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BREAKING NEWS: JACKSON MAHOMES, BROTHER OF CHIEFS QB, ARRESTED FOR SEXUAL BATTERY

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U.S. crude oil storage dips below 5-year average as energy demand 'fell off a cliff' Page 5



Operation against fentanyl on dark web brings arrests, guns, \$53 million in cash Page 7



U.S. sprinter Tori Bowie, three-time Olympic medalist, dies at 32 Page 8



Japanese PM Kishida to visit South Korea this weekend amid thawing ties Page 10

FEDERAL RESERVE RAISES INTEREST RATE BY QUARTER POINT

By Matt Bernardini
UPI

The Federal Reserve announced a 10th interest rate hike on Wednesday, raising the rate to 5.25%.

While inflation has slowed, it is still higher than the 2% mark that the Fed hopes to achieve. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell also is facing pressure from politicians to stop raising rates, as fears of a recession increase.

Powell planned to hold a news conference to discuss the increase at 2:30 p.m. EDT.

On Tuesday, Democratic Sens. Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders, Sheldon Whitehouse and other lawmakers sent a letter to Powell

saying that the Federal Reserve's aggressive actions were threatening to throw millions of people out of work.

"While the Fed should remain flexible to incoming data as it assesses the economy's progress toward achieving lower inflation, the evidence to date suggests that progress can continue to be made without slamming the brakes on the economy and costing millions of Americans their jobs," the letter said.

Inflation remains above the Federal Reserve's target. The most recent data show personal income levels increased by 0.3% from February to reach \$67.9 billion, suggesting wage growth



See INTEREST, page 3

History, civics scores decline among U.S. eighth-graders

By Doug Cunningham
UPI

U.S. history and civics scores of eight graders declined between 2018 and 2022, according to The Nation's Report Card from the National Center for Education Statistics. A lack of critical thinking skills are partially to blame.

"A well-rounded education includes a thorough grounding in democratic principles, and these assessments challenge students to show their knowledge and skills as they prepare to become full participants in American democracy," said NCES Commissioner Peggy G. Carr in a statement.

"Self-government depends on each generation of students leaving school with a complete understanding of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship. But far too



many of our students are struggling to understand and explain the importance of civic participation, how American government functions, and the historical significance of events."

Carr said that is partially due to problems with critical thinking skills. For example, to comprehend how Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech incorporates two ideas from the U.S. Constitution or Declaration of Independence, students need more

than reading skills.

"Students have to be able to read and know literacy skills, but they need critical thinking to know how to extrapolate an answer to that question," Carr said.

In U.S. history, NCES said there were declines since 2018 across all levels except for the very top performing students. In civics, scores were down for lower- and middle-performing students and were unchanged among top-performing students.

Just 13% of eighth-graders in 2022 were able to explain the significance of people, places, events, ideas and documents in American history, according to NCES. That means 87% of eighth-graders were not able to understand and demonstrate knowledge of significant

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OPINION

Heavy is crown: Being king or queen of Britain isn't easy

By Harlan Ullman, Arnaud de Borchgrave
Distinguished Columnist

Tens of millions of Americans will watch the coronation of Britain's King Charles III on Saturday.

Despite George III and the American Revolution, Americans have been infatuated with British royalty. But being a royal is not easy in what has been a sometimes tragic and recurring history of a human side to the monarchy that has not always helped the Windsor family.

Is that because the unique pressure of being a royal in arguably the world's most famous monarchy and living under constant surveillance and scrutiny has made scandal or notoriety inevitable? Or are these circumstances such that normal human behavior cannot cope?

Since the Windsors became the Windsors in 1917, changing the name of the royal family from Saxe-Coburg and Gotha because of the war with Germany (Kaiser Wilhelm II was Queen Victoria's grandson), the last 10-plus decades have not always been kind. Subsequent monarchs were George V and VI; briefly Edward VIII; Elizabeth II; and now Charles III.

The family motto is also distinctive: Dieu et mon, Droit for God and My Right. But divine right never made for divine rule or always for divine rulers.

The first of these human crises followed George V's death in January 1936, making his eldest son, the Prince of Wales, king. The Church of England forbade a monarch marrying a divorcee. But Edward VIII gave up his crown that December to marry "the woman I love," Wallis Simpson, a twice divorced American. That marriage provoked a political crisis. Edward, known as David to his friends, was replaced by his younger brother the Duke of York, who became a reluctant King George VI.

George reigned during World War II courageously remaining in London and Buckingham Palace with his family during the Blitz. Daughters Elizabeth and Margaret became auto mechanics to aid in the war effort. In ill health, George died young at age 56 and a 25-year-old Elizabeth inherited the crown. She would wear it for a record 70 years and 214 days, the longest in British history.

Unfortunately, Princess Margaret fell in love with a dashing and highly decorated Battle of Britain pilot, Group Capt. Peter Townsend. But like Simpson, Townsend was divorced. Margaret was forced to abandon marital plans, unlike her uncle. She finally married photographer Antony Armstrong-Jones in 1960.

For many reasons, including incompatibility and infidelity, that marriage failed. In 1976, the couple were divorced, the first time in over 400 years and Henry VIII that the royals parted ways. Margaret died in 2002 at 71.

The most bittersweet of these personal affairs was Charles' long-term relationship with Camilla Parker-Bowles, whom he had met around 1970. In 1970, Camilla's later to be husband, Army Officer Andrew Parker-Bowles, had broken off with her to court Charles' sister Anne. That did not work out and in 1973, Parker-Bowles and Camilla were married.

Despite obvious mutual affection, why Charles and Camilla never married then was always a question. But that question, ultimately, fated Charles' marriage to Diana Spencer in 1981. Diana was only 19; Charles 32.

Separation in 1992 was followed by divorce in 1996. As Diana sadly noted before her death in a car crash in Paris in 1997, a three-way marriage could never work. Finally, Elizabeth gave her permission for Charles and Camilla to marry in 2005.

Elizabeth's son Andrew and grandson Harry, unfortunately, could not escape the darker human side of Windsor history. Andrew's 1986 rocky marriage to Sarah Ferguson ended in separation in 1992 and divorce in 1996. After allegations of sexual misconduct and his friendship with Jeffrey Epstein, convicted of sexual offenses with underage girls, Andrew was stripped of his military rank and all official duties.

Blogger's New Book Spotlights Trend That Is Chilling to Free Speech

A friend recently suggested I check out Tim Urban's new book, "What's Our Problem?: A Self-Help Book for Societies." Its impact was chilling because it touched upon a critically important and ominous topic: the silencing of free speech by those with differing views.

The book was written by a left-wing progressive whose perspectives might seem unlikely to resonate with me. But the author's observations and assessments resonated.

In the book, the popular blogger-turned-author explores some of the most worrisome trends that we are seeing in this country, including increased partisanship and a lowering of the intellectual bar.

Urban also does a good job of introducing an interesting concept where political thinking isn't plotted along an X-Y linear axis but actually extends up vertically as well. The extremes he discusses are not just far-left and far-right but low-rung and high-rung thinking.

It's a compelling way of explaining how our country has been dragged down by people on both sides. Factions are cheapening public discourse and making it less about the arguments and a free marketplace of ideas and more about being beholden to the most extreme viewpoints.

Times are changing, and not for the better. Years ago, Washington, D.C., was a place where legislators could disagree vehemently on the right path forward for this country and still be able to maintain friendships with those who held opposing views. The two sides could agree to disagree.



