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DOD faces rising costs with dollar drop

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Snow covers U.S. from Midwest to Northeast

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1st ID families get support from online group

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Pam Goodwill, left, and Missie Adamczyk, members of "Family of One"

Volume 2, No. 286 © SS 2005 MIDEAST EDITION SUNDAY, JANUARY 23, 2005

DOD offers bonuses to Special Ops forces

$168M package aimed at stopping troops from going civilian

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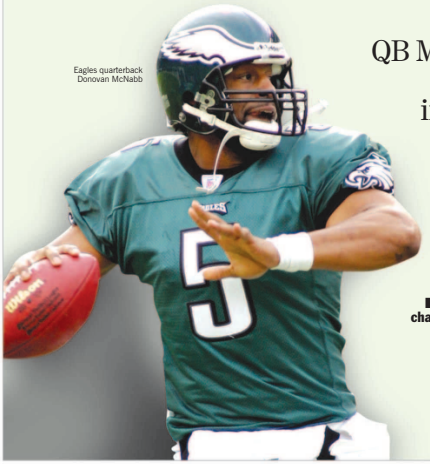
4th and goal in Philly



Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb

QB McNabb, Eagles face Falcons in latest chance at NFC title as road to Super Bowl narrows

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■ Complete preview of AFC, NFC championships, including features, position-by-position matchups, predictions and more

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY PETER PHOTIKOE
Stars and Stripes/AP photos

Steelers' Ben Roethlisberger, left, Patriots' Tom Brady

Roethlisberger, Brady took similar paths to playoffs

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Steelers' backs know disappointment in title games

Page 27

Steelers running back Jerome Bettis

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STARS AND STRIPES
Your Hometown Newspaper

News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Human smuggling case: The much-delayed trial of a New York man accused of driving and abandoning a tractor-trailer in the nation's deadliest human smuggling attempt will begin Tuesday in Houston unless the Supreme Court intervenes, a judge has ruled.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Friday denied a request from Tyrone Williams' attorneys to rehear allegations of racial bias in the case.

Williams is accused of driving the tractor-trailer that was abandoned in May 2003 at a truck stop. Seventeen immigrants were found dead inside the sealed trailer; two more died later.

Robert Blake trial: Actor Robert Blake was disappointed he couldn't get Bonny Lee Bakley out of his life but never asked that she be harmed, according to a man who said he tried unsuccessfully at Blake's behest to have Bakley arrested.

"He was upset that I hadn't been able to do what he wanted," Luis Mendoza testified Friday at Blake's murder trial. "He said his grandfather told him if you delegate things to people and they don't do them, you might as well do it yourself."

On cross-examination, the defense got Mendoza to acknowledge that not only did Blake not ask him to kill his wife, he didn't ask him to do anything illegal.

Andrea Yates conviction: Prosecutors want an appeals court to reconsider its order for a new trial for Andrea Yates, who was convicted of drowning her children in the family bathtub.

In a motion filed Thursday, Harris County, Texas, prosecutors said a three-judge panel of the First Court of Appeals erred when it overturned Yates' capital murder convictions earlier this month.

The panel sided with Yates' lawyers, who contended false testimony from a prosecution expert witness contributed to her 2002 capital murder convictions for killing three of her children. She was sentenced to life in prison.

Ray Charles' child support: The mother of Ray Charles' 17-year-old son drastically reduced her request for child support Friday, apologizing to a judge for previously seeking at least $60,000 a month.

Mary Anne den Bok had initially asked for $3,000 a month for Corey Robinson den Bok, then demanded at least $60,000 to pay for "the lifestyle he enjoyed" before his father's death June 10. On Friday, den Bok said she is now asking for $12,000 to $15,000.

The judge said he would rule at a hearing scheduled for Jan. 28.

Los Alamos lab shutdown: One of the nation's leading nuclear weapons laboratories is ready to resume normal operations after security and safety lapses last summer forced a shutdown of hazardous, high-risk operations at the lab.

Los Alamos National Laboratory Director Pete Nanos told employees Wednesday it should "look like a normal day" at the New Mexico lab by Jan. 31, with "productive work proceeding without impediment."

"Morning-after" pill: The government has delayed a decision about whether to allow women to buy the so-called "morning-after" birth control pill over the counter but hopes to act soon, the manufacturer said Friday.

Backers of the pill have been seeking the federal action, arguing that easy access to the product, sold under the trade name Plan B, would prevent thousands of unwanted pregnancies.

Opponents argue that being able to obtain the product without a prescription could lead women, particularly young teens, to experiment with risky sex.

Jackson molestation case: Defense attorney Thomas Mesereau Jr. walks past a few protesters as he arrives for a pretrial hearing in the Michael Jackson child molestation case in Santa Maria, Calif., on Friday. The judge in the case gave prosecutors permission Friday to introduce testimony about child-molestation misperceptions and myths during the pop star's trial. Jackson's attorneys argued against allowing such testimony, that it could be used to buttress unreliable testimony from the alleged victim and his family. Mesereau added it should not be allowed if he can prove the boy and his family "aren't victims at all, they're flat-out liars."

Cuban boy lawsuits: A federal judge has set a Monday trial for the claims of a dozen people who said they were wrongly assaulted by federal officers during the raid that removed Elian Gonzalez from his family's home in Miami.

The plaintiffs say they were innocent bystanders who were gassed and beaten outside the home during the early morning raid on April 22, 2000.

Elian was one of three survivors of a November 1999 shipwreck that killed his mother and others fleeing Cuba. He was turned over to his Miami relatives while his custody situation was resolved. The raid took place after government officials said the family refused to return the boy so he could be taken back to his father in Cuba.

Business

Fannie Mae's reporting woes: Mortgage giant Fannie Mae is eliminating 2004 performance bonuses for 43 top executives, a move that will save the company millions of dollars, as it struggles to deal with major financial reporting problems.

The nation's biggest backer of home mortgages disclosed the move late Friday in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission. It said its board of directors had voted this week to eliminate cash bonuses that would have been paid to top executives for hitting last year's performance goals.

War on terrorism

Gitmo prisoner abuse: The Navy's inspector general will review newly public documents regarding the treatment of prisoners held overseas to see if there is any call for an investigation, the Pentagon said Friday.

Many of the documents were obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union and disclosed in December. Several are messages from FBI agents discussing what they described as improper treatment of suspected terrorists held at the U.S. military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz sought the review, which will be conducted by Vice Admiral Ronald Route.

U.S. Southern Command announced Jan. 5 it would investigate the allegations raised in those documents that pertain to Guantanamo.

Route will further review them to see if any that pertain to Iraq, Afghanistan, or other areas that are outside the purview of the Southern Command inquiry, should also be investigated.

World

Asian bird flu deaths: Vietnam on Saturday reported two more bird flu deaths, bringing the human toll to nine in three weeks, as leaders of the World Health Organization planned to discuss preparations for a possible global flu pandemic.

The United States submitted a special request to WHO's executive board asking it to discuss bird flu at its current meeting in Geneva. It stressed the importance of strengthening outbreak surveillance, producing a vaccine and formulating an international plan to prepare for a possible pandemic.

Egyptian nuclear activities: U.N. nuclear inspectors toured an Egyptian laboratory during a review of the country's fuel programs prompted by irregularities in Egypt's reporting of its nuclear activities, a Western diplomat said Friday.

The diplomat said on the condition of anonymity that the tour by International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors was part of the agency's follow-up to revelations that Egypt had dabbled in uranium enrichment and had contemplated processing plutonium.

Inspectors would be going back on regular tours in the coming weeks, he said.

Big Brazilian baby: A baby born this week in northeastern Brazil weighing nearly 17 pounds is "doing great," hospital officials said Friday.

Doctors at the Albert Sabin Maternity Hospital in Salvador, 900 miles northeast of Sao Paulo, said Ademilton was being closely monitored by medical staff.

"He's doing great," pediatrician Luiz Serra said. "Of course, there are some special concerns because of his weight."

Francisca dos Santos Ramos, 38, gave birth Tuesday to 16-pound, 11-ounce Ademilton, the biggest baby ever delivered at the hospital.

Stories and photos from wire services

AP photos

Above: Boxes containing ballots for the forthcoming elections are transfered to the warehouse at Baghdad's international airport last week. Iraqi general elections are scheduled for Jan. 30. Left: U.S. soldiers remove a poster threatening Iraqis who vote in upcoming elections from the outside of a mosque in Mosul last week. U.S. forces have intensified operations in Iraq's third largest city in a race to make it safe enough for voters to cast ballots.

Iraq pledges to protect voters

BY MARIAM FAM
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The Iraqi government pledged Saturday it would do everything in its power to protect voters from insurgent attacks during this month's national elections, as militants announced they'd killed 15 captive Iraqi National Guardsmen for cooperating with the Americans.

Eight other Iraqi guardsmen and one Iraqi civilian were injured Saturday when a suicide bomber detonated an explosive belt near the gate of a military camp near Hillah, Iraqi office said.

Guerrillas in the northern city of Mosul blasted a building to be used as a polling station with machine gun and rocket propelled grenade fire Saturday, injuring one civilian, a hospital official said.

In Baghdad, the interior minister announced further security measures for the Jan. 30 balloting, in which Iraqis will choose a new 275-member National Assembly and 18 provincial councils.

The minister, Falah al-Naqib, confirmed that Baghdad's international airport would be closed for three days starting on the eve of the balloting. The nighttime curfew in Baghdad and other cities will be extended and restrictions imposed on private vehicles to guard against car bombs, he added.

Al-Naqib told reporters all leaves and passes for police and military forces had been canceled for the election period and that further measures would be announced closer to voting day.

"We have mobilized all our forces as a government," al-Naqib said.

Still, the minister did not play down the gravity of the security threat, nor the difficulties facing this country in organizing and conducting a nationwide election in the midst of a virulent insurgency.

"There are dangers and there are threats to throw the elections process into chaos, but we hope that our security plan will be up to the standards. We don't rule out an escalation from the terrorist forces," he said.

Sunni Muslim rebels have vowed to disrupt the balloting, and Sunni clerics have urged postponement until the security situation has improved. But leaders of the majority Shiites, estimated at 60 percent of Iraq's 26 million people, have demanded an election, believing their numbers will bring them power long denied them by Sunni Arabs.

Underscoring the grave security challenge, the insurgent Ansar al-Sunnah Army announced on a Web site that it had killed 15 Iraqi National Guardsmen seized off a commercial bus this month in the Anbar provincial town of Hit.

"After the investigation, they confessed to the crimes they have committed with the crusader forces," the group said in the statement. "God's verdict has been carried out against them by shooting them. ... They should be a lesson to others."

The claim could not be independently verified, and the statement contained no photographs.

Ansar al-Sunnah has claimed responsibility for a number of attacks against U.S. and Iraqi forces, including a December suicide bombing that killed 22 people, most of them Americans, at a U.S. military mess tent at the northern city of Mosul.

U.S. and Iraqi officials believe most of the country is secure enough for elections except Baghdad and three mostly Sunni Arab provinces — Anbar, Ninevah and Salaheddin. Although Iraqis living there will have the chance to vote, insurgent attacks and intimidation may produce a disappointing turnout.

Al-Naqib said the situation was improving in Ninevah, which includes Mosul, after a series of ongoing U.S. and Iraqi military operations there. He said 11 people "specializing in beheadings" had been arrested in Ninevah in recent days.

Security fears may have been responsible for discouraging many of the estimated 1.2 million Iraqis living abroad from registering to vote. Niurka Pineiro, an official of the International Organization for Migration which is handling the vote in 14 countries, said some people were scared that "when they go to these polling places some sort of mayhem may break out."

The agency extended the deadline for registration by two days — until Tuesday — to allow more Iraqi exiles to register.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Friday, at least 1,371 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,077 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is three higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. Friday.

The British military has reported 76 deaths; Italy, 20; Poland, 16; Ukraine, 16; Spain, 11; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Latvia and Kazakhstan one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,233 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 968 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ One soldier was killed Friday during a raid near Ad Duluiyah, Iraq.

■ One soldier was killed Friday northwest of Kuwait City in a training accident.

The latest identifications reported by military:

■ No identifications reported.

No comment on al-Zarqawi arrest rumors, official says

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq's interior minister on Saturday refused to comment on rumors that the top terror leader in the country had been taken into custody.

"I wouldn't like to comment for the time being," Interior Minister Falah al-Naqib said when asked about rumors that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi had been arrested. "Let's see. Maybe in the next few days we will make a comment about it."

Pressing him, a reporter asked, "Does that mean he is in custody?"

"No comment," the minister repeated.

The rumors about al-Zarqawi followed an interview aired on an Arab television station earlier this month in which a Saudi man arrested for a deadly truck bombing claimed that he heard from other insurgents that al-Zarqawi had been arrested by Iraqi police in Fallujah but released because authorities didn't recognize him.

Rumors spread that Iraqi authorities had al-Zarqawi in custody but were waiting to announce it just before the Jan. 30 elections.

Al-Zarqawi, the leader of Iraq's al-Qaida affiliate, has claimed responsibility for numerous kidnappings and the beheadings of several foreigners, including Americans. His group, al-Qaida in Iraq, also has carried out many other bombing and shooting attacks on American troops and Iraqi police and soldiers.

In an audiotape posted Thursday on the Web, a speaker who identified himself as al-Zarqawi called on his followers to prepare for a long struggle against the Americans and denounced Iraqi Shiites for fighting alongside U.S. troops in last November's assault on the rebel stronghold of Fallujah.

The United States has offered a $25 million reward for al-Zarqawi's capture or death — the same amount as for Osama bin Laden.

GI dies in Kuwait crash

KUWAIT CITY — One U.S. military helicopter pilot was killed and another was injured in a training accident in Kuwait, the American military said Saturday.

The accident involving the AH-64 Apache pilots occurred Friday afternoon northwest of Kuwait City, the military said in a statement.

The statement did not provide details about how the accident happened, saying only that it was under investigation.

The injured soldier was evacuated to a U.S. military hospital and was in stable condition, it said.

The identities of the soldiers were withheld pending notification of their families.

The soldiers' unit is in Kuwait as part of military operations in Iraq.

From The Associated Press

PHOTOS BY JOSEPH GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes

Above: U.S. and Iraqi forces detain a man Thursday during a joint patrol of neighborhoods on the outskirts of Ramadi, Iraq. After a search of his house, the man was taken to a detention facility on a U.S. base. Left: A member of the Iraqi National Guard watches over a young man detained Thursday by a joint patrol of U.S. and Iraqi forces near Ramadi.

Joint patrols get cold shoulder on holiday

U.S., Iraqi pre-election sweep encounters sparse crowds, mortar fire near Ramadi

BY JOSEPH GIORDONO
Stars and Stripes

RAMADI, Iraq — A second day of joint American-Iraqi patrols near Ramadi, on one of the holiest days of the year for Muslims, was met with a decidedly cooler reception than the previous outing.

Once again, members of Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment combined with Iraqi security forces to patrol in preparation for the Jan. 30 elections. But this time, in a neighborhood thought to be an insurgent safe haven, the local Iraqis were less overtly friendly than the day before in a different district.

A few small children approached the soldiers — which included members of an Iraqi National Guard called India Company — but most of the teenagers and adults watched silently.

