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Page 8



President Joe Biden speaks during a Summit for Democracy virtual plenary in the South Court Auditorium on the White House campus, Wednesday, March 29, 2023, in Washington.

Associated Press

Biden: World 'turning the tide' after backslide on democracy

By AAMER MADHANI

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Wednesday offered an optimistic outlook on the health of democracy worldwide, declaring that leaders are "turning the tide" in stemming a yearslong backslide of democratic institutions. Opening his second democracy summit, Biden looked to spotlight hopeful advancements over the past year despite Russia's war in neighboring Ukraine and U.S. tensions with

China over its military and economic influence in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. The president cited signs of progress across the globe, from Angola's effort to create an independent judiciary, Croatia's move to boost government transparency and the Dominican Republic's anti-corruption steps. At home, Biden pointed to his stalled push for voting protections in Congress as evidence of his administration's commitment to support democracy.

Continued on Page 2

The Aruban Gymnastics Federation organizes its first National Artistic Gymnastics Competition



Page 7

Imelda Rustveld and Gabriel Ras recognized as cultural giants



Page 11

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Biden: World 'turning the tide' after backslide on democracy

Continued from Front

"Today, we can say, with pride, democracies of the world are getting stronger, not weaker," Biden said. "Autocracies of the world are getting weaker, not stronger. That's a direct result of all of us."

The summits, which Biden promised as candidate in 2020, have become an important piece of his administration's effort to try to build deeper alliances and nudge autocratic-leaning nations toward at least modest changes.

He said the U.S. will spend \$690 million bolstering democracy programs — supporting everything from free and independent media to free and fair elections — around the world. He said he also wanted to use the summit to foster discussion about the use of technology to "advance democratic governance" and ensure such technology is "not used to undermine it."

The U.S. has come to an agreement with 10 other nations on guiding prin-



President Joe Biden speaks during a Summit for Democracy virtual plenary in the South Court Auditorium on the White House campus, Wednesday, March 29, 2023, in Washington.

Associated Press

ciples for how the governments should use surveillance technology, according to a senior administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to preview the agreement before its formal announcement.

Earlier this week, Biden signed an executive order

restricting the U.S. government's use of commercial spyware tools that have been used to surveil human rights activists, journalists and dissidents around the world.

Since Biden's first democracy summit in December 2021, countries have emerged from the corona-

virus pandemic and Russia invaded Ukraine, the largest-scale war in Europe since World War II.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, pushed back at those suggesting it was time for a negotiated settlement with Russian leader Vladimir Putin. "We should get rid of the illusion that compromising with evil can give something to freedom, and enemies of democracy must lose," Zelenskyy told the summit.

The Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, said the invasion was a jolting moment for the world's democracies.

"For decades, the idea of war in Europe seemed unthinkable. But we were wrong as Russia's brutalization of Ukraine has shown we cannot assume that democracy, freedom and security are givens, that they are eternal," Rutte said.

Kenya's president, William Ruto, said building democracy was essential to the growth of developing nations. Ruto was the winner last year of Kenya's close presidential race in which opposition candidate Raila Odinga had alleged irregularities. Kenya's Supreme Court unanimously rejected the challenges. "This is our path to sustainable development," Ruto said.

The U.S. hosted the last summit on its own. This time, it recruited four co-hosts — Costa Rica, the Netherlands, South Korea and Zambia — after ambassadors from China and Russia criticized the first summit and accused Biden of causing a global divide with a Cold War mentality. Still, some countries would rather not get between Washington and Beijing, an increasingly important economic and military player. Pakistan announced, as it did in 2021, that it received an invitation but would skip the summit, a move seen in part as an effort by the impoverished Islamic nation to assuage longtime ally China, which was not invited.

The Biden administration has also expanded its invitation list. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Gambia, Honduras, Ivory Coast, Lichtenstein, Mauritania, Mozambique and Tanzania were invited this year after being left off the list in 2021.

Costa Rica will focus on the role of youth in democratic systems. The Dutch are taking on media freedom. South Korea is looking at corruption. Zambia is centering on free and fair elections.

The U.S. is no stranger to the challenges facing democracies, including deep polarization and pervasive misinformation.

Lies spread about the 2020 presidential election by then-President Donald Trump and his supporters have convinced a majority of Republicans that Biden was not legitimately elected, normalized harassment and death threats against election officials, and been used to justify efforts in Republican-controlled legislatures to adopt new voting restrictions.

Later this year, the U.S. Supreme Court will rule in a case from Alabama that voting rights advocates fear could virtually dismantle the nearly 60-year-old Voting Rights Act. Congressional efforts to shore up that federal law and increase voting access have failed. □

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GOP lawmakers accuse Fed of being lax before bank failure

By PAUL WISEMAN

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican lawmakers accused top bank regulators Wednesday of dawdling as Silicon Valley Bank hurtled toward the second-largest bank failure in U.S. history and questioned whether tougher regulations would have made a difference. Regulators closed the bank March 10, shaking the U.S. financial system and triggering fears of a broader banking crisis. But Federal Reserve supervisors had first raised questions about Silicon Valley's risky practices far earlier — in 2021 — and had warned the bank's management about them in the fall of that year.

"That doesn't sound like a very urgent supervisory process," Rep. French Hill, an Arkansas Republican, said at Wednesday's hearing of the House Financial Services Committee into the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and of New York-based Signature Bank on March 12. Signature Bank's collapse was the third-biggest in the nation's history. In response to the crisis, some Democrats are calling for stricter bank regulations. Specifically, they want to undo a law, championed by the Trump administration five years ago, that rolled back the strict-



Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Board of Directors Chairman Martin Gruenberg, center, accompanied by Federal Reserve Board of Governors Vice Chair for Supervision Michael Barr, left, and Treasury Department Under Secretary for Domestic Finance Nellie Liang, right, testifies at a House Financial Services Committee hearing on recent bank failures, on Capitol Hill, Wednesday, March 29, 2023, in Washington.

Associated Press

est regulations on all but the very biggest banks — those with assets of more than \$250 billion.