ARMSTRONG WILLIAMS

No more.

I personally have always maintained deep and abiding friendships with people whose political philosophies and views differed from my own. I have always been happy to engage in debate and discussion with them based on the merits of an argument. I never took our differences to heart. But increasingly, the free marketplace of ideas in America is being shut down by those who want to drown out everyone who does not fall into line with the loudest and most strident voice.

At the end of the day, I believe most Americans want to live in a country where we can openly debate issues and share beliefs. A country that celebrates the free exchange of ideas and thoughts so the best

policies and philosophies can prevail. But that does not appear where we are headed.

Urban's book warns very clearly against the nefarious influence that extremists are having in our colleges, universities and schools. Take the recent student mob victory at Stanford Law School that occurred in March when a crowd of students shouted down a conservative U.S. judge because they disagreed with his stance on several social issues. The judge had been invited to present at the school, but was unable to speak due to students' heckling.

Nothing is more un-American than imposing a specific viewpoint on others with little regard to the other person's standing or failing to even respect their right to express themselves. This is being done every day by a group Urban refers to as the social justice fundamentalists.

Neither politics, current events nor personal choices should be a zero-sum game where you are either on our side or you are not.

Urban's book also does an excellent job of explaining shocking developments within our educational system where an orthodox viewpoint, highly slanted to the far left, is forced upon students, largely due to a lack of diversity in terms of viewpoint and

one-sided political leanings among professors. True learning must come from all corners, and we have to be unafraid to challenge students' thinking and always be willing to open our minds and consider new information.

Studies have repeatedly shown that our campuses have become more stridently partisan. To that point, Urban recounts numerous examples of teachers who feel completely silenced and afraid to speak their minds or to share any perspectives that run counter to a hard-left radical viewpoint.

In fact, part of what makes this book so compelling is that the author is a lifelong progressive who takes issue with some of the very illiberal tactics being used by those who profess to champion liberal values.

It is a scary state of affairs anywhere, but particularly in America. Urban's book highlights not just where we are but also paints a picture of where we should be and what it will take to get there.

The author simplifies complex arguments in ways that are relatable and understandable, whether you lean left or right. However, I suspect it will be the high-rung thinkers who will get the most out of this book. The low-rung thinkers may be quick to dismiss and pay it no heed -- which is really the point.

Bank crises rooted in system that rewards excessive risk-taking

By Alexandra Digby & Dollie Davis & Robson Hiroshi Hatsukami Morgan

First Republic Bank became the second-biggest bank failure in U.S. history after the lender was seized by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and sold to JP-Morgan Chase on Monday.

First Republic is the latest victim of the panic that has roiled small and midsize banks since the failure of Silicon Valley Bank in March.

The collapse of SVB and now First Republic underscores how the impact of risky decisions at one bank can quickly spread into the broader financial system. It should also provide the impetus for policymakers and regulators to address a systemic problem that has plagued the banking industry from the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s to the financial crisis of 2008 to the recent turmoil following SVB's demise: incentive structures that encourage excessive risk-taking.

The Federal Reserve's top regulator seems to agree. On Friday, the central bank's vice chair for supervision delivered a stinging report on the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, blaming its failures on its weak risk management, as well as supervisory missteps.

We are professors of economics who study and teach the history of financial crises. In each of the financial upheavals since the 1980s, the common denominator

was risk. Banks provided incentives that encouraged executives to take big risks to boost profits, with few consequences if their bets turned bad. In other words, all carrot and no stick.

One question we are grappling with now is what can be done to keep history from repeating itself and threatening the banking system, economy and jobs of everyday people.

S&L crisis sets stage

The precursor to the banking crises of the 21st century was the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s.

The so-called S&L crisis, like the collapse of SVB, began in a rapidly changing interest rate environment. Savings and loan banks, also known as thrifts, provided home loans at attractive interest rates. When the Federal Reserve under Chairman Paul Volcker aggressively raised rates in the late 1970s to fight raging inflation, S&Ls were suddenly earning less on fixed-rate mortgages while having to pay higher interest to attract depositors. At one point, their losses topped \$100 billion.

To help the teetering banks, the federal government deregulated the thrift industry, allowing S&Ls to expand beyond home loans to commercial real estate.

S&L executives were often paid based on the size of their institutions' assets, and they aggressively lent to commercial real estate projects, taking on riskier

loans to grow their loan portfolios quickly.

In the late 1980s, the commercial real estate boom turned bust. S&Ls, burdened by bad loans, failed in droves, requiring the federal government to take over banks and delinquent commercial properties and sell the assets to recover money paid to insured depositors. Ultimately, the bailout cost taxpayers more than \$100 billion.

Short-term incentives

The 2008 crisis is another obvious example of incentive structures that encourage risky strategies.

At all levels of mortgage financing -- from Main Street lenders to Wall Street investment firms -- executives prospered by taking excessive risks and passing them to someone else. Lenders passed mortgages made to people who could not afford them onto Wall Street firms, which in turn bundled those into securities to sell to investors. It all came crashing down when the housing bubble burst, followed by a wave of foreclosures.

Incentives rewarded short-term performance, and executives responded by taking bigger risks for immediate gains. At the Wall Street investment banks Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers, profits grew as the firms bundled increasingly risky loans into mortgage-backed securities to sell, buy and hold.

As foreclosures spread, the value of these securities

plummeted, and Bear Stearns collapsed in early 2008, providing the spark of the financial crisis. Lehman failed in September of that year, paralyzing the global financial system and plunging the U.S. economy into the worst recession since the Great Depression.

Executives at the banks, however, had already cashed in, and none were held accountable. Researchers at Harvard University estimated that top executive teams at Bear Stearns and Lehman pocketed a combined \$2.4 billion in cash bonuses and stock sales from 2000 to 2008.

A familiar ring

That brings us back to Silicon Valley Bank.

Executives tied up the bank's assets in long-term Treasury and mortgage-backed securities, failing to protect against rising interest rates that would undermine the value of these assets. The interest rate risk was particularly acute for SVB, since a large share of depositors were startups, whose finances depend on investors' access to cheap money.

When the Fed began raising interest rates last year, SVB was doubly exposed. As startups' fundraising slowed, they withdrew money, which required SVB to sell long-term holdings at a loss to cover the withdrawals. When the extent of SVB's losses became known, depositors lost trust, spurring a run that ended with SVB's collapse.



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Interest

continued from page 1

remains resilient against lingering inflationary strains. The lawmakers argued in Tuesday's letter that Powell's aggressive actions would end up hurting working families more than inflation has.

"While we do not question the Fed's policy independence, we believe that continuing to raise interest rates would be an abandonment of the Fed's dual mandate to achieve both maximum employment and price stability and show little regard for the small businesses and working families that will get caught

in the wreckage," the lawmakers wrote.

The failures of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank in March -- combined with the "lagging impacts of the Fed's earlier rate hikes" -- have also left the U.S. economy "even more vulnerable to an overreaction by the Fed," the letter said.

Scores

continued from page 1

political ideas and institutions and cite evidence from historical sources to support conclusions.

"Few eighth-graders are reaching higher levels of achievement," Dan McGrath, acting associate commissioner of NCES said.

"Only 13 percent of eighth-graders were at or above the National Assessment of Educational Progress proficient level for U.S. history. That's the lowest proportion of eighth-grade students reaching that level out of any subject assessed by the NAEP program. And

only about a fifth of students were at or above the NAEP Proficient level in civics, which is the second-lowest proportion of students reaching that level in any subject."

