evening, press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden had accepted Lander's resignation with "gratitude for his work at OTSP on the pandemic, the Cancer Moonshot, climate change, and other key priorities."

Lander, in his resignation letter, said, "I am devastated that I caused hurt to past and present colleagues by the way in which I have spoken to them."

"I believe it is not possible to continue effectively in my role, and the work of this office is far too important to be hindered," he added.

The White House said Biden did not request Lander's resignation.

Earlier Monday, Psaki said senior administration officials had met with Lander about his actions and management of the office, but indicated he would be allowed to stay in the job, saying the administration was following a "process" to handle workplace complaints.

"Following the conclusion of the thorough investigation into these actions, senior White House officials conveyed directly to Dr. Lander that his behavior was inappropriate, and the corrective actions that were needed, which the White House will monitor for compliance moving forward," she said.

Psaki added, "The president has been crystal clear with all of us about his high expectations of how he and his staff should be creating a respectful work environment."

The White House said Lander and OSTP would be required to take certain corrective actions as part of the review. It also said the review did not find "credible evidence" of gender-based discrimination and the reassignment of the staffer who filed the original complaint was "deemed appropriate."

Lander on Friday issued an apology to staffers in his office, acknowledging "I have spoken to colleagues within OSTP in a disrespectful or demeaning way."

"I am deeply sorry for my conduct," he added. "I especially want to apologize to those of you who I treated poorly, or were present at the time."

The White House review was completed weeks ago, but it was confirmed — and Lander apologized — only after reporting by Politico.

Biden's "Safe and Respectful Workplace Policy" was instituted when he took office and was meant to

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serve as a contrast from the often-demeaning way former President Donald Trump and his aides treated one another and political foes.

Lander's conduct and the White House's initial decision to stand by him sparked some consternation inside the White House and among Biden allies and created an unnecessary distraction from Biden's agenda.

By late Monday, Lander came to believe he was in an untenable position and resigned effective no later than Feb. 18, "in order to permit an orderly transfer."

There are five deputy directors — four women and one man — at the Office of Science and Technology Policy. Kei Koizumi is the deputy director for policy. Former National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration chief Jane Lubchenco is the deputy for climate science. Sally Benson is the deputy for energy. Carrie Wolinetz is the deputy director for health and life science. Alondra Nelson is the deputy director for science and society.

The world's largest general science society disinvited Lander from speaking at their annual meeting shortly before his resignation was announced. American Association for the Advancement of Science Chief Executive Officer Sudip Parikh said he didn't know if that had anything to do with the resignation.

"I hope that we sent the right message about what's important," Parikh told The Associated Press Monday night. "The time of letting these things go is over. Not just in sciences, but in workplaces all across America."

"This is an administration that has put a lot of their political capital into science and technology," Parikh added. "It's a tough role to fill. It's very possible and very likely that that person could be a woman."

Lander, whose position was elevated to Cabinet-rank by Biden, appeared prominently with the president last week when he relaunched his "Cancer Moonshot" program to marshal federal resources behind research and treatment for cancer diseases.

The founding director of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Lander is a mathematician and molecular biologist. He was lead author of the first paper announcing the details of the human genome, the so-called "book of life."

His confirmation to his role in the Biden administration was delayed for months as senators sought more information about meetings he had with the late Jeffrey Epstein, a disgraced financier who was charged with sex trafficking before his suicide. Lander also was criticized for downplaying the contributions of two Nobel Prize-winning female scientists.

At his confirmation hearing last year, Lander apologized for a 2016 article he wrote that downplayed the work of the female scientists. At the hearing, he also called Epstein "an abhorrent individual."

Lander said he "understated the importance of those key advances" by biochemists Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna. The two were later awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

Lander's departure on the grounds of Biden's respectful workplace policy echoed the February 2021 resignation of a White House deputy press secretary, T.J. Ducklo, who was suspended and then resigned over threatening conversations with a reporter.

## Supreme Court sides with GOP in Alabama election map case

By MARK SHERMAN and JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court put on hold a lower court ruling that Alabama must draw new congressional districts before the 2022 elections to increase Black voting power. The high court order boosts Republican chances to hold six of the state's seven seats in the House of Representatives.

The court's action, by a 5-4 vote announced Monday, means the upcoming elections will be conducted under a map drawn by Alabama's Republican-controlled legislature that contains one majority-Black district, represented by a Black Democrat, in a state in which more than a quarter of the population is Black.

A three-judge lower court, including two judges appointed by former President Donald Trump, had ruled that the state had likely violated the federal Voting Rights Act by diluting the political power of Black voters by not creating a second district in which they made up a majority, or close to it.

Justices Brett Kavanaugh and Samuel Alito, part of the conservative majority, said the lower court's order

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for a new map came too close to the 2022 election cycle.

Chief Justice John Roberts joined his three more liberal colleagues in dissent.

The justices will at some later date decide whether the map produced by the state violates the landmark voting rights law, a case that could call into question “decades of this Court’s precedent about Section 2 of the VRA,” Justice Elena Kagan wrote in dissent.

That decision presumably will govern elections in 2024 through the end of the decade in Alabama and could affect minority political representation elsewhere in the country, too.

Alabama lawmakers redrew the state’s congressional districts following the results of the 2020 census. Several groups of voters sued, arguing that the new maps diluted the voting power of Black residents.

In a unanimous ruling in late January, the three judges said that the groups were likely to succeed in showing that the state had violated the Voting Rights Act. As a result, the panel ordered lawmakers to redraw the districts so Black voters would be a majority, or close to it, in two districts, not one. The ruling ran more than 200 pages.

The panel wrote that “we do not regard the question ... as a close one.”

Alabama asked the Supreme Court to put the ruling on hold while it appeals and the justices agreed. The state argued that it drew the new map guided by race-neutral principles and that the new map is similar to past maps.

More than a dozen mostly Republican-led states had filed a brief urging the justices to side with Alabama and allow it to use the maps it originally drew.

Deuel Ross, a lawyer for Alabamians who sued, called the state’s congressional districts “a textbook case of a Voting Rights Act violation” and said the high court’s decision to intervene is disheartening.

But the facts are clear, Ross, a lawyer with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, wrote in an email to The Associated Press. “Alabama’s current congressional map violates the Voting Rights Act,” he said. “The litigation will continue, and we are confident that Black Alabamians will eventually have the congressional map they deserve — one that fairly represents all voters.”

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall called the order a victory for the state and said he believes the state will “ultimately prevail” in the ongoing litigation.

Marshall’s office argued the state’s congressional districts are similar to those in use, and approved by the courts, since the 1990s.

Roberts, who typically votes against consideration of race, wrote that he shares some of Alabama’s concerns, but still would have let the redrawn districts govern the 2022 election and have future elections governed by the ultimate outcome in the case.

Kavanaugh, writing to explain his vote, stressed that the court has repeatedly declined in the past to change the rules close to an election.

“When an election is close at hand, the rules of the road must be clear and settled. Late judicial tinkering with election laws can lead to disruption and to unanticipated and unfair consequences for candidates, political parties, and voters, among others. It is one thing for a State on its own to toy with its election laws close to a State’s elections. But it is quite another thing for a federal court to swoop in and re-do a State’s election laws in the period close to an election,” he wrote in an opinion Alito joined.

Taking issue with Kavanaugh, Kagan noted that the lower court ruled months before any votes will be cast.

She criticized the conservatives for using the emergency application process known as the shadow docket “to signal or make changes in the law, without anything approaching full briefing and argument.”

## Red flags trailed ex-UCLA lecturer across elite universities

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A trail of red flags about his behavior toward women followed Matthew Harris on an academic journey that took him to three of the nation’s most prestigious universities — Duke, Cornell and then the University of California, Los Angeles.

Former graduate classmates at Duke and Cornell, where he studied before becoming a postdoctoral



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fellow at UCLA in recent years, described him as inappropriate and creepy, with obsessive behaviors like sending excessive emails and text messages to some women that became harassment and, in at least one case, sexual harassment. Another said she changed her morning routine at Duke for weeks after Harris learned her schedule and texted her messages like, "I'm here, where are you?"

Last week, a SWAT team in Colorado arrested Harris after he allegedly emailed an 800-page document and posted videos threatening violence against dozens of people at UCLA, prompting the school to cancel in-person classes for a day. The so-called manifesto contained numerous racist threats and used the words "bomb," "kill" and "shoot" more than 12,000 times. Harris is expected to appear in court on Tuesday.

In online class reviews, interviews and emails obtained by The Associated Press, current and former students at all three universities alleged negligence by the schools for letting Harris slide previously, despite his concerning conduct.

"I have no idea how this guy is still teaching," one of his UCLA students wrote in October 2020 in an anonymous class review.

Two former Duke students, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they fear for their safety, said that while they did not report Harris to university officials at the time, his behavior was well known within the small philosophy program and they did not feel they would have been supported by faculty if they'd come forward.

Taken together in the years since major mass shootings at Columbine High School, Virginia Tech and elsewhere, the students' allegations at three top-tier colleges raise questions about the line between uncomfortable and actionable behavior, a university's duty to encourage the reporting of it, and an institution's obligation to prevent it from occurring at another school.

The students' descriptions of years of alarming behavior prompts another question: What, if anything, did the universities do to get Harris help?

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A graduate student at Duke as he completed his Ph.D. in 2019, Harris also attended Cornell for a year before UCLA hired him as a postdoctoral fellow and lecturer — a distinguished posting — until he was put on "investigatory leave" last March after allegedly sending pornographic and violent content to his students.

"Clearly Duke should not have passed him to us, and Duke and Cornell should not have passed him to UCLA," said Adriene Takaoka, a Cornell philosophy graduate student whose time overlapped with Harris'. "We're just lucky that no one's been physically hurt. Certainly people have been psychologically damaged."

The former Duke students described their initial interactions with Harris as largely collegial, but with strange undertones that grew over the years.

"There would just be this feeling of 'um, I feel uncomfortable' or 'that was creepy,'" another said. "By the time I left the program, I wanted absolutely nothing to do with him."

But Andrew Janiak, a Duke philosophy professor and former chair of the department who served on Harris' dissertation committee, said he never had any indication of such behavior, describing him as "very shy, very reticent, never aggressive. I never saw him even raise his voice."

Janiak received the first reports of harassment in late March, after Harris had left Duke. Emails show Janiak immediately contacted UCLA.

Duke and Cornell declined to comment to AP and did not answer a list of detailed questions sent via email, such as whether any official reports were made about Harris while he attended their institutions and if there were none, what that says about their culture of reporting.

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The signs were there, like bread crumbs scattered across the three schools.

The morning routine incident at Duke. A house party at Cornell where he tried to rope a relative stranger into a discussion about his mental health. Negative online reviews of his UCLA lectures. Maniacal laughter that disrupted classes. Odd interactions with women he'd approach out of the blue on campus. A campaign of incessant text messages and emails that caused several students to cut off contact with him.

"No one would look at that kid and say, 'oh, he's fine,'" said Brian Van Brunt, an expert on campus violence and mental health and former president of the National Association for Behavioral Intervention and

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Threat Assessment. "Typically someone like this didn't just appear out of nowhere."

In recent years, most colleges and universities have formed behavioral intervention and threat assessment teams in response to school shootings, meant to flag concerning behavior and get help before conduct escalates.

Emails and court documents show UCLA's behavioral intervention team was involved, but possibly not until as late as March 30, 2021, when Harris' behavior really began to escalate.

That spring, Harris began sending bizarre and disturbing emails to his former classmates and current UCLA students. The emails to the UCLA students allegedly included pornographic and violent content sent to women in his research group, prompting the university to put him on "investigatory leave."

Bill Kisliuk, UCLA's director of media relations, said in an email that people at the university "brought concerns" to its Title IX office last year, which "worked with the individuals to address the concerns." He declined to comment further, citing privacy. The university announced Monday that it was creating a task force "to conduct a comprehensive review" of its protocols for assessing potential threats.

The messages to Harris' former Duke classmates, however, had links to his YouTube channel that included a video titled "Dead White Professors (Duke University remix)." Despite evidence he was in North Carolina at the time, the university appeared unwilling to bar him from campus, emails show.

In April, his mother reached out to a professor at University of California, Irvine, saying her son in January had threatened in emails to "hunt" and kill the woman. The professor had briefly met Harris in 2013 while they were both at Duke and he reached out when he moved to LA in 2020, sending emails and text messages that would turn aggressive and obsessive.

"I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I did nothing and someone got hurt," Harris' mother wrote.

Those messages prompted the UC system to obtain a workplace violence restraining order against him, which barred him from all UC campuses. UCLA police also sought a Gun Violence Emergency Protective Order.

In November — months after he'd been involuntarily committed to a mental health facility and, his mother later told the FBI, diagnosed with schizophrenia — Harris tried to buy a gun but was denied because of those orders.

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Now, his former classmates wonder: How did Harris even get hired at UCLA?

His dissertation — despite an alarming dedication posted online — would have been approved unanimously by a four-person committee. Janiak said he wrote Harris a letter of recommendation but declined to discuss it.

"Everyone wants to re-read the past and try to figure out, 'was he secretly crazy,'" the professor said, but there was nothing "that would make me think, 'boy, this person's in trouble.'"

Janiak said students reported other complaints to him while he was chair of the department, but no one came forward about Harris until last March.

The onus is on the incoming institution to ask targeted questions about an applicant beyond their academic credentials, according to Saunie Schuster, a lawyer who advises colleges and co-founded the Association of Title IX Administrators.

While schools typically cannot mention unproven accusations for fear of a lawsuit, Schuster said, they can do a background check that includes phone interviews with classmates, supervisors and students. It's not clear whether UCLA officials conducted such a background check or interviews; the university did not answer AP's questions regarding whether it reached out Duke or Cornell during the hiring process.

Schuster said a background search would've allowed questions to be posed to former employers like, "would you hire this individual to work directly with you?"

"Has this individual demonstrated any conduct that you've observed that would give you concerns?"

For Harris' former classmates, the answer is clear: Yes.

## 'Dune,' 'Power of the Dog' poised for Oscar nomination hauls

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

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NEW YORK (AP) — Tuesday morning's Oscar nominations should bring Will Smith his third Academy Awards nod, a lot of love for Denis Villeneuve's science-fiction epic "Dune" and nominations spread across more streaming services than ever.

Nominations to the 94th Academy Awards will be announced Tuesday beginning at 8:18 a.m. EST. Actors Tracee Ellis Ross and Leslie Jordan will read the nominees live on multiple platforms, including Oscar.com, Oscars.org, the academy's social media accounts and on ABC's "Good Morning America."

A largely virtual awards season has added some unpredictability to this year's nominations, which are occurring later than usual. (To make way for the Olympics, the Oscars will be held March 27.) Among the favorites Tuesday are "Dune," Kenneth Branagh's black-and-white coming-of-age drama "Belfast" and Jane Campion's gothic western "The Power of the Dog."

Campion, a nominee for 1993's "The Piano," is expected to become the first woman to ever be nominated twice for best director. Last year, Chloé Zhao just became the second woman to ever win the award. Campion's director of photography, Ari Wegner, is also poised to be just the second woman ever nominated for best cinematography. The only previous woman to do so was Rachel Morrison for "Mudbound" in 2018.

Most major streaming services have films in the hunt.