The 2018 law allowed the Fed to apply tougher oversight only on a case-by-case basis of banks with assets between \$100 billion and \$250 billion, a category that included both Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank. The Fed official who oversees bank regulation, Michael Barr, agreed Wednesday that the Fed

had had "substantial discretion" to deal with Silicon Valley Bank.

The Fed is conducting its own review of its supervision of Silicon Valley Bank, due May 1. Barr said the review would, among other things, look into why Fed officials couldn't compel the bank's management to fix the problems.

Before enacting tough new regulations on banks, said Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer, a Missouri Republican, "How

about enforcing the existing ones first?"

Rep. Jim Himes, a Connecticut Democrat, also questioned Barr about the apparent lack of follow-up by Fed regulators once they had rated Silicon Valley Bank's management "deficient" in July 2022. Himes suggested that Congress consider requiring banks to respond to concerns raised by supervisors in a timely manner.

"We need to tighten up the

process," Himes said. "We need to think about automatic mechanisms that when a finding of deficiency is made... kick in."

Regulators have said that Silicon Valley Bank, the go-to institution for California tech startups, was an "idiosyncratic" case and that the overall U.S. banking system remains sound. Silicon Valley had made a high-risk bet that interest rates would fall. When they instead rose as the Fed aggressively increased its benchmark rate to fight inflation, the value of the bank's vast bond portfolio plummeted.

News of its financial distress led panicked large depositors to yank money out of the bank — a stunning \$42 billion on March 9. Depositors were expected to withdraw an additional \$100 billion the next day. In response, regulators intervened to take control of the bank and stop the bank run.

The vast majority of Silicon Valley Bank's deposits exceeded the federal deposit insurance limit of \$250,000. Worried that its failure would shake public faith in American banks, the federal government decided to protect all deposits at Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank, even those exceeding \$250,000. □

Congress to consider new no-fly list for unruly passengers

By DAVID KOENIG

AP Airlines Writer

U.S. Senate and House members proposed a new no-fly list for unruly passengers on Wednesday, an idea that was pushed by airline unions but failed to gain traction last year. The legislation would let the Transportation Security Administration ban people convicted or fined for assaulting or interfering with airline crew members. It would be separate from the current FBI-run no-fly list, which is intended to prevent people suspected of terrorism ties from boarding planes.

The number of incidents involving unruly passengers dropped sharply last year after a judge struck down a federal requirement to wear masks on planes. However, incidents serious enough to be investigated by federal officials remained more than five times higher than before the pandemic.

"The violent incidents have not stopped," said Cher Taylor, a Frontier Airlines flight attendant who said she witnessed a passenger attack another in 2021 in Miami and walk away before police arrived. At a news conference out-

side the Capitol Taylor said "Strong penalties are needed to curb violent and unacceptable behavior. Bad behavior should not fly."

Civil libertarians vowed to oppose the measure. They say the FBI no-fly list is not transparent and unfairly targets people of color, and that the new list would have the same problems. They also say that the Federal Aviation Administration is cracking down on bad behavior, and that reports of unruly passengers are declining.

"If Congress wants to further reduce air-rage incidents on aircraft, it should



A Transportation Security Administration officer works at Dallas Love Field Airport on June 24, 2020, in Dallas.

Associated Press

look at forcing the airlines to make flying a less miserable experience," said Jay Stanley, a spokesman for the American Civil Liberties Union.

The new measure was introduced by Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., and Reps. Eric Swalwell, D-Calif., and Brian Fitz-

patrick, R-Penn.

The lawmakers said the bill includes guidelines for notifying people that they are being placed on the list, and how to appeal. The bill would let TSA decide how long a person would be banned from flying on commercial planes. □

Dem senators from 4 states ask NOAA to address whale deaths

By **WAYNE PARRY**

Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP)

— Democratic U.S. Senators from four states want federal environmental officials to address a spate of whale deaths on both coasts, urging “transparency and timeliness” in releasing information about whale deaths and their causes. The call late Tuesday by New Jersey Sens. Robert Menendez and Cory Booker; Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumenthal, Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley, and Rhode Island Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse for action by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration marked the first large-scale request for action by Democratic federal lawmakers on an issue that has rapidly become politicized.

Thus far, mostly Republican lawmakers have called for a pause or an outright halt to offshore wind farm preparation work, which they blame for the deaths of whales along the U.S. East Coast since December. But in their letter to a NOAA administrator, the Democratic senators conspicuously did not blame or even mention offshore



A police officer in Seaside Park N.J. photographs a dead whale on the beach on March 2, 2023. On Tuesday, March 28, Democratic U.S. Senators from four states called upon the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to address a spate of whale deaths on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

wind as a potential cause of the deaths. Numerous federal agencies have said there is no evidence linking it to whale deaths, many of which were determined to have been caused by ship strikes or entanglement with fishing gear.

In a statement to The Associated Press on Wednesday, Booker said he wants the agency to protect whales and communicate quickly about any deaths. “To protect these animals, we must follow the facts and address the known,

documented causes of death,” he said. “We know that NOAA’s preliminary findings for many of the whales washing up along the Atlantic coast this year have shown evidence of a vessel strike.”

The senators voiced particular concern about two deaths of endangered North Atlantic right whales, although most of the whale deaths involved the more plentiful humpback species.

“Without action, the (North Atlantic right whale) will

likely go extinct,” they wrote. “If we do not act, other whale species may face the same fate.”

Lauren Gaches, a NOAA spokesperson, said that as of Wednesday, 30 whale deaths have been recorded on the Atlantic Coast since Dec. 1. They were 21 humpback whales; three sperm whales; three minke whales; two North Atlantic right whales and one sei whale.

The senators also expressed concern about the deaths of gray whales on the West

Coast, where 298 of the animals have washed ashore since 2019. Some showed signs of emaciation, but NOAA said more research is needed.

NOAA has declared “unusual mortality events” involving whales on both coasts, including one on the East Coast dating back to 2016. Gaches said the agency will work directly with Congress to address any concerns it may have about the issue and the agency’s response to it.