In 2022, the NCES report card found 22% of eighth-graders scored at or above the proficient level in civics. Students at that level "understand and explain the purposes that governments serve; how and why legislative, executive, and judicial powers are separate, shared, and limited in American constitutional government; and the differences between government and civil society."

The NAEP civics assess-

ment encompasses three central and interrelated components:

- knowledge and understanding of key aspects of the American political system and the principles of American democracy;
- the intellectual and participatory skills needed to apply civic knowledge for effective citizenship;
- and civic dispositions, such as understanding the rights individuals have and the responsibilities of individuals to their community.

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Police searching for gunman after 1 killed, 4 wounded at Atlanta medical office

By Doug Cunningham
UPI

The Atlanta Police Department on Wednesday said one person was killed and four others were wounded by a gunman inside a downtown medical office building.

Police still were searching for the shooter early Wednesday afternoon and said he is believed to still be armed and should not be approached.

Police identified the suspected gunman as 24-year-old Deion Patterson.

“There have been no additional shots

fired since the initial incident unfolded. We are currently aware of four shooting victims related to this situation. Three have been transported to the hospital for treatment and a fourth has been pronounced deceased on scene. Officers are actively searching for the suspect and any other victims,” Atlanta police said on Twitter.

The shooting occurred at 12:42 p.m. EDT inside a building on West Peachtree Street between 12th and 13th Streets.

Police asked anyone in the area to secure their building and shelter in place.

BOLO - Suspect is still at large. [pic.twitter.com/M8GkXa8dmM](https://twitter.com/M8GkXa8dmM)— Atlanta Police Department (@Atlanta_Police) May 3, 2023

Police deployed a large number of heavily armed officers to the area.

According to Atlanta Public Schools, several schools were locked down and parents were advised not to try to pick up children until the lockdown ends later.

“As the area immediately surrounding 1110 West Peachtree Street in Midtown Atlanta remains under a shelter-in-place due to an active shooter, several Atlanta Public Schools buildings (schools and

offices) will operate on exterior lockdown for the remainder of the day, out of an abundance of caution, until we receive further information from authorities,” APS said in a public safety message on their website. “Our campuses and buildings are secure, and this action is out of an abundance of caution.”

The school district advised parents not to come to the schools to check their students out of class because the schools will remain in lockdown for the day.

The wounded were undergoing surgery at downtown Atlanta’s Grady Memorial Hospital.

Meet the 20 horses racing in Saturday’s Kentucky Derby

By Robert Kieckhefer
UPI Racing Writer

The 149th running of the Kentucky Derby is set for Saturday at the storied Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky.

Often called the most exciting 2 minutes in sports, the Derby kicks off the Triple Crown, which includes the Preakness and Belmont Stakes. The last horse to win all three races was Justify in 2018.

The Derby is scheduled to start at 6:57 p.m. EDT, and will be broadcast on NBC. It also will stream on Peacock. Scattered showers are predicted early in the morning, but the rest of the day promises to be partly cloudy.

Here are the 18 horses entered for the 1 1/4-mile Run for the Roses, by post position, with morning-line odds, jockey and trainer.

1. Hit Show (30-1, Manny Franco, Brad Cox)

One of four from the Cox stable, this son of Candy Ride worked his way up the ranks to win the Grade III Withers at Aqueduct by 5 1/2 lengths in February, and then just missed in the Grade II Wood Memorial, losing a head-bob decision to Lord Miles. The inside post is never a bargain in the Derby, and since he appears to run best when close to the pace, Franco will have to try to get him going in the first few jumps. It’s a tough spot.

2. Verifying (15-1, Tyler Gaffalione, Brad Cox)

Here’s another of the Cox brigade. By 2018 Triple Crown winner Justify, Verifying has yet to win a stakes race, although he had all kinds of traffic trouble in finishing fourth in the Grade II Rebel at Oaklawn Park and just failed to hold off Tapit Trice by a neck in the Grade I Blue Grass. It looks like he, too, will have to blast off from the starting gate to overcome the inside draw.

3. Two Phil’s (12-1, Jareth Loveberry, Larry Rivelli)

You either hate his chances or see him as a potentially lucrative upsetter. His key wins came in last year’s Grade III Street Sense Stakes at Churchill Downs and the Grade III Jeff Ruby Steaks at Turfway Park this March. But the Street Sense was run on a sloppy track, and Turfway’s races are run on an all-weather surface. With dry conditions predicted for Derby Day ... we’ll see. On the plus side, the Hard Spun colt is trained by a guy who won nine training titles

at Arlington Park before Churchill Downs Inc. shuttered that track and sold the land to the Chicago Bears.

4. Confidence Game (20-1, James Graham, Keith Desormeaux)

Another son of the Argentine-bred Candy Ride, this colt won the Grade II Rebel at Oaklawn Park. His two other victories came at Churchill Downs, which is a good sign because not all horses like the quirky surface at the Louisville oval. He also has thrown in a couple of clunkers and that, coupled with the fact he hasn’t raced since the Feb. 25 Rebel, didn’t inspire a lot of confidence in oddsmaker Mike Battaglia, who listed him at 20-1 on the morning line.

5. Tapit Trice (5-1, Luis Saez, Todd Pletcher)

This gray colt is riding a four-race winning streak dating to his maiden win at Aqueduct in December. He has improved steadily through an allowance win at Gulfstream Park and victories in the Grade III Tampa Bay Derby and Grade I Blue Grass at Keeneland. Along with Forte, he gives trainer Pletcher the top two horses on the morning line for Derby 149. Like many others in this field, the Tapit colt likely will seek a comfy spot from which to launch a stretch bid. He also is the most expensive horse in the field, having sold for \$1.3 million at the 2021 Keeneland yearling sale.

6. Kingsbarns (12-1, Jose Ortiz, Todd Pletcher)

As if Forte and Tapit Trice weren’t enough, Pletcher also has this undefeated Uncle Mo colt lined up for the Derby start. He’s one of the least experienced in the field, making just his fourth start after going unraced as a 2-year-old. The three starts he does have, however, are a nice progression through a maiden win at Gulfstream Park to an allowance score at Tampa Bay Downs and a dominating win over a good field in the Grade II Louisiana Derby. He led from the start in that last victory at 1 3/16 miles and looked like he’d have no trouble going the extra 16th in Louisville.

Photo by John Sommers II/UPI

7. Reincarnate (50-1, John Velazquez, Tim Yakteen)

This Good Magic colt got into the Derby by accumulating minor

points with third-place finishes in the Grade II Rebel and Grade I Arkansas Derby, both at Oaklawn Park. His only victories were in a 1-mile maiden affair at Del Mar in November and the Grade III Sham Stakes, also at 1 mile, at Santa Anita on Jan. 8. The 1 1/4 miles of the Kentucky Derby looks like a challenge for him, thus his 50-1 odds on the morning line.

8. Mage (15-1, Javier Castellano, Gustavo Delgado)

Another by Good Magic, Mage makes just his fourth career start. His case is simple: After a tardy start, he took the lead in the stretch in the Florida Derby and Forte, the solid favorite for the Kentucky Derby, was all out to catch him and win that race by 1 length. Sounds good for Mage? Well, they go an extra furlong in Louisville, and if they’d had that much distance at Gulfstream Park, Forte looked capable of putting away his rival pretty decisively. Also, Mage finished fourth in the Fountain of Youth, won by Forte.