"This is 'muj' central," one U.S. soldier remarked, referring to mujahedeen, or Islamic fundamentalist fighters, as the group walked through the central square of a largely dilapidated apartment complex. Some of the little children played with toy Kalashnikov assault rifles. One quickly loaded and unloaded the toy's ammo magazine. Soldiers said they wondered who taught the child the action.

The streets were much less crowded than the day before. An Iraqi interpreter with the group explained it was because Thursday was Eid, the Islamic holy day marking the height of hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

Insurgents did not take the day off, however. Just before the patrol left its base camp on the outskirts of Ramadi, a salvo of at least four mortar rounds whistled overhead and hit the base. Shortly after, U.S. artillery returned fire, and a loud alarm was sounded throughout the base.

Soldiers just finishing chow donned their helmets and body armor. Units made a count to assure all their personnel were accounted for. There were no reports of injuries immediately after the attack.

Later, as the patrol approached a mosque they said has been preaching anti-American messages, the doors were quickly shut and locked and the men inside started to walk away. Iraqi soldiers called them back and questioned them. Anti-American leaflets and a banner were found.

One India Company soldier tore up the leaflets in front of the mosque leader. Other Iraqi soldiers took off their boots and searched the mosque. It was an action U.S. soldiers could not have taken alone, and one example of how U.S. officials hope joint patrols will allow forces to be more effective.

One India Company soldier tore up the leaflets in front of the mosque leader. Other Iraqi soldiers took off their boots and searched the mosque. It was an action U.S. soldiers could not have taken alone, and one example of how U.S. officials hope joint patrols will allow forces to be more effective.

An Iraqi National Guard soldier spray paints, "Iraq is good, elections are good," over what an interpreter said was pro-insurgent graffiti.

"Right now, we're doing a lot of the basic training, familiarizing them with our weapons systems and tactics," said Sgt. Heriberto Vargas, one of the U.S. soldiers training India Company. Vargas is one of the 3,500 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division soldiers who deployed from South Korea to Iraq last fall.

U.S. officials have staked the future security of Iraq on being able to train an effective and independent Iraqi security force. In the short term, that force will also be asked to bolster election security with the 150,000 U.S. troops in Iraq.

While India Company members searched the mosque, U.S. forces detained a young man who had been seen following patrols for several days. The man had repeatedly acted suspiciously, soldiers said, and they believed he was gathering intelligence for future attacks.

The man was detained, his hands secured behind his back with plastic restraints. Soldiers wrapped engineer's tape around his eyes as a crude blindfold, and told him to lead them to his house so it could be searched.

When soldiers arrived, someone had already called the family. The young man's father pleaded with the soldiers to let his son go.

A search team carted off two bags of cassette tapes, documents and other items, and told the family the man was going to be held at a U.S. base for more questioning.

Just before taking the man away, Company A commander Capt. Kevin Capozzoli reassured the family that he would not be mistreated.

"As a father myself, I understand," Capozzoli told the detainee's father. "But there are a lot of problems in this city. And we are trying to fix them."

E-mail Joseph Giordono at: giordonoj@pstripes.osd.mil

MIDEAST NOTEBOOK

Kevin Dougherty

Troops ease hajj turbulence in Afghanistan

Two years ago, a pilgrim shot and killed the Afghan minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism reportedly over delays and other problems in transporting people to Saudi Arabia for the hajj, the traditional visit to Mecca taken by faithful Muslims.

This time around there has been far less turbulence, though there is still the matter of return trips, which began Tuesday. The hajj ended Saturday.

"The Afghans have done very well," said Marine Maj. John Forti, who is heading up the U.S. military effort to assist the Afghan government.

Much the same could be said of U.S. personnel helping in the effort. Scores of commercial flights from four locations in Afghanistan — Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat — have been coordinated in some way or another by Air Force, Army and Marine personnel.

Forti said the number of pilgrims processed through the four sites totals 26,387, up by nearly 2,000 from 2004. Some Afghans even came from refugee camps in Pakistan. The U.S. military provided broad assistance, from security and accommodations in Kandahar to fire trucks in Herat.

The Afghan constitution

U.S. soldiers who spend time with seasoned Afghan fighters in the field often come away impressed by their tremendous stamina.

During one recent excursion, troops were looking for an anti-coalition member in eastern Afghanistan, said Maj. Eric Bloom, a spokesman for Task Force Phoenix. The mission included members of the Afghan National Army. At some point, the vehicles stopped and several U.S. and Afghan troops began to climb a hill for a better view, hoping to spot their target.

Bloom came away amazed at how easily the Afghan fighters bounced from boulder to boulder on their way to the summit, and then back down.

"It's a real challenge sometimes for our troops to keep up with their troops," Bloom said.

Bad news, Mr. Bear

On a recent trip to a remote base call Sweeney, a red teddy bear dangled from the end of a rope in front of a soldier's hooch.

When a fellow soldier was asked what the bear might have done to justify such a fate, the troop shrugged his shoulders and raked a boot over the gravel before him. He was choosing his words carefully, trying to be diplomatic.

"Apparently," the soldier said, "he got dumped by his girlfriend."

Was the little red teddy a gift from the ex-girlfriend? In any event, the bear got caught in the crossfire.

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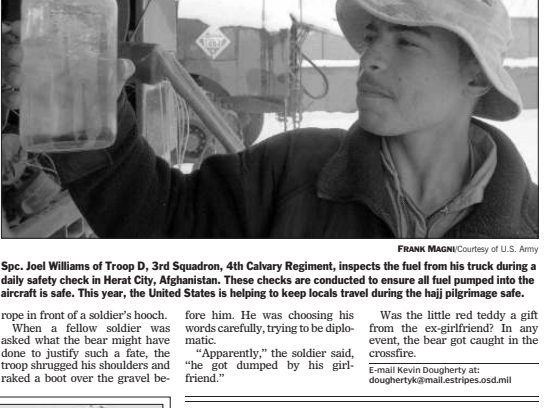


FRANK MAGNI/Courtesy of U.S. Army

Spc. Joel Williams of Troop D, 3rd Squadron, 4th Calvary Regiment, inspects the fuel from his truck during a daily safety check in Herat City, Afghanistan. These checks are conducted to ensure all fuel pumped into the aircraft is safe. This year, the United States is helping to keep locals travel during the hajj pilgrimage safe.

China: 8 hostages freed by rebels

The Associated Press

BEIJING — Eight Chinese hostages held by Iraqi insurgents have been released, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Saturday, citing the Chinese Embassy in Baghdad.

But the Chinese Foreign Ministry in Beijing issued a statement saying that embassy officials in Iraq and neighboring countries have failed so far to make contact with the eight hostages.

"We are trying to verify the news," a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on customary condition of anonymity.

The insurgents decided to release the eight Chinese construction workers taken hostage in Iraq after China pledged to discourage its citizens from traveling to Iraq, according to a rebel videotape aired Saturday by Al-Arabiya television.

The tape showed each of the Chinese shaking hands with a masked insurgent.

"The Islamic Resistance Movement, Al-Numan Battalion, has decided to release the eight citizens as a goodwill gesture for the friendship between the two countries of Iraq and China," an insurgent said on the tape.

"They were not harmed during the period they were held and also they weren't exchanged for any amount of money," the rebel added.

The Chinese government said the hostages are migrant workers from the southeastern province of Fujian who traveled to Iraq hoping to earn money to support their families back home. They disappeared while leaving Iraq for Jordan.

The insurgent group said they had worked at American sites in Iraq.

Fujian sends thousands of laborers each year to the Middle East and elsewhere.

AP

Eight Chinese hostages held by Iraqi insurgents have been released, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Saturday, citing the Chinese Embassy in Baghdad. This video image released by Iraqi insurgents and aired by Al-Arabiya television claims to show one of the group of Chinese construction workers allegedly taken hostage in Iraq shaking hands with one of their masked captors and being released.

Registration extended for Iraqi voters overseas

BY ALEXANDER G. HIGGINS
The Associated Press

GENEVA — Registration for overseas absentee voting in Iraq's national election has been extended by two days because the turnout so far in the weeklong campaign has run far behind expectations, organizers said Saturday.

As of Thursday, fewer than one in 10 of the estimated 1.2 million eligible Iraqis living abroad in 14 countries had registered.

The International Organization for Migration, which is organizing the overseas vote, decided to continue registrations through Monday and Tuesday.

"The extra days will apply to each of the 74 registration centers in all 14 countries where Iraqis are able to register and vote, pending the approval of the host governments," the organization said in a statement.

"We are extending our operation in an effort to provide Iraqi voters with as much access to our centers as possible," said Peter Erben, director of the project.

Niurka Pineiro, spokeswoman for the Geneva-based organization, said that "in some places" the turnout has been less than anticipated. She noted that in Australia only one in eight of the estimated eligible voters had signed up as of Thursday.

"We don't know exactly why," Pineiro said. "It could be a number of things. It could be procrastination, it could be apathy, they don't have the right documents."

She said some speculated that a Muslim holiday this week may have been a factor.

"It's a mixture of apathy and apprehension," said Bernie Hogan, the head of the voting effort in Australia, explaining the lack of response from Iraqis living in that country.

Despite predictions that as many as 50,000 Iraqis living in Australia could join the electoral rolls, only 6,500 have done so.

Hogan on Saturday revised his registration target to 10,000 Iraqis and expressed disappointment with the response.

The absentee voting itself will still be held over three days, Jan. 28-30, with the final day coinciding with the election day in Iraq, the agency said.

To register, Iraqis have to document their identity, Iraqi nationality and birth on or before Dec. 31, 1986. They must then return to the same location to vote.

As of Thursday, 93,847 overseas Iraqis had registered, the agency said.

Iraqis who live outside the host countries may travel at their own expense to a participating country to register and vote.

1st ID moms' virtual shoulder to lean on

'Family of One' e-mail group offers support, camaraderie

BY STEVE LIEWER
Stars and Stripes

For months now, a 1st Infantry Division soldier could count on two things after stepping off a rest-and-recuperation flight from Iraq at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport: a Texas-sized hug from Donna Cranston and a Shiner Bock beer from the trunk of her car.

Cranston, 47, is the mother of Spc. Matt Cranston, a 1st ID soldier serving in Samarra. She lives near the airport and has taken it upon herself to greet every returning soldier who wears a Big Red One patch. If they need to catch a connecting flight, she personally drives them to the right terminal. If they've got a long layover, she takes them home and feeds them a hearty meal.

"Nothing has thrilled me more than to have a soldier riding in my convertible," Cranston said, communicating via e-mail, as did all the 1st ID family members interviewed for this article. "They will tip their head back, look into the sky, take a deep breath and say 'Ma'am you have no idea what a wonderful feeling this is right now!' "

Cranston is only the most visible sign of a virtual support group of 1st ID families called the "Family of One" that sprang up online shortly after the division deployed to Iraq last February.

She found like-minded support almost by accident last spring, when Barbara Holman, the mother of a Big Red One soldier, posted messages on Internet bulletin boards belonging to a 1st ID alumni society and her son's battalion.

"Nothing in my experience ever prepared me for the sudden onslaught of fear and worry and lack of peace," Holman said. "I was crying and tearing up over nothing, just floating through what had to be done and nothing more."

In the months since, about 70 families from across the country stumbled on the group, drawn to the Internet by the loneliness and frustration of living while their loved ones were in a dangerous war zone. Suddenly they were in touch with others like them.

"While everyone else was going on with their daily lives, we were having trouble breathing, or wanting to cry or snapping at people," said Kim Willoughby, 47, of Bright, Ind., whose son, Nathan, is in the 1-26 Infantry. "It was a relief to know that across this country, loved ones were experiencing these same feelings — that we were not alone."

Most of the members are mothers, but wives, sisters, girlfriends and even a few dads also have joined. Only a few have met one another in person, and many know each other only by screen names like "Ranger Mom" and "Pambo."

But almost all of them say they've forged a bond that will last long after their soldiers return home during the next three months.

"We've been through a lot together, becoming a true family and [forming] what I honestly believe will also be lifelong friendships," said Missie Adamczyk, 25, of suburban Washington, whose fiancé, Capt. Michael Jurick, is serving in Iraq with the 1-26 Infantry.

Some of their exchanges are giddy and schoolgirlish. At other times, the Family of One joins together to boost someone through a rough patch.

Celeste Rubanick, 49, a Florida mail carrier and the mother of Spc. Dale Rubanick of the 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery, turned to her online friends the day she burst into tears in the middle of her route because she was sure her son had been killed. (He hadn't.)

"We admit to these things and more in our e-mails," Rubanick said, "and it feels wonderful to find out others feel the same way."

Much of the time they discuss practical matters, like what to put in gift boxes and how to best wrap cookies to keep them fresh all the way to Iraq. When word comes of an attack in Bayji, Samarra or Baqouba, they burn up the Internet looking for information and post whatever news they hear from soldiers downrange.

"I was also warned about the hard stuff," said Lee Ann Grzywa, 47, of Aurora, Ill., whose son, Joshua, is a staff sergeant in the 1-26 Infantry's mortar platoon. "Seeing the look in your soldier's eyes that tells you they've seen things you haven't imagined."

The Family of One has helped its members channel a desperate need to help the troops. Every one of them has shipped boxes of goodies not only to their own sons or boyfriends, but to other soldiers as well. At Christmas, they sent "secret Santa" gifts to each other's deployed children so everyone would get an unexpected gift.

In Dallas, other Texas moms joined Cranston in greeting the R&R flights and working at the airport's USO club. Joyce Hagens, 48, the mother of 22-year-old twin sons both serving with the 1-26 Infantry in Samarra, created a tribute wall to troops in Iraq at the rural Texas hospital where she works. They take turns writing condolence letters on behalf of the group to the family of every soldier killed in the war.

Barely two months remain in the Big Red One's tour. So far, none of the group's sons or daughters have been killed and only a few have suffered minor injuries despite some close calls.

"As these last few weeks wind down, we have a heightened sense of this," Holman said. "There is a fear that something might happen at the end."

Although the end of the deployment is finally approaching, none of the women has any plans to abandon her newfound family.

"We have all become so close. It would be like losing a very dear friend," Hagens said.

Many in the Family of One would like to see the Army expand its family readiness groups to include more than just the spouses and children of soldiers.

"Often the military forgets that parents are family," Holman said. "We had to create our own support. I hope others will take our group as a beacon of light."

E-mail Steve Liewer at: LiewerS@mail.estripes.osd.mil

Caring links

Members of the Family of One e-mail group recommend a number of Web sites for family members of deployed soldiers either to get support, or to lend support to others. Among their suggestions:

■ **www.bigredone.org**: A 1st Infantry Division alumni association, the Society of the Big Red One, offers a "family" section.

■ **www.globalsecurity.org**: Information about units, camps, the politics and geography of Iraq.

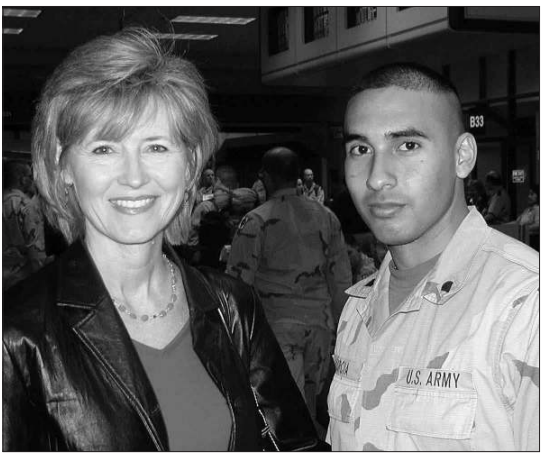
■ To donate money or supplies in support of troops, try **www.anysoldier.com**, **www.woundedwarriorproject.com**, and **www.soldiersangels.org**.