Netflix has "The Power of the Dog," Adam McKay's apocalyptic comedy "Don't Look Up," Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical adaptation "Tick, Tick ... Boom!" and Maggie Gyllenhaal's Elena Ferrante adaptation "The Lost Daughter." After several near-misses with "Roma," "The Irishman" and "Mank," Netflix is still seeking its first best picture win.

Apple has the deaf family drama "CODA" and Joel Coen's Shakespeare adaptation "The Tragedy of Macbeth." Denzel Washington, star of "Macbeth," is in line for his ninth acting Oscar nomination. Troy Kotsur of "CODA" could become only the second deaf actor nominated for an Academy Award. The only previous deaf actor nominated in Oscar history is Marlee Martlin, Kotsur's "CODA" co-star.

Amazon is represented with Aaron Sorkin's "Being the Ricardos," which may score acting nods for stars Nicole Kidman and Javier Bardem.

Two films that premiered simultaneously in theaters and on HBO Max — "Dune" and the Will Smith-led "King Richard," about the father of Venus and Serena Williams — should also be in the best picture mix. With about \$400 million in ticket sales, "Dune" could be the biggest ticket-seller to be nominated for best picture — so long as "Spider-Man: No Way Home" or "No Time to Die" don't sneak in.

In pulling from films released in myriad ways, the Oscar nominations are sure to reflect a tumultuous pandemic year for Hollywood that began with many theaters shuttered and ended with Sony Pictures' "Spider-Man: No Way Home" smashing box-office records.

In between, much of the normal rhythm of the movie business was transformed, as studios pushed some of the biggest movies of the year to streaming services in a bid to lure subscribers. Films including "Dune" (despite the objections of its director), Pixar's "Luca" and "King Richard" were among those that went straight to homes.

As COVID-19 cases surged in the last two months due to the omicron variant, much of Oscar season also turned virtual. Last year, the pandemic led the academy to host a delayed Oscars in a socially distanced ceremony at Los Angeles' Union Station. Ratings plummeted to an all-time low of 9.85 million viewers.

This year, the academy has yet to map out plans for its show, except that it will include a host for the first time since 2018. For better or worse, the Academy Awards will also be without its usual lead-in. The Golden Globes in January were an untelevised non-event after NBC said it wouldn't air them in 2022 while the beleaguered Hollywood Foreign Press reformed itself after ethics and diversity criticism.

Other changes were more subtle but potentially impactful. For the first time, the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences ruled out hard-copy DVD screeners for its members, who instead could watch submissions on the academy's streaming platform.

## Peng Shuai watches Gu win Olympic gold in freeski big air

By JAKE SEINER AP Sports Writer

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BEIJING (AP) — Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai sat with International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach and watched American-born Chinese freeskier Eileen Gu win gold at the women's big air event Tuesday.

Peng appeared a day after delivering a controlled interview in Beijing that touched on sexual assault allegations she made against a former high-ranking member of China's ruling Communist Party. Her answers — delivered in front of a Chinese Olympic official — left unanswered questions about her well-being and what exactly happened.

Bach said he and Peng spoke with athletes at the Big Air Shougang venue for about 30 minutes, and the pair was seen together in the stands.

Bach said Peng told him that she was going into quarantine later Tuesday and planned to exit the closed Olympic coronavirus bubble. He was not sure if she planned to return for any more Olympic events.

Peng, a local star who has encouraged Chinese girls and women to take up tennis, watched as Gu formally ascended to a similar position with her first Olympic gold medal.

An 18-year-old born in San Francisco, Gu decided in 2019 to compete for China at the Beijing Games, spurning Team USA in the process. Gu, whose mother is Chinese, has said repeatedly that her goal is to be a role model for young female athletes in China.

Gu sidestepped a question about whether she shared concerns from the international community about Peng's well being. She said he was "really happy" Peng attended and honored that a star from a major sport like tennis came to see "niche sports like freeskiing."

"I'm really grateful that she's, yeah, happy and healthy and out here doing her thing again," Gu said.

Peng's interview with French sports newspaper L'Equipe and an announcement that Bach met Peng for dinner this weekend seemed aimed at allaying sustained international concerns about the three-time Olympian and former No. 1-ranked tennis doubles player. Fears for Peng's safety have threatened to overshadow the Winter Olympics in Beijing.

Peng told L'Equipe that the concerns were the result of "an enormous misunderstanding." But the format of the interview appeared to limit follow-ups about the allegations and their aftermath.

L'Equipe asked Peng about sexual assault allegations that sparked the controversy in November. The allegations were quickly scrubbed from her verified account on leading Chinese social media platform Weibo. She subsequently dropped out of public view for a while. That led to "where is Peng Shuai?" questions online and from players and fans outside of China, in part because the country has a history of disappearing people who run afoul of its leaders.

In her lengthy post, Peng wrote that Zhang Gaoli, a former vice premier and member of the ruling Chinese Communist Party's all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee, had forced her to have sex despite repeated refusals. Her post also said they had sex once seven years ago, and that she developed romantic feelings for him after that. Zhang has not commented on the accusation.

"Originally, I buried all this in my heart," she wrote. "Why would you even come find me again, take me to your house and force me and you to have sexual relations?"

## John Vinocur, Paris-based columnist and editor, dies at 81

By JOHN DANISZEWSKI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — John Vinocur, a much-respected foreign correspondent for The New York Times and The Associated Press and later executive editor and columnist at the International Herald Tribune in Paris, has died, his family announced. He was 81.

Vinocur died in Amsterdam on Sunday while staying with his companion, Jacqueline Schaap, the Times reported, quoting Vinocur's son, James. The cause was complication from sepsis.

Among the best-known bylines in the Times and the Herald Tribune from Europe, known for captivating writing and a thorough grasp of the continent's politics, Vinocur was a fixture of the journalistic community in Paris, where he lived for decades. He covered such historic events as the attack on the Israeli Olympic athletes and the convulsions that shook Europe with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

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"He loved news and got this little sparkle in his eye when he sensed a good story. He was a true newsman," recalled Maria Sanminiatielli, a senior AP editor in New York who worked with Vinocur in the 1990s at the Herald Tribune. Vinocur was the paper's editor from 1986-1996.

"John Vinocur was a master of descriptive prose and was probably among the two or three best writers in AP in the last three generations," said Robert Reid, senior managing editor at Stars and Stripes who was a colleague of Vinocur's at AP. "He managed to write with color, wit, accuracy and authority. Most writers are lucky if they can master one of those characteristics."

Vinocur, a native of Queens, New York, and graduate of Oberlin College, went overseas for the AP in 1968, covering major events, wars and conflict in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

His scoops included a memorable beat reporting on an injury to heavyweight champ George Foreman and causing the postponement of the "Rumble in the Jungle," the championship fight between Foreman and Muhammad Ali in Zaire in 1974.

Hired away by the Times, he became the newspaper's bureau chief in Germany from 1977-82 and in Paris from 1982-85. He then worked briefly in New York as metropolitan editor, before returning to Paris to join the Herald Tribune, then jointly owned by the Times and the Washington Post.

After stepping down as executive editor of the Herald Tribune, Vinocur continued to write as a columnist for the IHT and the Times, which had acquired sole ownership. The column, Politicus, was full of pungent observations on the state of play in diplomacy, often focused on German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the West's up-again, down-again relations with the then emerging Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Alison Smale, a veteran AP correspondent in central Europe who served as managing editor then executive editor of the International Herald Tribune after Vinocur, said that Vinocur "loved nothing more than to dissect the latest dispute ripping through the Europe he came to admire, but also criticize. John was the first guide to help many of us grasp what it is to be a foreign correspondent.

"Already, he is missed," she added.

The breadth and depth of his knowledge on Europe was on display in his columns, often with a touch of irony. Commenting on a rare public show of tensions between France and Germany — in 2010, at a time when the two countries still were seen as the pillars of an ever-closer union in Europe — Vinocur was droll.

"In truth, the idea of the inevitability and even the quasi-sacred character of the French-German relationship is one of the platitudes that have been shaken with the exposure of some of the European Union's existential fibs," he wrote.

## **Biden threatens: No gas pipeline if Russia invades Ukraine**

By AAMER MADHANI, SYLVIE CORBET and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a flurry of diplomacy across two continents, President Joe Biden met with Germany's new leader Monday and vowed the crucial Nord Stream 2 Russia-to-Germany gas pipeline will be blocked if Russia further invades Ukraine. Russia's Vladimir Putin retorted that the U.S. and its allies are the only ones talking invasion.

Putin and French President Emmanuel Macron met for more than five hours in Moscow at the same time Biden and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz spoke at the White House in efforts to defuse the crisis before armed conflict breaks out. Russia has massed thousands of troops at the Ukraine border, adding military might almost daily.

The White House has expressed increasing alarm about the prospects of war, and Biden has been looking to solidify support among European allies for economy-jarring sanctions against Russia if it attacks.

"If Russia invades, that means tanks and troops crossing the border of Ukraine again, then there will be no longer a Nord Stream 2," Biden said. "We will bring an end to it."

That would hurt Russia economically but also cause supply problems for Germany. Construction of the pipeline has been completed, but it is not yet operating.

"We are jointly ready, and all of NATO is ready," Biden said, referring to the powerful Western alliance, though Ukraine is not a member.

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While Biden reiterated with certitude that the pipeline would not move forward, Scholz stressed the need to keep some ambiguity about sanctions in order to press Russia to de-escalate the crisis.

"It's necessary for Russia to understand that a lot more could happen than they've perhaps calculated with themselves," Scholz said.

The buildup of over 100,000 Russian troops near Ukraine has fueled Western worries of a possible offensive. White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan warned Sunday that Russia could invade Ukraine "any day," triggering a conflict that would come at an "enormous human cost."

At the same time, Biden and NATO allies have made clear there are no plans for sending in troops to fight Russia on Ukraine's behalf.

Macron and Putin, during their lengthy meeting — with a dinner that featured the choice of sturgeon or reindeer — registered their disagreements but also emphasized a need for more talks.

Putin noted that the U.S. and NATO have ignored Moscow's demands that the alliance guarantee it will keep Ukraine and other ex-Soviet nations out, refrain from placing weapons in Ukraine and roll back alliance forces from Eastern Europe.

"We are categorically against any further NATO's expansion eastward because it poses a threat to us," Putin said. "It's not us who's advancing to NATO, it's NATO coming to us and so it's illogical to talk about Russia's aggressive behavior."

He scoffed at Western descriptions of NATO as a defensive alliance, saying sarcastically that "people of Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan have learned it from their own experience." And he threatened a wider war if Ukraine should join the alliance and perhaps try to win back Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014.

"European countries will automatically be drawn into a military conflict with Russia," Putin said. "You will be drawn into that conflict beyond your will. There will be no winners."

Macron described the talks as "substantial, deep" with a focus on conditions that could help de-escalation.

"We tried to build converging elements," he said. "The upcoming days will be crucial and deep discussions together will be needed."

Putin signaled his readiness to continue negotiations and denied anew that Russia has any intention of invading Ukraine.

In the meantime, Biden warned "it would be wise" for Americans other than essential diplomats to leave Ukraine.

On a positive note, Putin said without elaboration that some of Macron's proposals could serve as a basis for a settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, adding that they agreed to have a call after Macron's visit to Kyiv Tuesday.

Likewise, Biden said when asked if there remained an "offramp" for Russia in the standoff, "The answer is yes."

Before meeting Biden, Scholz told German media that "there will be a very high price if Ukraine is attacked militarily. And we are preparing for this very precisely and have been talking about the details for a long time." Scholz will travel to Kyiv and Moscow Feb. 14-15.

German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht said her country would add up to 350 troops within a few days to about 500 already a part of a NATO battlegroup in Lithuania. "With this, we are strengthening our contribution to forces on NATO's eastern flank and sending a very clear signal of unity to our allies," she said.

Biden already has deployed additional U.S. troops to Poland, Romania and Germany, and a few dozen elite U.S. troops and equipment landed Sunday in southeastern Poland near the border with Ukraine, with hundreds more infantry troops of the 82nd Airborne Division set to arrive.

Britain said the U.K. was sending 350 troops to Poland to bolster NATO forces, joining 100 Royal Engineers already there.

At a news conference in Washington, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell defended the increasingly dire Western warnings that a Russian invasion may be imminent.

"This is not alarmism. This is simply the facts," Blinken said. "And the facts are that we've seen over the

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last few months a massive amassing of Russian forces on Ukraine's borders."

Borrell noted that "140,000 troops massed on the border is not to go to have tea."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance is weighing a more permanent military presence in southeast Europe in response to Russia's "massive military deployment" near Ukraine.

"We are considering more longer-term adjustments to our posture, our presence in the eastern part of the alliance," Stoltenberg said after talks in Brussels with Polish President Andrzej Duda. "If Russia really wants less NATO close to the borders, they get the opposite."

Stoltenberg gave no details and said no final decision has been made, but the move could mirror NATO's long-term military presence in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, where about 5,000 troops are stationed. It would see a similar force based in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia.

The aim would be only to bolster the defenses of NATO allies in the region. The troops would not cross into Ukraine should Russia invade.

Biden and Scholz also discussed contingency plans for providing gas supplies to Europe should Russia cut off supply. Europe is already dealing with liquefied natural gas supplies being sapped by a cold winter last year, a summer with little renewable energy generation and Russia delivering less than usual.

Biden asserted the U.S. and other countries could make up a "significant portion" of supplies lost should Russia move to cut off Europe.

But energy experts say replacing Russian gas would be complicated and can't be done overnight. Export terminals cost billions of dollars to build and are working at capacity in the U.S.

## Governors in 4 states plan for end to school mask mandates

By MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — The governors of four states announced plans Monday to lift statewide mask requirements in schools by the end of February or March, citing the rapid easing of COVID-19's omicron surge.

The decisions in Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey and Oregon were announced as state and local governments grapple with which virus restrictions to jettison and which ones to keep in place. The changes also come amid a growing sense that the virus is never going to go away and Americans need to find a way to coexist with it.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy called the move "a huge step back to normalcy for our kids" and said individual school districts will be free to continue requiring masks after the state mandate ends March 7.

Meanwhile, California announced plans to end its indoor masking requirement for vaccinated people next week, but masks will still be the rule for schoolchildren in the nation's most populous state.

The four states are among a dozen with mask mandates in schools, according to the nonpartisan National Academy for State Health Policy. New Jersey's requirement has been in place since classes resumed in person in September 2020.

Murphy cited the "dramatic decline in our COVID numbers" in announcing the rollback. The omicron variant fueled a spike in infections over the holidays, but cases in the state are down 50% and hospitalizations dropped off by one-third since last week, he said.

"We are not — and I've said this many times — going to manage COVID to zero," the governor said. "We have to learn how to live with COVID as we move from a pandemic to an endemic phase of this virus."

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont recommended ending the statewide mandate in schools and child care centers on Feb. 28. Delaware Gov. John Carney said his state's school mask mandate will run through March.

Oregon's mask requirements for schools will be lifted March 31. The statewide mask requirement for indoor public places will be lifted no later than the end of March, health officials announced.

Dr. Dean Sidelinger, the state medical officer and epidemiologist, said education and health officials will meet in the coming weeks to revise guidance to "ensure schools can continue operating safely and keep students in class" once the mask rule is lifted.