9. Skinner (20-1, Juan Hernandez, John Shirreffs)

This Curlin colt upped his game this season after an early-winter break, winning a maiden race at Santa Anita in February, finishing third in the Grade II San Felipe in March, and then reporting third, beaten just 1/2 length, in the Grade I Santa Anita Derby in his last start. He has improved as the distances have grown and he was making up some ground in the late going last time out. Juan Hernandez takes the reins from Victor Espinoza.

10. Practical Move (10-1, Ramon Vasquez, Tim Yakteen)

A Practical Joke colt, he got hopes up by winning the Grade II Los Alamitos Futurity in his final start of 2022 and hasn’t lost since. He won the Grade II San Felipe easily, but then was pushed to the limit by Japan-based Mandarin Hero in the Grade I Santa Anita Derby, winning by a nose as he got a clean trip while his rival fought traffic. Skinner was a closing third in that. Look for him to race just behind the speed and make a move. He was bred by Chad Brown and Head of Plains Partners, better known as hugely successful owners.

11. Disarm (30-1, Joel Rosario, Steve Asmussen)

This Gun Runner colt was on the bubble to make the Derby field

after finishing second in the Grade II Louisiana Derby. He needed to finish third or better in the Grade III Lexington at Keeneland -- the final Derby prep race -- to get in. That’s just what he did -- finish third. The combination of his sire, his trainer, Steve Asmussen, and his owner-breeder, Winchell Thoroughbreds, has been a powerful force in the past few years. Karma alert: Asmussen, one of the all-time American training leaders, has yet to win the Kentucky Derby and saw victory in last year’s race snatched from his runner, Epicenter, by 80-1 shot Rich Strike in the final strides.

12. Jace’s Road (15-1, Florent Geroux, Brad Cox)

Another of the Cox quartet, Jace’s Road was bumped from the field by Disarm and only made it back into the Derby when Wild On Ice was fatally injured in training. He finished fifth in the Grade III Southwest at Oaklawn Park, beaten 12 3/4 lengths, and third in the Louisiana Derby, 6 1/4 lengths back of the winner, Kingsbarns. That record and subpar speed figures qualify him for 50-1 morning line odds.

13. Sun Thunder (50-1, Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeck)

An Into Mischief colt trained by Kenny McPeck, he’s another who earned his way to Louisville through also-ran finishes in big races -- second in the Risen Star and fifth in the Louisiana Derby at Fair Grounds and fourth in the Grade I Blue Grass at Keeneland. He also deserves his 50-1 odds on the morning line.

14. Angel of Empire (8-1, Flavien Prat, Brad Cox)

Cox has been one of the hottest trainers on the Triple Crown trail this year and this Classic Empire colt is one of the big reasons. He finished second in the Smarty Jones Stakes at Oaklawn Park in his 3-year-old debut, and then landed the Grade II Risen Star Stakes at Fair Grounds in New Orleans and returned to Hot Springs to win the Grade I Arkansas Derby by 4 1/4 lengths with a devastating late move from well off the pace. Despite all that, he might be a little underappreciated at the windows.

15. Forte (3-1, Irad Ortiz Jr., Todd Pletcher)

Here’s your long-time Kentucky Derby favorite. The son of Violence was 4-for-5 last year, finishing with a win in the Breed-

ers’ Cup Juvenile and the Eclipse Award as the top 2-year-old of 2022. The off-the-pace stretch runner won the Fountain of Youth in his 3-year-old debut, but then was all out to win the Florida Derby. This is the 12th time trainer Todd Pletcher has had three or more starters in the Derby, but only two of the 62 have worn the roses -- Super Saver in 2010 and Always Dreaming in 2017.

16. Raise Cain (50-1, Gerardo Corrales, Ben Colebrook)

Here’s a Violence colt with just two wins from seven career starts who gets in by virtue of a 23-1 upset score in the 1-mile Gotham Stakes, run on a muddy Aqueduct track. He did win by 7 1/2 lengths that day, but none of the others who started in the Gotham will be anywhere near the Kentucky Derby starting gate. He will be one of the longest of long shots, but remember, last year’s winner was sent off at odds of 80-1.

17. Derma Sotogake (10-1, Christophe Lemaire, Hidetaka Otonashi)

Japan has radically improved its dirt racing over the past several years and now is reaping worldwide rewards, scoring big-money wins this year alone in Saudi Arabia and Dubai. This guy is part of that effort, finishing third in the Group 3 Saudi Derby, and then winning the Group 2 UAE Derby. He’s by the New York-bred sire Mind Your Biscuits, a sprinter who twice won the Group 1 Dubai Golden Shaheen. His damsire, however, is 1989 Kentucky Derby winner Sunday Silence. Trainer Otonashi knows what he’s doing and this colt is the real deal. The name? His owner is a dermatologist and Sotogake is a takedown move in sumo wrestling. The No. 17 gate? A big minus.

18. Rocket Can (30-1, Junior Alvarado, Bill Mott)

A Bill Mott trainee by Into Mischief, this one won the Grade II Holy Bull Stakes, finished second to Forte in the Fountain of Youth and then ducked a rematch in the Florida Derby. Instead, he went off as favorite in the Grade I Arkansas Derby, only to get caught up in a traffic mess at the top of the stretch and finish fourth. He faded from a pace-pressing trip in the Fountain and was victimized while coming from off the pace in Arkansas. If he can plot a better trip this time around, he could be around when it counts.

U.S. crude oil storage dips below 5-year average as energy demand 'fell off a cliff'

By Daniel J. Graeber
UPI

Storage levels of commercial crude oil dipped below the five-year average and data on the supply-side of the equation remains mixed, data show, while crude oil prices experienced a free fall on Wednesday.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration, the statistical arm of the Energy Department, showed the total amount of crude oil in storage declined by 1.3 million barrels over the last seven-day period.

U.S. commercial crude oil inventories had been a bit bloated, though recent data show storage levels are 2% below the five-year average for this time of year. The situation is a bit

mixed for refined petroleum products, however. Total motor gasoline inventories are about 6% above the five-year average, though distillates, a product line that includes diesel, is 12% below the five-year average for this time of year.

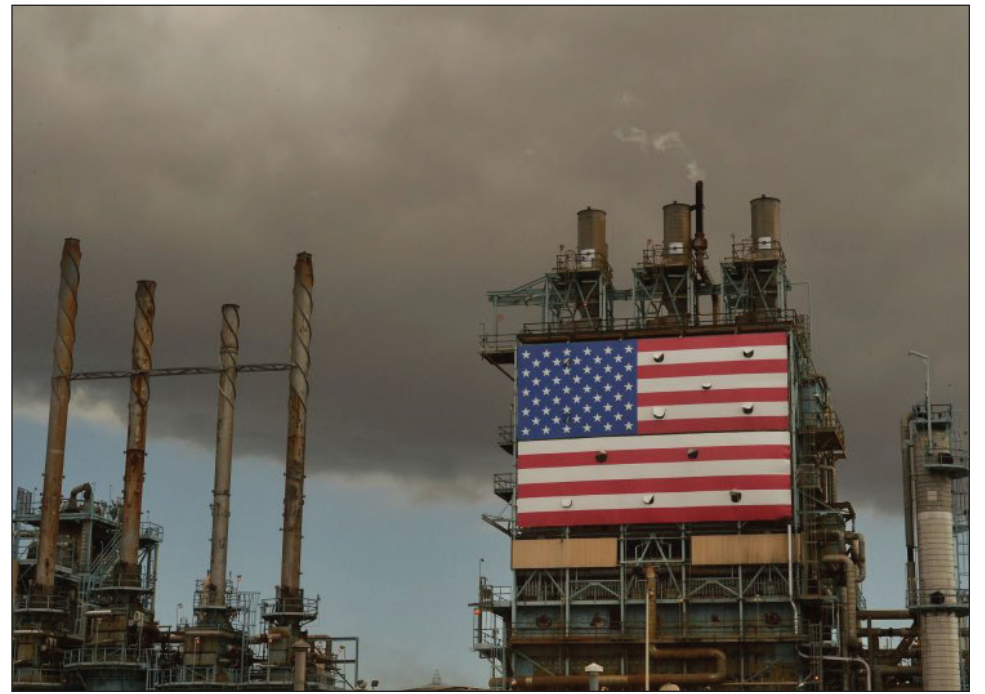
Edward Moya, a senior market analyst at OANDA, said in an emailed research note that data suggested demand "fell off a cliff" amid concerns about lackluster performance for the U.S. and Chinese economies, the two largest in the world.