The senators asked NOAA to detail how it plans to address and prevent whale deaths; outline the agency’s procedures for notifying the public when a whale death is discovered and when the results of necropsy examinations are ready; and list any challenges the agency faces in determining the causes of whale deaths, and whether specific actions by Congress or the administration might help.

They noted that since 2008, NOAA has implemented vessel speed regulations to reduce the number of whale deaths caused by boat strikes, and that updated rules regarding the issue are due by June. □

Hawaii authorities say 33 swimmers were harassing dolphins

By **AUDREY McAVOY**

Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Hawaii authorities on Tuesday say



In this photo provided by the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, department enforcement officers speak to swimmers in Honaunau, Hawaii, March 26, 2023, after the swimmers allegedly harassed a pod of wild spinner dolphins.

Associated Press

they have referred 33 people to U.S. law enforcement after the group allegedly harassed a pod of wild dolphins in waters off the Big Island.

It’s against federal law to swim within 50 yards (45 meters) of spinner dolphins in Hawaii’s nearshore waters. The prohibition went into effect in 2021 amid concerns that so many tourists were swimming with dolphins that the nocturnal animals weren’t getting the rest they need during the day to be able to forage for food at night.

The rule applies to areas within 2 nautical miles (3.7 kilometers) of the Hawaiian Islands and in designated waters surrounded by the islands of Lanai, Maui and

Kahoolawe.

The state Department of Land and Natural Resources said in a news release that its enforcement officers came upon the 33 swimmers in Honaunau Bay on Sunday during a routine patrol.

Aerial footage shot by drone shows snorkelers following dolphins as they swim away.

The department said its video and photos showed swimmers “who appear to be aggressively pursuing, corralling and harassing the pod.”

Enforcement officers contacted the group while they were in the water, and told them about the violation.

Uniformed officers met the

swimmers on land where state and federal officials launched a joint investigation.

Hawaii’s spinner dolphins feast on fish and small crustaceans that surface from the ocean’s depths at night.

When the sun rises, they head for shallow bays to hide from tiger sharks and other predators.

To the untrained eye, the dolphins appear to be awake during the day because they’re swimming.

But because they sleep by resting half of their brains and keeping the other half awake to surface and breathe, they may be sleeping even when they’re maneuvering through the water. □

U.S.: Credit Suisse violates deal on rich clients' tax evasion

By JAMEY KEATEN and
COURTNEY BONNELL
Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Credit Suisse violated a plea agreement with U.S. authorities by failing to report secret offshore accounts that wealthy Americans used to avoid paying taxes, U.S. lawmakers said Wednesday, releasing a two-year investigation that detailed the role employees at the embattled Swiss bank had in aiding tax evasion by clients.

The U.S. Senate Finance Committee pointed to an ongoing, possibly criminal conspiracy tied to nearly \$100 million in accounts belonging to a family of American taxpayers that the bank did not disclose. It also said Credit Suisse helped a U.S. businessman hide more than \$220 million in offshore accounts from the IRS.

Credit Suisse revealed that it had found 23 accounts each worth more than \$20 million that were not declared to tax authorities, many of them unveiled just days before the report was released, according to the committee. It said its findings show that more than \$700 million was concealed in violation of the bank's 9-year-old plea deal with the U.S. Justice Department.

"Credit Suisse got a discount on the penalty it faced in 2014 for enabling tax evasion because bank executives swore up and down they'd get out of the business of defrauding the United States," said Sen. Ron Wyden, the Democratic chairman of the committee. "This investigation shows Credit Suisse did not make good on that promise, and the bank's pending acquisition does not wipe the slate clean," he said. The Swiss government pressed for a \$3.25 billion takeover of long-troubled Credit Suisse by rival bank UBS this month amid turmoil in the global financial system. The collapse of two U.S. banks ignited wider fears that sent shares of Switzerland's second-largest bank tumbling as



A sign displays the name of Credit Suisse on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange in New York, Wednesday, March 15, 2023.

customers withdrew their money.

The Senate findings pose new problems for UBS as it tries to absorb Credit Suisse and create a single Swiss megabank, coming the same day that UBS named a new CEO to help push through the takeover. It's also Credit Suisse's latest run-in with U.S. authorities, following settlements worth hundreds of millions of dollars over mortgage-backed securities that were behind the 2008 financial crisis.

Credit Suisse, whose yearslong troubles range from hedge fund losses to fines for failing to prevent money laundering by a Bulgarian cocaine ring, said it "does not tolerate tax evasion" and insisted that the Senate report described "legacy issues" some dating to a decade ago that have been addressed since. "We have implemented extensive enhancements since then to root out individuals who seek to conceal assets from tax authorities," the Zurich-based bank said.

"Our clear policy is to close undeclared accounts when identified and to discipline any employee who fails to comply with bank policy or falls short of Credit Suisse's standards of conduct," it said.

UBS said it has assessed

outstanding lawsuits and investigations as part of the Credit Suisse acquisition and expects the deal to be beneficial for shareholders. It's working to close the sale and get approval from regulators in the coming weeks or months.

The Senate report noted Credit Suisse's cooperation with the investigation, including having appointed new leadership.

The Swiss lender paid a discounted fine of \$1.3 billion to the U.S. Justice Department after pleading guilty in 2014 to conspiracy to aid and assist U.S. taxpayers in filing false income tax returns and other documents with the IRS.

The bank acknowledged "knowingly and willfully" helping thousands of Americans open accounts that weren't declared to tax authorities and concealing offshore assets. It avoided criminal charges in exchange for agreeing to report undeclared accounts and provide other information to U.S. officials. The Senate committee said secret offshore accounts belonging to a family of dual U.S.-Latin American citizens and worth nearly \$100 million were closed in 2013 but the money was transferred to other banks without telling U.S. authorities.

With that maneuver, "Credit Suisse enabled what appears to be potentially criminal tax evasion by a client to go undetected for almost a decade," the report says.