The March 31 deadline was selected using predictions by health scientists that COVID-19-related hos-

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pitalizations will decrease to 400 or fewer by that time — a level that Oregon experienced before the omicron variant surge.

In California, unvaccinated people will still be required to be masked indoors after Feb. 15, and everyone will have to wear masks in higher-risk areas such as public transit and nursing homes and other congregate living facilities, state officials said. Local governments can continue their own indoor masking requirements.

State officials also announced that indoor “mega events” with more than 1,000 people will have to require vaccinations or negative tests, and those who are unvaccinated will be required to wear masks. For outdoor events with more than 10,000 people, there is no vaccination requirement, but masks or negative tests will be recommended.

The debate over masks in schools has been polarizing in much of the U.S., with parents protesting at school board meetings and slates of candidates — pro- and anti-mask — seeking school board seats in an attempt to shape policies.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday that universal mask-wearing in schools “still remains our recommendation,” but she did not fault states for dropping the requirement.

“It’s always been up to school districts. That’s always been our point of view and always been our policy from here,” she said.

Eight Republican-led states, including Florida and Texas, have bans on school mask mandates, though some have been suspended amid legal fights with districts and parents who want to require masks, according to the National Academy for State Health Policy.

In Illinois, where a judge last week struck down Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s statewide school mask mandate, the Democratic attorney general said Monday he will appeal the ruling. The Chicago school system, where teachers recently refused to hold in-person classes until an agreement was reached on safety measures, including providing KN95 masks to students and staff, said the ruling doesn’t apply and the nation’s third-largest district will continue to require masks.

Murphy faced pressure from Republicans and some parents who have held rallies at the statehouse demanding an end to the mandate. But the governor has had support for the mask rule from the New Jersey Education Association, the state’s biggest teachers union.

In a statement, the union noted that trends show COVID-19 heading in the right direction, and added: “It is appropriate for Gov. Murphy to allow local districts to continue to require masking in communities where that is prudent based on local conditions.”

Nationwide, new COVID-19 cases per day have plunged by more than a half-million since mid-January, when they hit a record-shattering peak of more than 800,000. Cases have been declining in 47 states over the past two weeks, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

Also, the number of Americans in the hospital with COVID-19 has fallen 28% since mid-January to about 111,000.

Deaths are still running high at more than 2,400 per day on average, the most since last winter, reflecting a lag between when victims become infected and when they die.

In New Jersey, it is unclear how many and how soon the state’s 600-plus school districts might end the wearing of masks.

In Paterson, the state’s third-biggest city, the school system will take time to consult with administration officials, principals, parents and staff, said district spokesperson Paul Brubaker.

Melissa Alfieri-Collins, a mother of two who disagrees with mask mandates in schools, saying she prefers “choice,” called the governor’s decision good news. But she raised concern that districts might keep mask rules in place.

“For this reason, parents need an opt-out option for when and if districts do this,” she said.

Connecticut will also allow school districts to retain the mandate. It’s unclear if Delaware will follow suit, but the governor said he wanted to give school districts time to consider a local mandate.

Stephen White, a 55-year-old father of a 14-year-old son, said that if the lifting of the mandate were to take effect immediately, he wouldn’t be in favor of it. But four weeks from now is a different story.



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"By that time period, if the rates are going down and they can say that 'OK, kids are vaccinated' — if they have a substantial amount of kids that are vaccinated — I don't have a problem with them not wearing a mask at school," he said.

Francis Amegah, a 63-year-old with two children in the Newark school district, said the end of the mandate is "well overdue."

"They shouldn't be wearing masks. If something happens, we'll be able to handle that. The parents should be able to take care of that," he said.

Republicans claimed responsibility for pushing the governor to end the mandate.

"Gov. Murphy will never admit that the pressure is getting to him, but it absolutely is," GOP Senate Leader Steve Oroho said.

## Texans hire veteran coach Smith as new head coach

By KRISTIE RIEKEN AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — After giving David Culley just one year to prove himself, the Houston Texans on Monday hired Lovie Smith as their new head coach, adding a veteran with a track record of success to a team that faces questions about its hiring process.

Smith, who is Black, is the second minority candidate to be hired this offseason after the Miami Dolphins hired San Francisco 49ers offensive coordinator Mike McDaniel, who is biracial, on Sunday.

Smith spent last season as Houston's associate head coach and defensive coordinator. He will take over for Culley, who is also Black, and was fired after one season.

Houston interviewed multiple candidates over the past few weeks, including Brian Flores, Hines Ward, Josh McCown and Joe Lombardi. Flores, who is Black, was fired despite posting winning records in the final two of his three seasons in Miami.

Flores sued the NFL, the Dolphins and two other teams last week over alleged racist hiring practices for coaches and general managers.

Flores issued a statement through his legal team applauding the Texans for hiring a Black man, but questioning why he wasn't offered the job.

"We would be remiss not to mention that Mr. Flores was one of three finalists for the Texans' head coach position and, after a great interview and mutual interest, it is obvious that the only reason Mr. Flores was not selected was his decision to stand up against racial inequality across the NFL," his legal team said in a statement.

The Texans had been criticized by some in the media this week for even considering McCown for the position since the 42-year-old former NFL quarterback has never coached at any level aside from volunteering with his son's high school team. McCown spent part of the 2020 season on Houston's practice squad before retiring following a 17-year career.

The Texans raved about the qualities Smith brings to the team.

"He is one of the most respected coaches in the NFL and an established leader," Houston general manager Nick Caserio said in a statement. "A proven winner, Lovie has shown the ability to develop players both on and off the field for years. We had numerous discussions with countless coaches, executives, and players, and what revealed itself is that Lovie has both the leadership and people skills it takes to lead us forward."

The 63-year-old Smith joined the Texans last offseason after spending 2016-2020 as the coach at Illinois.

This will be the third NFL head coaching job for Smith, who coached the Chicago Bears for nine seasons and coached Tampa Bay for two seasons ending in 2015.

Now he takes over a team in the process of a complete rebuild after trading or releasing almost all of its top players in the past couple of years. The Texans went 4-13 last season in a year when star quarterback Deshaun Watson did not play after a trade request and amid 22 lawsuits alleging sexual harassment or assault.

After the hiring of Smith is complete, the Texans will continue an offseason where they are expected to finally trade Watson. They have the third overall pick in the draft after not having a first-round pick since

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2019, and could acquire more high draft picks if they're able to trade Watson.

Smith becomes the fifth head coach in franchise history, following Dom Capers, Gary Kubiak, Bill O'Brien and Culley.

"I have so many friends, family, teammates and coaches to thank for supporting me and helping me continue to do what I love, which is teaching and developing players," Smith said in a statement. "I understand the responsibility I have to this organization and this city to develop a championship-level program. I'm ready to get to work and build it together."

Noted Texans owner Cal McNair: "I've had an extreme amount of respect for Lovie for years now and that only grew with the work he did last season and throughout this process. "I'm excited for him and his family as we continue to evolve as an organization."

Smith was 144-81 with the Bears, leading them to the Super Bowl in the 2006 season where they lost to the Colts. He struggled in his stint with Tampa Bay, going 2-14 in his first season and 6-10 the following year before being let go.

Smith went 17-39 at Illinois before being fired with one regular-season game left in his fifth season. The Texas native began his coaching career at his alma mater as the defensive coordinator for the high school team at tiny Big Sandy, Texas, in 1980 before moving on to college coaching in 1983.

His first NFL job came in 1996 when he was hired to coach linebackers for the Buccaneers.

## BEIJING SNAPSHOT: A scramble for scarce Olympic souvenirs

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The race is on to snap up scarce 2022 Winter Olympic souvenirs, especially stuffed versions of Games mascot Bing Dwen Dwen, a panda in a winter coat.

People showed up with stools Sunday to wait overnight in freezing temperatures outside Gongmei Emporium on the Wangfujing pedestrian mall in central Beijing. Some were from a mini-industry who are paid to stand in line to buy the latest smartphones and other consumer crazes for clients.

The pandas were sold out Monday at many locations, including at the Olympics facilities, where Chinese volunteers and foreign visitors lined up for hours.

Gongmei sold out of Bing Dwen Dwen toys in 30 minutes, said one woman who would give only her surname, Dong. She said she arrived 30 minutes before the store opened but failed to get one.

A sign in Gongmei's window said it had 300 Bing Dwen Dwen figures and buyers were allowed one each. It promised more Tuesday.

In the Houhai neighborhood north of the Chinese capital's center, a shop hung out a sign before 10 a.m. saying Bing Dwen Dwen souvenirs were sold out.

The Beijing Olympic organizing committee asked souvenir factories to make more, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. Many reopened this week after shutting down for two weeks or more during the Lunar New Year holiday.

Dong said she and three family members would take turns waiting in line through the night for Gongmei to open Tuesday.

At mid-afternoon, about 40 customers already were in line. Employees with bullhorns urged them not to stay overnight, when temperatures were forecast to fall to minus-6 degrees C (21 degrees F).

Gongmei's Wangfujing flagship sold Olympics merchandise worth 3 million yuan (\$470,000) on Friday, the day of the opening ceremony, the official newspaper Global Times reported.

Wang Qianliang, 60, and his wife, visiting from Xi'an in western China, waited for two hours but failed to get a Bing Dwen Dwen. Wang said he would come back Tuesday.

"My child really wants to have one," Wang said.

## Peter Thiel leaving board of Facebook parent Meta

MENLO PARK, Calif. (AP) — Peter Thiel, a Silicon Valley billionaire and advisor to former President Donald Trump, is leaving the board of directors of Facebook parent company Meta.

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The company said Monday that Thiel will stay on until Meta's next shareholder meeting later this year, where he will not stand for reelection.

Thiel joined Facebook's board in 2005, a year after the company was founded and seven years before its made its debut on Wall Street. But he has been an increasingly polarizing figure among the company's directors due to his conservative politics.

"Peter is truly an original thinker who you can bring your hardest problems and get unique suggestions," Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg said in a statement. "He has served on our board for almost two decades, and we've always known that at some point he would devote his time to other interests."

Meta Platforms Inc. did not say what Thiel planned to do after his director stint is over. But reports in The New York Times and Bloomberg, citing unnamed sources close to Thiel, said he wants to focus on influencing November's midterm elections and support candidates who would further Trump's agenda.

A representative for Thiel did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

In a statement, Thiel said "It has been a privilege to work with one of the great entrepreneurs of our time. Mark Zuckerberg's intelligence, energy, and conscientiousness are tremendous."

## Exclusive: MLB, players stop drug testing during lockout

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Drug testing in Major League Baseball has stopped, a casualty of the sport's lockout that started Dec. 2.

Testing for steroids was halted for the first time in nearly 20 years due to the expiration of the sport's drug agreement between management and the players' association, two people familiar with the sport's Joint Drug Program told The Associated Press. The people spoke on condition of anonymity Monday because no public announcement was made.

When they negotiated the 2017-21 drug agreement, the sides included a provision that states "the termination date and time of the program shall be 11:59 p.m. ET on Dec. 1, 2021." That matched the expiration of the five-year labor contract.

"It should be a major concern to all those who value fair play," Travis Tygart, chief executive officer of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, said Monday.

MLB and the union declined comment on the halt.

Just last month, Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens were denied election to the Hall of Fame by baseball writers over suspicions of PEDs use. Manny Ramirez and Alex Rodriguez, who both served drug suspensions, fell well short in voting.

"If it's just a simple matter of agreeing to it," Tygart said, "you would have hoped they would have been able to get that figured out, so that when the game does restart, you don't have questions hanging over individual players based on size, speed, batting percentage, home run numbers, whatever it may be, that people are going to call into question again."

MLB and the union conducted 47,973 tests from 2017-21, including 7,327 during offseasons, according to a report in November from Thomas M. Martin, the independent program administrator.

Absent fear of detection, it is hard to predict whether some players will attempt to use PEDs in the period before a new collective bargaining agreement is in place along with a restoration of the drug-testing program.

"You could easily do what the cyclists were doing even in a good testing program, which was microdosing of testosterone," Tygart said. "You can do testosterone gels or oral pills that could be out of your system and you can do more in maybe weeks."

Baseball reached its first joint drug agreement in late 2002, a deal calling for survey testing in 2003.

Urine testing for PEDs with penalties for violations began in 2004 under a series of a repeatedly tightened drug agreements. Testing for banned amphetamines started in 2006, and in 2012 blood testing for Human Growth Hormone began, though it was suspended last year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In December 2007, former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell issued a report commissioned by MLB

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that implicated 85 players in PEDs use, including seven MVPs and 31 All-Stars. Many denied the allegations.

While prominent players suspended under the drug program include Rafael Palmeiro (2005), Ramirez (2009 and '11), Rodriguez (2014) and Robinson Canó (2014), there were just five positives for PEDs among 8,436 tests in the year ending with the 2021 World Series: Miami pitcher Paul Campbell, Oakland outfielder Ramón Laureano, Seattle pitcher Héctor Santiago, San Francisco pitcher Gregory Santos and Colorado third baseman Colton Welker.

Baseball's halt in testing was signaled to players in a "Work Stoppage Guide" created by the Major League Baseball Players Association and distributed to its members, a copy of which was obtained by the AP.

"Will Joint Drug Agreement (JDA) testing be administered during a work stoppage?" read a heading on page 19.

"Based on past precedent in the NFL and NHL, it is unlikely that MLB can administer JDA testing during a work stoppage," the guide said.

On another topic, the union thinks players may sign to play with teams in Japan and South Korea during the lockout, a prospect that might become more attractive as the stoppage increasingly threatens opening day on March 31.

"The PA would challenge any attempts by MLB to interfere with players who choose to participate in a foreign league during a lockout," the guide said. "During the 2004-05 work stoppage, a large number of NHL players chose to play internationally."

In a sign of a potential grievance should the lockout extend into the regular season and cost players pay, the guide states: "The PA will take the position, consistent with other sports unions in prior lockouts, that a player who is injured and unable to play at the time of the lockout must receive his pay and access to rehab until he is medically cleared."

Teams cut off access to club medical staff and facilities when the lockout started. The union has arranged for training facilities for players.

The sides remain far apart on terms for a deal. Owners meet from Tuesday to Thursday in Orlando, Florida, and union staff will meet with players in Arizona and then Florida this week.

Players last week rejected MLB's request that the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service assist talks, and Labor Secretary Marty Walsh offered to help Monday.

"I have spoken to both the MLBPA and MLB about the ongoing contract negotiations and encourage both sides to continue engagement," Walsh said in a statement, first reported by Politico. "Like any contract negotiation in any industry, I stand ready to help facilitate productive conversations that result in the best outcome for workers and employers."

Players blame owners for instituting the lockout. The guide acknowledges what Commissioner Rob Manfred has said, that MLB thinks the timing of a lockout that starts during the offseason is more beneficial to clubs than a late-season strike, such as the August walkout in 1994.

"In recent years, work stoppages in other pro sports (NFL, NHL, NBA) have all been lockouts," the guide said. "Ultimately, owners would prefer to choose the timing of a work stoppage and attempt to do so when it is most advantageous to them. Management does not want players to have the opportunity to go on strike during the middle of the season, or in advance of the playoffs, when it would be most damaging to the clubs."