China's post-pandemic rebound has been underwhelming, while recent data in the U.S. labor and housing markets point to trouble ahead. WTI was trading at \$78

one week ago. Moya added that bookings at Wyndham resorts are off, reflecting similar issues from the likes of Delta airlines.

"Crude prices don't want to rebound even as we get some signs that supplies might struggle over the short-term," said Moya. "WTI crude is below the \$70 level and it doesn't look like it is looking to stabilize anytime soon."

The decline in crude oil prices came amid news that would otherwise be bullish for the market, suggesting economic fears are entrenched. Another vessel was seized by Iran, according to the U.S. military, and Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed drones over the Kremlin were part of an assassination attempt.



Woman wins lottery jackpot using numbers from a dream

By Ben Hooper
UPI

An Australian woman won a lottery jackpot worth more than \$670,000 using a set of numbers that came to her in a dream.

The Altona, Victoria, woman told The Lott officials she bought her ticket for the April 12 Monday & Wednesday Lotto drawing on The Lott's website while away from home and only discovered she had won \$670,566.65 when she checked the balance of her online account several days later.

The winner said her numbers came from an unusual source.

"I always play these numbers. They were in a dream I had. I remembered the numbers from my dream and put them all on a Lotto ticket," she said. "We're still deciding how best to use the prize, but it will make things a whole lot easier."



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Fentanyl overdose deaths nearly quadrupled in 5 years

By Steven Reinberg
HealthDay News

Overdose deaths in the United States tied to the powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl soared 279% from 2016 to 2021, health officials reported Wednesday.

With the nation reeling from continued drug overdose deaths, investigators sought to identify trends in drug-related fatalities involving the five most commonly involved opioids and stimulant drugs: fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and oxycodone.

In just five years, deaths involving fentanyl -- the most frequently implicated substance -- rose from 6 per 100,000 people to 22 per 100,000, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"This continues to be a public health concern in the United States that we should keep monitoring," said lead researcher Mierianne Rose Spencer, a health statistician at CDC's National Center for Health Statistics.

The rate of overdose deaths involving methamphetamine and cocaine also increased during that time period, while deaths from heroin and oxycodone dropped off, Spencer's team found.

"The report, like many others over the past few years, highlights the devastation that fentanyl is wreaking on our country as lost lives continue to mount," said Pat Aussem, associate vice president for consumer clinical content development at the Partnership to End Addiction.

Among the young, fentanyl and methamphetamine were the most lethal. Death

rates were highest among young adults ages 25 to 44, with men more affected than women. All races were involved, but Black Americans and Native Americans were hit especially hard.

These chilling overdose deaths are driven by a number of factors, including misuse of opioid prescription painkillers, and use of heroin and fentanyl, often in combination with other substances, said Aussem, who was not involved with the study.

"Cocaine, meth, ecstasy and counterfeit pills that resemble Adderall, Xanax and Percocet or other pain medications may be laced with fentanyl, resulting in an overdose if the person using the substance has no tolerance for it," she said.

"Increasingly, fentanyl is combined with xylazine, an animal tranquilizer known as 'tranq,' that can raise the risk of overdose and death, Aussem added.

For the study, CDC researchers used data from the National Vital Statistics System. Among the other findings:

Fentanyl was the leading cause of overdose death among all ethnic and racial groups. The rate of drug overdose deaths involving heroin decreased by nearly 41%, although that wasn't considered significant. The rate of overdose deaths from oxycodone decreased by 21%. Spencer said that because the CDC team used death certificate data, it's not possible to show whether overdose deaths from heroin, cocaine, oxycodone and methamphetamine also involved fentanyl.

Spencer believes the rise in fentanyl-re-

lated overdose deaths is due to the increasing supply of the drug flooding into the country. It's unlikely that this trend will be reversed anytime soon as overdose deaths continue to rise, she noted.

The latest tally from the CDC is over 107,000 people in the 12-month period ending in August 2022, Aussem said. "This is equivalent to a plane with nearly 300 people aboard crashing every day. We need a focused, coordinated response embracing harm-reduction strategies and evidence-based care we know works," she added.

Aussem said difficulty accessing addiction treatment and healthcare contributes to drug overdose deaths, as do social and economic factors, such as poverty and unemployment and the stigma surrounding addiction.

What's needed now?

"To address the overdose death rates in the United States, a multifaceted approach is necessary, including increased screening for mental health and substance use health issues with greater access to quality addiction treatment," Aussem said.

Also, healthcare professionals need more training and must be more willing to treat people with substance use disorders, she noted.

Aussem added that harm reduction services are essential. These should include fentanyl and xylazine test strips, needle and syringe exchange programs, and overdose prevention education. Medications for

opioid addiction such as naloxone must be more widely available as well.

"Reducing the stigma surrounding substance use disorders is also needed so people will talk about their concerns and seek treatment," she said. "Also, educating and equipping families to respond can lead to better outcomes. They are often the first to witness the problem and can intervene to encourage safer use and/or connection to treatment."

Using test strips that identify fentanyl before someone takes a drug that might be contaminated with it can be useful, Aussem said.

"Some states treat fentanyl test strips as drug paraphernalia, but they can be helpful in saving lives," she said. "Xylazine test strips will also be needed as xylazine penetrates more of the country's drug supply."

The wide availability of the nasal spray naloxone (Narcan) is another strategy that can help prevent overdose deaths, Aussem said.

"The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration] has approved over-the-counter naloxone so anyone can get it and learn how to use it," she said. "It would be ideal to have it in first aid kits as well as readily available in schools, offices and other places where people gather."

Because many people overdose when alone, having a phone app like Canary or access to services like the Never Use Alone overdose prevention hotline (1-800-484-3731) may provide help when it is critically needed, Aussem added.

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Russia says Kremlin targeted by two drones, Putin unharmed

By Patrick Hilsman
UPI

The Russian government claimed Wednesday two drones targeted the Kremlin overnight in an assassination attempt on President Vladimir Putin.

The Kremlin press service said Putin was unharmed in the attack and his work schedule would continue as usual.