The committee said former senior bankers helped manage that family's accounts. In addition, Credit Suisse employees helped a U.S. businessman hide \$220 million from U.S. authorities despite long knowing he was an American, according to the report, which said whistleblowers flagged the scheme after the plea deal.

Credit Suisse workers were incentivized to help accounts hide U.S. ties because their bonuses depend on the amount of money being managed, the report said.

To that end, employees who had clients with assets above \$20 million or \$30 million may have given those accounts special consideration because it would mean they got larger bonuses, the committee said. Investigators say bankers figured out how to code accounts for Americans who possess dual citizenship. Those bankers would use the non-U.S. passport of wealthy individuals to evade internal systems designed to look for identifying marks in U.S. passports. □

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Long Paris trash strike ends, workers face daunting cleanup

By THOMAS ADAMSON

Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Striking sanitation workers in Paris began returning to work Wednesday, ending one of the most enduring symbols of opposition to French President Emmanuel Macron's unpopular pension bill, as nationwide protests also appeared to be winding down.

Awaiting clean-up crews were heaps of trash that had piled up over their weeklong strike beginning March 6, as well as debris from the streets following the tenth nationwide anti-pension reform protests a day earlier.

Trash mounds that reached up to 10,000 tons along the French capital's streets matching the weight of the Eiffel Tower have become a striking visual and olfactory symbol of opposition to Macron's plan to raise the retirement age by two years. For most people that means working until 64 once the measure, under examination by the Constitutional Council, is enshrined in law.

Sanitation workers, who had blocked three incinerator plants and garbage truck depots, retire earlier



A man jogs past uncollected garbage bags Tuesday, March 28, 2023 in Paris.

Associated Press

than most people, at age 57 due to their laborious jobs, though many work longer to increase their pension. The new plan would push their retirement age to 59.

Numerous strikers had cited health concerns if they were made to work longer. In a decision that sent waves of relief among many Paris residents, the powerful CGT union representing sanitation workers announced that the three-

week-long strike would be "suspended" as of Wednesday. Crews will join others who were legally requisitioned over the last week to help with the daunting clean-up process.

A statement by the CGT claimed that requisitions of trucks, incinerators and personnel, ordered by the Paris police prefect, had bled the movement, leading to its suspension. But added that "the combat isn't over."

"It's good that the trash is collected. It's very unsanitary, and some residents already have trouble with rats and mice. It can be dangerous if it's left too long," said artist Gil Franco, 73. The suspension of the strike, together with the dwindling protest numbers, is seen by some as the beginning of the end of demonstrations against the pension bill.

"People are getting tired of it. There has been too much violence. Paris is a

mess, and I want to get on with normal life," said Paris resident Amandine Betout, 32, getting her morning croissant in Le Marais district. She said it was a "good thing" that the trash is swept up from the streets, even though the cleanup could take some time.

An artist going by the single name Bisk who has drawn attention for his creative sculptures using trash said his work has added some levity to otherwise tense protests, reminding Parisians about the lighter side of life. "People come by all serious, then see a monster's face or a little man and they leave with a smile. People have thanked me for puncturing the mood," the 30-year-old artist said.

Bisk said he has worked on around 100 trash bin 'sculptures' since March 6, creating fantastical monster's faces with mad eyes or little friendly men that have garnered a life of their own on social media.

"Everyone is tense, and I'm stopped by police when I'm working as they think I'm going to set fire to the trash — but I'm just doing art," Bisk said. "I'm not political. I just transform crap into gold." □

Calls mount for Taliban to free girls' education activist

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Calls mounted Wednesday for the Taliban to free a girls' education activist arrested earlier this week in Kabul, as a minister in the Taliban-led

government defended the detention.

Matiullah Wesa, founder and president of Pen Path — a local nongovernmental group that travels across

Afghanistan with a mobile school and library — was arrested in the Afghan capital on Monday.

Since their takeover of Afghanistan, the Taliban have imposed restrictions on women's and minority rights. Girls are barred from school beyond the sixth grade and last year, the Taliban banned women from going to universities.

Wesa has been outspoken in his demands for girls to have the right to go to school and learn, and has repeatedly called on the Taliban-led government to reverse its bans. His most recent tweets coincided with the start of the new academic year in Afghanistan, with girls remaining shut out of classrooms and campuses. Late Tuesday, the

U.S. chargé d'affaires for Afghanistan, Karen Decker, said she was disturbed by "multiple, disturbing reports" of Afghans being detained while peacefully protesting in support of their aspirations.

Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai said he was saddened to hear of Wesa's arrest.

Local reports said Taliban security forces detained Wesa after his return from a trip to Europe. The Taliban authorities have not confirmed his detention, whereabouts or reasons for the arrest.

Abdul Haq Humad, the director of publications at the Ministry of Information and Culture, defended the detention.

"His actions were suspi-

cious and the system has the right to ask such people for an explanation," he said Tuesday in a tweet. "It is known that the arrest of an individual caused such widespread reaction that a conspiracy was prevented." Wesa's brother, Attaullah Wesa, said Taliban forces surrounded the family home on Tuesday, beat family members and confiscated Matiullah's mobile phone. Social media activists have created a hashtag to campaign for Matiullah Wesa's release. Many posts condemned his detention and demanded immediate freedom for the activist.

Wesa and others from the Pen Path launched a door-to-door campaign to promote girls' education. □



Matiullah Wesa, a girls' education advocate, reads to students in the open area in Spin Boldak district in the southern Kandahar province of Afghanistan on May 21, 2022.

Associated Press



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The Aruban Gymnastics Federation organizes its first National Artistic Gymnastics Competition

(Oranjestad)—Last weekend, the Aruban Gymnastics Federation organized for the first time, a national competition for artistic gymnastics. On Saturday morning, the minister of Sports, Mr. Endy Croes, was present at the tournament, held at the Sports Center

Betico Croes, where he opened the competition with a brief speech.