■ **www.defendersoffreedom.us**: Started by Donna Cranston, a Family of One member. A nonprofit organization that sells tie-dye wristbands and soldier calendars, with all proceeds going to help deployed or injured troops.

■ **www.militarywives.com**: Offers practical advice and support geared toward women, with special subsites for families in each service, reservists and military husbands.

■ **www.prayercentral.net**: Offers daily prayers for troops in Iraq, as well as advice and links to other helpful web site.

Source: Family of One



Courtesy of Barbara Holman

Barbara Holman, co-founder of the Family of One support group, spends time with Spc. Albert Garcia at Dallas-Fort Worth airport, as he prepares to board his flight back to Iraq after time at home for rest and recuperation. Family of One members in Dallas have made it their duty to greet R&R flights at the airport.

> *"We've been through a lot together, becoming a true family and [forming] what I honestly believe will also be lifelong friendships."*
>
> **Missie Adamczyk**
> of suburban Washington, shown right with fiancé Capt Michael Jurick, I-26 Infantry

Courtesy of Missie Adamczyk

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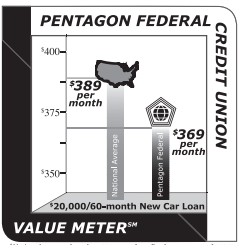

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Dollar's drop could create COLA quandary

In a time of budget cuts, DOD may face soaring COLA costs if euro's surge continues

Editor's note: With the dollar at near all-time lows, the cost of buying goods and services off base is hitting the American military community hard. Stars and Stripes is running stories in an occasional series to show how Americans are coping — and what the government is doing to help — with these pocketbook issues.

BY TERRY BOYD
Stars and Stripes

As President Bush's second term begins, controlling defense spending may become one of the most contentious issues.

Even as the Bush administration ponders cutting $6 billion during 2006, including expensive new weapons systems, the falling dollar may end up negating some of those savings.

Bush administration officials will have to ask Congress for billions in contingency money for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan above the $400 billion or so expected 2006 Department of Defense budget appropriations request. Should the dollar continue its fall — as analysts, investment gurus and currency traders predict — the DOD may have to scramble for supplemental funding, including for the accounts that pay for maintaining the quality of life and buying power of 340,000 or so U.S. troops and DOD civilians stationed overseas.

As the dollar drops against foreign currency, it makes the cost of basing U.S. military personnel in Europe and Asia all the more expensive. For example, every time the euro rises one euro cent in value against the dollar, the dollar increase in salary and benefits for local-national employees at the Navy Exchanges is $187,000 adjusted annually, according to Lt. Cmdr. Lisa Braun, spokeswoman for Navy Region Europe in Naples, Italy. Last fiscal year, the Navy Exchanges lost $1.1 million in local-national employee benefits because of the weak dollar, according to Braun.

If the dollar dropped to the point that it cost as much as $2 for one euro, then Installation Management Agency-Europe, which oversees all U.S. installations in Europe, could be faced with an estimated $17 million to $20 million "must fund" bill, according to Millie Waters, spokeswoman for the IMA-E headquarters in Heidelberg, Germany. That bill would have to be paid by the Department of the Army. If not, various quality-of-life services such as Morale, Welfare and Recreation, or infrastructure projects would potentially be unfunded, Waters said.

The dropping dollar also has a dramatic impact on leave-and-earnings statements. To maintain the buying power of those military personnel overseas, the Department of Defense gives cost-of-living increases, as well as living quarters allowances to those living off base.

In 2000, the overseas COLA program cost the government about $1 billion, with an average supplement of $297 per month, according to the Web site, **www.militarypay.com**.

But allowances increased dramatically as the dollar fell over the last two years, including about a 10 percent drop just since last September.

In December 2003, for example, a married sailor at pay grade E-7 without children in Naples, Italy, received $980.12 in COLA. This November, the same chief petty officer received about $1,125 based on today's COLA rate. If he had two children, he'd receive about $1,300.

In Germany, an E-5 with 10 years in and two dependents got a November COLA increase to $785 from $600 the previous pay period, according to Army finance officials.

Multiply that COLA sampling across the globe, and you're talking billions of dollars if the dollar falls further.

So where does all that money come from?

The currency fluctuation account provides the DOD a budgetary allowance for currency value changes that affect not only COLAs, but other benefits such as overseas housing allowances and fuel costs, according to military budget expert Steve Strobridge in an e-mail reply to a Stars and Stripes query.

"If the dollar drops so much … that budgetary allowance is used up, then DOD would either have to absorb the extra cost within the DOD budget or, if the difference were significant enough, address it in the annual supplemental funding request to Congress," wrote Strobridge, a retired Air Force colonel who worked at the U.S. Air Force headquarters as the chief of the entitlements division. He is now director of government relations, for the Military Officers Association of America, a Virginia-based non-profit association of retired officers.

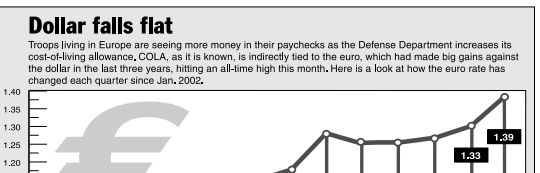
In any event, Strobridge stated, "there is no worry that somehow DOD will be held hostage and won't be able to keep adjusting COLAs to reflect changing currency values. Those changes will continue to be made, and DOD will come up with the money to pay for them one way or another."

Scott Schonauer contributed to this report.

E-mail Terry Boyd at: **boydt@mail.estripes.osd.mil**

Dollar falls flat

Troops living in Europe are seeing more money in their paychecks as the Defense Department increases its cost-of-living allowance. COLA, as it is known, is indirectly tied to the euro, which had made big gains against the dollar in the last three years, hitting an all-time high this month. Here is a look at how the euro rate has changed each quarter since Jan. 2002.



Source: 266th Finance Command, U.S. Army

Stars and Stripes

Currency experts: Dollar's decline will continue in 2005

BY SCOTT SCHONAUER
Stars and Stripes

NAVAL STATION ROTA, Spain — You might want to buy your euros now, currency experts say.

The dollar could be in for a bigger slide in 2005.

Americans living overseas watched the dollar fall lower and lower against the euro last year, boosting the costs for those living off base.

But the trend has to bottom out, right? Not any time soon, analysts say.

Some exchange experts forecast that the euro will reach $1.45 in the next several months, but a worst-case, "nightmare" scenario has the dollar plummeting to $2 within a year.

David Gilmore, a partner with Foreign Exchange Analytics in Essex, Conn., sees the dollar dropping to $1.45 against the euro.

"I think we'll see new lows before the year is out," he said. "It's hard to say when. You know, nothing is ever a straight line."

The weakening dollar can make it difficult financially for Americans living overseas, but the Pentagon has allowances set up so servicemembers and commands can maintain their purchasing power.

American servicemembers stationed in Europe would likely see a boost in their cost-of-living allowance, while the different military services stationed in Europe have special service-level accounts that they can grab from to buffer the fluctuating currency rates. For example, if the dollar drops, U.S. Air Forces in Europe can tap into an Air Force budget set up specifically to help minimize the impact, command spokesman Capt. Chris Watts said.

The dollar has rebounded in the last several weeks to $1.31 on Tuesday, but analysts said that the spike in the value would not last.

"I think it's temporary," Gilmore said. "The Bush administration has made deficit reduction a key objective of the new term, and it's ability to achieve that will probably determine what happens to the dollar.

"I just think there's a very poor record in Congress for cutting discretionary spending for obvious reasons. The war on terror has escalating costs to it. And homeland security has escalating costs to it. And we have record tax cuts in the pipeline the Bush administration is intent on making permanent. So, the budget math doesn't add up."

> *"The Bush administration has made deficit reduction a key objective of the new term, and it's ability to achieve that will probably determine what happens to the dollar."*
>
> **David Gilmore**
> partner, Foreign Exchange Analytics

Clifford Bennett, a chief strategist based in Sydney, Australia, with FxMAX, said the dollar is in a "historical long-term re-pricing."

"The rally of the U.S. dollar went on for years, and we're just now seeing that unwound," Bennett said. "And things have really changed where the rest of the world wants to invest in the rest of the world instead of just the U.S. this decade."

The good thing is that currency rates are cyclical. What goes down, Gilmore said, will likely come up. The question is, when?

"If you're a member of the U.S. military and you're living in Germany or somewhere else in Europe, right now you understand very much what it does to your purchasing power and you stay on base," Gilmore said. "But it won't stay there forever. The dollar will strengthen over time."

For Americans living overseas, take heed: Even the currency experts get it wrong sometimes.

"Forecasting currencies is more art than science," Gilmore said. "There's no Holy Grail for doing it accurately. Anyone that says they can, his or her nose is growing as they're telling you that."

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DOD offers benefits to shore Special Ops

BY LISA BURGESS
Stars and Stripes

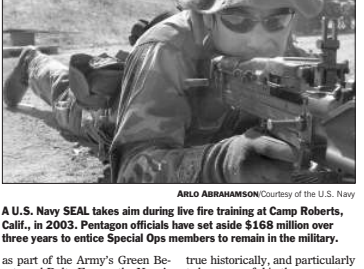
ARLINGTON, Va. — Hoping to slow the hemorrhage of Special Operations servicemembers who are leaving their military jobs to accept lucrative commercial work, Pentagon officials have set aside $168 million over three years — fiscal 2005 to 2007 — for a commando benefits package.

According to a story in Friday's Christian Science Monitor, senior Pentagon leaders approved the bonus package Dec. 22.

Some of the funds for the bonuses will come from the upcoming 2006 budget proposal, which Congress will have to approve later this year, David Chu, the Pentagon's under secretary of Defense for personnel and readiness, told the Monitor.

Other funds will come from the as the already-approved fiscal 2005 defense supplemental budget.

Both junior and senior members of the Special Operations will benefit from the bonuses, according to the story, with lump-sum payments totally as much as $150,000 going to the most experienced individuals — operators with 19-years or more as part of the Army's Green Berets and Delta Forces, the Navy's SEALs, the Air Force pararescuemen and combat controllers, and other Special Operations troops.



ARLO ABRAHAMSON/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

A U.S. Navy SEAL takes aim during live fire training at Camp Roberts, Calif., in 2003. Pentagon officials have set aside $168 million over three years to entice Special Ops members to remain in the military.

"We are offering handsome rewards to agree to substantial service beyond 20 years. That's a new objective," Chu told the Monitor. "We're reaching a point ... where we're going to want more Special Operators to stay past 20 years of service than has been true historically, and particularly to be successful in the war on terror."

The total amount of the benefits will be $168 million over three fiscal years, beginning in fiscal year 2005, which began last October, and lasting though fiscal 2007, which ends Oct. 1, 2007, according to Army Lt. Col. Joseph Richard, a Pentagon spokesman.

There are about 49,000 members of the Special Operations community. The bonuses are intended only for those specifically designated as "operators," which generally includes those individuals who spend of the most of their time performing tactical operations, mostly in the field, Richard said.

Richard outlined some of the details of the package on Friday, although questions remain about when the benefits will begin and whether they will be retroactive.

Richard said that each service would "issue detailed implementing instructions in the near future."

According to the Dec. 22 memo approved by senior leaders, Richard said, the new incentives will include:

■ A critical skills retention bonus for all servicemembers in the rank of E-6 who have completed 19 years of service and who have a Special Operations military occupational skills designator, and who are willing to sign an active-duty service agreement of one to six years.

The amount of the bonus depends on how long the person is willing to stay in the military. Individuals agreeing to stay for a one-year contract (and only members who have completed 24 years of service are eligible for this option) will get $8,000. For two years, the bonus will be $18,000; for three years, $30,000; for four years, $50,000; five years, $75,000; and another six year-stint, $150,000.

■ A $375 per month special-duty assignment pay for all special operators in ranks E-4 thru E-9. This payment will replace the special duty assignment pay that already exists for commandoes, which "was scattered all over," Richard said. The new benefit structure "makes it equal across the board," he said.

■ A $750 monthly assignment incentive pay for Special Operations enlisted members and warrant officers with more than 25 years of service, whom Special Operations Command leaders have formally designated as "operators," and who agree to serve a minimum of an additional year.

■ A "critical" designation for Army and Navy warrant officers with a SOF military occupational skills designator, which means their respective services may offer up to $60,000 in accessions bonus in order to attract more warrant officers.

E-mail Lisa Burgess at: burgessl@stripes.osd.mil

Small towns fight to keep nearby bases from closing

BY KIMBERLY HEFLING
The Associated Press

LOOGOOTEE, Ind. — By day, scientists and engineers at Indiana's only Navy base work on classified projects for submarines and high-tech weapons systems. At night, they go home to houses with big porches in tiny towns.

To many, it's the best of both worlds: a challenging, high-paid job with small-town appeal.

"There's a set of moral ties, an element that keeps us here," said Dusty Wilson, 35, an electrical engineer who is the fourth generation in his family to work at the Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center. "Everything you need is here. You don't have to leave your roots."

But times could be changing for this southern Indiana community and others across the nation that depend on military bases for jobs, tax dollars and retail sales.

Pentagon officials are preparing for their fifth round of base closings, and they say there's plenty of fat to trim. Officials won't specify how many of 400 bases are targeted — but say the military has 24 percent more capacity than it needs.

Recommendations for closings are due May 16 to a nine-member Base Realignment and Closure — or BRAC — commission. Defense leaders say the closures, the first since 1995, could save billions.

But what's good for the federal pocketbook is causing anxiety in military-dependent communities.

"There are a lot of people saying they don't know what they would do," said Jeff Bowling, 32, an electronics technician at Crane whose stepfather also works at the base and whose brother is employed by a Crane contractor.

AP

Scott Johnson looks over a few of the weapons repaired at the Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center in Crane, Ind., on Jan. 4. The center is Indiana's 12th largest single-site employer and provides 8,100 jobs either through the government or related contractors, with a total payroll of $368 million.

Bowling lives in Loogootee, a town of 2,741 people where 67 percent of all wages paid come from Crane.

Crane — Indiana's 12th largest single-site employer — provides 8,100 jobs either through the government or related contractors, with a total payroll of $368 million. Its tasks range from modifying weapons for Navy SEALs to testing laser-guided bombs, and it has 650,000 tons of ordnance storage capacity.

Many employees say they'd have to move to find similar work.

The sentiment is similar at Fort Knox, Ky., where Bill Barron, a retired Army Reserves major general, is leading an effort to keep that installation open.

"Some people speculate that this round of base closures could be worse than all the previous ones combined," Barron said. "All the low-hanging fruit has been picked, so BRAC '05 is going to be pretty painful for a lot of installations."

Communities are spending millions on consultants, lobbyists and construction projects to prove their "military value" — how well the base contributes to defense needs now and in the future.