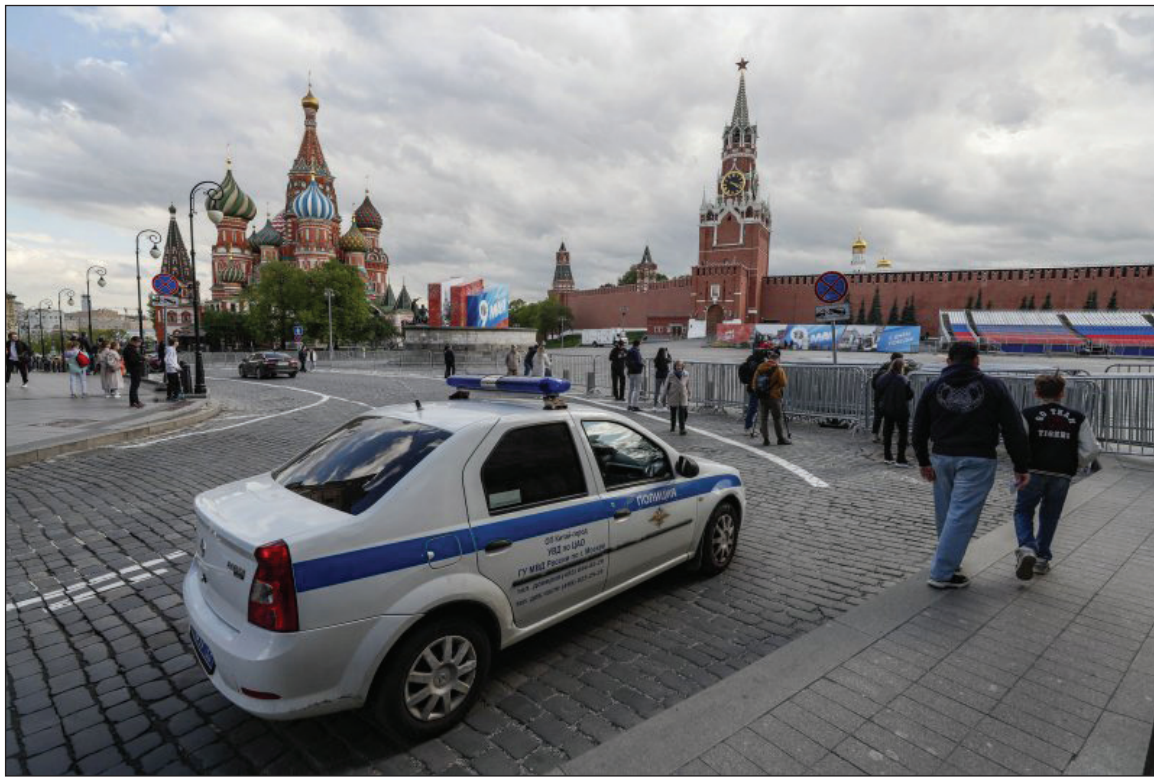
Putin was in St. Petersburg on Tuesday approving tram traffic in Mariupol via video link and celebrating the 70th birthday of Russian composer Valery Gergiev, Russian state-run news agency TASS reported.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Putin is in Novo-Ogaryovo outside Moscow meeting the governor of Nizhny Novgorod.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said

The Kremlin press service claimed the drones had been intercepted by Russian electronic countermeasures.

"As a result of timely actions taken by military and special services using electronic warfare systems, the drones were disabled,"



the press service said. "Their fall and the fragments scattered around on the territory of the Kremlin caused no casualties or material damage."

Moscow and Kyiv are both preparing to mark the victory over Nazi Germany in the Second

World War, which is celebrated on May 9.

The Presidential press service's statement called the strikes "a pre-planned act of terrorism and an attempt on the life of the Russian president, which took place just before the Victory Day and the

May 9 parade that will be attended by foreign guests."

The Presidential press service threatened retaliation, saying "Russia reserves the right to take retaliatory measures whenever and wherever it sees fit."

Presidential adviser Mykhailo

Podolyak denied Ukrainian involvement on Twitter and implied "local resistance forces" were behind the attack.

"First of all, Ukraine wages an exclusively defensive war and does not attack targets on the territory of the Russian Federation," Podolyak tweeted Wednesday.

"The emergence of unidentified unmanned aerial vehicles at energy facilities or on the Kremlin's territory can only indicate the guerilla activities of local resistance forces" said Podolyak.

Ukraine has a policy of denying strikes inside Russian territory.

On Saturday, a fire broke out at an oil facility in Russian-occupied Crimea, which pro-Russian officials blamed on a Ukrainian drone strike.

Separately, a fire broke out at a fuel depot near the Kerch Bridge in Russian-occupied Crimea Wednesday, Russian-appointed regional governor Veniamin Kondratiev wrote on Telegram.

"The fire has been assigned the highest level of severity. According to preliminary information, there are no victims," he wrote.

Iran seizes second oil tanker in Strait of Hormuz

By Doug Cunningham
UPI

For the second time within a week Iran has seized an oil tanker while transiting the Strait of Hormuz. The tanker was seized by a dozen Iran Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps fast-attack craft at 6:20 a.m. local time Wednesday, according to the U.S. Navy.

"The oil tanker departed Dubai and was transiting from the Arabian Gulf toward the port of Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates when a dozen IRGCN fast-attack craft swarmed

the vessel in the middle of the strait. The," the U.S. Navy said in a statement.

"IRGCN subsequently forced the oil tanker to reverse course and head toward Iranian territorial waters off the coast of Bandar 'Abbas, Iran."

The seized tanker Niovi was Panama-flagged.

The first oil tanker, Advantage Sweet, was seized by Iran April 27.

The Navy said then that Iran's actions were contrary to international law and regional stability and called on Iran to release the tanker. According to the U.S.

Navy, over the past two years Iran has harassed, attacked or interfered with the navigational rights of 15 internationally flagged merchant vessels.

The Navy statement Wednesday said these actions by Iran are "unwarranted, irresponsible and a present threat to maritime security and the global economy."

Tensions are high between the United States and Iran as sanctions against Iran continue and Iran supplies Russia with attack drones used against Ukraine.



Operation against fentanyl on dark web brings arrests, guns, \$53 million in cash

By Patrick Hilsman
UPI

The Justice Department on Tuesday announced 228 arrests and the seizure of more than a hundred guns in a "record-breaking" joint law-enforcement operation targeting fentanyl and opioid traffic on the dark web.

The department also said it confiscated \$53 million in cash and virtual currencies, as well as 850 kilograms of drugs that included 64 kilograms of fentanyl or fentanyl-laced narcotics.

The law enforcement action, dubbed "Operation SpecTor" by the Justice Department, was conducted by the Joint Criminal Opioid and Darknet Enforcement team, composed of multiple government agencies.

"Operation SpecTor was a coordinated international effort spanning three continents to disrupt fentanyl and opioid trafficking on the darknet, or dark web," the Justice Department said in the statement.

Taking part in the operation: the FBI; the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; U.S. postal inspectors; the Naval Criminal Investigative Service; the Internal Revenue Service; and Homeland Security. Working alongside these agencies was international law-enforcement partners in Austria, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Britain, Brazil, Poland, and



Switzerland.

"The operation was conducted across the United States, Europe, and South America, and was a result of the continued partnership between JCODE and foreign law enforcement against the illegal sale of drugs and other illicit goods and services on the darknet," the Justice Department said.

The Justice Department says it seized

"117 firearms, 850 kilograms of drugs that include 64 kilograms of fentanyl or fentanyl-laced narcotics, and \$53 million in cash and virtual currencies."