Currently, there are three gymnastics clubs on the island. Those include Gihae Gymnastics, Perla Gymnastics and Avanse. On the 25th and 26th of March,

these three clubs competed against each other in different categories for the first time. There was a big crowd of supporters sitting in the bleachers, excited to see the contestants. Minister Croes applauds the work done by the federation in transforming the



entire sports center into an appropriate environment for gymnastics. Additionally, he also commends how the floor had been divided into different sections, all for different categories in the competition. The minister congratulates the president of the federation, Mrs. Milly Bagheri-

van Trigt, and the board of directors for their success in organizing this big event. Furthermore, he praises the tremendous work done by the clubs, parents and athletes. Finally, he would like to give the biggest congratulations to all finalists and winners from all categories. □



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Shopping

The Paseo Herencia stores offer a great collection in beach wear, clothing, perfume, shoes, jewelry, souvenirs and much more. Pamper yourself by visiting Maggy's and enjoy their salon services and shop for your favorite beauty products. Aruba Aloe has that perfect gift to bring back home, all made with natural ingredients. Other brand favorites are Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Aldo, Carmen Steffens, Nike store, Pandora and many more.

Restaurants

Start with a breakfast meal at Paseo Herencia offering unique breakfast options such as Drunk's Denial with their Make it Your Own Crêpe Bar offering sweet and savory crêpe flavors and the option to booze it up with their Mimosa crêpe (mandarin soaked in champagne), Pina Colada (pineapples in coconut rum), Bourbon Apple, Brandy Apricot, Whiskey Pear and more. Location can be found by following the bakery smell upon arrival. Another option is Seabarita offering you delicious breakfast options ranging from Huevos Rancheros to empanadas surrounded by a cozy picnic setting with streetside view. Go Argentinian style at Che Bar and try their delicious omelet with chorizo/ham, mozzarella, onions, peppers, and tomatoes served with skillet potatoes and toast. Looking for something for the whole family? Visit TGI Fridays



and choose between waffle, omelets, breakfast sandwiches and tacos starting at \$8. These restaurants are also open for lunch & dinner offering you a variety of cuisine choices. If you're looking for more unique concepts, join us for dinner at Xixon Restaurant greatly known in Miami for their Spanish inspired dishes with top notch flavors and the largest wine variety or visit The Lazy Turtle and try their exotic African dish "Kuvuta Kuku" accompanied by their tasty lazy cocktails. Coming for drinks? Sip and have a good time at the Bulldog Aruba located in the center of the Plaza. Open till late.

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Entertainment

Catch live shows from Monday to Thursday and Sunday at 8pm on the Paseo center stage and the nightly water shows at 7:30pm, 8:30pm and 9:30pm. Looking for some adrenaline? Visit the Airsoft experience located behind The Lazy Turtle. Snap Instagramable pictures at the Angel Wings located between Pandora and Free Spirit or the Flying mosaic hearts located behind King Churros. Parking up to two hours is free when shopping, dining or catching a movie at Paseo Herencia. Just present your purchase receipt at our parking cashier.

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Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Eagle Aruba Beach Resort

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently recognized the Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. Presenting the Ambassadors with the Goodwill certification as a token of appreciation.

The Goodwill certification is granted to ambassadors to recognize, their loyalty, friendship, and visits to the island of Aruba. Goodwill Honorees have been choosing Aruba as their preferred vacation destination for more than 20 years consecutively. The Honoring certification program has three levels, which are divided according to the number of consecutive years visiting the island.

Honoring Levels:

- Distinguished Ambassadors: 10+ years
- Goodwill Ambassadors: 20+ years
- Emerald Ambassadors: 35+ years

Honorees were:

Goodwill Ambassadors:
20+ years:

Richard & Linda Rothstein are residents of Massachusetts, United States (have been coming to

Aruba for 20 years consecutively).

Ms. Marouska Heyliger representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and members of the Eagle Aruba Resort bestowed the certification of the Goodwill Ambassador Certificate and memorable gifts.

On behalf of the Government of Aruba, we would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to Mr. & Mrs. Rothstein for making Aruba their preferred vacation destination for so many years. We are so thankful to have had such wonderful visitors all these years! Aruba is unquestionably their home away from home!

The top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by the honorees were:

Michael & Charmaine Langlois reasons:

1. Friendly people treat us like family (most important)
2. Beautiful beaches
3. Swimming and snorkeling
4. Excellent restaurants
5. Shopping ☐



**beauty
& THE
★
BEACH**

Aruba Today is delighted to share to its readers a new segment called "Beauty and the Beach", where we take a minute to honor our guests who have decided to spend their vacation on our beautiful and warm island.

In this edition, we'd like to give a shout out to **Ashley, Lindsay and Stacy from Canada**, who say their favorite thing on the island is the people. Aruba is always proud to host all families and guests. We at Aruba Today encourage any visitor of the island to send in their pictures and/or messages; who knows? You might get on the cover!



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Aruba's underwater wonderland

ORANJESTAD - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating under water spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.

Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamentu, Papiamentu is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the

north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded

the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its port-side in Malmok bay, and the sunken world war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your



car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the

southern-west part of the island.

The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven. □

Imelda Rustveld and Gabriel Ras recognized as cultural giants



(Oranjestad)—The first “Fiesta Tipico di Barrio” (“Typical Party of the Neighborhood”) was organized at the Neighborhood Center Brazil by the Typical Aruban Union Foundation (UTR). This was a beautiful initiative by the leaders of the Typical of Aruba group in order to promote traditional music at the neighborhood centers around the island.

Culture is meant to be experienced, and events like this is ideal for maintaining our folklore alive so we can pass this on to young-

er generations. The goal is to have a “Fiesta Tipico” event every month in one of the many neighborhood centers on the island so we can allow our traditional music to resonate within each neighborhood. This will be possible with the help of UNOCA, which has made funding available to cover the costs of this cultural event. During the Fiesta Tipico event in the Brazil neighborhood, the minister of Culture, Xiomara Maduro, has given recognition to two artists—one a singer and the other a mu-

sician; two cultural giants that have made significant contributions to our music culture.