In Brunswick, Maine, officials have compiled a 20-page document to promote Brunswick Naval Air Station. California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has formed a commission to discuss ways to keep California's bases open.

Pentagon leaders say they try to keep the process removed from politics. The analysis is done in a "windowless room tightly sealed and locked," said Raymond DuBois, who oversees the BRAC process for the Pentagon.

Still, townspeople here hope the message gets through.

"I'll be praying about it," said Cheryl Biggs, 55, who owns Blessings Christian bookstore in Loogootee. Without Crane, she said, "This town would be a ghost town."

DOD official questions helo testing

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Navy's plans for a new presidential helicopter do not provide for sufficiently rigorous testing of early production models, the Pentagon's chief of testing says.

The early models of the Marine One helicopter would even lack some of the capabilities of the president's current version, the testing chief's report says. The first new Marine Ones are expected to begin operating in October 2009.

Next Friday, the Navy is expected to announce who will get the $1.6 billion contract to produce 23 of the aircraft. Maryland-based Lockheed Martin Corp. and Connecticut-based Sikorsky Aircraft Corp. are competing for the job. The full fleet is supposed to be in operation by 2014.

However, Thomas P. Christie, the Pentagon's director of operational test and evaluation, says in his report that the Navy's schedule will mean the new helicopters will be tested even as they are being built — meaning that lessons learned in the testing process cannot be incorporated into the early production models.

This "violates the fly-before-buy concept," Christie says.

A Navy spokesman declined to address the concerns raised in the 380-page report, released by the Pentagon this week. The White House has pressed for an expedited bidding and development process because of safety concerns with the current helicopter, based on the SH-3 Sea King, in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Navy officials have sought more time.

IN THE WORLD

Military begins to leave tsunami-striken region

U.S. ends mission in Thailand; Sri Lanka pullout begins

BY JULIANA GITTLER
Stars and Stripes

UTAPAO, Thailand — U.S. forces officially ended their relief mission to Thailand on Saturday, moving the few remaining operations to the control of the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group at the U.S. Embassy, said Marine Lt. Col. Robert Krieg, a member of the combined support force planning team.

Command and control forces will remain at the headquarters in Utapao for the remainder of the dwindling mission, he added.

U.S. forces also began the process to close down in Sri Lanka, a progression that should wrap up this week, Krieg said.

The overall mission to South Asia is being turned over to the United Nations, which will continue to operate with local governments, participating militaries and aid agencies.

"We're turning [operations] over to them much faster than we thought they'd be ready for," Krieg said.

Also Saturday, Maj. Gen. David A. Deptula, commander of the joint forces air component from Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, began a tour of the region to see the reconstruction and visit Air Force troops working there.

"We are seeing a rapid transition now in terms of the nations that originally requested aid and basically getting to the point where they can handle on their own the reconstruction efforts," Deptula said.

At a stop at Utapao, the general said he was pleased with the success of the mission, including the rapid deployment of C-130s to the region and the airlift of supplies by other resources, including Air Force HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters in Sri Lanka.

"It is a testament to the preparedness and readiness of the PACAF forces," Deptula said of Pacific Air Forces personnel.

Many operations took place on foreign landing strips in areas where U.S. troops haven't trained before, he said.

In Sri Lanka, U.S. forces moved 146,000 pounds of food, 124,000 pounds of supplies and 8,500 gallons of water, Krieg said.

Pave Hawks helped to evacuate 442 people and Marine and Navy engineers cleared debris in several communities, using some of the debris to repair a sea wall.

At a women's college in Galle, Seabees and engineers demolished two damaged buildings and moved 250 cubic yards of rubble to clear space for future construction. The groups also cleared debris at several schools and a Sri Lankan army base, Krieg said.

"We've seen an immediate effect through our efforts," said Lt. Jorge Cuadros, the Air Detachment officer-in-charge of Navy Mobile Construction Battalion 7, from Guam, in a written release. "Within two days of clearing the demolished schools, children were back to their classes learning."

In Indonesia, the last area for U.S. relief efforts, military personnel continued airlifting supplies into remote areas, Krieg said.

U.S. forces continue to evaluate roads and bridges and will provide their assessments to the Indonesian government and the United Nations. If asked, the United States could provide assistance with the projects, Krieg said.

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BENJAMIN D. GLASS/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Lt. Cmdr. Robert Federal from the USS Abraham Lincoln stacks boxes of food Friday to be delivered to outlying towns around Banda Aceh on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. As military leaders begin to pull U.S. assets out of Indonesia, the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Group will likely be one of the first to leave.

Norwegian envoy scrambles to resolve foreign aid dispute

The Associated Press

KILINOCHCHI, Sri Lanka — With Tamil Tiger rebels claiming the Sri Lankan government is blocking tsunami aid to rebel-controlled areas, Norwegian diplomats are urging the two sides to create a joint body that would ensure fair distribution of humanitarian supplies, officials said Saturday.

Indonesia, fighting its reputation for widespread corruption, repeated promises made earlier this week that it will do all it can to make sure foreign aid reaches tsunami victims. One step announced by Welfare Minister Alwi Shihab was that foreign governments could designate specific projects they wanted to fund.

"I hope that the trust can be built between the government and the donor countries," Shihab said in Banda Aceh, the capital of Indonesia's worst-hit province. "We want to demonstrate to the whole world that this government is different from the previous government."

In Sri Lanka, envoys from Norway — which helped mediate a cease-fire three years ago in the nation's two-decade civil war — met with Tamil rebels a day after talks with government officials to try to resolve a dispute over aid deliveries in this country that suffered about 31,000 deaths in the disaster.

The rebels accuse the government of obstructing the flow of aid to their territory in the northern and eastern parts of the island. The government denies the allegation.

Canada mad cow cases

OTTAWA — Investigators probing Canada's third case of mad cow disease said Friday that none of the cattle from the same farm show any trace of the brain-wasting disease.

Nine animals born on the same farm within a year of an infected Alberta dairy cow have tested negative for mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency said in a release.

A tenth cow tested negative in November. Most of the remaining animals have died or been slaughtered.

The infected dairy cow was one of two diagnosed in Alberta during a 10-day span this month. The new cases turned up after the Bush administration said it would lift the ban on Canadian cattle that was prompted by a case in 2003.

The third case raised concerns about the safety of Canada's feed supply and prompted fears that the key U.S. market would not reopen its border to young Canadian cattle as promised on March 7.

From The Associated Press

Palestinian militants agree to cease-fire

BY LARA SUKHTIAN
The Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — An armed group linked to Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas' ruling Fatah party announced Saturday it was willing to accept a cease-fire if Israel also agrees to stop attacks, a sign of progress in five days of talks between Abbas and militant leaders.

Abu Mohammed — the nom-de-guerre used by the masked spokesman of the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in the West Bank and Gaza Strip — said the armed group would accept a truce "if it is mutual and if Israel also commits to it."

Israel has refused to give such a guarantee in the past, and it remains unclear if it will do so now, although some Israeli officials have indicated that Israel will respond in kind to a halt in Palestinian violence.

Abbas has been in Gaza since Tuesday for talks with militant groups to persuade them to halt attacks on Israel, a key condition Israel has set for negotiating with the Palestinian leadership.

The militants have said the talks are going well and will continue.

Egypt is expected to host Palestinian officials and militant leaders in the coming days in Cairo to complete a cease-fire agreement, a top Palestinian official said on condition of anonymity. The meeting is to be convened after the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha, which ends Sunday.

Al Aqsa's announcement came a day after some 3,000 Palestinian police officers were deployed in the northern Gaza Strip to halt rocket fire on Israeli communities, eliciting praise from a top Israeli official on Saturday.

Compared to lackluster performance in the past, "now it seems they [Palestinian security forces] are taking positive action," said Brig. Gen. Giora Eiland, head of Israel's National Security Council.

Eiland told Israel Radio that the situation remains fragile, and that in the long run, Abbas will have to dismantle armed groups and raid weapons workshops.

Abbas has said he wants to avoid force, and is instead trying to reach agreement with the militants.

Earlier Saturday, a splinter group of the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade in the Gaza Strip said it also was willing to declare a cease-fire with Israel.

"We think that all the factions, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad, believe that this cease-fire must be mutual," Abu Mohammed said.

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Iran: Women can run for president

BY ALI AKBAR DAREINI
The Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's hard-line constitutional watchdog announced Saturday that women can run for president for the first time in June elections, a step seen as a message to prove that Iran is a democracy in the face of increasing U.S. pressure.

The announcement clears up ambiguities within the constitution about whether only men can hold the post.

"If they posses the necessary qualifications, women can also run for president," state-run television quoted Guardian Council spokesman Gholamhossein Elham as saying.

According to Iran's constitution, the president must be elected from among political "rijal." Rijal is an Arabic word that can be interpreted as "men" or simply refer to political personalities regardless of their gender.

"The word "rijal" doesn't negate gender," Elham was quoted as saying.

For the past 25 years, the Guardian Council has rejected women from running on the basis of the "men" interpretation.

Elham did not elaborate and it was not clear what caused the council to change its interpretation.

Iran's presidential election is slated for June 17. Reformist President Mohammad Khatami is prevented from running for a third term by the constitution.

The next Iranian president will face substantial challenges, including the task of convincing the world that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful and responding to pressure on various fronts from the United States. Last week, President Bush said he would not rule out the possibility of using military force against Iran's nuclear program.

Political analysts said the new interpretation by the Guardian Council was intended to ensure a high turnout in the election in order to make a possible U.S. attack irrelevant.

"Definitely, the ruling establishment wants a maximum voter turnout in June to tell the world it's a democracy. And allowing women to run will obviously encourage more people to vote," analyst Saeed Leylaz said.

Iran, which had women rulers in ancient times, has not had a female leader in modern day. Prior to the 1979 Islamic revolution, Iran had one female minister. In 1997, Khatami appointed a woman, Masoumeh Ebtekar, as vice president and head of the Envionmental Protection Organization but her position is perceived as even lower than a minister.

The Guardian Council may also be looking to redeem itself after last year's parliamentary elections. The council, which vets all parliamentary legislation and elections, disqualified more than 2,000 reformist candidates in the legislative polls, effectively barring reformers from the assembly. The widespread disqualifications led to a low turnout and reformists denounced the vote a "historical fiasco."

Last day of hajj stoning ritual goes smoothly

BY ADNAN MALIK
The Associated Press

MINA, Saudi Arabia — Tens of thousands of Muslim pilgrims crowded the pathway to three large stone pillars Saturday, some stepping on toes or gently shoving to reach their goal, where they cried out "Allahu Akbar" as they threw pebbles.

The final day of the symbolic "stoning the devil" ritual was slightly more frenzied than the past two days, as the pilgrims — many carrying their luggage — were in a rush to return to Mecca for the final rite of the annual hajj pilgrimage.

But there were no major problems and doctors reported only a few dozen minor injuries, such as scratches and bruises.

"Everything is under control," said Interior Ministry spokesman Mansour al-Turki.

The pilgrims have only until sundown to perform the ritual on Saturday, instead of midnight as on other days.

Many ignored loudspeaker warnings — in Arabic, English, Farsi and Urdu — to walk slowly and not push each other. "Give everyone a chance so you get your turn," said the voice on the loudspeakers, repeating a message also displayed on large electronic message boards at the entrance to the Jamarat, or pillars that represent the devil.

AP

Millions of pilgrims crowd to throw stones at pillars representing the devil in Mina, outside of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on Saturday.

As the crowd thinned in the late afternoon, a thunderstorm slowed the passage of pilgrims. Umbrellas were opened, and many found plastic bags in their luggage to hold over their heads. The mountain ranges that surround the valley could barely be seen through the heavy rain, and thunder and lightning rattled the pilgrims.

Al-Turki said about 160,000 people per hour were passing over the footbridge leading to the pillars.

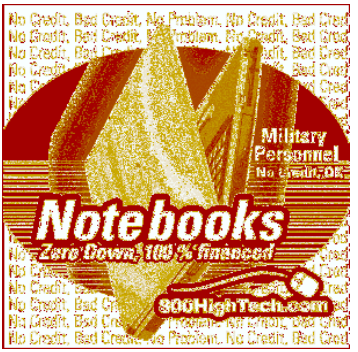
The ritual is a notorious bottleneck, and Saudi Arabia made extra precautions this year in an effort to prevent the deadly stampedes that have occurred in the past. Last year, 244 people were trampled to death when the crowd panicked during the stoning ritual.

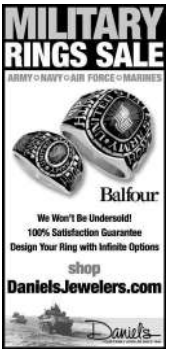
This year, authorities widened the walkways approaching the site to 80 yards across to reduce congestion. The Saudis also rebuilt the three pillars. Previously, the pillars resembled tall obelisks.

Now they are stone walls 85-feet long, allowing many more people to pelt them with pebbles at the same time.

A religious fatwa also extended the hours permitted for the ritual.

It appeared the precautions made the ritual smoother and safer.





Pact to be re-evaluated

MOSCOW — The notorious 1939 pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union that divided up much of eastern Europe is open only to historical re-evaluation, a Kremlin spokesman said Saturday, suggesting that Moscow isn't prepared to support a legally binding renouncement of the agreement.

"At present, only the historical evaluation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact is possible," Dmitry Peskov, deputy press secretary to President Vladimir Putin said.

He did not elaborate, but the statement appears to dampen expectations, created this week by Estonian President Arnold Ruutel, that the Kremlin was ready to disown the pact during the May celebrations in Moscow to mark the 60th anniversary of the Nazi defeat in World War II.

From The Associated Press

Schwarzenegger

Execution may hurt gov.'s dual citizenship

BY WILLIAM J. KOLE
The Associated Press

VIENNA, Austria — California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger should be stripped of citizenship in his native Austria for approving the execution of a convicted killer, a leading Austrian politician said Saturday.

Peter Pilz, a top official with the environmentalist Green Party, said the Austria-born Schwarzenegger no longer is worthy of citizenship in his homeland because he broke the law by clearing Donald Beardslee's execution on Wednesday.

Capital punishment is illegal here, and Schwarzenegger — who holds dual U.S.-Austrian nationality — should be stripped of his Austrian passport for "heavily damaging the reputation of the republic," Pilz said.

He told Austrian media he sent the Interior Ministry a letter formally requesting that the government begin the process of terminating Schwarzenegger's citizenship.

"Schwarzenegger is possibly the most prominent Austrian abroad, and he shapes the picture of Austria," Pilz said. "I don't want that picture shaped by someone who commits state murder. That does not correspond to the political culture of this country."

Calls to the Interior Ministry seeking comment went unanswered Saturday.

Beardslee, 61, convicted of killing two women over a drug deal almost a quarter-century ago, became the first inmate put to death by California in three years when he was given a lethal injection at San Quentin State Prison.

The execution came hours after Schwarzenegger rejected a clemency petition seeking to commute the death sentence to life without parole, and the California Supreme Court rejected two last-minute appeals. In Vienna, it triggered a small but spirited protest outside the U.S. Embassy.

IN THE STATES

Winter storm coats Midwest and Northeast

BY JULIET WILLIAMS
The Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — A blustery snowstorm out of Canada created a midwinter bonanza for snow sports enthusiasts across the upper Midwest while the upper Ohio Valley and Northeast braced for more than a foot of highway-clogging snow Saturday.