"Our message to criminals on the dark web is this: You can try to hide in the furthest reaches of the Internet, but the Justice Department will find you and hold you accountable for your crimes," said Attorney

General Merrick Garland.

"The availability of dangerous substances like fentanyl on dark net marketplaces is helping to fuel the crisis that has claimed far too many American lives," he continued. "We will continue to illuminate the dark web and we will bring to justice those who try to hide their crimes there."

The Justice Department highlighted three prosecutions from Operation SpecTor in their press release.

Anton Peck, 29, of Boca Raton, Fla., was sentenced to 16 years in prison for "conspiring to possess with the intent to distribute controlled substances, including fentanyl, methamphetamine, and heroin" on Dec. 1.

Christopher Hampton, 36, of Cerritos, Calif., was indicted on 11 counts for "various narcotics and weapons offenses that could result in a sentence of life in prison" on Nov. 18.

Devlin Hosner, 33, and Holly Adams, 31, both of Indigo, Calif., were indicted for "conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute fentanyl and methamphetamine and with conspiracy to launder money" on May 12.

In April, the White House designated fentanyl laced with xylazine as an "emerging threat." Xylazine is a drug the FDA has approved for use in animals but not humans.

The DEA says xylazine-positive overdoses have drastically increased across the United States.

American doctor dies climbing Mount Everest

By Sheri Walsh
UPI

A retired American doctor has died scaling Mount Everest, according to the U.S. Embassy in Nepal.

Jonathan Sugarman, a Seattle-based doctor and former University of Washington professor, died Monday at Camp 2,

which sits just under 21,000 feet in elevation.

The U.S. Embassy in Nepal issued a statement confirming "Dr. Jonathan Sugarman passed away while climbing Mt. Everest."

"The Embassy is in contact with Dr. Sugarman's family and with local authorities. Out of respect for the family's privacy, we cannot comment further," the

statement said.

"Jonathan Sugarman died at Camp 2 after he began to feel unwell," expedition organizer Pasang Sherpa told CNN on Tuesday. His exact cause of death has not been released.

"His body remains at Camp 2 with the rest of the climbing team," Sherpa added.

Sugarman, 69, was climbing with

International Mountain Guides based out of Washington state.

"It is with deep sorrow that IMG reports the death of one of our Everest 2023 team members at Camp 2," Eric Simonson, chief executive officer and owner of IMG, said in a statement.

"We can confirm that this event was not the result of a climbing accident or route condition that

would be of potential impact or safety concern to any other teams on the mountain," he said. "The rest of the IMG climbing team is all doing as well as can be expected given the circumstances."

Sugarman is the fourth person to die on Everest during this year's spring climbing season. Last month, three Sherpa porters died after falling into a crevasse.



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U.S. sprinter Tori Bowie, three-time Olympic medalist, dies at 32

By Alex Butler
UPI

American sprinter Tori Bowie, a three-time Olympic medalist, has died, her agency announced Wednesday. She was 32.

The cause of her death was not announced.

"We're devastated to share the very sad news that Tori Bowie has passed away," Icon Management Inc., tweeted Wednesday morning. "We've lost a client, dear friend, daughter and sister."

"Tori was a champion. A beacon of light that shined

so bright! We're truly heartbroken and our prayers are with the family and friends."

USA Track and Field said it was "deeply saddened" to hear of Bowie's death and said her "impact on the sport is immeasurable."

"My heart breaks for the family of Tori Bowie,"

Jamaican Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, an eight-time Olympic medalist, tweeted. "A great competitor and source of light. Your energy and smile will always be with me. Rest in peace."

Bowie attended the University of Southern Mississippi and turned profession-

al in 2013. She competed in the long jump, in addition to sprinting events.

The Sand Hill, Miss., native was part of a gold medal-winning 4x100-meter relay team at the 2016 Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro. She claimed a silver and bronze medal at the

same Olympics in respective 100- and 200-meter events.

Bowie went on to win gold in the 100-meter and 4x100-meter races at the 2017 World Championships. She finished third in the 100-meter race at the 2015 World Championships in Beijing.

Jets expected to sign wide receiver Randall Cobb to 1-year

By Alex Butler
UPI

The New York Jets are expected to sign veteran wide receiver Randall Cobb to a one-year contract, a league source told UPI on Wednesday.

Cobb spent 10 of his 12 previous seasons in the NFL on the Green Bay Packers, where he was teammates with new New York Jets quarterback Aaron Rod-

gers. The 32-year-old pass catcher totaled 417 yards and a touchdown in 13 games last season for the Packers. Cobb reunited with the Packers in 2021 after spending his respective 2019 and 2020 campaigns with the Dallas Cowboys and Houston Texans.

Cobb entered the league as a second-round pick for the Packers in the 2011 NFL Draft. He made the

Pro Bowl in 2014, when he gained a career-high 1,287 yards and scored 12 touchdowns on 91 catches in 16 starts for the Packers.

Cobb totaled 625 catches for 7,585 yards and 53 touchdowns over his first 155 NFL games. His 532 catches for the Packers rank fifth in franchise history, behind Donald Driver, Davante Adams, Sterling Sharpe and Jordy Nelson.

Cobb is the second for-



mer Packers wide receiver to join the Jets this off-season. The Jets signed former Rodgers target Allen Lazard to a four-year, \$44 million

deal in March. The Jets also signed former Kansas City Chiefs wide receiver Mecole Hardman earlier this off-season.

Garrett Wilson, Corey Davis and Denzel Mims are among the other wide receivers on the Jets depth chart.



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World Meteorological Organization warns of potential El Niño event in 2023

By Patrick Hilsman
UPI

The World Meteorological Organization says an El Niño weather phenomenon is likely to develop in 2023, which could result in higher temperatures.

An El Niño event occurs when the surface of the Pacific Ocean warms up, affecting global weather patterns. The event typically happens every two to seven years.

While the phenomenon is linked to increased rainfall in parts of North America, Africa,

South America, and Central Asia, it can also cause drought in Australia and parts of Southern Asia.

In contrast, a La Niña event occurs when the surface of the Pacific Ocean cools. Together the phenomena create the El Niño/Southern Oscillation cycle.

In March, the WMO declared an end to a three-year La Niña weather event.

"There is a 60% chance for a transition from ENSO-neutral to El Niño during May-July 2023, and this will increase to about 70% in June-August and 80% between

July and September," the WMO said in a press release Wednesday.

The WMO says 2016 was the hottest year on record due to a combination of an El Niño event and global warming.

"We just had the eight warmest years on record, even though we had a cooling La Niña for the past three years and this acted as a temporary brake on global temperature increase," said WMO Secretary-General Pettaeri Taalas, "the development of an El Niño will most likely lead to a new spike in global heating and increase the

chance of breaking temperature records."

The warming caused by an El Niño phenomenon usually occurs the year after it occurs, which means the effects of this year's potential El Niño phenomenon would most likely be observable in 2024.

"The world should prepare for the development of El Niño, which is often associated with increased heat, drought or rainfall in different parts of the world," said Taalas, "it might bring respite from the drought in the Horn of

Africa and other La Niña-related impacts but could also trigger more extreme weather and climate events."

In April, the WMO warned that climate change could drive food insecurity and mass migration in its State of the Global Climate 2022 report.

"While greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise and the climate continues to change, populations worldwide continue to be gravely impacted by extreme weather and climate events," the WHO said.