Mrs. Imelda Rustveld

The first person recognized for her outstanding contribution is Mrs. Norma Imelda Rustveld, better known as just Imelda. Mrs. Rustveld is married to Julio Quandus and has five children. She is known in the music world on the island, especially as a popular Mariachi singer. She had participated in several Ranchera Festivals, both in Aruba and Curacao. As a child, Imelda also sang in various holiday groups. In 2011, she founded her own group called “Aguinaldo Flor di Pasco,” in which she was a choir singer and manager. We Arubans know Imelda’s version of the song called “Caballito Blanco,” which is still played often around Christmas time.

Mr. Gabriel Ras

The second honoree is Mr. Gabriel Ras. Mr. Ras was born in a musical family. His siblings all play various musical instruments, and at 12 years old, he learned to play the cuarta. At 17, he founded the band “The Young Adventure.” At that time, this band was extremely popular, and was often booked to play at parties and events. After that, they started playing in different hotels. In 1977, Gabriel left the island to go live in The Netherlands. It is here that he also played in different musical groups in



different parts of the country, as well as in Belgium and Germany.

In 1980, Gabriel returned to Aruba and played in the band called “Vibracion 74”, and had participated in various festivals. Gabriel also played in a house band at the Bushiri Hotel as well as other renowned hotels on the island for several years. Gabriel has also played in other bands, including “To Remember” and “Reflexion Band.” His siblings also played in various bands.

Let’s keep supporting what’s ours

Minister Maduro gives her thanks to the UTR foundation for their beautiful initiative in preserving and promoting Aruba’s music culture. The minister also extends an invitation to the public to further support what is ours. Our traditional music is ours alone, and now that UTR and UNOCA is bringing this to neighborhoods, let’s take advantage and give our support with our presence. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

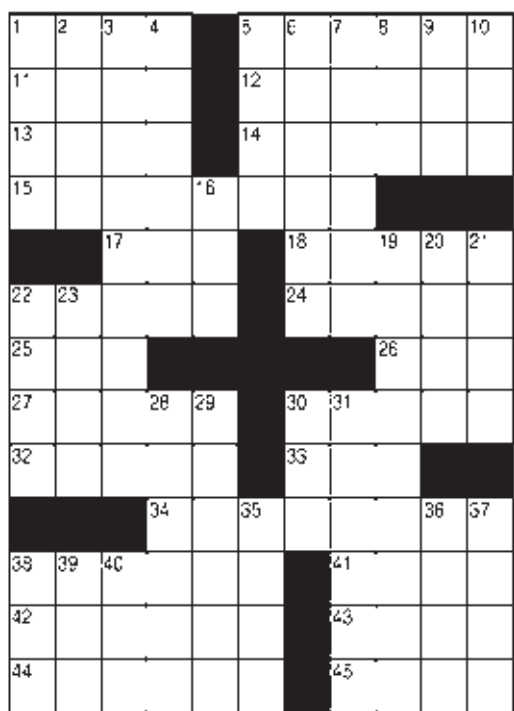
- 1 Ticked off
- 5 Fancy ties
- 11 Motor sound
- 12 Singer Twain
- 13 "Bus Stop" playwright
- 14 Galileo's crime
- 15 Night light
- 17 Singer Reed
- 18 Museum piece
- 22 Ship staffs
- 24 Sleep sound
- 25 Poker prize
- 26 Solo in space
- 27 "— luck!"
- 30 Fragrance
- 32 Toasting word
- 33 Coffee dispenser
- 34 Gambling spot
- 38 Ness nemesis
- 41 Jason's ship
- 42 Like some clocks
- 43 Even
- 44 Most original
- 45 Concludes

DOWN

- 1 Do some laps
- 2 "Dear me!"
- 3 Verdi opera
- 4 Before, poetically
- 5 Tennis great
- 6 Clipping need
- 7 Bizet opera
- 8 Early hour
- 9 Frank McCourt book
- 10 Utter
- 16 Tour carrier
- 19 Wagner opera
- 20 Persia, today
- 21 Minimal change
- 22 NCOs with
- 23 Corner two stripes
- 28 Strauss piece
- 29 Singer Morissette
- 30 Minivan alternative
- 31 Dream up
- 35 Splinter group
- 36 Mature
- 37 Supplies with turf
- 38 Fire
- 39 Eroded
- 40 Punch sound



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Review: 'Dungeons & Dragons' puts the funny in fantasy

By **JOCELYN NOVECK**
AP National Writer

"You're not a lot of fun, are you," notes barbarian Holga (Michelle Rodriguez) to brave fighter Xenk (Reg  -Jean Page) in the new "Dungeons & Dragons" film, making two jokes at once.

The first is that Xenk, a paladin (or holy knight) in "D&D" lingo, is everything BUT fun gorgeous, noble, heroic, smart, and did we mention gorgeous? He's just REALLY not fun, or funny. He's so not funny, it's hilarious.

The second, broader joke is that "Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves," hotly awaited by devotees of the decades-old role-playing game, makes darned sure to be fun, and funny enough to laugh at itself. And that's the thing that makes it work.

At least, for a newbie like me. I've never played the game, I confess. But this is a movie, not a game, and I'm here to tell you how it works for over two hours at the multiplex. Which is to say, surprisingly, sometimes delightfully well even if you have no clue what a paladin or Red Wizard or Harper is, or if the term "Dungeon Master" sends your mind straight to "Fifty Shades of Grey." The most obvious reason for this success, besides fleet-footed direction by Jonathan Goldstein and John Francis Daley, is star Chris Pine, whose sunny charisma and smooth knack for comedy, plus



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Chris Pine in a scene from "Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves."

Associated Press

an ability to seem like he's both inside the movie and outside looking in, keeps everything bubbling. He's ably assisted by Rodriguez, plus young accomplices Justice Smith as a confidence-challenged (but sweet) wizard and Sophia Lillis as a shape-shifting druid. And then we have a graying Hugh Grant, playing the heck out of yet another comic villain role a character almost as curmudgeonly as he was on the Oscar red carpet. Plus there's a cameo from another big star, but more on that in a minute. Because first we have to mention the pudgy dragon. Yes, pudgy. Whatever dragons eat, and we can only try to imagine, he's had too many.