Storm warnings were posted from Wisconsin to New England, where the National Weather Service posted a blizzard warning in effect through Sunday. By midmorning, snow was falling from parts of Wisconsin and Illinois into New York state, New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia.

With up to 10 inches expected, Maryland school systems canceled Saturday activities, including SAT tests.

One man died after falling through ice on a pond in Ohio, where two others died of apparent heart attacks while removing snow, authorities said.

Up to 15 inches of snow was forecast in New Jersey and areas around New York City during the weekend, and accumulations of up to 20 inches were possible in parts of New England, the weather service said. A foot was likely in northern Ohio. Some areas of the Midwest — like southwestern Ohio — already had several inches on the ground from earlier storms.

Even at the Hidden Valley Resort in Vernon, N.J., there was apprehension about the storm.

"It's great for morale and gets a lot of people interested in skiing, but a snowfall like that over the weekend hurts our cash registers because people aren't getting in their cars and coming out here," general manager John Shema said.

The heaviest snowfall in Wisconsin was about 12 inches in the Milwaukee suburb of West Allis, but an additional 2 to 5 inches was possible during the day because of moisture from Lake Michigan, the weather service said. The heavy snow prevented a rescue squad from quickly getting to the scene of a house fire that killed two women in Racine during the night.

Up to a foot of snow had fallen in Michigan by late Saturday morning. Detroit delayed the opening of its first annual Motown Winter Blast for several hours to give road crews a chance to clear highways. The outdoor festival features dogsledders, ice carvings, snow sculptures, a giant toboggan and ice skating.

AP photos

Above: Harold Coleman spreads salt to help melt snow on the sidewalk he just shoveled outside the sandwich shop where he works Saturday in Chicago. Heavy snow pounded the Chicago area Friday night and continued into Saturday. Below: A woman crosses the street through a blinding snow storm Saturday in downtown Chagrin Falls, Ohio. Northeast Ohio was expecting up to a foot of snow.

Wind gusts of more than 60 mph were common across Iowa.

In Chicago, about 200 people had to spend the night at O'Hare International Airport, where more than 300 flights were canceled on Friday, and several more flights were canceled Saturday, airport officials said.

In Minnesota, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport had both of its main runways open Saturday after shutting them down one at a time Friday for plowing, said airport spokesman Patrick Hogan.

Airlines canceled some 200 flights Friday. Highways that were shut down because of zero visibility Friday in western Minnesota had reopened.

AP reporters Chris Newmarker in Trenton, N.J., and Melanie S. Welte in Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this report.

FBI says Boston terror threat may have been revenge hoax

BY DENISE LAVOIE
The Associated Press

BOSTON — Gov. Mitt Romney said he has become "less concerned, not more concerned" about a potential terrorist threat against the city of Boston. The FBI, meanwhile, is exploring possible theories for the reports — including a possible revenge motive.

FBI agents have been looking into an uncorroborated tip that 16 people might be planning an attack on the city. Those allegedly involved in the plot include 13 Chinese nationals, two Iraqis and a man identified on the FBI's Web site as Jose Ernesto Beltran Quinones, whose nationality was not given.

But the tipster who told federal officials about the alleged conspiracy may have fabricated the story out of revenge, a federal law enforcement official said Friday. The law enforcement official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the tipster may have been angry because a group of illegal immigrants had failed to pay for smuggling them into the country.

That scenario is one of many being examined in the case, said the official in Washington, who declined to describe other theories being explored.

The original tip was received by the California Highway Patrol, according to another federal law enforcement official in Washington who also spoke on condition of anonymity.

The tipster claimed four of the Chinese — two men and two women — entered the United States from Mexico and were awaiting a shipment of "nuclear oxide" that would follow them to Boston.

Several radioactive compounds take form as oxides and could be used in a dirty bomb, said Charles Ferguson, a science and technology fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington. Plutonium and americium oxides, in the right amounts, would be dangerous to human health, while uranium oxide would be less so, Ferguson said.

Security was increased in Boston, where two of the planes were hijacked for the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Associated Press writer Curt Anderson in Washington contributed to this report.

Some homeland security grants ended

BY TED BRIDIS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The government has ended grant programs that have provided more than $1.2 million a year since 2002 for two homeland security organizations that distribute information about potential threats to oil and gas and public transit companies.

The information sharing and analysis centers were set up to protect energy and bus, rail and ferry systems.

Collectively, more than a dozen such centers help protect banks, chemical plants, water utilities and other sectors. The centers, many of which are privately financed, are part of the Bush administration's effort to encourage corporations to ensure the safety of vital parts of the country's infrastructure.

The energy industry's early warning center lost $629,000 in annual Energy Department grants since 2002. On Friday, it switched to a cheaper communications network that can relay emergency notices from the government to its 500 members, which represent leading oil and gas companies and organizations.

Unlike the old system, it will not permit member companies to distribute among themselves terror warnings, tips or other data.

"We're still figuring out how to provide the more detailed analytical capabilities — more than the government provides — and how to share information between members," said Kendra Martin, director of security for the American Petroleum Institute.

The warning center for the public transit industry, which serves more than 130 companies and organizations, risks shutting down as early as next month because the Federal Transit Authority did not renew its $1.2 million, two-year federal grant.

In each case, the Homeland Security Department encouraged the industry centers to join for free its new Homeland Security Information Network, which distributes government alerts among corporations, trade groups and others.

Some officials said they worried that participation in the federal network could discourage companies from sharing sensitive details among themselves about threats they would prefer to keep from the government.

"Nothing would prevent companies from continuing to share, but they would be sharing information on a government system that the government has access to," Martin said. "It was different when we knew it was a system we controlled."

The administration said it did not intend to discourage information sharing among companies.

Each industry's early warning center will decide whether or how it would share warnings with the government, said Jim Caverly, director of Homeland Security's Infrastructure Coordination Division.

Roe v. Wade debate lively after 32 years

BY DAVID CRARY
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Coming just two days after George W. Bush's inauguration, Saturday's anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion is dominated by the hopes of one side — and fears of the other — that the president will try to overturn Roe v. Wade through appointments to fill expected high court vacancies.

Anti-abortion activists were among the legions of Bush supporters converging on Washington in the past few days, and most will remain for Monday's annual March for Life. Though Bush is widely admired within the movement, some of its militants still question his commitment to reversing the 32-year-old decision.

"President Bush has an ethical obligation to protect the unborn, and he has a political debt of honor to those who put him in office," said Randall Terry, founder of Operation Rescue. "His staff must thoroughly investigate any possible appointee, and if they are not unalterably committed to overturning Roe v. Wade, they must be dismissed from consideration."

Anti-abortion lawmakers in Congress and several states, meanwhile, are introducing the latest in a wave of measures aimed at making it more daunting to obtain an abortion. The bills would require abortion providers to tell women 20 weeks or more pregnant that an abortion could cause pain to their fetus, and to offer anesthesia administered directly to the fetus.

Abortion-rights supporters, simultaneously apprehensive and determined, are engaging in post-election reassessments, some of them wondering openly if their rhetoric and strategies should be modified to better compete for public support.

AP

From left, Sharon Turner of Germantown, Md., a member of the Abolition of Abortion Federation, and Alveda King of Atlanta, a niece of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., take part in an anti-abortion demonstration Friday outside the Supreme Court in Washington.

Frances Kissling, president of Catholics for a Free Choice, is suggesting there is little to be gained — in the court of public opinion — by opposing the notion that a fetus represents some form of human life. She proposes "a new pro-choice discourse" that would acknowledge both women's rights and respect for fetal life.

"Abortion is a serious matter; it is a woman's right and no woman needs to apologize for making this decision," Kissling wrote recently. "On the other hand, no woman needs to brag about her choice, and the decision of one pro-choice organization to sell T-shirts announcing 'I had an abortion' was in poor taste."

She says the legislation provides abortion-rights supporters with a chance to show they do value fetal life. She objects to the federal bill, saying it requires doctors to follow a script that is insensitive to women, but she supports the concept of offering fetal anesthesia in appropriate circumstances.

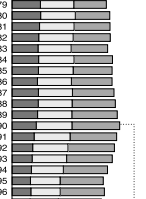
"Abortion should be a humane and compassionate procedure," she wrote in the latest edition of her organization's journal.

Dave Andrusko of the National Right to Life Committee accused Kissling of "Alice in Wonderland" reasoning. You can't concede that a fetus is human, and then say it's allowable to destroy it, he argues.

Abortions down since peak in 1990

When Roe v. Wade legalized abortion in 1973, nearly one-third of procedures were obtained by women 19 years old or under. In 2001, nearly half of abortions were obtained by women over 25.

Legal abortions in the United States, in millions



Alaska, California and New Hampshire did not report in 1998-2001. Oklahoma did not report in 1998 or 1999.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention AP

Roe changes mind, asks court to do so

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The woman once known as "Jane Roe" has asked the Supreme Court to overturn its landmark Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion 32 years ago.

Norma McCorvey, whose protest of Texas' abortion ban led to the 1973 ruling, contends in a petition received at the court Tuesday that the case should be heard again in light of evidence that the procedure may harm women.

"Now we know so much more, and I plead with the court to listen for witnesses and re-evaluate Roe v. Wade," said McCorvey, who says she now regrets her role in the case.

The politically charged issue comes before the court as both sides gird for a possible bitter nomination fight over Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist's replacement should the ailing justice retire this term. At least three justices, including Rehnquist, have said Roe v. Wade was wrongly decided and should be overturned.

Two lower courts last year threw out McCorvey's request to have the ruling reconsidered.

But in a strongly worded concurrence, 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals judge Edith H. Jones criticized the abortion ruling and said new medical evidence may well show undue harm to a mother and her fetus.

DJ rocks around clock to set new world record

BY MIKE BRANOM
The Associated Press

WINTER PARK, Fla. — Dave Plotkin rocked around the clock — several times over.

The disc jockey at Rollins College's WPRK-FM unofficially set a record Friday for the world's longest continuous broadcast by a single DJ.

Plotkin, 25, took to the airwaves at 9 a.m. Monday and signed off at 11:03 p.m. Friday, a 110-hour span. A DJ in Switzerland lasted 105 hours in July 2002.

"Everthing I did, every facet of my life for the past five days, I was broadcasting on the radio with a wireless [microphone] or here in the studio," Plotkin said Friday evening in the seconds before reaching Hour 106 and breaking the old record. "I miss the outside world."

The event, planned for more than a year, raised $16,150 for the 52-year-old radio station.

It will take Guinness, keeper of the world's records, four to six weeks to validate Plotkin's feat.

Under Guinness' rules, Plotkin had to speak at least once every 59 seconds. And there was no napping while "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" played: Songs could not be longer than six minutes.

The event, planned for more than a year, raised funds for the station. The broadcast, which also went out over the Internet, drew donations from as far as Peru.

In between spinning CDs from indie rockers, Plotkin hosted local bands, interviewed artists and civic leaders, gave interviews himself and took cold showers in a stall built down the hall from the studio.

He was watched by medical professionals, journalists, friends, family and assorted well-wishers in what turned into the small liberal-arts college's social event of the season.

"Since you've been down here in this hole of hell for so long," said a woman offering Plotkin a purple orchid, "I thought you needed something alive and beautiful."

Others seemed to be drawn by the curious sight of a man determined to stay awake for close to five days straight.

AP

Dave Plotkin, left, a disc jockey at Rollins College's WPRK-FM in Winter Park, Fla., tries to keep his eyes open Friday during the 101st hour of his radio marathon.

Toward the end, he tried to put CDs into closed trays, banged his head on the microphone and forgot his station's call letters.

"I'm a lab rat," said Plotkin, his face unshaven and his eyes fading in and out of glassiness.

Martin favorite to replace Powell as FCC chairman

Los Angeles Times

Before his appointment to the Federal Communications Commission, Kevin J. Martin worked for the Bush-Cheney transition team. Now the speculation is that President Bush will return the favor and help Martin himself transition into a new job: chairman of the FCC.

With the long-expected resignation of Chairman Michael K. Powell now a reality, the White House is believed to have a short list of candidates that, besides Martin, includes Rebecca A. Klein and Pat Wood.

Both Klein and Wood are former chairs of the Public Utility Commission of Texas, with Wood being appointed by then-Gov. Bush.

Klein succeeded Wood, who now is chair of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the longest-serving Bush appointee covering state and federal terms.

But whoever is named chairman will have to bring something sorely missing under the Powell regime — a sound and stable voice for a more unified FCC, industry experts said.

"Everyone will be looking forward to working with a new commission because of the unproductive attitude that has enveloped this one," said Jessica Zufolo, a Washington, D.C., analyst for Medley Global Advisors in New York.

"Everyone is desperately hoping that a consensus will be found in a post-Powell era," she said, pointing out that companies and investors can plan better and that courts would view FCC rulings more favorably.

The Powell era often was marred, she said, by acrimony, court fights and too many 3-2 votes that left even victors worried about how long the decisions would hold up.

Martin and Klein are especially regarded as having consensus-building skills that would reach across party lines and lead to more unanimity, Zufolo and other industry experts said.

"But no matter who would become chair, we do not expect a basic change in the direction of FCC telecom and media policy," said analyst Blair Levin of Legg Mason Equity Research in a note to investors.

‘Ghost units’ spark Scout probe

Feds focus on Ala. Boy Scouts for allegedly listing fake members

BY JAY REEVES
The Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Boy Scout volunteer Tom Willis knew something was wrong when he saw that 20 kids on the list for a scouting program all had the same last name: Doe.

Willis, a former Eagle Scout who serves on the organization’s board for the northeast Alabama area, said it appeared someone was listing fake members to increase enrollment, which could boost funding from agencies, make paid Boy Scout recruiters look better, or both.

“It was just so blatant. They didn’t even try to make up names,” said Willis, a dentist from Decatur.

Amid suspicions that such practices are widespread in the Greater Alabama Boy Scout Council, federal prosecutors have subpoenaed records and agents are investigating whether bogus boys and “ghost units” fill the rosters of Boy Scout groups throughout northeast Alabama, where the council operates.

> *“Let me assure you that your executive committee considers these allegations to be very serious and is taking necessary and appropriate action.”*
>
> **Randy Haines**
> Greater Alabama Boy Scout Council board chairman

The FBI refused comment on any review, but the council — which claims it serves nearly 120,000 members and for 2002 reported revenues of $6.5 million — this month confirmed it was under investigation. In a message posted on its Web site, council board chairman Randy Haines said Scout officials were cooperating with federal law enforcement and conducting an internal audit.

“Let me assure you that your executive committee considers these allegations to be very serious and is taking necessary and appropriate action,” said the message from Haines, a banking executive.

An official at the Boy Scouts’ national office in Irving, Texas, said the organization has numerous policies meant to ensure that only real members and groups show up on rolls.

“The national council is dedicated to the accurate reporting of membership,” said spokesman Greg Shields.

Yet longtime scout volunteer Larry Cox said he got used to seeing paperwork from council headquarters in Birmingham that listed the names of youngsters who had dropped out of scouting or never been part of a unit to begin with. At an area meeting of adult volunteers last year, he said, virtually every unit present reported names being added to their rolls.