NOAA upgrades storm surge forecast model in time for hurricane season

By Sheri Walsh
UPI

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Tuesday it has upgraded its storm surge model to improve forecasts for high-impact weather in time for the 2023 hurricane season, which begins June 1.

NOAA's Probabilistic Storm Surge, or P-Surge, model has been upgraded to version 3.0, which will help forecasters better predict storm surge risks in the United States, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands during the hurricane and tropical storm season that runs through Nov. 30.

"Today, NOAA upgraded the Probabilistic Storm Surge model!" NOAA tweeted Tuesday. "The upgrade brings key modeling and forecasting improvements for storm surge, just in time for the official start to the 2023 Hurricane season in just about a month!"

This just in Today, NOAA upgraded the Probabilistic Storm Surge (P-Surge) model! The upgrade brings key modeling and forecasting improvements for storm surge, just in time for the



official start to the 2023 #Hurricane season in just about a month! <https://t.co/GdJK0HG5Ru> pic.twitter.com/7MmPdJmr0m— National Weather Service (@NWS) May 2, 2023

Storm surge is the abnormal rise of water generated by a storm above the normal astronomical tide and can cause extreme flooding in coastal areas.

"We are seeing a sharp increase in catastrophic storm surge impacts in our coastal communities," said Ken Graham, director of NOAA's National Weather Service.

"Our new capabilities to effectively and accurately model and forecast storm

surge is critical to upholding the NWS mission of protection of life and property," Graham added.

NOAA's improved P-Surge model will provide better forecasts for surge, tide, and waves for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The model can also run two storms' forecasts simultaneously and can provide more accurate computations of the amount of water inundation coastal areas can expect.

P-Surge models a storm surge by creating a range and likelihood of storm surge values before hurricanes and tropical storms hit Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

Now the update will allow the same kind of analysis for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, too.

NOAA released its first P-Surge model in 2008 after storm surge devastated communities along the Outer Banks of North Carolina and southeast Virginia following Hurricane Isabel in 2003.

The latest P-Surge model takes wind forecasts from NOAA's National Hurricane Center combined with historic averages and enters them into NOAA's Sea, Lake and Overland Surges from Hurricanes -- or SLOSH model -- to come up with storm surge water levels and inundation.

Study casts light on dying star seen devouring planet big as Jupiter

By Patrick Hilsman
UPI

Researchers have discovered a star at the end of its life cycle, which has absorbed a Jupiter-size planet, according to a study published Wednesday in the Journal Nature.

Kishalay De, an astronomer with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the study's lead author, first observed the event. De was using Caltech's Zwicky Transient Facility at the Palomar Observatory in California to look for novae, cosmic events that occur when a collapsed star, or white dwarf, pulls gas from nearby stars. It was then when he observed a flash from the event.

De then pulled data collected by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory's Near-Earth Object Wide Field Infrared Survey Explorer spacecraft, which produces infrared scans of the entire sky every six months.

Based on the data from NEOWISE, De was able to determine that the star had become brighter nearly a year before he initially observed the cosmic event.

De was also able to determine that the gasses in the area of the star were much cooler than the hot jets of gas that typically surround novae.

"As the star expanded, its outer atmosphere eventually surrounded the planet," NASA said in a press release, adding that "drag from the atmosphere slowed the planet down, shrinking its orbit and eventually sending it below the star's visible surface."

As the planet was pulled into the star, the energy from the collision caused the star to become even larger and temporarily became hundreds of times brighter. The infrared flash from the star is thought to have been caused by the presence of dust, which emits infrared light when it is heated up by starlight.

"Very few things in the universe brighten in infrared light and then brighten in optical light at different times," said De.

"The fact that the NEOWISE saw the star brighten a year before the optical eruption was critical to figuring out what this event was," he continued.

De's team believes the dust is a result of the planet pulling gasses from the star during the collision, when the gasses cool.

When our own sun reaches the end of its lifecycle in approximately 5 billion years, it is believed that it will absorb planets in the solar system in a similar fashion.

"If I were an observer looking at the solar system 5 billion years from now, I might see the sun brighten a little, but nothing as dramatic as this, even though it will be the

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- **DO NOT** search for the leak, try to stop it, smoke, or use anything that may create a spark or flame



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La Voz Latina

Japanese PM Kishida to visit South Korea this weekend amid thawing ties

By Thomas Maresca
UPI

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is coming to Seoul for talks with South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol this weekend, officials said Tuesday, in the first visit by a Japanese leader since 2018 as relations continue to improve between the two U.S. allies.

Tokyo's Foreign Ministry confirmed Tuesday that Kishida's two-day trip will start Sunday. It follows on the heels of Yoon's trip to Tokyo in March, during which the two leaders vowed to resolve lingering trade disputes and to restore "shuttle diplomacy" after the relationship had frozen



in recent years.

The Seoul visit will present a "good opportunity

to frankly exchange opinions on ways to develop Japan-South Korea relations

and the rapidly changing international situation," Kishida told reporters during a

visit to Accra, Ghana.

Relations between Seoul and Tokyo took a turn for the worse in 2018 after the South Korean Supreme Court ruled that two Japanese firms must provide compensation to victims of forced labor under Japan's 1910-45 colonial occupation of Korea.

The Yoon administration announced a plan in March to resolve the dispute by using South Korean public funds to pay the victims. Both sides have since made moves to lift trade restrictions that emerged in the wake of the 2018 decision.

The thaw comes in the face of growing nuclear threats from North Korea and an increasingly asser-

tive China. Washington has been pushing for closer cooperation among its Asian allies and the three countries have begun stepping up trilateral military exercises.

Yoon visited the United States last week when he and U.S. President Joe Biden adopted the Washington Declaration, an enhanced nuclear cooperation pact that will include greater information sharing and visits by U.S. nuclear submarines to South Korea.

Japan is hosting the Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima on May 19-21, and Kishida has invited Yoon to attend. In a further show of improving ties between Seoul and Tokyo, the finance ministers of the two

Emilio Estevez has pitch for how to reboot 'The Mighty Ducks'

By Fred Topel
UPI

Emilio Estevez told UPI he would still return for another Mighty Ducks if Disney agreed to his pitch. Estevez starred in Season 1 of the Disney+ series The Mighty Ducks: Game Changers but declined to return for Season 2, and the streaming service has now canceled the show.

"I have my own pitch for how to reboot The Mighty Ducks and I have no ill will towards Disney," Estevez told UPI in a phone interview promoting the re-release of The Way.

Estevez added he is open to meet-

ing with the CEO of Disney "if Bob Iger ever wants to sit down and talk about how to reboot the Ducks in a way that I think audiences would dig."

Estevez, who played hockey coach Gordon Bombay, said he felt Game Changers "didn't pay the proper homage to the movies. The fans were the first ones to tell us that. That is really the reason why I didn't return for the second season."

Season 1 of Game Changers had Bombay run his own ice rink, having left hockey behind. The Mighty Ducks had become a competitive team that excluded less skillful players from joining the team.

One way Estevez would get

it right would be to ask Joshua Jackson to return in the role of Charlie. Jackson was a teenager in the movie trilogy and Estevez directed Jackson in the film Bobby.

"He's an actor who I hope to re-team with at some point in the future, maybe on the next Ducks movie or TV show," Estevez said. "To bring Josh back in, that's how we would start to get it right."

After Disney announced Estevez would not return for Season 2, Estevez told Deadline in a statement that "a good old fashioned contract dispute" and "a myriad of creative differences" led to his exit. Now, Estevez elaborated.



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