But back to Pine, aka the bard Edgin, whom we first

meet in a dank, freezing prison cell. He's well, he's knitting. Nearby sits Holga (Rodriguez), and her own hobby is eating. She's not a cordial sort, especially when food supply is at risk. An appearance in front of a judicial council, begging for a pardon, gives Edgin the chance to tell his backstory. Turns out he wasn't always a criminal; he was a Harper, part of a spy guild acting for the greater good, but he attracted the ire of the Red Wizards of Thay, which led to the tragic murder of his wife. Teaming with Holga, he sets out to find the magical Tablet of Reawakening that would return his wife to him and especially their baby daughter Kira (played by Chloe Coleman as a youngster). But they get captured, and their ac-

complice Forge (Grant), who somehow escapes, swears to take care of Kira. Edgin, a master planner, devises a jailbreak right during the pardon hearing. They discover Kira is now living in a walled city with Forge, a con-man who turns out (gasp!) to have planned the whole thing, and has convinced her that Dad betrayed her for riches. And now he's allied with Sofina, a terrifying sorceress (Daisy Head). Forge not only refuses to give Kira back but sends Edgin and Holga to their deaths. Holga, however, quickly dispatches all the soldiers meant to kill them all while Edgin tries, and fails, to untie a rope.

Now they need that tablet, but first they need a magical helmet (bear with us.) The quest, upon

which they're joined by Simon (Smith) and Doric (Lillis), leads to the film's most entertaining scenes. One of these is an impressive, fast-paced sequence where shape-shifter Doric infiltrates enemy lines and then, chased by Sofina, morphs seamlessly into various animal forms and back to herself again.

Another is a comic bit where Pine's Edgin tries to elicit key information from a series of corpses. Summoned to life by an increasingly effective Simon, each corpse can answer five questions before returning to the grave forever. Edgin keeps wasting his chances with questions like "Did that count as a question?"

And a prime comic moment comes from none other than Bradley Cooper (see, worth the wait!). We'll reveal nothing but the observation that this cameo is small, but packs a punch. Finally we have Xenk (Page), perfectly cast as a paladin so, well, perfect that he delivers babies in between vanquishing enemies, and provides the crucial help Edgin needs. But for all sorts of reasons, Edgin can't bring himself to like the guy. Most of all, he can't deal with his lack of understanding of irony, sarcasm, and especially humor.

He's probably right. Heroism is all well and good, but humor is crucial. That's a lesson this film has, luckily, already figured out. □

HBO's 'Succession' sets viewer mark for fourth-season start

NEW YORK (AP) — HBO's "Succession" opened its fourth and final season with a record first-night audience of 2.3 million viewers, the Nielsen company said on Tuesday.

That tops the previous high for the drama about a backbiting family of media moguls. It beat the 1.7 million who watched last season's finale the first night it was available, Nielsen said. For HBO, the first-night audience is usually only a fraction of the number of

people who will watch one of their shows. For example, each episode last season averaged 7.2 million viewers when delayed viewing is taken into account.

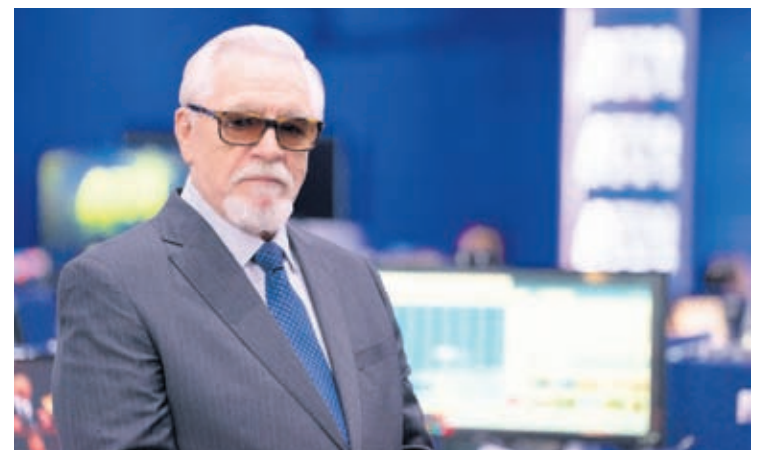
The numbers indicate that more people are catching on to the two-time Emmy winner for best drama just as it is approaching the end.

There was anticipation for the season premiere, with HBO saying there was four times the viewership of previous "Succession"

episodes on HBO Max last week compared to the week before.

The first episode showed how much things are strained between family patriarch Logan Roy and three of his four children, critic Brian Lowry wrote for CNN.

"There was a lot going on in this season opener, but the premiere's primary function involved setting the stage for the battles and challenges to come," Lowry wrote. □



This image released by HBO shows Brian Cox in a scene from the fourth season of "Succession."

Associated Press

NFL hits highs in diverse executives, lacks in head coaches

By ROB MAADDI

AP Pro Football Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — The NFL took another step at the owners meetings to increase diversity throughout the league while continuing to face criticism and a lawsuit for lack of representation among head coaches.

Each team is now required to have a person in charge of diversity, equity and inclusion. Currently, 15 clubs have a DEI head and two others have someone leading that department and another one.

"They actually have to have specific roles and deliverables that are in their job description so that is a big thing," NFL executive Jonathan Beane said in an interview with The Associated Press. "The reason why that's so important is we have to have a single point of accountability at the clubs where they are focused on driving it throughout their organization, in football operations and coaching, in business operations, engaging with ownership to make sure that this is a priority throughout the whole ecosystem of a club." The league has reached milestone points



Pittsburgh Steelers head coach Mike Tomlin speaks during the AFC head coaches availability at the NFL meetings, Monday, March 27, 2023, in Phoenix.