The problem, Cox said, is with “a few people at the conference office,” not volunteers who are out leading activities such as camping trips, service projects and “Pinewood Derby” car races.

The idea that someone would overstate membership goes against what the Boy Scouts are supposed to be about, he said.

“Being trustworthy and having integrity is one of the prime points of the Scouting oath.”

Murray surprises Va. town with pit stop

The Associated Press

ROANOKE, Va. — Bill Murray posed with a bawling baby, yucked it up with a gravedigger and sipped bourbon with locals after the actor stopped to repair his Mercedes-Benz.

Murray declined, however, to reveal the contents of his mysterious whisper to Scarlett Johansson at the end of the movie “Lost in Translation.” Besides, he said, the speculation over what he said was likely more interesting.

Murray found himself in this southwestern Virginia city on Wednesday after he tossed an apple core out the window of his black 2000 Mercedes and ran into a curb, witnesses told The Roanoke Times.

Murray drove to the Roanoke Mercedes-Benz and Volvo dealership to have his alignment fixed and for other repairs.

He waited 20 minutes before he walked up to startled manager Jeff Webb.

“Bill Murray,” Webb said, trying not to appear star-struck.

“What in the world are you doing here?”

Technician Jay Jones fixed Murray’s Mercedes and took up his offer of a drink. His wife didn’t buy that.

“Yeah right,” she said. “Just be home for dinner.”

Gravedigger Caleb Rossi asked Murray to sign a bootleg copy of “The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou” that he’d bought for $4 during a trip to New York.

“If you do this, this is in it for you,” said Rossi, 25, displaying a 2000-01 Botetourt Chamber of Commerce plaque he’d snagged from the trash.

Rossi got his autograph.

No one seems to know for sure where Murray was headed. He told the locals he finds driving to be a stress reliever and that he prefers to travel at night and sleep during the day.

AP

Ashtyn Webb, 14 months, doesn’t find comedian Bill Murray all that funny as she poses with him for a photo at a local Roanoke, Va., restaurant on Wednesday. Murray stopped at a local Mercedes dealership to have repairs done on his car and go for dinner and drinks with the staff.

Burger King turns to ‘Apprentice’ for new entree

BY JOHN PAIN
The Associated Press

MIAMI — Giving product placement a new twist, Burger King got its latest recipe from the mogul wannabes on “The Apprentice.”

The burger being debuted in 7,800 restaurants nationwide Friday came straight out of Thursday night’s episode of Donald Trump’s reality TV show.

Thursday night’s show was the premiere of the third “Apprentice” series, in which contestants compete for the chance to get a job with the billionaire businessman.

The two teams each had to design a new Burger King product, with help from the chain’s head chef.

Trump

They then had to sell it while running two busy stores in midtown Manhattan during lunchtime.

The team with the most sales won.

Burger King refused to discuss financial terms of the promotion deal.

The winning team, Networth, hawked a Western Angus steak burger, loaded with cheese, barbecue sauce, onion rings, lettuce and tomatoes. (For those counting calories, that’s about 700 big ones.)

“It seemed like a perfect fit for us. ... Donald Trump is a bottom-line guy,” said Russ Klein, Burger King Corp.’s chief marketing officer.

The episode was taped months ago. But with the burger on sale Friday, he said, “It will feel like a product has come from the boardroom into the restaurant in 24 hours.”

Burger King is planning to run a 30-second commercial featuring Trump on NBC until the end of January, Klein said. The burger should be in stores until Feb. 4.

The buzz comes as the chain seems to be recovering from a rough patch.

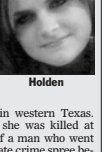
“I think it’s a very smart marketing move,” said Jerry McVety, president of McVety & Associates, a Farmington Hills, Mich.-based restaurant consultant.

“It’s a short, quick, targeted campaign. ... It’s driven more by the association with ‘The Apprentice’ and Trump than it is with this particular burger.”

Privately held Burger King doesn’t release exact sales figures, but sales at stores open at least a year have risen for 11 straight months through December, after sliding for nearly two years before that.

Suspect in custody

TYLER, Texas — A college student whose abduction was captured on a surveillance videotape as she was leaving her clerk’s job at a Wal-Mart was found shot to death Friday, and a suspect was arrested, authorities said.



Holden

The body of Megan Leann Holden, 19, was discovered in a ditch alongside a highway in western Texas. Police said she was killed at the hands of a man who went on a multistate crime spree before he turned up Friday at an Arizona hospital with a gunshot wound.

The suspect, Johnny Lee Williams, 24, was being held on a $1 million bond on an aggravated kidnapping charge from Texas, authorities said, adding that Williams was driving the woman’s pickup truck, which was parked outside the hospital.

Judge: Cuba must pay

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — A federal judge ordered Cuba on Friday to pay $1.75 million to a Miami pilot who survived a midair attack by Cuban MiGs over the Florida Straits in 1996.

The pilot, Jose Basulto, evaded the jets and was able to fly home, but was traumatized by the knowledge that two other planes operated by the group Brothers to the Rescue had been downed, killing the four people aboard, said U.S. District Judge Kenneth A. Marra.

“He has suffered greatly. And perhaps the judgment will help ease the pain a bit,” said Larry Klayman, the lawyer who filed the suit.

It was unclear when Basulto would be able to collect the money from the Cuban government, which sent no one to court to defend against the lawsuit.

Nev. lottery proposal

LAS VEGAS — Nevada Democrats are betting the time is right for the nation’s No. 1 gambling state to create a lottery, despite a prohibition in the state constitution dating back to 1864.

Assembly Speaker Richard Perkins said Friday that the money is needed to fund education. But lottery proposals have died 26 times in the Legislature since 1970 in the face of opposition from Nevada’s powerful gambling interests, which have maintained that the state should not compete with its top industry.

Legislators would have to approve a lottery and voters would have to support the idea twice to change the constitution.

From The Associated Press

We Salute You

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On behalf of the charity or charities you supported through the CFC-O, we thank you and salute you for your tremendous generosity.

Sincerely,

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Cooking controversy

OH THOMPSON — A high school principal promises he's going to give the living skills curriculum an extreme makeover after a student skinned and cooked a guinea pig and a rabbit during class.

The student, a 16-year-old boy, told the principal, Beto Gage, that he killed the animals at home before bringing them to Ledgemont High School. Gage said living skills teacher Diana Stevens lets students prepare a meal of their choice on Wednesdays.

Students who didn't want to watch were allowed to go into another room, Gage said.

The student had asked Stevens if he could catch and cook a wild rabbit and she approved, provided he gut the carcass before class, Gage said. He said the student, whose name was not released, is an active hunter.

The animals, however, apparently were purchased at a pet store.

Musical research

NC GREENSBORO — The University of North Carolina at Greensboro has started a research institute dedicated to increasing the understanding of how music is created by the human brain.

Researchers will look for insights by studying music's uses in medicine, psychology and education, among other fields.

Parish closing

NH ROCHESTER — An Episcopal parish that lost most of its worshippers after the diocese elected an openly gay bishop announced it will close after Easter. Remaining parishioners decided to close the Church of the Redeemer, saying there aren't enough worshippers and the parish leaders are overburdened.

The church has operated for more than 100 years.

Coach must stop prayer

MI AUGUSTA TOWNSHIP — A Washtenaw County school district ordered a high school coach to stop leading his wrestlers in prayer. The district issued the order after the ACLU threatened to sue unless Daren Schaller stopped the prayers, which came after practices and before meets.

The whole team participated in the prayers, which the district said were voluntary.

Penmanship for doctors

MT HELENA — The state House Judiciary Committee endorsed a bill calling for sanctions against doctors if a licensed pharmacist can't read the prescriptions they write. Under the legislation, repeat offenses could lead to a fine of up to $500.

The bill now goes to the full House for debate.

Costco sells Picasso

WA SEATTLE — Costco shoppers were offered an online deal this month — an original Picasso.

The crayon-on-paper drawing of a face signed and dated by Pablo Picasso was listed for $39,999.99 on the retailer's Web site Jan. 12. It sold Wednesday, said Jim Sinegal, Costco's chief executive, who would not identify the buyer.

The Issaquah-based discount retailing giant may be better known for bulk chicken and cases of soda, but the Costco.com site features an eclectic mix of items, from caskets to computers to sports equipment.

Art dealer Jim Tutwiler, who sold the Picasso, has been selling art through Costco for the past decade. He said Costco's markup is one-tenth that of traditional galleries.

Death settlement

IN BLOOMINGTON — The family of a man who died after a jailer shocked him with a stun gun has reached a $500,000 settlement over his death.

James Borden, 47, died in November 2003 at Monroe County Jail, where Lawrence County police had brought him for violation of a home detention order. Jail reports said Borden was "uncooperative," prompting jailer David Shaw to shock him six times with the stun gun.

Lawrence and Monroe counties agreed to the settlement but did not admit liability in Borden's death.

The settlement does not include Taser International Inc., the Scottsdale, Ariz.-based maker of the stun gun.

A coroner ruled Borden's cause of death as a heart attack brought on by an existing heart condition, drug intoxication and electrical shock.

Icy perch

A red-tailed hawk sits a top a pogonip covered branch in Washoe Valley, Nev.

Poison plan

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — A woman received a 20-year prison sentence Thursday for putting rat poison in her boss' soda to cover up the fact that she was stealing his money.

Fernesha Foster, 37, was found guilty Jan. 5 of poisoning for dropping the toxic mix into optometrist Mark Caruso's drink in 2000. Caruso realized the drink tasted funny and drove himself to an emergency room, where he was treated and released.

Foster, who worked as a technician for Caruso at a Wal-Mart, said she had discovered that her boss knew she had written checks from his account. Foster said she was not trying to kill him, but only send him home sick so she could have time to cover her tracks.

Foster's lawyer, William Lanphear, said he would appeal the verdict and sentence. He had argued Foster was innocent because there wasn't enough rat poison in the soda to do Caruso harm.

Foster is almost at the end of a five-year prison sentence for grand theft in the case.

Polite robber

MN MILWAUKEE — Sometimes saying please just doesn't work.

A man trying to rob Marine Land Pets got locked inside the pet store because of some fast action on the part of two clerks. The sisters, Wendy and Crystal York, triggered alarms that notified police and locked the store's front door.

The man can be heard on the store's security tape demanding that the clerk's open the door, only to hear them say, "We can't."

Then he asks again, "Open the door, ma'am. Please open the door."

He finally found his way out a back door and fled. Police were looking for him.

Scalding reaction

MA BOSTON — A Boston parking meter attendant suffered first-and second-degree burns on her face and upper torso after a man angry over the $55 ticket she gave him allegedly threw hot coffee at her.

Christi Noviello, 44, was walking her beat in the Back Bay at about 8:30 on Thursday morning when she saw a Hummer parked in a loading zone with a woman in the passenger seat.

She gave the woman a chance to move the vehicle before writing a $55 ticket and slipping it under a windshield wiper.

"I am a nice meter maid," Noviello told the Boston Herald.

"As a courtesy, I gave the lady a chance to move, but she pointed at the Starbucks and refused."

The driver, Francois Youhanna, came out of the coffee shop enraged, Noviello said.

"He had a venti-sized cup of black coffee in his hand and he flung it right in my face."

Youhanna was arrested and charged with assault and battery with a deadly weapon, hot coffee.

Sweet little lambs

Jaden Silva 2, leads his animal in the pee wee division of the lamb lightweight medium wool class at the Cameron County Fair Grounds in San Benito, Texas.

It's as easy as pie

Spencer Hill, left and Bridget Deery, both students at Notre Dame High School in Burlington, Iowa, take part in a pie-eating contest in the school's cafeteria.

Sunset baseball

Adam Wootton, 4, plays baseball with his aunt and grandmother as the sun goes down at Civitan Park in Farmington, N.M.

Making a point

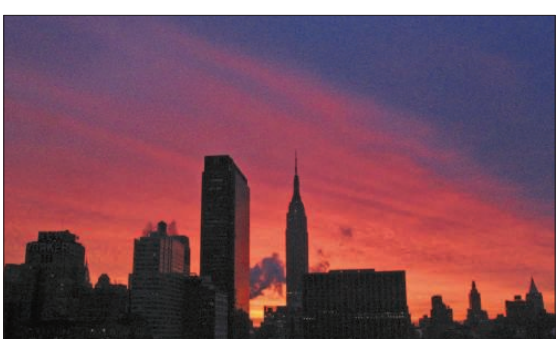
Chad Sommers, left, of New Orleans, and Donald Bratton of Ocean Springs, Miss., both students at The University of Southern Mississippi, put on a fencing demonstration on the Hattiesburg, Miss., campus.

Catching air

Brandon Knox, 17, of Omaha, Neb., jumps a hill at Mt. Crescent Ski Area in Crescent, Iowa.

Too hot to handle

Montana State University-Northern student Dan Stratton welds together a spark tester during welding certification class at MSU-Northern, Havre, Mont.



Before the storm

Dawn breaks over the midtown Manhattan skyline, with the Empire State Building center right, on Saturday.

Quarry crash

ME ROCKLAND — A vehicle skidded off a cliff and plunged into an ice-covered quarry, but divers will wait until spring to recover the body of the driver.

A passing driver saw the accident, which happened Thursday morning near the Limerock Street-Old County Road intersection. The witness told police she saw a dark-colored Chevy Blazer go over a stone barrier at the side of the road and fall into the city-owned quarry.

Rockland police Sgt. Jeff McLaughlin said snowy weather, road conditions and speed probably contributed to the accident.

Cockfight extortion

SC COLUMBIA — A former state official pleaded guilty to extortion charges Thursday and admitted taking a $10,000 bribe protect a cockfighting organization from legal trouble.

Suspended South Carolina Agriculture Commissioner Charles Sharpe was accused of accepting the payoff from an organization involved in breeding and raising birds for cockfighting, which is illegal in the state.

He used the money to pay off a debt from his 2002 campaign for commissioner, prosecutor Mark Moore said. Sharpe also pleaded guilty to lying to a federal officer.

"I am truly sorry for my error in judgment and ask for forgiveness," Sharpe told the court.

Alarming problem

CA FREMONT — Burdened by thousands of false alarms, police in Fremont will become the first in California to stop responding to burglar alarms unless there is a confirmed break-in or security breach.

The new policy, effective Feb. 18, will allow police to handle more urgent calls and save the city about $600, 000 a year in staff time and equipment costs, Fremont Police Chief Craig Steckler said.

"I'm going to get out of the alarm business," Steckler said. "I was never asked permission to get into it."

Under the policy, police won't respond to burglar alarms unless a resident, property owner or alarm company employee can show evidence that a crime occurred, such as glass breakage or seeing a suspicious person. Officers, however, will still respond to panic, duress and robbery alarms.

Costly surgery error

NY NEW YORK — A hospital and the New York Rangers' hockey team doctor Thursday were ordered to pay $450,000 to a dance director and choreographer who had surgery on the wrong knee.

Douglas Hall, 43, went to St. Vincent's Hospital in November 2001 for arthroscopic surgery on his right knee. Despite marking the right knee with an "X," Dr. Andrew Feldman operated on the left knee.

Feldman, described on St. Vincent's Web site as the head team physician for the Rangers, admitted an error occurred; the parties disagreed on how it happened.