The guide says health benefits for players who were on 40-man rosters at any point during the 2021 season will have coverage until the 2022 season is scheduled to start. At that point, "the PA will ensure your health coverage remains intact."

The union has started making \$5,000 stipends available to players from money it has saved. The guide points to similar types of payments in the past but points out "even if the executive board authorizes financial assistance to players, be aware that the amount of any assistance will be far less than the player's contract salary."

**Michael Jackson film coming from Bohemian Rhapsody producer**

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By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

A biopic about Michael Jackson is in the works from Oscar-winning "Bohemian Rhapsody" producer Graham King and "Gladiator" screenwriter John Logan. Lionsgate will handle the worldwide distribution of the film, the studio's chair Joe Drake said Monday.

The studio said that the film will give, "an in-depth portrayal of the complicated man who became the King of Pop" and that it will bring to life his "most iconic performances as it gives an informed insight into the entertainer's artistic process and personal life." Also producing are John Branca and John McClain, who are co-executors of the Michael Jackson estate.

The Jackson business has been on the upswing of late, including the recently launched Broadway musical "MJ: The Musical," following a series of court victories that brought an end to serious legal crises.

The 2019 HBO documentary "Leaving Neverland" raised child molestation allegations anew. The once-dead lawsuits brought by the two men featured in it had been revived by changes in the law. And a decision in the estate's appeal of a \$700 million tax bill was taking years to arrive. Both accusers' lawsuits were dismissed and a ruling in the tax case slashed the bill dramatically.

The two men featured in the documentary are appealing the dismissals of their lawsuits. HBO has defended "Leaving Neverland" as a valid and important piece of documentary journalism.

The victory handed to the estate in its tax case came in part because the judge believed the value of Jackson's image and likeness had been severely diminished by such allegations at the time of his death, despite his acquittal at his 2005 child molestation trial.

Under the guidance of Branca and McClain, the estate has brought in \$2.5 billion in revenue in the past 11 years, and Jackson has remained the top earning deceased celebrity every year since his death at age 50 from a lethal dose of the anesthetic propofol.

Little else was revealed about the film, and no director or cast has been announced, but the names behind it suggest that eyes are on awards potential. Logan and Graham collaborated before on "The Aviator," which got them both Oscar nominations.

"I first met the Jackson family in 1981 and I'm humbled to bring their legacy to the big screen," King said in a statement. "Sitting at Dodger Stadium watching the Victory Tour, I could never have imagined that nearly 38 years later I would get the privilege to be a part of this film."

Jackson's mother, Katherine Jackson, also said in a statement that, "Ever since Michael was little, as a member of The Jackson 5, he loved the magic of cinema... As a family, we are honored to have our life story come alive on the big screen."

## What to watch out for when Oscar noms are announced Tuesday

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It's time again to celebrate Hollywood's grandest ambitions and most daring risk takers. No, I'm not talking about "Jackass Forever."

On Tuesday morning, nominations to the 94th annual Academy Awards will be announced. Nominations are occurring a little later than usual. To make way for the Olympics, the Oscars are to be held March 27.

And for the second straight year, the Oscars will unfold during the pandemic. The industrial complex of parties, galas and little gold statuettes known as "awards season" has again gone largely virtual, sapping the season of some of its usual buzz. The Oscars' typical opening act — the Golden Globes — were much reduced and untelevised this year.

But the Oscar nominations, which will be announced Tuesday beginning at 8:18 a.m. EST by presenters Tracee Ellis Ross and Leslie Jordan, will try to again seize the spotlight after a year of profound change for the industry and a still-unfolding recovery for movie theaters. Nominations will be broadcast live on Oscar.com, Oscars.org, the academy's social media accounts and on ABC's "Good Morning America."

But those are far from the only headwinds facing the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences. Last year's Oscars, held in late April at an audience-less Union Station rather than the Oscars' usual home, the Dolby Theatre, plummeted to an all-time low of 9.85 million viewers.

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Can Tuesday's slate of nominees stem the tide? Among the films expected to do well are Denis Villeneuve's sci-fi epic "Dune," Kenneth Branagh's autobiographical coming-of-age tale "Belfast" and Jane Campion's gothic western "The Power of the Dog. Alas, "Jackass Forever," the current no. 1 movie at the box office, will have to wait until next year.

Here are five questions heading into nominations.

## JUST HOW MUCH WILL STREAMERS DOMINATE?

Streaming services have for years made inroads into the Oscars, but they may overwhelm this year's best-picture field. After academy rule changes, 10 films will be nominated for best picture, and it's possible that only a few of them will have opened traditionally in theaters. Netflix, which is still pursuing its first best-picture trophy, has three contenders in "The Power of the Dog," Adam McKay's apocalyptic comedy "Don't Look Up" and Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical adaptation "Tick, Tick ... Boom!" Apple has the deaf family drama "CODA" and Joel Coen's Shakespeare adaptation "The Tragedy of Macbeth." Amazon is represented with Aaron Sorkin's "Being the Ricardos." Two films that premiered simultaneously in theaters and on HBO Max — "Dune" and the Will Smith-led "King Richard" — are in the hunt. That has made contenders like Paul Thomas Anderson's "Licorice Pizza" (MGM, Focus Features) and "Belfast" (Focus) stand out as theater-first throwbacks.

## WILL THE BIGGEST BOX-OFFICE HITS CRASH THE PARTY?

Given the waning audience for the Oscars and a tumultuous year for theaters, some would like to see as many crowd-pleasers represented Tuesday as possible. Could "Spider-Man: No Way Home," the biggest hit of the pandemic with \$749 million in domestic ticket sales and \$1.77 billion globally, or Daniel Craig's 007 swan song "No Time to Die" (\$774 million worldwide) score a best picture nomination? As much as the Oscars' populism could use some pop, don't count on either to join the 10 nominees. The segment of the academy most supportive of big-budget box-office success — producers — passed up the chance to in their highly predictive guild nominations. That would likely leave "Dune" (\$399 million worldwide) as the category's biggest ticket seller. But there are also other metrics to measure today's most popular movies. "Don't Look Up" is Netflix's second-most popular movie ever with some 359,790,000 hours watched, according to the company.

## HOW INTERNATIONAL WILL THE NOMINEES BE?

Two years after Bong Joon Ho's Korean thriller "Parasite" won best picture, a group of acclaimed international films could vie in several top categories. While no film has the broad support that made "Parasite" the first non-English language film to win Hollywood's top honor, Ryusuke Hamaguchi's masterful three-hour Japanese drama "Drive My Car" could squeeze into best picture, best director or best screenplay. Other films with strong support outside of the academy's best international film category including Pedro Almodovar's "Parallel Mothers" (look for Penélope Cruz in the uber-competitive best actress category), Asghar Farhadi's "A Hero," Joachim Trier's "The Worst Person in the World," Paolo Sorrentino's "The Hand of God" and Jonas Poher Rasmussen's animated "Flee." In expanding and diversifying its membership in recent years, the academy has grown more international — and enlarged the sway of overseas voters.

## WILL KSTEW GET IN?

Kristen Stewart had once been widely expected to land her first Oscar nomination for her performance as Princess Diana in Pablo Larrain's "Spencer." But that film has proved divisive among critics and moviegoers, and Stewart's once sturdy Oscar bid now appears far from certain. The 31-year-old actor was looked over by the Screen Actors Guild and the BAFTAs. She could mount a comeback with the academy, but best actress is brutal this year. Among the favorites: Olivia Colman ("The Lost Daughter"), Lady Gaga ("House of Gucci"), Jennifer Hudson ("Respect"), Nicole Kidman ("Being the Ricardos"), Cruz, Jessica Chastain ("The Eyes of Tammy Faye") and Alana Haim ("Licorice Pizza"). If Stewart isn't snubbed, someone — several someones — will be.

## WILL ENOUGH PEOPLE WATCH?

This is probably the biggest question facing the Oscars this year, and it hovers over everything. Ratings for award shows all around have been declining for years, but the pandemic and the growth of streaming has accelerated the dismantling of Hollywood tradition. This year, the academy has signaled that everything is on the table. Should "Spider-Man" star Tom Holland be called upon to emcee? No details have yet been

announced about the show, but the academy has said there will be a host for the first time since 2018. Maybe Johnny Knoxville has a few tricks up his sleeve?

## Report: Corporate climate pledges are weaker than they seem

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Many of the world's largest companies are failing to take significant enough steps to meet their pledges to vastly reduce the impact of their greenhouse gas emissions in the decades ahead.

That's the conclusion of a new report by the NewClimate Institute, an environmental organization that works to combat global warming. Its researchers, who examined the actions of 25 companies, concluded that many of them are misleading consumers by using accounting practices that make their environmental goals relatively meaningless or are excluding key parts of their businesses in their calculations.

The companies have pledged to make their emissions reductions or to offset their emissions through such techniques as planting carbon-capturing forests over self-imposed periods ranging from 2030 to 2050.

The authors chose to study corporate giants, including Amazon and Walmart, which made bold climate pledges and who, because of their size, are seen as especially influential. In recent years, large corporations have increasingly adopted pledges to significantly reduce their carbon footprints — a priority of growing importance to many of their customers, employees and investors.

NewClimate Institute concluded that even though many companies have pledged to reach net-zero emissions, the 25 companies they studied have collectively committed to reduce emissions by about 40% — not the 100% that people might be led to believe from the companies' net-zero or carbon-neutral pledges.

"We were frankly surprised and disappointed at the overall integrity of the companies' claims" said Thomas Day of NewClimate Institute, one of the study's lead authors. "Their ambitious-sounding headline claims all-too-often lack real substance, which can mislead both consumers and the regulators that are core to guiding their strategic direction. Even companies that are doing relatively well exaggerate their actions."

Among the 25 companies the researchers studied, 24 relied too heavily on carbon offsets, which are rife with problems, the report said. That's because carbon offsets often rely on carbon removal ventures such as reforestation projects. These projects suck up carbon but are not ideal solutions because forests can be razed or destroyed by wildfires, re-releasing carbon into the air.

Most of the companies, the report said, presented vague information on the scale and potential impact of their emissions-reduction measures or might have exaggerated their use of renewable energy.

The report called Amazon's goal of net-zero carbon by 2040 unsubstantiated. It said it was unclear whether Amazon's goal referred solely to carbon dioxide emissions or to all greenhouse gases. The report also said it was not clear to what degree Amazon planned to reduce its own emissions, as opposed to buying carbon offset credits which rely on nature-based solutions.

In response, Amazon said it has been transparent about its investments in nature-based solutions, and disputed that its net-zero goals are based on offsets. The company said it's on a path toward powering its operations with 100% renewable energy by 2025, five years ahead of its original target of 2030. It also highlighted other initiatives including deploying 100,000 electric delivery vehicles by 2030.

As an example of a misleading goal, the report said CVS Health could potentially achieve its 2030 emissions target with little effort because it compared that target with a base year that included extraordinarily high emissions.

A CVS spokeswoman responded that after the company's merger with Aetna in late 2018, 2019 was the first full year of data the company could use as a baseline for the new combined entity.

"By 2030, we plan to reduce our environmental impact by more than 50%, including a reduction in our energy consumption and use of paper and plastic," the company said.

The NewClimate report said that Nestle, among the companies with the lowest marks, had emissions-reduction plans that covered only portions of its business and that its net-zero targets relied upon carbon offsets. The company also provided little detail on the renewable electricity sources it was pursuing, it said.

Nestle responded that its emissions reduction targets do cover all its activities, that it's reducing green-

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house gas emissions 50% by 2030 and that its factories and offices are switching to renewable electricity.

Jonathan Overpeck, dean of the school for environment and sustainability at the University of Michigan, who had no role in the NewClimate report, said: "Far too many companies are coming up short when it comes to meaningful decarbonization. Corporate decarbonization goals and plans for meeting them are generally far less compelling than needed for success in halting climate change."

Some other outside experts suggested that the NewClimate report was too critical of carbon offsets.

"Forest-based offsets are challenging, but they can be real and important," said Christopher Field, director of the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment at Stanford University. "A too-strong emphasis on decarbonization paths that don't include offsets will slow overall progress and raise costs."

The report did note some things it said the companies are doing well. Shipping company Maersk received the best ratings despite the challenges its industry faces in reducing emissions. The authors noted that Maersk is pursuing alternative fuels and has partnered with a renewable energy company to establish a factory for e-methanol. Maersk did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Most of the companies studied, 15 of them, have outlined plans to reduce their "Scope 1" and "Scope 2" emissions, which are emissions released directly by the company or by its using electricity, the report said. But those companies didn't address their "Scope 3" emissions; these include emissions released by suppliers or customers that use their products. Scope 3 emissions account for, on average, 87% of all emissions for the 25 companies studied, the group said.

The report commended Walmart, which pledged to be net-zero by 2040, for following good practice by committing to reduce its operational emissions to zero without the use of offsets and setting near-term goals for those reductions which include using 100% renewable energy by 2035. But Walmart was faulted for not including Scope 3 emissions. Walmart does have a voluntary program that guides its product suppliers to reduce emissions, and nearly a quarter of its suppliers have joined, the report said.

Walmart responded that it does have a goal to reduce or avoid one billion metric tons of Scope 3 emissions and that it reports its progress openly.

The report stressed that companies should take more responsibility to reduce Scope 3 emissions. Yet it can be challenging to track those emissions across supply chains, especially when working with smaller companies, said Maggie Peloso, a lawyer involved in climate change risk management and environmental litigation.

"It's not always as easy as calling someone up and saying, 'Hey, I want to know what your emissions were from the factory when you produced that 100 boxes of stuff that you sent to my stores and I sold them,'" Peloso said.

Among the suggestions for improvement that the NewClimate Institute offered were that companies focus on shorter-term emissions reduction targets for the next five to 10 years. It also suggested that companies set specific emissions-reduction targets with transparent accounting, instead of ambiguous net-zero goals.

If national governments created policies and regulations to meet the targets they have set, it would be far more effective, suggested John Reilly, who served as co-director of the Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Global Change at MIT. "On the hopeful side, perhaps there is ongoing effort within companies to create rules, procedures, and strategies to achieve their ambitious targets," he said.

## Peng Shuai emerges at Olympics, gives controlled interview

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Nothing to see here, move on.

That was the message that Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai delivered Monday in a controlled interview in Beijing that touched on sexual assault allegations she made against a former high-ranking member of China's ruling Communist Party. Her answers — delivered in front of a Chinese Olympic official — left unanswered questions about her well-being and what exactly happened.

The interview with French sports newspaper L'Equipe and an announcement that International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach met Peng for dinner this weekend seemed aimed at allaying sustained



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international concerns about the three-time Olympian and former No. 1-ranked tennis doubles player. Fears for Peng's safety have threatened to overshadow the Winter Olympics underway in Beijing.

Peng told L'Equipe that the concerns were the result of "an enormous misunderstanding." But the format of the interview appeared to limit follow-ups about the allegations and their aftermath. L'Equipe said it submitted questions in advance, a precondition for the interview, but also got to ask others that were unplanned. A Chinese Olympic committee official sat in on the discussion, translating Peng's comments from Chinese, the newspaper said. It said it also used an interpreter in Paris to ensure the accuracy of the comments that it published in French.

Large parts of the hour-long interview, conducted Sunday in a Beijing hotel and organized through China's Olympic committee with the IOC's help, focused on Peng's playing career. At age 36, and after multiple knee surgeries, Peng said she couldn't envisage a return to tour-level professional tennis. She hasn't played on the women's tour since February of 2020.