Associated Press

in diverse hirings in the front office, but critics point to the sidelines where there are only three Black head coaches in a sport that had 56.4% Black players in 2022. The NFL now has seven minority team presidents, including five who are Black and three women, and nine general managers, including eight Black men. But there are six minority head coaches overall. Mike Tomlin (Pittsburgh Steelers), Todd Bowles (Tampa Bay

Buccaneers) and DeMeco Ryans (Houston Texans) give the league three Black head coaches entering a season for the fifth year in a row.

"While increased diversity in executive roles could lead to increased diversity on the sidelines, progress on this front has remained stagnant for years," said Devan Rawlings, the author of Revelio Labs' NFL report. "The NFL has a significant disparity between the di-

versity of its players and that of its coaching staff the largest among men's major leagues and this has not changed despite a large pool of diverse former players that could meet a demand for coaching talent."

Brian Flores, the former Miami Dolphins head coach, sued the league and three teams last year, saying the NFL was "rife with racism," particularly in its hiring and promotion of Black coach-

es. Flores was an assistant with the Pittsburgh Steelers last season and is the new defensive coordinator for the Minnesota Vikings.

"I will acknowledge our representation of diverse head coaches, in particular Black head coaches, is certainly below our expectation and is not where anyone wants it to be or knows it needs to be," said Beane, the senior vice president, chief diversity and inclusion officer for the NFL.

"We have way too much talent out there to have the representation among the head coaches that we have. However, I think it's really, really important to look at other areas that are CEO-type positions, that are critical positions to the success or failure."

The number of minority presidents and GMs are the most in NFL history. The league didn't even have its first Black president until the Washington Commanders hired Jason Wright in August 2020. Kevin Warren (Chicago Bears), Sashi Brown (Baltimore Ravens), Sandra Douglass Morgan (Las Vegas Raiders) and Damani Leech (Denver Broncos) have joined him in the past two years. □

NBA, players still talking about new deal as deadline looms

By TIM REYNOLDS

AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said Wednesday he is hopeful that a new collective bargaining agreement between the league and its players can get done by the end of this week, though he stopped short of predicting that a deal would actually get struck. The league and the National Basketball Players Association face a Friday deadline for either side to decide that they will opt out of the deal and end the current CBA on June 30. That opt-out deadline already has been extended twice, and Silver said the NBA's current plan is to exercise that option if there is no deal by Friday night.

"I hope we do get one done," Silver said at the conclusion of a two-day meeting of the league's Board of Governors. "Because, honestly, I'm only one side of the negotiation, it's difficult for me to place odds on whether or not that's going to happen."

The NBPA did not have any immediate reaction to Silver's comments. Both sides have said throughout this process and past labor talks that they do not intend to negotiate or discuss specifics publicly.

The sides have been talking about a new CBA for more than a year, and Silver said he expected negotiations to resume Wednesday night.

And if Friday passes without a deal, it wouldn't be dire

immediately since the sides still will have three months to get something done before the current CBA expires.

"There's just something about collective bargaining where deadlines are necessary and seemingly sides tend to hold their best positions until the very end," Silver said. "So my sense is this will go down to the very end."

The current CBA, which took effect July 1, 2017, came with a mutual option for either the NBA or the NBPA to opt out after six seasons June 30 of this year.

The sides originally had a Dec. 15 deadline to announce an intention to exercise the opt-out, then pushed it back to Feb. 8,



NBA commissioner Adam Silver, left, and Charlotte Hornets owner Michael Jordan, right, pose for a photo during a news conference to announce Charlotte, N.C., as the site of the 2017 NBA All-Star basketball game, June 23, 2015.

Associated Press

then to Friday.

A lockout would be damaging on many levels well beyond the obvious part of

how a league that is coming off a season of record revenue would see that momentum interrupted. □

What did players learn about MLB's new rules this spring?

By **DAVID BRANDT**

AP Sports Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — It was the defining moment of the recently finished World Baseball Classic: Japan's star pitcher Shohei Ohtani vs. United States slugger Mike Trout. Ninth inning. Two outs. One-run game.

Team USA pitcher Merrill Kelly said the storybook scene was just as dramatic for the players in the dug-out as it was for fans watching. But he also admitted there was a thought that crept through his head.

"How are we possibly going to put a pitch clock on a situation like this?" Kelly said. Well, we're about to find out.

Major League Baseball's new rules package is set for its regular-season de-



The pitch clock runs as New York Mets' Daniel Vogelbach (32) warms up on deck during the fifth inning of a spring training baseball game against the St. Louis Cardinals, Saturday, March 25, 2023, in Port St. Lucie, Fla.

Associated Press

but Thursday when all 30 teams play their first game. For many fans, it'll be the first time seeing the sport's sizable list of rules changes, including a pitch clock, limits on infield shifts and bigger bases. They've been tested in spring exhibitions but weren't used in the WBC. "This is the next level having the rules applied in games that matter," said Diamondbacks three-time All-Star Evan Longoria. "Nobody's getting numbers stamped on the back of a baseball card during spring training."

"I think this is going to be a huge adjustment." The limitations on the infield shift haven't been a particularly big concern. The bigger bases which could help curb collisions and injuries have hardly been noticed.

MLB has also shown a willingness to listen to feedback from players. Last week, the commissioner's office sent a memo trying to clarify some rules issues from spring training.

But everyone knows the real test begins Thursday.

"I think there will be a lot more gamesmanship during the regular season," Cubs pitcher Drew Smyly said. Some of that showed in spring training. New York Mets ace Max Scherzer and other pitchers tried weaponizing the pitch clock, hurrying hitters or waiting them out within the bounds of the 15-second timer 20 seconds with someone on base to mess with their timing.

"Really, the power the pitcher has now I can totally dictate pace," the three-time Cy Young Award winner said.

The cat-and-mouse game between pitchers and would-be base stealers will be particularly intriguing during the season's opening weeks. Pitchers can only disengage from the rubber twice in each at-bat, meaning limited chances for pickoff attempts. If a pitcher disengages a third time and doesn't record an out, a balk is called and all runners advance one base. □



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