The newspaper published her comments verbatim — which it said was another pre-condition for the interview — in question-and-answer form. Photos of Peng during the interview showed her wearing a red tracksuit top with "China" in Chinese characters on the front.

L'Equipe asked Peng about sexual assault allegations that sparked the controversy in November. The allegations were quickly scrubbed from her verified account on a leading Chinese social media platform, Weibo. She subsequently dropped out of public view for a while. That led to "where is Peng Shuai?" questions online and from players and fans outside of China, in part because the country has a history of disappearing people who run afoul of its leaders.

In her lengthy post, Peng wrote that Zhang Gaoli, a former vice premier and member of the ruling Chinese Communist Party's all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee, had forced her to have sex despite repeated refusals. Her post also said they had sex once seven years ago, and that she developed romantic feelings for him after that. Zhang has not commented on the accusation.

"Originally, I buried all this in my heart," she wrote. "Why would you even come find me again, take me to your house and force me and you to have sexual relations?"

The interview with L'Equipe was her first sit-down discussion with non-Chinese-language media since the accusation. She walked back the original post.

"Sexual assault? I never said that anyone made me submit to a sexual assault," the newspaper quoted her as saying.

"This post resulted in an enormous misunderstanding from the outside world," she also said. "My wish is that the meaning of this post no longer be skewed."

Asked by L'Equipe why the post disappeared from Peng's account, she said: "I erased it."

"Why? Because I wanted to," she added.

The obvious follow-up question of why she posted in the first place wasn't asked.

The IOC also worked Monday to defuse the situation. It said Bach dined with Peng on Saturday, a day after Chinese President Xi Jinping opened the Winter Olympics. The IOC said Peng also attended the China-Norway Olympic curling match with IOC member Kirsty Coventry of Zimbabwe.

Speaking in his daily Olympic press conference, IOC spokesman Mark Adams wouldn't say whether the IOC believes Peng is speaking freely or is under duress

"We are a sporting organization, and our job is to remain in contact with her and, as we've explained in the past, to carry out personal and quiet diplomacy, to keep in touch with her, as we've done," he said. "I don't think it's for us to be able to judge, in one way, just as it's not for you to judge either."

He said the IOC cannot pass judgement on whether there should be an investigation of her initial allegations.

"I think we can say that we are doing everything we can to make sure that this situation is as it should be," he said.

In the interview with L'Equipe, Peng did not reply directly to a question about whether she has been in trouble with Chinese authorities since the post. Instead, she responded with a pat-sounding answer that echoed views often expressed by the Chinese government about sport and politics.

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"I was to say first of all that emotions, sport and politics are three clearly separate things," the newspaper quoted her as saying. "My romantic problems, my private life, should not be mixed with sport and politics." Asked what her life has been like since the November posting, she replied: "It is as it should be: Nothing special."

Peng thanked fellow players who expressed concerns about her. They included 23-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams, who tweeted "we must not stay silent" in November and called for an investigation.

But Peng also expressed bafflement.

"I would like to know: Why so much worry?" she asked. "I never disappeared. It's simply that many people, like my friends and among them those from the IOC, sent me messages and it was completely impossible to respond to so many messages."

The women's professional tennis tour suspended all WTA tournaments in China because of concerns about Peng's safety. Peng told L'Equipe that a WTA mental health counselling unit sent her emails and a text message.

"That was very unfamiliar to me," she said. "Why would I need psychological help or that type of thing?"

WTA Chairman and CEO Steve Simon issued a statement saying that while "it's always good to see Peng Shuai, whether in an interview or attending the Olympic Games," this interaction with L'Equipe "does not alleviate any of our concerns about her initial post."

Simon reiterated calls for "a formal investigation by the appropriate authorities and an opportunity for the WTA to meet with Peng — privately — to discuss her situation."

## **Auburn, Gonzaga stay 1-2 in AP Top 25; Texas Tech up to 9th**

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

Auburn keeps finding ways to win — even sometimes in tougher-than-expected games — to maintain its hold on No. 1 in the The Associated Press men's college basketball poll.

Bruce Pearl's Tigers haven't lost since November and are firmly locked into the top spot after earning 48 of 61 first-place votes in Monday's poll. That came after a narrow road win against a six-win Georgia team over the weekend, which came less than two weeks after a one-point escape against a nine-win Missouri team.

Still, Auburn (22-1) has won 19 straight games since losing in double overtime to Connecticut in November, including all 10 of its Southeastern Conference games.

"We're 22-1 for a reason," said Wendell Green Jr., who had a tiebreaking layup late to beat Georgia. "We've got winners. We believe we can win against any team in the country. We've got big-time players that's going to make big-time plays."

Auburn is part of a select group of teams that rank highly on both ends of the court in KenPom's national statistics. The Tigers rank 13th in adjusted offensive efficiency (116.5 points per 100 possessions) and 14th in defensive efficiency (90.1), joining No. 2 Gonzaga, No. 4 Arizona, No. 5 Kentucky, No. 6 Houston and No. 7 Duke as the only teams ranked in the top 15 of both categories entering the week.

"I believe we're becoming a great team," guard K.D. Johnson said, "and we're comfortable with any situation."

### **THE TOP TIER**

Mark Few's Bulldogs earned the other 13 first-place votes and have sat at No. 2 throughout Auburn's three-week stay at the top. Gonzaga has won 12 straight since falling to Alabama in early December.

Purdue climbed a spot to No. 3, followed by Arizona in the Wildcats' second stint inside the top five this season. Kentucky and Houston were next.

Duke rose two spots to No. 7 after a lopsided win at rival North Carolina in retiring Hall of Famer Mike Krzyzewski's final visit to Chapel Hill, followed by Kansas, Texas Tech and reigning national champion Baylor to round out the top 10.

The Red Raiders made their first appearance inside the top 10 under first-year coach Mark Adams, who took over when Chris Beard left for Texas. Texas Tech jumped five spots after beating the Longhorns and

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West Virginia last week.

## FRIARS ROLLING

Providence rose four spots to No. 11, its highest perch since the 2015-16 season when the Friars spent 12 weeks in the AP Top 25, peaking at No. 8 in January. Ed Cooley's program has won seven straight games for its first 20-2 start since the 1972-73 season and its first-ever 10-1 start in Big East play.

## RISING

Marquette had the biggest jump, rising six spots to No. 18 under first-year coach Shaka Smart after beating Villanova. No. 13 Illinois matched Texas Tech's climb by rising five spots after beating Wisconsin. In all, 10 teams moved up from last week's rankings.

## SLIDING

No. 12 UCLA had the week's big tumble, falling nine spots after losses to Arizona and a seven-win Arizona State team — the latter coming in triple overtime. This is the first time the Bruins, a Final Four team from last year and the preseason No. 2 selection, has fallen outside the top 10.

No. 24 UConn also had a lengthy fall, sliding seven spots after losing at home to Creighton and on the road to Villanova. The Wildcats dropped three spots to No. 15.

In all, eight teams fell from last week.

## STATUS QUO

Five teams held their position from last week, with No. 16 Ohio State joining Auburn, Gonzaga, Kentucky and Houston.

## WELCOME

No. 22 Saint Mary's and No. 23 Murray State were the week's new additions. The Gaels' poll appearance is their first since early in the 2019-20 season, while the Racers are in the poll for the first time since spending a week at No. 25 in March 2015.

## FAREWELL (FOR NOW)

Iowa State (No. 20) and LSU (No. 25) fell out from last week's rankings.

## CONFERENCE WATCH

The Big Ten and Big East lead the country with five ranked teams each. The Big 12 was next with four teams, though it marked the second straight week the league didn't have at least one team in the top five. That had last happened in the final poll of the 2018-19 season.

The SEC and Pac-12 were next with three teams apiece, followed by the West Coast Conference with two. The Atlantic Coast, American Athletic and Ohio Valley conferences each had one.

## Black colleges alarmed by bomb threats, but undeterred

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY and JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

From her office in Birmingham, Alabama, DeJuana Thompson looks across the street and sees a daily reminder of terror. Her window overlooks the 16th Street Baptist Church, where a bomb in 1963 killed four young Black girls.

"Living in the era of bomb threats is not new to people of color," said Thompson, president and CEO of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.

Nearly six decades after that bombing by the Ku Klux Klan, the FBI is now investigating last week's bomb threats against at least 17 historically Black colleges and universities across the U.S. Thompson said the threats underscore the need to teach new generations the history of violence targeting people of color so the lessons of the past can be applied to the present.

The FBI said the hate crimes probe involves more than 20 field offices and "is of the highest priority." Investigators have identified at least five "persons of interest," a law enforcement official told The Associated Press. The official could not discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

In one of the cases, a caller claiming to be affiliated with the neo-Nazi group Atomwaffen Division described a plot at Bethune-Cookman University in Florida involving seven bombs hidden in bags, Daytona

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Beach Police Chief Jakari Young said.

University campuses are considered "soft targets," but "they're not as soft as they used to be," said Robert McCrie, a professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. Universities have traditionally been easily accessible to the public, but many hardened their security after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. Now, picture IDs are needed to enter buildings on McCrie's campus and others, he said.

Though no devices were found at the schools threatened last week, "people of color don't have that privilege to think it's not real," said Lance Wheeler, director of exhibitions at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta.

The bomb threats against Black institutions are deeply rooted in U.S. history. In Alabama, people used to call Birmingham "Bombingham" because of how many bombs and bomb threats occurred, Thompson said. Among the many victims: the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, a civil rights leader whose home was damaged on Christmas Day in 1956 by 16 sticks of dynamite placed beneath his bedroom window. When a KKK member suggested he leave town, Shuttlesworth responded that "I wasn't saved to run," U.S. Rep. John Conyers Jr. told the House of Representatives after Shuttlesworth died in 2011.

"How we responded then is how we are responding now," Thompson said. "We will not stand for these hate crimes, we will not stand for this intimidation, we shall not be moved."

The Congressional Bipartisan HBCU Caucus' statement on the latest bomb threats recalled 1969 racial segregation protests at North Carolina A&T that prompted an armed response by the National Guard and police. One student was killed, dozens injured and more than 300 people arrested as gunfire was exchanged from campus buildings. The protests followed the first sit-in at a whites-only lunch counter by four Black men, later known as the Greensboro Four.

"We know from history that in spite of external threats, HBCUs are resilient institutions that will persist through all forms of adversity," the statement said.

Universities in Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, and other states targeted last week have resumed operations since the lockdowns. But many still worry about future threats and efforts to prosecute those responsible.

Maurice Mitchell, national director of the Working Families Party and strategist for the Movement for Black Lives, said HBCUs and independent Black institutions are targeted because they represent independence and resilience for African Americans, which is a threat to a white supremacist ideology.

"The mere existence of Black schools, Black churches, Black political organizations and Black business are a threat," he said. "We see upswings in these attacks as backlash to Black resistance, the exercising of independent Black political power, the influence of Black social movements."

The attacks are "ways to try to put fear into communities that are trying to obtain freedom," Wheeler said.

The impact of the Black vote this last election has been felt at the ballot box, such as Georgia flipping two Senate seats for Democrats including the election of Raphael Warnock as the first Black senator to represent the state. And the Black Lives Matter movement has led a national push for protests against police violence and injustice, including murder convictions for the men who killed Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia and George Floyd in Minneapolis.

There is a "culture of fear of Black independence, of Black people building our own institutions, our own power and setting out our own direction politically, economically. There's always efforts to suppress that, and I think that is what's happening right now," Mitchell said. "The best way to challenge these white supremacists and haters is by doubling down and investing in HBCUs long term and strengthening them as institutions."

National Urban League President Marc Morial called the latest bomb threats "part of the poisonous tree of hate," putting them in the same category as legislative proposals that would suppress the vote, the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, a spike in hate crimes and backlash against affirmative action.

"Terrorism is always about creating discord, creating unrest and fear — it's about disrupting society," said Warren Eller, who also teaches at John Jay.

Delaware State University President Tony Allen said students and community members shouldn't let threats disrupt their spaces. Sharing in Thompson's message, Allen wrote a letter to the university com-

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munity shortly after a bomb threat on his campus.

"Here is what I say to these bullies, these fearmongers of our day: 'We shall not be moved,'" he said.

## Shiffrin's next chance, halfpipe qualifying highlight Day 4

By NOAH TRISTER AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Mikaela Shiffrin will have to rebound quickly. Her next chance at a medal is the slalom, but that's a top event for rival Petra Vlhova.

The showdown between those two Alpine skiing stars highlights Day 4 of the Beijing Games, which also includes qualifying runs for Shaun White and Chloe Kim, the start of snowboardcross coverage and the first curling medals of these Olympics.

Here are some things to watch (all times Eastern):

### SLALOM SHOWDOWN

Shiffrin won the slalom at the 2014 Games and is a four-time world champion in the event. Vlhova, however, has a big lead in the World Cup slalom standings this season, after Shiffrin was slowed by contracting the coronavirus.

A bad turn in the giant slalom Monday knocked the American star out of that event on the opening run. Vlhova, of Slovakia, finished 14th.

"Something was missing, and I was a bit in trouble with the conditions," Vlhova said. "I tried to do my best, but it was not enough."

NBC plans to show the women's slalom live as part of its prime-time and late-night coverage Tuesday.

### SNOWBOARD STARS

Shiffrin's rough start was a downer for the U.S., but now it's time for a couple other American standouts to begin competing. Shaun White, the three-time gold medalist who said recently the Beijing Games would be his last competition, begins qualifying for the halfpipe. So does Chloe Kim, who, like White is a defending champion in that event.

"I really want to finish my career strongly on my own terms and put down some solid runs," White said. "If I could do that, I'll be very happy."

NBC is carrying women's qualifying live in prime time and the men live in its late-night slot. USA Network will also have live coverage of women's halfpipe.

The chaotic, high-flying snowboardcross also begins with the women's competition. Lindsey Jacobellis, who missed out on gold in 2006 when she fell after grabbing her board in premature celebration, is still chasing an Olympic title.

NBC is carrying snowboardcross qualifying during its late-night coverage, and USA Network plans to air the qualifying and final rounds live. The final isn't expected to start until well after 2 a.m.

### CURLING

The mixed doubles competition wraps up when Italy faces Norway for the gold medal. USA Network is set to air that at 1 p.m. CNBC will show the bronze medal game between Sweden and Britain at 5 p.m. and the gold medal game at 8.

Amos Mosaner and Stefania Constantini have already clinched Italy's first-ever Olympic curling medal by reaching the final.

"That feels great," coach Claudio Pescia said. "Not only that we have a medal, but the performance these two athletes made this week is amazing."

### LUGE

Germany's Natalie Geisenberger is trying for her third consecutive gold medal in singles luge. USA Network will show the final run live in the morning, with an encore presentation by NBC in the afternoon.

Geisenberger can become the first three-time women's singles gold medalist in Olympic history.

### ALSO OF NOTE

Norwegian cross-country skiing star Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo finished 40th in the skiathlon, but he has another medal shot in the sprint. USA Network will have the men's and women's sprints live in the

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morning, with NBC showing them in the afternoon and USA Network showing them again in the 7:30 p.m.-2:55 a.m. time slot ... NBC will air the final of men's freestyle skiing Big Air live in prime time. ... American speedskater Joey Mantia competes in the 1,500 meters. USA Network will air that between 9:20 a.m. and 1 p.m., and again later. NBC is showing it in prime time.

## Amir Locke protesters seek acting police chief's resignation

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A caravan of vehicles drove through Minneapolis demanding justice in the death of Amir Locke, the 22-year old Black man who was fatally shot by Minneapolis police as officers served a no-knock search warrant.

Sunday's caravan of about 50 vehicles was organized by the Racial Justice Network and other police accountability groups.

Some in the caravan then gathered in a neighborhood outside what's believed to be the home of interim Police Chief Amelia Huffman. They chanted the names of Locke as well as Breonna Taylor, a Black woman who was killed by Kentucky police during a no-knock raid in 2020.

They also called for Huffman's resignation, the Star Tribune reported.

"We're asking for her job," said activist Toussaint Morrison over a microphone outside the home, "because it seems like the only time they pay attention is when it affects their jobs or their money. But we pull up when it affects our lives."

The gathering follows a march Saturday that drew hundreds of demonstrators to the streets of Minneapolis. The protesters met outside the Hennepin County Government Center before marching through downtown streets.

Locke was fatally shot Wednesday when a SWAT team entered a downtown Minneapolis apartment without knocking.

A police bodycam video shows an officer kicking the couch where Locke's family said he was sleeping. On the video, he is seen wrapped in a blanket, beginning to move, with a pistol in his hand just before an officer fires his weapon.

Locke's parents, Andre Locke and Karen Wells, say their son was "executed" after he was startled from a deep sleep and reached for a legal firearm to protect himself.

## Wüst skates into history with another golden Olympic moment

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP National Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Ireen Wüst can't really explain it.

Something inside of her just changes when she gets to an Olympic Games.

Her confidence soars. Her legs feel stronger. When she needs that little extra bit of speed, it's always there.

"I don't know what it is," Wüst said. "I just see the rings and something magical happens."

It happened again Monday, at the age of 35, pushing the Dutch speedskating star into a class of her own.

Wüst glided into the record books with a victory in the 1,500 meters at the Beijing Games, becoming the first athlete — woman or man, winter or summer — to claim individual gold medals at five different Olympics.

Nope, Michael Phelps didn't do that. Neither did Carl Lewis. British rower Steve Redgrave won gold medals over five Olympics, but each of those victories came as part of two- or four-man teams.

Wüst did it all on her own.

The enormity of her accomplishment has yet to sink in.

"Of course it means a lot, but I don't realize it yet," said Wüst, who plans to retire after the Olympics. "Ask me this question again in 10 days. I'm an emotional mess in my head."

Wüst already was the most decorated speedskater in Winter Olympic history. She pushed her medal haul to an even dozen, a collection she started gathering in her debut at the 2006 Turin Games.

But what made this one really stand out was the color.

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Gold.

She's got six of them now — five in individual events that are evenly distributed over each of the Olympics she has competed in during her remarkable career.

On the biggest stage, Wüst always seems to shine.

"She had the perfect race at the best moment," said fellow Dutch skater Antoinette de Jong, who settled for the bronze behind the winner and Japan's Miho Takagi.

Wüst set an Olympic record while defending her title in the 1,500, crossing the line with a time of 1 minute, 53.28 seconds at the Ice Ribbon oval.

Wüst yanked off her hood, threw up her arms and tilted back her head in delight when she saw her time on the scoreboard.

"An Olympic record on this track is amazing," she said. "The time is really fast. I was really proud already of myself that I did my best 1,500 in the biggest moment."

She couldn't really let loose, not with three more pairs still to go.

"It's nerve-wracking," Wüst said with a chuckle.

She wasn't the only one nervously watching the clock as the remaining six skaters made their runs at the gold.

From afar, the Dutch king and queen were holding their breath as well.

"The nerve-wracking wait was excruciating but made the release of this historic victory extra beautiful," King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima wrote in a Facebook post. "Wüst concluded her impressive career in her own way: with full focus and strong willpower."

When Takagi, skating in the final pair, came up 0.44 short, Wüst leapt into the arms of her coach to begin celebrating yet another gold medal.

"Expected is not quite the word for it," she said. "But I felt really good in training. I did amazing lap times in training, so I knew I was good."

Amazingly, Wüst has medaled in the 1,500 — a race that requires the speed of a sprinter and the staying power of an endurance skater — at all five of her Olympics.

She's won the gold three times, to go along with a silver and a bronze. Her other individual golds are in the 3,000 at the Turin and Sochi Games.

"Words can't describe her class," said American Brittany Bowe, who finished more than 2 1/2 seconds behind the winner in 10th. "She is the greatest of all time, as her performance shows. Another Olympic gold medal in Olympic record fashion. I'm honored to have competed against her for so many years, and even more so to call her a friend."

The mighty Dutch team won its second gold in three speedskating events, setting itself up for another big performance after dominating the last two Winter Games at the oval.

While some may have written her off because of her age, Wüst never doubted that she had one more gold medal performance in those strong legs of hers.

"Age is just a number," she said. "It's all about how you feel. I'm not thinking about that I'm 35 and old. Never."

Still, winning another gold will not dissuade Wüst from her plans to retire after the Beijing Games.

"This is it," she said. "I will leave on top."

## Gun salutes mark Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee year

LONDON (AP) — Gun salutes rang out in London and Edinburgh on Monday to mark the official start of Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee year, as the 95-year-old monarch prepared for a busy season of public duties.

Britain's longest-serving monarch, Elizabeth became queen on the death of her father, King George VI, from lung cancer at age 56 on Feb. 6, 1952.

The monarch doesn't celebrate the anniversary of the date she became queen, known as Ascension Day, as it is also the anniversary of her father's death.

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In a statement released Saturday, the queen remembered the death of her father and recalled the seven decades of "extraordinary progress" that her reign has spanned.

The queen made clear she intended to continue as head of state, renewing the pledge she made on her 21st birthday to devote her entire life to the service of the U.K. and the Commonwealth.

She also sought to shore up the future of monarchy by saying it was her "sincere wish" that Prince Charles' wife, Camilla, should be known as "Queen Consort" when her son becomes king. With those words, Elizabeth sought to answer once and for all questions about the status of Camilla, who was initially shunned by fans of the late Princess Diana, Charles' first wife.

While Sunday's anniversary was low-key, public celebrations of the Platinum Jubilee are scheduled for June, when the weather is usually sunnier. The festivities will include a military parade, a day of horse-racing and neighborhood parties. There is also a competition to create a new dessert to be consumed over the jubilee weekend June 2-5.

The queen will mark a more somber milestone on March 29, when she attends a memorial service for Prince Philip at Westminster Abbey. The queen's husband of 72 years died in April 2021 at the age of 99.

The queen is also scheduled to attend a string of in-person public engagements in the coming weeks, including audiences with politicians and diplomats, a diplomatic reception at Windsor on March 2 and the Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey on March 14.

It marks a step by the monarch to more public duties since she was told to rest by her doctors after spending a night in hospital for tests in October. She was forced to cancel appearances at several key events, including Remembrance Sunday services at the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow, Scotland.

## What does Ivanka Trump know about Jan. 6? Congress is asking

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump was in the Oval Office with his daughter Ivanka and Vice President Mike Pence's national security adviser on the morning of Jan. 6, 2021, when he made yet another push to pressure Pence.

Trump again told Pence that he had a duty to reject Electoral College votes that would formalize Democrat Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election, something the vice president had no authority to do in his ceremonial role in Congress that day.

"You don't have the courage to make a hard decision," Trump told Pence, according to congressional testimony. Even after Trump called him a "wimp," Pence rebuffed the demand, issuing a lengthy statement afterward laying out his conclusion that he had no power to influence the outcome.

When the call ended, Ivanka Trump turned to retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg and said, "Mike Pence is a good man."

"Yes, he is," Kellogg replied.

Now the House committee investigating the riot wants to know what else Ivanka Trump heard and saw that day as they try to stitch together the narrative of the riots and the former president's role in instigating them. There was a frantic effort by many of Trump's top supporters to persuade him to intervene, and some directly sought to use his daughter as their conduit.

A committee aide said they are hopeful that she will soon commit to a time to meet.

Throughout her time in the White House, Ivanka Trump was known as a rare voice who could get through to her father and talk him out of bad decisions, though her success was mixed. The former first daughter has kept an extraordinary low profile since her father left office and has distanced herself from him and politics since moving to Florida.

But her proximity to him on Jan. 6 could provide the committee with direct access to what Trump was doing during those crucial three hours when his supporters violently stormed Capitol.

"Ivanka Trump has details about what occurred in the lead-up to and on Jan. 6 and about the former president's state of mind as events unfolded," Rep. Stephanie Murphy, D-Fla, a member of the panel, told The Associated Press.

It is highly unusual for congressional investigators to target a family member of a president, but as a



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senior adviser to her father, she also had a perch close to power.

Kellogg disclosed the exchange with the committee, but so far Ivanka Trump, who famously guards her image and public profile, has not talked to the panel.

The answers could have significant repercussions not only for Donald Trump, who is eyeing a political comeback in 2024, but for those in the Republican Party who have downplayed his role in the insurrection.

A spokeswoman for Ivanka Trump did not respond to multiple requests for comment. But in a statement issued in late January, a representative for her noted that Ivanka Trump did not speak at the rally near the White House where the then-president urged his supporters to "fight like hell" as Congress convened to certify the 2020 election results, and said she still believed that "any security breach or disrespect to our law enforcement is unacceptable."

Members of the committee hope to get beyond such vague assertions.

Hours after Trump's call to Pence, Ivanka Trump joined brother Donald Trump Jr., Rudy Giuliani and Kimberly Guilfoyle under a large tent at the rally to listen to Trump's speech.

She reportedly told aides she "decided to attend only because she had hoped to calm the president and help keep the event on an even keel."

After Trump's speech, as rioters began to smash through Capitol police barriers and break windows, the former president tweeted: "Mike Pence didn't have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution ..."

That tweet, according to court testimony, only added to the anger fueling the mob.

Back in the White House, as staffers watched in shock at what was unfolding down Pennsylvania Avenue on television screens positioned throughout the West Wing, Trump's attention was so rapt that he hit rewind and watched certain moments again, according to Stephanie Grisham, a former White House press secretary.

"Look at all of the people fighting for me," Trump said, according to Grisham, who also served as chief of staff to first lady Melania Trump. At one point, the president was confused why staffers weren't as excited as he was watching the unrest unfold.

Kellogg testified that staff wanted the president to take immediate action to address the violence consuming the Capitol, but Trump refused.

"Is someone getting to potus? He has to tell protestors to dissipate. Someone is going to get killed," Alyssa Farah Griffin, a former White House communications official, texted Ben Williamson, an aide to White House chief of staff Mark Meadows.

"I've been trying for the last 30 minutes. Literally stormed in outer oval to get him to put out the first one. It's completely insane," Williamson wrote back.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., then called Ivanka Trump, pleading that the president "ask people to leave."

"We're working on it," she replied.

At that point, staffers acknowledged that despite efforts by Meadows, press secretary Kayleigh McEnany and Kellogg, the only person who could get through to him would be his daughter.

Ivanka Trump, according to testimony, went on to make at least two "tenacious" attempts to reason with her father as staffers were bombarded with messages from Trump allies begging him to quell the violence.

"Can he make a statement. I saw the tweet. Ask people to leave the (Capitol)," Fox News host Sean Hannity texted Meadows.

But inside the West Wing, Kellogg strongly recommended that they not ask the president to appear in the press room, where a group of reporters would be waiting for him.

"Apparently, certain White House staff believed that a live unscripted press appearance by the President in the midst of the Capitol Hill violence could have made the situation worse," lawmakers wrote in their letter to Ivanka Trump.

The president ultimately agreed to a video statement. Multiple takes were filmed but not used. In each one of the initial takes, according to the committee, he failed to ask rioters to leave.

The final video was released on Twitter at 4:17 p.m. — nearly two hours after Trump's initial tweet criticizing Pence.

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"This was a fraudulent election, but we can't play into the hands of these people," Trump said in the video. "We have to have peace. So go home. We love you; you're very special."

Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., the vice chair of the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection, has said it's hard to "imagine a more significant and more serious dereliction of duty" than Trump's failure to quell the riots.

Trump's last words that day came at 6:01 p.m. when he tweeted that the 2020 election was "unceremoniously and viciously stripped away from great patriots who have been badly and unfairly treated for so long." He ended with, "Go home with love and in peace. Remember this day forever."

The committee has been aggressively interviewing witnesses — nearly 500 so far — and has subpoenaed Meadows and Trump's personal lawyer. They are asking Ivanka Trump to cooperate voluntarily.

## Closed steel mill sends Olympic skiers - not smoke - skyward

By JAKE SEINER AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Alex Hall is accustomed to a grand mountain vista. The American freestyle skier could get used to the view atop Big Air Shougang, though.

"The like, crazy smokestack things in the back are pretty cool," he said. "You get to see some of the mountains in the background, you got this temple here, the city's that way, the steel factory. You get to see a lot of stuff."

Anytime he and his fellow big air competitors come back to China, plenty of people will get to see them, too.

Freeski big air opened its Olympic competition Monday at the world's first permanent, city-based big air facility, a repurposed steel mill on the west side of Beijing that's made a stunning backdrop for one of the Games' newest sports. Freeskiing is taking on big air for the first time as a Winter Games discipline, while the snowboarders will be here next week after debuting the event in Pyeongchang four years ago.

The 200-foot big air structure was built on the site of the former Shougang Group steel mill, China's first state-owned plant that helped the country become a world leader in steel production. Its billowing smokestacks provided work for thousands but also darkened the sky over Beijing's Shijingshan District, contributing to the city's air pollution problem.

China closed the factory in conjunction with the 2008 Summer Games, seeking to clean up its image, as well as its air.

The sprawling campus has been converted into a bizarre, yet beautiful, city oasis.

Rusting factories and machinery remain, but the space between has been filled by grassy lawns, glassy ponds and a good deal of greenery. One of the blast furnaces was given a face-lift and turned into a steampunk-style event space with shops, commercial offices and a museum. The yards host dance showcases in the summer, and architects plan to transform one of the massive cooling towers hovering over the big air jump into a wedding venue.

"This feels like it was created in a virtual world, in a video game," American freeskiier Nick Goepper said.

It's also central to China's efforts to encourage 300 million people to participate in winter sports in conjunction with these Games. Facilities were carved into the complex's infrastructure to help Chinese athletes train in short track speedskating, figure skating, ice hockey and curling. The Beijing Organizing Committee is even based out of the park's offices.

The eye-catcher, though, is big air.

The discipline is a sort of high-risk home run derby for snowboarding and freestyle skiing, taking one element of the sport and pushing it to its extreme. Because the jumps span only a couple of hundred feet — compared to several thousand on slopestyle courses — they're a strong fit for live audiences.

Even better, you don't need a mountain to put on a big air event. Temporary jumps have been erected at Boston's Fenway Park and Atlanta's Truist Park in recent years, bringing the mountain sport to metropolitan areas instead of asking the masses to trek up to ski and snowboarding's native slopes.

"When we went to Atlanta, lots of those people don't get to see snow that often," American snowboarder

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Chris Corning said. "I'm not sure they have snowplows there."

The freeskiers have noticed an enormous uptick in quality at the permanent Big Air Shougang. As American Colby Stevenson said, scaffolding jumps like the one in Atlanta can be "pretty sketchy."

"It's a little bit scary just because you can like, feel it out there swaying," teammate Mac Forehand said.

With narrow runways and shorter, flatter landings, those temporary setups aren't conducive to going big. The spacious Shougang setup doesn't have those restrictions.

"It feels like we're up in the mountains," Swedish freeskiier Oliwer Magnusson said.

That's shown during practice runs, when several skiers have thrown down previously unfinished tricks. The men's freeskiers expect their rivals to break new ground in the finals Wednesday, and that's only possible because of the jump's quality.

It has athletes drooling over the possibility of other permanent venues cropping up elsewhere, but it's not clear that's going to happen. China invested aggressively in its push to get citizens involved in winter sports, which is what made Big Air Shougang possible.

"I think that the direction is the correct one to be going in," said American-born Eileen Gu, who is competing for China in part because she wants to inspire Chinese girls to take up skiing.

Such a venue might not get enough use to justify in another city, though. The Shougang jump was laid out so the seats can also be used for concerts and shows in summer, but the ramp itself has limited utility. After all, there are only so many skiers and snowboarders who can handle being thrust 20-plus feet in the air.

"If something like this was sustainable enough to repeat all over the world, I think that would be super-duper cool," Goepper said. "This just brings the sport closer to the public."

Either way, there's appreciation for the peculiarity of what's happening here, where the yards that once poured pillars of black smoke into smoggy Beijing are shooting Olympians skyward instead.

"One of the coolest things I've gotten to see," Forehand said.

## Olympics Live: US figure skater Zhou out after COVID test

BEIJING (AP) — The Latest on the Beijing Winter Olympics:

U.S. men's figure skater Vincent Zhou has tested positive for the coronavirus, and is out of the individual competition.

In a five-minute video posted to Instagram on Monday night, a teary Zhou announced that he would have to withdraw. He had initially tested positive as part of a routine COVID-19 screening, and underwent additional testing.

The 21-year-old had struggled through a poor free skate for the eventual team silver medalists a day before, and was due to compete in the individual competition that begins with the men's short program on Tuesday.

In the video, Zhou said he had isolated to the point of crushing loneliness over the past few months in a bid to avoid the virus. He ended on a positive note, though: "This is not the end. This is a setup for a bigger comeback."

Slovenia has won gold in the ski jumping mixed team event's Olympic debut.

The team of Ursa Bogataj, Nika Kriznar, Peter Prevc and Timi Zajc had 1,000.5 points Monday, dominating the competition by more than 100 points.

Prevc jumped last and soared 101.5 meters (333 feet) and had 126.3 points to seal the top spot on the podium for the Slovenians.

Russia won silver and Canada, in a surprise, earned bronze.

Germany, one of the favorites to win, was disqualified after the first round because of an equipment violation by Katharina Althaus, who won silver for the second straight Olympics on Saturday.

Japan, with Olympic champion Ryoyu Kobayashi and star Sara Takanashi, finished fourth in the 10-nation

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field after Takanashi had a jump disqualified.

Ren Ziwei of China has survived a controversial finish to win the men's 1,000 meters in short track speedskating.

Liu Shaolin Sandor of Hungary crossed the line first Monday, but was penalized twice and earned a yellow card. That elevated Ren, who crossed second, to the gold medal.

Li Wenlong of China earned silver. Liu Shaoang of Hungary, the brother of Liu, took bronze.

Liu appeared to bump Ren in taking the lead late in the race. Ren grabbed Liu approaching the finish line. Liu still managed to cross first before going down.

But the referee assessed the penalties to Liu.

The final was called back after the race began because of metal debris on the ice.

There were three Chinese skaters in the final. The Liu brothers' father is Chinese and their mother is Hungarian.

The Dutch king and queen were suitably impressed by speedskater Ireen Wüst's gold medal-winning race.

In a Facebook post, King Willem-Alexander, an avid follower of Dutch sports and former member of the International Olympic Committee, and his wife Queen Maxima called it a "phenomenal race." Wüst won her fifth individual gold medal at her fifth games.

The 35-year-old had to wait after posting a new Olympic record time to see if any other skater would go faster in later pairings. When no one did, she leapt into arms of her coach to begin celebrating yet another gold in what she says is her final tournament.

"The nerve-wracking wait was excruciating but made the release of this historic victory extra beautiful," the post from Willem-Alexander and his wife Queen Maxima said. "Wüst concluded her impressive career in her own way: with full focus and strong willpower."

Arianna Fontana has burnished her legacy as short track's most decorated skater with her second Olympic medal in Beijing.

The 31-year-old Italian took the lead from Dutch world champion Suzanne Schulting late in Monday's race and let out a yell as she crossed the line to earn her 10th career medal.

Fontana won in 42.488 seconds.

She also won a silver in the inaugural mixed team relay on Sunday, putting her ahead of Viktor An and Apolo Ohno for career medals with nine.

Fontana was already the only athlete to win a medal of every color in the same individual event. She won gold in the 500 four years ago in Pyeongchang, silver in Sochi in 2014 and bronze at Vancouver in 2010.

Schulting took silver in 42.559 and Kim Boutin of Canada earned bronze in 42.724.

Taiwanese speedskater Huang Yu-ting is facing the heat from the audience back home after she posted a video on her Instagram page wearing an athletic suit showing "China" prominently on the back just before the Olympics began.

Taiwanese internet users flooded her Facebook page with comments decrying her choice in wardrobe, as it seemed to suggest she supported China.

"Why don't you go represent the mainland directly, since we've inconvenienced you," wrote one user, referring to China.

China claims Taiwan, a self-ruled island, as part of its territory. That's forced Taiwan to strike a deal with the Olympics organizers to compete under the name "Chinese Taipei."

A small, pro-independence nonprofit, Taiwan Republic, even staged a 20-person demonstration against Huang on Monday in Taipei.

Huang did not apologize directly, although she deleted the pictures.

"In the sports world, we have no nationality. Everyone is good friends off of the playing field," she said

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on Facebook.

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Some big names are out of contention in men's 1,000-meter short track speedskating.

The quarterfinals featured crashes and penalties galore. South Korea's Park Janghyuk was carted off the ice on a stretcher, although he was advanced by the referee to the semifinals at Capital Indoor Stadium.

Out of contention are Sjinkie Knegt of the Netherlands, John-Henry Kruger of Hungary and Dion Pascal of Canada. Pascal crashed out of his race.

Kruger won his race, but was penalized for a lane change that caused contact.

Liu Shaolin Sandor of Hungary also crashed in his race, but advanced when Knegt received two penalties that triggered an automatic yellow card.

Brendan Corey of Australia made a move that triggered a pileup and he was penalized.

American Andrew Heo won his heat, but teammate Ryan Pivrotto fell just after the start and was eliminated.

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Papua New Guinea's prime minister tested positive for COVID-19 when he arrived in Beijing last week to attend the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games and had to cut short his stay.

Prime Minister James Marape was immediately given medical treatment, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said Monday.

Marape missed Friday's opening ceremony and returned home Sunday night, canceling a planned trip to France. He held a meeting with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang via video link while in Beijing, Zhao said.

Marape's present condition was unknown.

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Americans Kristen Santos and Maame Biney are out of the women's 500 meters in short track speedskating.

Santos was penalized in her quarterfinal for a lane change that caused contact. Biney didn't finish high enough in her race to move on to the semifinals.

Arianna Fontana of Italy advanced in pursuit of her 10th career medal. The Italian is the most decorated short track skater in Olympic history.

Other big names moving on to the semifinals later Monday night were Kim Boutin of Canada and Suzanne Schulting of the Netherlands.

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Denise Herrmann missed only one of 20 shots and skied fast to win Olympic gold in the women's 15-kilometer individual biathlon.

The German's win came after a season of mixed results on the World Cup circuit. Her only podium finish was a bronze medal in the individual race early in the season in Oestersund, Sweden.

A former Olympic cross country skier, Herrmann led early and maintained it, completing the course in 44 minutes, 12.7 seconds.

Anais Chevalier-Bouchet of France missed her very last shot, which proved to be a costly mistake, and won silver 9.4 seconds behind Herrmann.

Norway's Marte Olsbu Røiseland, the overall World Cup leader, missed two shots, one prone and one standing, and settled for bronze, 15.3 seconds back.

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Ireen Wüst has added to her haul as the most decorated speedskater in Olympic history with another gold.

The 35-year-old Dutch skater won her second straight gold in the 1,500 meters, setting an Olympic record with a time of 1 minute, 53.28 seconds at the Ice Ribbon oval in Beijing.

Miho Takagi of Japan claimed the silver in 1:53.72, while the bronze went to Antoinette de Jong of the Netherlands in 1:54.82.

It was another Olympic disappointment for Brittany Bowe. The U.S. skater again came up short in the quest for her first individual Olympic medal, fading badly at the end to finish 10th in 1:55.81.

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Wüst just keeps getting stronger. She's now won 12 medals over her career, including six golds. That makes her the most decorated athlete in the history of speedskating, as well as her country's most prolific Olympic medalist.

Wüst has medaled in the 1,500 at the last five Olympics. She's won the gold three times, to go along with a silver and a bronze.

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Casey Dawson is finally on his way to the Olympics.

The U.S. speedskater tested positive for COVID-19 three weeks ago and had struggled to get the necessary clearance to travel to Beijing. He had to produce four consecutive negative tests, and also dealt with issues over testing centers in Utah that had to be approved by the Chinese consulate.

But Dawson finally resolved those matters and was on a flight to Beijing, according to a tweet Monday from US Speedskating.

Dawson missed the 5,000 meters, and his late arrival will likely keep him out of Tuesday's 1,500 meters. But his main focus was on next week's team pursuit, where he's part of a group that is considered a strong medal contender.

The quarterfinals are next Sunday, with semifinals and the final two days later.

Dawson, a 21-year-old skater from Park City, Utah, has been training at the Utah Olympic Oval to stay sharp while his COVID-19 situation played out. He received his U.S. Olympic clothing and gear this past weekend.

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More details have emerged about a delay to an Olympic women's hockey game between Russia and Canada in Beijing.

Canada initially declined to leave the locker room because COVID-19 tests taken earlier in the day by the Russian athletes had not yet been processed.

The International Ice Hockey Federation eventually reached a compromise to have players from both teams wear masks, a first at the Beijing Olympics.

Forward Oxana Bratisheva said through a team translator that the Russian team was initially told the game would be postponed before being told it would proceed an hour late.

The Russian players eventually were allowed to remove their masks at the start of the third period after the test results showed no one was positive.

The Canadians kept their masks on and won 6-1 to improve to 3-0 for the tournament.

Canada was concerned about Russian players who previously tested positive for COVID-19.

Canada held out forward Emily Clark for precautionary reasons after her test result came back inconclusive.

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Swedish skier Sara Hector has capped a recent career resurgence in the best way possible, winning the gold medal in the women's giant slalom at the Beijing Olympics. It was her first individual victory at a major championship.

The 29-year-old Hector finished two runs down a course known as The Ice River at the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center. Her unofficial combined time was 1 minute, 55.69 seconds.

Federica Brignone of Italy was 0.28 seconds slower over the two legs to add a silver medal to the bronze she won in the giant slalom at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games behind champion Mikaela Shiffrin, who fell during Monday's opening run.

Lara Gut-Behrami of Switzerland was third, 0.72 behind Hector, and now has another bronze to go alongside the one she collected in the downhill at the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

When Hector crossed the line, she raised her ski poles overhead and yelled to celebrate before being embraced by Brignone and Gut-Behrami.

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The skeleton athlete from Belgium whose teary reaction to being placed into virus-related isolation made

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headlines last week was on the ice Monday for the start of official training.

Kim Meylemans was ninth-fastest out of 24 sliders in one training run, then 18th-fastest in the next.

Meylemans tested positive for COVID-19 after arriving in China, and thought she was going to the Olympic village after returning several negative tests. She was taken to another hotel serving as an isolation facility instead, before officials intervened and got her into the village.

Meylemans is still being tested twice a day and is expected to remain in an isolated wing of the village until the midpoint of this week.

Training for her event continues Tuesday.

China's U.N. ambassador has fired back at his U.S. counterpart over her remarks that sending a member of the Uyghur ethnic group to help deliver the Olympic flame was an attempt to distract from the issue of abuses against Muslim minorities.

Ambassador Zhang Jun issued a statement to "resolutely refute" what he called unfounded accusations against China made by Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield in an interview with CNN.

Zhang said China's Winter Olympics team includes 20 athletes from nine ethnic minorities, including Uyghur and Tibetan. China chose cross-country skier Dinigeer Yilamujiang, a Uyghur, as one of two final Olympic torchbearers at the opening ceremony.

"She is the pride and excellent representative of the Chinese people. On what ground does the U.S. has such inexplicable anger over this? And why?" Zhang said.

China has 174 athletes competing in the Games, mainly drawn from the Han majority that makes up more than 90% of the population.

A former U.S. bobsledder's longshot bid to get a spot in the women's bobsled field for the Beijing Games has been denied.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled Monday that Jazmine Fenlator-Victorian of Jamaica should not be awarded a starting position in that event.

Fenlator-Victorian asked CAS to throw out some of the calculations used by the International Bobsled and Skeleton Federation to determine which nations qualified for the event and give Jamaica a spot that allocated to France.

Fenlator-Victorian is still scheduled to compete in the new monobob event. She raced for the U.S. at the 2014 Olympics and competed for Jamaica at the 2018 games.

Canadian snowboarder Max Parrot took home the Olympic gold medal in men's slopestyle just over three years removed from being diagnosed with cancer.

Technically superior on his second of three runs, Parrot scored a 90.96 to hold off the field. He tossed his snowboard in delight after the final score was revealed.

Su Yiming of China earned the silver and Mark McMorris of Canada used a strong final run to bump himself into bronze — his third straight one — and knock defending champion Red Gerard of the United States off the podium.

Olympic organizers say they had a call with athletes Sunday to discuss living conditions at isolation hotels. "We know that that's not easy for anyone in that situation, but particularly an athlete who's gone through the journey to get here," said Kit McConnell, sports director for the International Olympics Committee.

Organizers were not able to immediately say how many athletes are currently in the isolation hotels because they tested positive, but said the numbers have been coming down.

Everyone inside the Olympic bubble is required to take COVID-19 tests. Those who are confirmed positive must go to an isolation facility until they're cleared for discharge, either through negative tests or a review by a panel of medical experts.

The call with athletes came after complaints about inadequate food, small and unclean rooms, and a

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lack of access to training equipment. Over the weekend, organizers said they were addressing the issues and that athletes in isolation would be able to order food from the Olympic Village and have it delivered to their rooms.

As of Monday, organizers say 387 people inside the Olympic bubble have tested positive. The figure includes news media and team officials, not just athletes.

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Beat Feuz of Switzerland captured gold in the Olympic men's downhill.

The 41-year-old Johan Clarey of France was 0.10 seconds behind in second and two-time Olympic champion Matthias Mayer of Austria was 0.16 behind in third.

The victory gave Feuz the one thing lacking from a career filled with accomplishments. He won a silver medal in super-G and bronze in downhill at the 2018 Olympics and is the four-time reigning World Cup downhill champion.

The 5-foot-8 (1.72-meter) Feuz is second in this season's downhill standings.

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Players for Canada and the Russian team are wearing masks upon returning to the ice for their women's hockey preliminary round game at the Beijing Olympics.

The start of the game was delayed for an hour after the Canadians stayed in their locker room rather than coming out for puck drop. The Russian team eventually returned to its locker room before both teams returned to the ice about 50 minutes after the game was scheduled to start.

The reason behind the delay is unclear, though this is the first game of the Beijing Olympics hockey tournament in which players were required to wear facemasks.

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Eileen Gu's goal of three Olympic medals nearly blew off in the wind.

The American-born freestyle skier who spurned Team USA for China ahead of the Beijing Games risked missing the finals in women's big air when she lost a ski on her second run and crashed into do-or-die position entering Round 3.

Gu scaled back her plans in the final round and landed a conservative right-side 900.

Gu said the wind changed direction between her first and second runs. Because she was the fifth of 25 skiers down the jump at Big Air Shougang, she didn't notice the shift until she was mid-air.

She gathered herself for a clean third run and finished fifth, easily into the 12-skier finals.

Canadian Megan Oldham narrowly led France's Tess Ledeux for the top spot after Ledeux topped Oldham for gold at last month's X Games.

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American figure skater Vincent Zhou has tested positive as part of regular COVID-19 screening at the Beijing Olympics, one day after struggling through a poor free skate for the eventual team silver medalists.

Zhou is undergoing additional testing Monday to confirm his status. If the results are negative, he will be allowed to compete in the individual competition, which begins with the men's short program on Tuesday.

The high-flying but wildly inconsistent 21-year-old Zhou arrived in Beijing with high hopes of contending for a medal. He finished sixth in the men's program at the Pyeongchang Games, but his second-place finish at the NHK Trophy and victory at Skate American in his two Grand Prix assignments gave him hopes of earning a medal.

He'll get at least one as part of the team silver medalists. He'll await another COVID-19 test to see if he can earn another.

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Kamila Valieva became the first woman to land a quad in the Olympics — two of them, in fact — and her historic free skate put a stamp on Russia's dominant run to the gold medal in the team figure skating event at the Beijing Games on Monday.

The 15-year-old Valieva opened with a huge quad salchow and followed with the difficult triple axel before landing another quad, this time a toe loop in combination with a triple toe loop. The only blemish



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on her program came when she fell on her quad toe loop late in the program, but by that point her first gold medal in Beijing was assured.

Valieva scored 178.92 points, giving Russia 74 points and their second gold medal in three editions of the team event. The U.S. took the silver medal after back-to-back bronze, while Japan won its first team medal with bronze.

German skier Dominik Schwaiger has been taken away in a toboggan after falling during the men's downhill at the Beijing Olympics.

He was the second starter and his fall caused a delay in the race.

Schwaiger lost control and fell on his back, then slid down the mountain and grazed the safety nets. He was holding his left arm in apparent pain once he stopped.

The race was postponed from Sunday because of strong winds.

The American ice dance team of Madison Chock and Evan Bates delivered the best free skate of their career during the team competition at the Beijing Games, almost assuring Team USA of its first silver medal in the event.

Russia continues to lead the Americans by a wide margin with only the women's free skate left, but Chock and Bates were able to edge their world champions, Victoria Sinitsina and Nikita Katsalapov, with a score of 129.07 points.

The Russian duo was next with 128.17 while Japan, which was tied with the Americans after the pairs competition, were last among the five ice dance teams. That left the Americans six points behind Russia with 58 but, more importantly, four ahead of the Japanese team entering the final discipline.

Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai has met with International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach in Beijing.

The IOC says the meeting took place over dinner Saturday and IOC member Kirsty Coventry also attended. Coventry and Peng attended the China-Norway mixed curling match that night.

Peng briefly disappeared from public view in November after she accused a Chinese official of sexual assault on her verified Weibo social media. The post was swiftly removed.

Peng told a French newspaper in an interview published Monday that international concern over her well-being is based on "an enormous misunderstanding." She denied having accused the Chinese official of sexual assault.

L'Equipe, which specializes in sports news, published the interview Monday. The publication said it spoke to the tennis player a day earlier in a Beijing hotel in an hour-long interview organized through China's Olympic committee.

The newspaper said it had to submit questions in advance and that a Chinese Olympic committee official sat in on the discussion and translated her comments from Chinese.

The Russians have solidified their hold on the team figure skating gold medal, despite an unexpected fall by their pairs duo of Anastasia Mishina and Aleksander Galliamov, with two disciplines remaining at Capital Indoor Arena.

Mishina and Galliamov's score of 145.20 points gave their team the maximum 10 points, while a disappointing program by the American duo of Alexa Knierim and Brandon Frazier left a dead heat for the silver medal.

Knierim did a single toe loop instead of the planned double during their opening combination, then put her hand down on a triple salchow and stepped out on their throw triple flip. That was enough to give the Americans just six points, while Japan got a strong program from Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara to pull even with Team USA in second place.

Up later Monday are the free dance, followed by the concluding women's free skate.

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NBC primetime Olympics host Mike Tirico will have a shorter stay in Beijing than originally planned. Tirico's final show from Beijing will be Monday night. He will fly from China to NBC Sports headquarters in Stamford, Connecticut, to host on Wednesday and Thursday before heading to Los Angeles Friday to anchor Olympics and Super Bowl coverage through Sunday.

Tirico will then head back to Stamford for the final week of Olympics coverage. The Games end on Feb. 20. Maria Taylor, who signed with NBC on the eve of last July's Tokyo Olympics, will host Tuesday night's show while Tirico is flying back.

Tirico was originally slated to stay in Beijing through Thursday before going to Los Angeles. NBC officials though have reiterated that Tirico's schedule was subject to change based on COVID-19 and other factors.

NBC said in January that it would not send its announcers and most hosts to the Beijing Olympics due to continued concerns about rising COVID-19 cases worldwide and China's strict policy about those who test positive.

Defending Olympic champion Mikaela Shiffrin has missed a gate early in the first run of the giant slalom at the Beijing Games on Monday and been disqualified from the event.

Coming around a left-turn gate, she lost control, slid and fell on her side.

The 26-year-old Shiffrin is trying to become the first Alpine ski racer from the United States to win three Olympic golds across a career.

She arrived in China as one of the most-watched athletes in any sport at the Winter Olympics, a superstar who has dominated ski racing for long stretches in recent years. She has said she hoped to enter all five individual events at Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center.

Her next race is the slalom on Wednesday. Shiffrin won that at age 18 at the 2014 Sochi Games.

## Spotify CEO says canceling Joe Rogan isn't 'the answer'

By TOM KRISHER and LINDSEY BAHR Associated Press

Joe Rogan has put Spotify in a tough spot, but the streaming giant is not ready to part ways with the popular podcast host despite intense criticism over his anti-coronavirus vaccine comments and use of racial slurs.

Spotify CEO Daniel Ek also said in a message to employees Sunday that Rogan's racist language was "incredibly hurtful" and that the host was behind the removal of dozens of episodes of "The Joe Rogan Experience."

"While I strongly condemn what Joe has said and I agree with his decision to remove past episodes from our platform, I realize some will want more," Ek said in the note. "And I want to make one point very clear — I do not believe that silencing Joe is the answer."

The letter is the clearest indication yet of where Spotify stands on Rogan's fate with the company as some musicians, including Neil Young and India.Arie, have pulled their work from the streaming service in protest and others could follow. Spotify reportedly paid \$100 million to exclusively host Rogan's podcast, which now threatens the bottom line but is also a key part of the company's strategy to be a one-stop shop for audio.

"We should have clear lines around content and take action when they are crossed, but canceling voices is a slippery slope. Looking at the issue more broadly, it's critical thinking and open debate that powers real and necessary progress," Ek wrote.

He said he was "deeply sorry" for the impact the controversy was having on Spotify's employees. Rogan apologized Saturday for his use of the N-word on some past episodes.

Spotify's move likely won't sit well with one side of an increasingly polarized country where there are heightened sensitivities on race and vaccine misinformation, experts say.

"If Spotify says, 'We can't drop him. He has the right to say what he wants,' that continues on the line where there is this implicit support to say racist things on these platforms," Adia Harvey Wingfield, a so-

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ciology professor at Washington University in St. Louis, said before Ek's letter was released.

The streaming site also has to decide whether offensive words are allowable elsewhere on its app, where songs with racist, homophobic and anti-immigrant messages are available, said John Wihbey, a Northeastern University professor and specialist in emerging technologies.

"There's some real self-examination to be doing beyond Joe," Wihbey said Sunday. "This is a big moment of reckoning for entertainment and streaming platforms to see where the window is, what's over the line."

In his letter, Ek announced an investment of \$100 million to license, develop and market "music and audio content from historically marginalized groups," without giving more details.

Rogan's public troubles started on Jan. 24 when Young asked to have his music removed over concerns Rogan was promoting skepticism about the COVID-19 vaccines. Other artists followed suit, including Joni Mitchell and Roxane Gay.

Spotify said it would soon add a warning to all podcasts that discuss COVID-19, directing listeners to factual, up-to-date information from scientists and public health experts.

The scrutiny intensified when a video compilation emerged last week showing Rogan repeatedly using the N-word. Arie posted it on her Instagram account, using the hashtag #DeleteSpotify.

"They take this money that's built from streaming, and they pay this guy \$100 million, but they pay us like .003% of a penny," the Grammy winner wrote. "I don't want to generate money that pays that."

Rogan apologized in an Instagram video Saturday, saying that the slurs were the "most regretful and shameful thing" he has ever had to address and that he hasn't used the N-word in years.

Ek told The Wall Street Journal last week that he took responsibility for being "too slow to respond" to the criticism over vaccine misinformation. It took the company five days to respond publicly to Young.

"It's become clear to me that we have an obligation to do more to provide balance and access to widely accepted information from the medical and scientific communities guiding us through this unprecedented time," Ek continued in a statement.

Rogan is an odd mix of shock jock and host who leads discussions of public policy, arts and culture, Wihbey said, describing his brand as conservative "bro America."

His comments were clearly racist, Wihbey said, but he hopes that Rogan will see this as a chance to substantively discuss race and vaccine issues in future episodes. His audience may not hear the discussions otherwise, Wihbey said.

"I do think that assembling this kind of audience is important," he said. "He can say things that I think can move the needle."

Wingfield said the controversy could be positive if it starts a shift to discussions of racial stereotypes.

"I think that if Joe Rogan kind of learns from this experience and becomes a driving voice for that conversation, that could be really valuable," she said. "But I want to stress again that that's a pretty big if, and I don't know if it will come to that."

Spotify reports having 406 million active monthly users, up nearly 20% from last year, and advertising has grown largely because of podcasts. Musicians still generate the bulk of Spotify's profits, experts say. The company had 31% of the 524 million music streaming subscriptions worldwide in the second quarter of 2021, more than double that of second-place Apple Music, according to Midia Research.

Spotify Technology's share price fell 0.5% early Monday in after-hours trading. It jumped 9.2% on Friday.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Feb. 8, the 39th day of 2022. There are 326 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 8, 1587, Mary, Queen of Scots was beheaded at Fotheringhay Castle in England after she was implicated in a plot to murder her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I.

On this date:

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In 1693, a charter was granted for the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg in the Virginia Colony.  
In 1910, the Boy Scouts of America was incorporated.  
In 1922, President Warren G. Harding had a radio installed in the White House.  
In 1924, the first execution by gas in the United States took place at the Nevada State Prison in Carson City as Gee Jon, a Chinese immigrant convicted of murder, was put to death.  
In 1952, Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed her accession to the British throne following the death of her father, King George VI.  
In 1960, work began on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, located on Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street in Los Angeles.  
In 1965, Eastern Air Lines Flight 663, a DC-7, crashed shortly after takeoff from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport; all 84 people on board were killed. The Supremes' record "Stop! In the Name of Love!" was released by Motown.  
In 1968, three Black students were killed in a confrontation between demonstrators and highway patrolmen at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg in the wake of protests over a whites-only bowling alley.  
In 1971, NASDAQ, the world's first electronic stock exchange, held its first trading day.  
In 1973, Senate leaders named seven members of a select committee to investigate the Watergate scandal, including its chairman, Democrat Sam J. Ervin of North Carolina.  
In 2007, model, actor and tabloid sensation Anna Nicole Smith died in Hollywood, Florida, at age 39 of an accidental drug overdose.  
In 2020, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing said a 60-year-old U.S. citizen who'd been diagnosed with the coronavirus had died on Feb. 5 in Wuhan; it was apparently the first American fatality from the virus.  
Ten years ago: Washington state lawmakers voted to approve same-sex marriage.  
Five years ago: The Senate confirmed Sen. Jeff Sessions to be attorney general, 52-47, despite fierce Democratic opposition to the Alabama Republican over his record on civil rights and immigration. Britain's House of Commons gave its final approval to a bill authorizing the government to start exit talks with the European Union, despite fears by opposition lawmakers that the U.K. was setting out on a rocky path to Brexit with a sketchy roadmap.  
One year ago: In legal briefs filed on the eve of Donald Trump's historic second impeachment trial, lawyers for the former president insisted that he was not guilty of inciting a violent mob at the Capitol to try to overturn the election; prosecutors said Trump must be convicted for this "most grievous constitutional crime" even after leaving the White House. Anthony Sowell, 61, died in prison while awaiting execution for killing 11 women and hiding their remains in and around his Cleveland home. Mary Wilson, one of the original members of the 1960s Motown group the Supremes, died at her Nevada home at 76. Longtime NFL coach Marty Schottenheimer died in North Carolina at 77. Electric automaker Tesla said it had invested around \$1.5 billion in Bitcoin and planned to soon begin accepting the digital currency as payment.  
Today's Birthdays: Composer-conductor John Williams is 90. Broadcast journalist Ted Koppel is 82. Actor Nick Nolte is 81. Comedian Robert Klein is 80. Actor-rock musician Creed Bratton is 79. Singer Ron Tyson is 74. Actor Brooke Adams is 73. Actor Mary Steenburgen is 69. Author John Grisham is 67. Retired NBA All-Star and College Basketball Hall of Famer Marques Johnson is 66. Actor Henry Czerny is 63. Rock singer Vince Neil (Motley Crue) is 61. Former Environmental Protection Agency administrator Lisa P. Jackson is 60. Movie producer Toby Emmerich is 59. Actor Missy Yager is 54. Actor Mary McCormack is 53. Basketball Hall of Famer Alonzo Mourning is 52. Actor Susan Misner is 51. Dance musician Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo (Daft Punk) is 48. Actor Seth Green is 48. Actor Joshua Morrow is 48. Rock musician Phoenix (Linkin Park) is 45. Actor William Jackson Harper is 42. Actor Jim Parrack is 41. Folk singer-musician Joey Ryan (Milk Carton Kids) is 40. Actor-comedian Cecily Strong is 38. Rock musician Jeremy Davis is 37. Hip-hop artist Anderson.Paak is 36. Actor Ryan Pinkston is 34. NBA star Klay Thompson is 32. Professional surfer Bethany Hamilton is 32. Actor Karle Warren is 30.