An otter nuisance

OH COLUMBUS — The wily and playful river otter was once on the verge of extinction in Ohio. Now they're thriving — and causing so much damage that wildlife officials are considering allowing hunters to trap them.

It's a situation other states have had with other animals. In Florida and New Jersey, it's the black bear. The Rockies and Alaska have the gray wolf. Nearly everywhere else, it's the white-tailed deer and Canada goose.

The otter's numbers have soared in just two decades — from 123 to about 4,300 — and Ohio wildlife officials are proposing a permit-only two-month trapping season. The Ohio Wildlife Council will vote on the proposal in April.

Turtles on the decline

FL DAYTONA BEACH — Endangered loggerhead turtles along Florida beaches are in serious and rapid decline, but last year's four hurricanes are probably not to blame, experts said.

According to the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, a 20-mile stretch on Florida's east coast from Melbourne Beach to Wabasso Beach, the number of loggerhead nests have dropped steadily since 1998, from 18,000 nests to approximately 8,000.

Loggerhead nesting activity is inconsistent from year to year.

There are high and low cycles that last a few years each and are considered normal. But after six years of lows, experts said something might be wrong.

Puppy sparks fight

NY NEW YORK — A Bronx teenager fatally stabbed a 20-year-old man and wounded a teenage girl in a fight over a pit bull puppy, police said.

Samuel Encarnacion, 18, was arrested on murder and assault charges in the incident, which happened at about 2:45 a.m. Thursday inside a Bronx apartment.

Encarnacion allegedly became violent when his girlfriend, Ophelia Torres, 16, and her cousin, Johnny Torres, refused to let hinn play with or help train the puppy, police said.

Charitable nudity

CA STANFORD — More than a dozen Stanford University freshmen have put together an eye-catching calendar, inspired by southern Asia tsunami victims and naked Maine lobster fishermen.

The calendar, which has already sold 70 copies and no doubt will sell hundreds more, features 14 students from Larkin Hall, a freshman dormitory. All are naked, but strategically so.

"You can't see anything," said Pam Geist, one of three Larkin students who created the calendar, which will raise funds for Save the Children. "Everything is blocked."

Geist is topless in the April photo, but her long hair and a discreet camera angle make sure she is revealing nothing more than a liberal halter top would.

Co-creators Joel Lewenstein and Andrew Burmon are the August models, with both holding cameras in strategic places. One camera has a telephoto lens.

Stories and photos from wire reports

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AAFES's overall prices too high

I am writing in response to the many letters I've read in Stars and Stripes concerning the Army and Air Force Exchange Service gas-price situation.

It sounds like military in Japan are having relatively the same problem we are here in Europe. AAFES claims to set its gas prices based on the average weekly U.S. prices, yet we here are paying $2.06 a gallon while folks back home are paying $1.78 a gallon.

Every day we see commercials and advertisements by AAFES stating that it supports the military, it keeps prices low for those of us serving our country away from home and it provides a great service to us by not charging any tax. Yet it more than makes up for no tax charges with its outrageous prices on everything from a T-shirt to gasoline.

I could go into almost any store back home and buy a T-shirt for under $10, where the average price for a T-shirt in a post exchange store is close to $20. A pair of jeans can run you around $35 to $40, for an off-brand. In fact, we have even sent money to our parents to purchase our clothes at home because it's cheaper to buy and ship them than it is to purchase them from the post exchange.

When is AAFES going to keep its word and start supporting the military by keeping prices low? When is it going to stop capitalizing on our situation of being thousands of miles from home — and from good stores?

Our options are limited by being stationed here and instead of support and help from AAFES, it is taking advantage of our situation and our wallets.

God bless our parents who are willing to shop for us back home and God bless the Wal-Mart, Target and J.C. Penney stores back home for truly great deals and prices. AAFES could learn a thing or two from them.

Candy Horton
Darmstadt, Germany

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Where were prison supervisors?

It seems to me that something is amiss totally in the Abu Ghraib prisoner-abuse scandal.

I also was embarrassed when I first saw the photos and heard of the breaking abuse scandal. I fully agree that these actions are immoral, indecent, intolerable and against the Geneva Conventions.

I sometimes tend to agree with some writers when they say, "So what?" Do these fanatic terrorists have any remorse about the crimes they commit against their own countrymen, our soldiers, and innocent civilians and children?

However, these actions [at Abu Ghraib] are illegal and deserve punishment. What I cannot come to terms with, and accept, is that a junior enlisted reservist, an E-4, could manage to put together and be ring master to such a "band of rogue guards" without being noticed.

These actions didn't just happen in a blink of the eye, and in an isolated corner, or back room. These actions took time, and occurred over a period of time.

My question is, where were the senior enlisted, and officers, when this abuse was taking place? Were these supervisors never in the work area where these actions took place? The military/civilian interrogators surely outrank this "ring master," and had to be present in the environment. How could these professionals not notice what was happening around them?

Anyone would agree that if the senior chain of command didn't see what was happening under its eyes, then it was negligent or absent in its duties also. You can delegate authority, but you can't delegate responsibility.

Will there be any senior-level personnel in positions of responsibility courts-martialed and serving sentences, or was the explanations of "I wasn't aware of these actions under my command" accepted.

Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth A. Cox (Ret.)
Stuttgart, Germany

TV spots a 'necessary evil'

Over the past few weeks, I have also been following the U.S. Air Forces in Europe commercial editorial saga and I have my own 2 cents I'd like to add.

Letters to the editor being what they are, purely the opinion of the writer whether shared by others or not, they are just that, opinion. It is important to note that relevant arguments have now been raised on both sides.

I agree that the frequency at which these commercials are aired is quite disturbing.

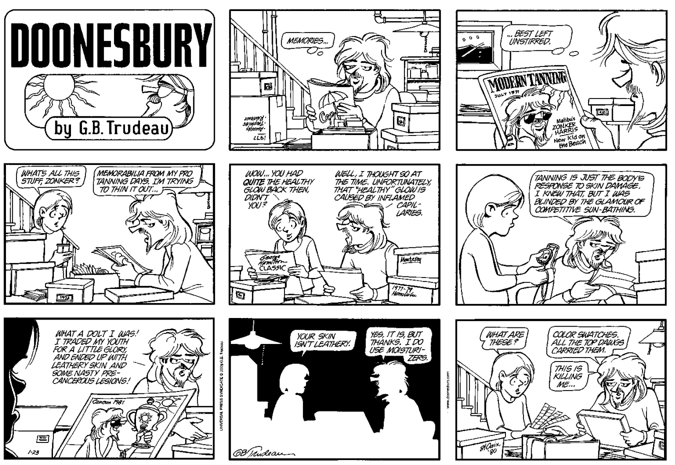
Additionally, I would hardly consider phrases such as "Bring your courage" and "I just got finished flying ol' 777" critical information. I've even heard it said that Gen. Robert H. "Doc" Foglesong has earned himself another nickname, D-Diddy, because he has more videos than P-Diddy.

However, I also agree with a letter writer ("Foglesong TV spots defended," Jan. 19) on one issue: It is very important for senior leadership to be recognized by those they are responsible for. It would be next to impossible to meet or address each person under your command in person; therefore, these commercials are valuable in that anyone in the USAFE command can readily identify his or her commander.

While I do prefer to see "State Quiz," history or "This is how potato chips are made" commercials, our USAFE leadership commercials are somewhat of a necessary evil. Perhaps all the recent attention they have received will serve to enhance their quality.

At any rate, both sides have been heard and openly discussed; do we really need to carry it on much further?

Staff Sgt. Wayne Bukaty
Sembach Annex, Germany



OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other stateside syndicates.

China can't hide Zhao's legacy
Los Angeles Times

China well understands the danger of reformers' funerals. In 1989, the death in April of disgraced former Communist Party chief Hu Yaobang propelled tens of thousands of supporters, angered at the government's treatment of Hu, into Beijing's Tiananmen Square. They protested party corruption and government nepotism. As weeks went by and the crowd grew, the demands came to include greater democracy. The protests ended with the declaration of martial law and the indelible image of tanks routing demonstrators as one young man in the square tried to stop them.

Zhao Ziyang, a former premier who in 1989 was the leader of the Communist Party, supported the protesters. Weeks before tanks and troops crushed the rebellion, Zhao went to Tiananmen to meet the demonstrators, weepingly telling them, "We've come too late, we've come too late." It was his last public appearance.

Monday, after nearly 16 years under house arrest, Zhao died. The government, afraid of stirring protests, censored foreign broadcasts of his death, ordered that the news be buried deep inside newspapers if printed at all and insisted again Tuesday that its actions in 1989 were correct. Police fanned preventively into Tiananmen Square. …

Although he failed to persuade party leaders to match political reforms to economic advances, there has been progress in opening local party committees to discussion and dissent. … If the Chinese can mobilize nascent grass-roots movements into a force that demands a say in government, Zhao will receive the honor he deserves.

Allies will recall Iraq timeline
Journal Star, Peoria, Ill.

Nearly two years into the war to rid Iraq of its alleged "weapons of mass destruction," the Bush administration officially called off the search for them this month. "Based on what we know today, the president would have taken the same action (to invade) because this is about protecting the American people," said White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan.

"Protect them from what?" would be a fair question, given that no such WMDs were found and that the president made those WMDs the primary justification for his decision to pre-emptively attack.

To be fair, Bush's predecessor also believed Iraq had WMDs, and Saddam Hussein did a pretty good job of pretending, too. Beyond that, the American people have already issued their judgment. In November it didn't seem to matter much, at least to most voters, that there had been no satisfactory explanation for how a president could put so many American lives at risk. …

Global opinion does matter, maybe not today or tomorrow, but someday when we're staring down another potential menace — perhaps one far more potent than Saddam — and we ask for the world's help. What kind of "moral authority" will America have then? It's another fair question.

Scapegoat or not, Graner guilty
The Watertown (N.Y) Daily Times

Spc. Charles Graner, the alleged ringleader of rogue guards at Abu Ghraib, has been convicted on all 10 counts under five charges: assault, conspiracy, maltreatment of detainees, committing indecent acts and dereliction of duty. He was sentenced to 10 years in military prison by a jury of four Army officers and six senior enlisted men.

Mr. Graner, 36, an Army reservist from Pennsylvania, will be dishonorably discharged after completing his sentence. He has been demoted and ordered to forfeit all pay and benefits.

The reservist … maintained he was just following orders. He said intelligence agents at the prison ordered the abuse of prisoners to make them easier to interrogate.

So far, authorities have not uncovered a wider network of abuse or found evidence to validate Graner's explanation that he is being made a scapegoat. Four soldiers have pleaded guilty in the case. Two other guards are awaiting trial.

Bringing the offenders to justice shows the world that the United States does not tolerate such misconduct. It is the right thing to do and the right message to send.

'Crossfire' done, thank you
Chicago Tribune

In announcing the end of CNN's 22-year-old high-decibel political slugfest "Crossfire," CNN/US President Jonathan Klein said something quite unusual for a network television executive: He had listened to a critic.

Klein told a Washington Post writer that he agreed with comedian Jon Stewart, who famously used a "Crossfire" appearance last fall to rip into the show for "partisan hackery."

"I think he made a good point about the noise level of these types of shows, which does nothing to illuminate the issues of the day," Klein said. …

Could this step away from TV's shout-show abyss portend a healthy swing toward politeness? One can only hope. …

In an ABC News survey, 85 percent of respondents said that the world would be better if we said "please" and "thank you" more. Now, that would seem to be stating the obvious. … But there's no doubt we could stand to be more civil to one another. May the demise of "Crossfire" mark the rise of something good.

Don't ignore Medicaid, Medicare
The Miami Herald

President Bush lost no time in pushing Social Security reform to the top of his domestic agenda for the second term. Unfortunately, his priorities are off the mark. America's healthcare system and the government's Medicaid and Medicare programs demand far more attention, and more urgently. …

Medicaid programs, which serve 52 million poor and disabled people, are being squeezed financially due to rising healthcare costs and increased rolls as more Americans fall into poverty. The Medicare trust fund, which covers major healthcare costs for 42 million seniors, is projected to become insolvent in 14 years.

Meanwhile, projections for Social Security's insolvency begin more than 20 years later, beyond 2040.

President Bush's campaign paints a picture of a Social Security system about to melt down. Yet the real crisis today involves the 45 million uninsured Americans, nearly 16 percent of the population, including some eight million children. … Our priority should be to have every American covered by health insurance and control costs with preventive care.

Even this 'sacrifice fly' helps
The Indianapolis Star

Under threat of government intervention, not to mention scorn from fans, Major League Baseball and its players' union finally stepped up to the plate and swung at a policy dealing with steroid abuse.

It wasn't exactly a homer. A sacrifice fly would be a better description. But considering the sham of a policy now governing the sport, even a bunt would have been welcome.

The new policy mirrors one used in the minor leagues, where players are tested four times a year, with a 15-game suspension for the first positive test, a one-year ban on the fourth violation, and a lifetime ban from the minors for a subsequent positive result.

Baseball's new rules leave a lot to be desired. But perhaps younger athletes will get the message that steroids and other drugs aren't the sole path to athletic advancement.

Public is meat of the matter
Yakima (Wash.) Herald-Republic

Canadian authorities confirmed … that another animal in the western province of Alberta had tested positive, the second found to have mad cow disease since U.S. officials announced last month they would resume the cattle trade with Canada in March.

Canadian officials also said that once again no part of the cow has entered either the human or animal food system. That's an important consideration.

Still, the announcement could add support to U.S. cattlemen who have sued to block the lifting of the ban on Canadian beef, saying allowing the trade will hurt U.S. producers and put consumers at risk.

On the other hand, beef packers, who have had to pay more for cattle since the Canadian border closed, support reopening trade. …

We're confident government officials and scientists are on top of this on both sides of the border. But their main focus should be on inspections and other methods to ensure public health and safety in the food supply and not be sidetracked by protectionist policies that tilt the dynamics of the marketplace.

Having a ball by buying access
The Times Herald-Record, Middletown, N.Y.

President Bush spent much of [last] week getting ready for Thursday. You could hardly blame him.

With the inauguration for his second term momentarily taking some attention away from the war in Iraq, the president made several public appearances. …

He told one interviewer that, since he's not running for president again, "maybe politics won't creep in quite so fast."

But then he also noted he had a "big agenda in mind." … That agenda is the reason so many large corporations have chipped in $250,000 apiece and so many private donors gave $100,000 apiece — sometimes more, thanks to loose rules on these donations — to pay for the inauguration events. If that's not political, what is? Wealthy individuals and corporations are financing the parties, parades and balls as a way of saying thank you and, by the way, don't forget us when you get back to work on this domestic agenda.

Correction

Last Sunday's "What newspapers are saying at home" page misidentified the location of The Spokesman-Review. It publishes in Spokane, Wash.

YOUR MONEY

AP

Shoppers are shown at the Atlantic City Outlets-The Walk in Atlantic City, N.J., last week. Atlantic City, known more for its gambling than for its shopping, is a vacation spot for betting senior citizens, says a study that warns about elderly gambling.

Gambling seniors need to remember fixed incomes

BY GARY ROTSTEIN
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Significant numbers of older adults admit betting more money than they can afford to lose or wagering sums above $100, a new study reports in warning about elderly gambling.

Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and Penn State College of Medicine did not find that older adults necessarily gamble more than the rest of the population. They suggested, however, that a rate similar to younger adults poses more risks because of the higher percentage of seniors on fixed incomes, with mental impairments, or with health-care needs that could be sacrificed to invest in gambling.

The study, published Wednesday in the American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, found that of 843 Philadelphia-area residents 65 and older, 70 percent had gambled in the past year on lottery tickets, bingo, Atlantic City casinos or other options.

About 4 percent of those interviewed admitted betting more than they could afford to lose. Nearly 8 percent, including some of the latter group, had risked at least $100 on a single wager. The researchers grouped those two categories together into an "at-risk" population representing about one of every nine survey participants.

"I didn't think it was going to be this much," said Dr. David Oslin, lead author and an assistant professor and geriatrician at the University of Pennsylvania. "I would have thought it would be lower in older adults because not too many people come to me talking about their gambling."

The study's release comes four months after the gambling industry gained some favorable publicity in a Yale University report that showed older recreational gamblers to be healthier than their non-gambling peers.

One common interpretation of that data was that someone in a bingo hall or casino was more likely to be active and healthy to begin with, rather than receiving any cause-and-effect benefit from gambling. Some researchers allow that social benefits can come from gambling as a group within a population that's sometimes isolated.

The casino industry's American Gaming Association and some organizations that focus on problem gambling said it was hard to react to the new study because they hadn't yet seen it. Some in the field agreed, however, that attention needs to be focused on the elderly because of the increasing prevalence of gambling opportunities.

"It definitely should be studied because [the older population] does have a large number of people with time on their hands ... and it's really good to keep an eye on vulnerable populations," said Christine Reilly, executive director of Harvard Medical School's Institute for Research on Pathological Gambling and Related Disorders.

In the Penn-Penn State College of Medicine study, more than three-fourths of the gamblers were lottery players and more than half visited casinos or played machines such as illegal video poker.

Oslin said his worst fear as a geriatrician is that some people lose money gambling that they normally depend on for medications and other health care.

"This confirms to us it's probably something we need to pay attention to," Oslin said. "Now we're justified in going ahead with that groundwork, seeing if patients are making those trade-offs."

New online tools help job hunters

BY ANDREA COOMBES
CBS MarketWatch

SAN FRANCISCO — Want to stand out from other job seekers? An online profile may be one way to do that.

These days, you can send a link to your online profile in an e-mail to prospective employers. Ziggs.com, a company that launched in October, offers online profiles for $25 a year, with the first year free.

"The online profile gives so much [more information than] the résumé. It's a great point of differentiation," said Tim DeMello, chief executive at Ziggs.

The profile you create includes a snapshot page complete with photo and quick introduction, a more detailed biography and a faux interview, where the applicant decides which questions to answer.

Unlike networking sites such as LinkedIn and Ryze, Ziggs' profiles also are a means to maintain a semblance of control over one's online "brand."

For $50 a year (on top of the $25), the company will ensure your profile tops the list of sponsored searches when anyone searches your name using a major Internet search engine such as Google or Yahoo.

"Your name being in search listings is important and the information attached to it is important," DeMello said. Employers are "going to look at that, even before they invite you in for an interview.

"The way Ziggs got started is I found out that, out of 100 random search-engine queries, about 5 out of 10 are proper names," he said.

"They're looking for us and we need to make sure we are presented right."

Some job seekers have no online presence to worry about, but even those who do should consider this: Employers conducting online searches may be more interested in finding information that you're not about to reveal in a profile.

"We've had instances where we were ready to hire and a Google search revealed [this lawyer] had been released from jail a year earlier," said Ira Halperin, co-head of the corporate practice unit at Meltzer, Lippe, Goldstein & Breitstone, a business law firm based in Mineola, N.Y.

"That was not on his résumé," Halperin said, adding that the company conducts Internet searches on every potential employee, from janitor to lawyer.

For Halperin, an online profile makes little sense from a hiring perspective. Since the profile is written by the applicant, "obviously it's going to be filtered."

Internet searches "are a free opportunity to do some checking that takes minimal effort," he said. "I have a sense that it is common not only among law firms but anyone who's hiring these days."

Some note that those posting online profiles should avoid adding photos. "Recruiters do not want to see the ethnic background of an individual prior to the interview," said Mark Mehler, co-author of CareerXroads, a directory of job sites. "They could be accused of discrimination."

Whether or not you decide an online profile is worth your money, there's no doubt you'll still need a résumé.

"Most hiring managers still want to see a very pristine, clean, good-looking résumé," Mehler said. "It's not going away."

Given that the résumé remains a powerful force in hiring, consider avoiding these all-too-common mistakes:

■ Avoid jargon, and generalities. "Put results on your resume, the ways you've made a concrete difference," said Andrea Kay, a career consultant and author of "Greener Pastures: How to find a job in another place."

■ Stick to relevant information. "The biggest mistake that I see is people put too much information on there that doesn't resonate" with hiring managers, said Jennifer Johnson, director of recruitment at Wisnik Career Enterprises, in New York.

■ Don't rely on e-mail alone. "Some company networks are flat-out deleting e-mails that have attachments," said Kevin Donlin, president of Guaranteed Resumes, based in Edina, Minn. This "gives you a perfect excuse to call the employer."

Is this on sale?

AP

Ray Grover sits in a new Lexus while shopping for cars at Lexus of Serramonte in Colma, Calif., on Jan. 13. At right is salesperson Margo Alexander. Retail sales, helped by sizzling activity in auto showrooms, jumped by 1.2 percent in December, providing a solid finish to a year in which sales climbed at the fastest pace since 1999.

YOUR MONEY

Mortgage shouldn't lead to debt

Q: I'm 21 and thinking about buying my first home. How much house can I afford to buy, and is it OK to bid less than what the seller is asking?

A: You have actually asked two of the more difficult questions to answer when it comes to real estate.

Many people believe there are strict formulas that determine how much they can borrow for a home. In reality, lenders have loosened their standards considerably in recent years, and some borrowers may find — much to their later sorrow — that they can get a much bigger mortgage than they can comfortably repay.

A good rule of thumb is to keep your total housing costs — including mortgage, taxes and insurance — to about 25 percent of your gross income. That way, you'll have enough money for other goals, such as retirement savings and vacations.

You can stretch a bit more if you expect your income to rise considerably within a few years or if you have no other debt. But you might want to be even more conservative if your income is uncertain or your debt load is particularly heavy.

Once you have a target monthly payment, you can play with the online mortgage affordability calculators offered by companies including Bankrate Inc. and E-Loan Inc. to see how much house that will buy.

As far as how much to bid, you might consider consulting an experienced real estate or buyer's agent who is well-versed in the neighborhoods you're targeting for your house hunt.

There are no hard-and-fast rules. Some sellers overprice their homes; others set the price too low, hoping to set off bidding wars. A smart agent can help you figure out which is which and coach you on the best bidding strategies for your market.

Money Talk

Liz Pulliam Weston

Q: I was confused about a statement you made regarding penalties on withdrawals from 529 college savings plans. You mentioned a 10 percent penalty on withdrawals that aren't used for qualified education expenses but didn't say whether the penalty applies to the entire withdrawal or just the earnings.

If it's just the earnings, why should I care about the penalty? Even if I don't use the money for education, I'd still be ahead because the money had a chance to grow tax-deferred.

A: That would be a heck of a loophole, wouldn't it? But, alas, it doesn't exist.

It's true that only the earnings in your 529 are subject to the penalty, not your original contributions. But you'll also have to pay regular income taxes on any gains that you withdraw.

The combination of taxes and penalties effectively eliminates the 529 as a tax shelter for most folks unless the money is used for education — or unless they're in a much lower tax bracket when they withdraw the money than they were during the years in which the gains were accrued.

Dear Liz: I want to disagree with you over your recent advice about buying cars for kids.

I was extremely depressed during my senior year of high school for many reasons, but a big part of it was that I couldn't drive because of our financial situation. My mom had other bills to pay, and my paychecks weren't big enough to cover the insurance.

I really don't think you grown-ups know how it feels to wait for rides, walk home past the young sophomores that drive and have people look down on you. All I can say is that when I have kids, I will do anything to make sure they have a car.

A: No, you probably won't — because someday you'll be the grown-up and you'll realize what a service your mother did for you by not buying you something your family couldn't afford.

You also will learn, with any luck, that how you react to circumstances is a lot more important than the circumstances themselves.

By the way, many of us grown-ups know exactly how it feels to wait for rides, and we survived just fine.

Liz Pulliam Weston is the author of "Your Credit Score: How to Fix, Improve and Protect the 3-Digit Number That Shapes Your Financial Future." Questions for Money Talk can be submitted to her at 3940 Laurel Canyon Blvd., No. 238, Studio City, CA 91604, or via her Web site, **www.lizweston.com.** She regrets that she cannot respond personally to queries.

New Outlook program

REDMOND, Wash. — Microsoft Corp. will begin selling its Outlook e-mail program as a subscription to Hotmail customers, in a bid to persuade people to pay for add-on services and better compete with rivals such as Google Inc. and Yahoo Inc.

The new service, which costs $59.95 per year, will let people organize e-mail, contact lists and calendars in their online Hotmail accounts using the Microsoft Outlook program most often found on businesses' desktop computers.

Ted Schadler, principal analyst with Forrester Research, said Redmond-based Microsoft is smart to take advantage of a popular core product — Outlook — to help make Hotmail more attractive to sophisticated users. But he noted that there are many free programs that do similar things, and questioned whether the price will be too high to garner much interest.

"That feels pretty steep to me," he said.

The move comes as Microsoft's competitors also appear to be looking for ways to help people better organize and manage their growing e-mail inboxes.

From The Associated Press

Friday's Market Summary

Indexes

52-week High	52-week Low	Name	Last	Net Chg	% Chg	YTD % Chg	52-wk % Chg
10,868.07	9,708.40	Dow Jones Industrials	10,392.99	-78.48	-.75	-3.62	-1.66
3,823.96	2,743.46	Dow Jones Transportation	3,471.17	-42.25	-1.20	-8.61	+12.96
337.79	259.08	Dow Jones Utilities	331.70	-1.11	-.33	-.97	+22.27
7,273.18	6,211.33	NYSE Composite	6,996.56	-13.91	-.20	-3.50	+5.58
1,437.46	1,150.74	Amex Index	1,414.58	+8.82	+.63	-1.38	+15.92
2,191.60	1,750.82	Nasdaq Composite	2,034.27	-11.61	-.57	-6.49	-4.22
1,217.90	1,060.72	S&P 500	1,167.87	-7.54	-.64	-3.63	+2.31
666.99	548.29	S&P MidCap	633.74	-3.53	-.55	-4.46	+5.83
656.11	515.90	Russell 2000	611.08	-1.26	-.21	-6.21	+2.51
12,024.36	10,268.52	DJ Wilshire 5000	11,507.29	-61.78	-.53	-3.87	+3.14

NYSE
Most Active ($1 or more)

Name	Vol (00)	Last	Chg
Lucent	605475	3.27	-.01
Pfizer	357076	24.48	-.50
GenElec	276959	35.13	-.24
Celanese n	221278	16.00	...
NortelN lf	192902	3.16	+.04
Citigrp	184100	47.93	+.16
NokiaCp	179512	14.14	+.04
Motorola	174837	15.63	-.14
EMC Cp	166154	13.09	-.07
CablvsnNY	160365	28.84	+3.36

Amex
Most Active ($1 or more)

Name	Vol (00)	Last	Chg
SPDR	610269	116.78	-.72
SemiHTr	272132	30.22	-.43
iShRs2000	109799	121.56	-.28
iShJapan	78304	10.59	+.11
DJIA Diam	76170	103.84	-.78
CanArgo n	66015	1.36	+.14
SP Engy	43518	36.40	+.08
SP Fncl	41049	29.54	-.15
WheatR g	34868	3.28	+.14
OilSvHT	33123	86.85	+.13

Nasdaq
Most Active ($1 or more)

Name	Vol (00)	Last	Chg
Nasd100Tr	1129275	37.05	-.30
SiriusS	918862	5.83	+.29
Intel	785176	22.42	-.16
Microsoft	734321	25.65	-.21
ApldMatl	592789	15.59	-.32
Cisco	556929	18.01	-.31
SunMicro	500749	4.17	-.07
eBay	477044	86.05	+2.72
Oracle	404725	13.31	+.03
Aastrom	325295	4.00	+.10

Key Defense Stocks

Name	Div	PE	Last	Chg	YTD %Chg
Alliant Technosystem	...	16	65.39	+.05	...
Armor Holdings	...	28	42.07	-1.23	-10.5
Boeing	1.00	15	50.07	-.83	-3.3
Computer Sciences	...	17	51.50	-.90	-8.6
Engineered Sup Sys	.07	20	55.61	-1.33	-6.1
General Dynamics	1.44	17	100.51	-.39	-3.9
General Electric	.88	23	35.13	-.24	-3.8
Halliburton	.50	...	41.80	+.01	+6.5
Harris Corp.	.48	25	54.11	-.83	-12.4
Allied Signal	.83	21	34.99	-.18	-1.2
L-3 Communications	.40	21	69.60	-.07	-5.0
Lockheed Martin	1.00	20	54.75	-.25	-1.4
NorthrpG s	.92	18	51.51	+.14	-5.2
Raytheon	.80	42	36.76	-.14	-5.3
Rockwell Intl.	.66	25	53.38	-1.35	+7.7
Sequa Corp.	...	34	56.70	+.40	-7.3
Texas Instruments	.10	20	21.03	-.35	-14.6
Textron Inc.	1.40	30	69.25	-1.01	-6.2
United Technologies	1.40	19	100.08	+.30	-3.2

Key Mutual Funds

Name	NAV	Chg.	YTD %Ret.
Fidelity Invest: GroInc	37.03	-.21	-3.1
Fidelity Invest: GroCo	52.77	-.55	-5.9
Amer Century Inv: Ultra	28.19	-.19	-4.4
Fidelity Spartan: EqIdx	41.33	-.26	-3.6
Putnam Funds A: GrInA p	18.75	-.13	-3.4
Fidelity Invest: A Mgr	15.93	-.04	-1.7
Frank/Temp Frnk A: SMCpGrA	32.69	-.13	-4.3
AIM Investments A: Const p	21.83	-.17	-4.4
Fidelity Invest: USBI	11.17	+.01	+.5
Fidelity Invest: Ovrsea	33.79	+.13	-4.5
Fidelity Advisor T: GrOppT	29.30	-.22	-4.1
Fidelity Advisor T: EqInT	27.33	-.18	-3.3
Scudder Funds S: GroIncS	21.14	-.15	-3.5
Putnam Funds A: GlbEqty p	8.15	-.04	-3.6
AIM Investments A: ChartA p	12.40	-.07	-3.2
AIM Investments A: WeingA p	12.55	-.11	-3.8
Merrill Lynch I: BalCapI	26.22	-.08	-1.8
Scudder Funds S: Intl FdS	42.61	+.24	-3.7
Fidelity Advisor T: OvrseaT	16.96	+.06	-4.5
Lord Abbett A: DevGtA p	14.85	-.06	-6.6
Scudder Funds S: Income S	13.07	+.02	+.5
Merrill Lynch I: USGvtMtg	10.31	+.01	+.6
Scudder Funds S: Devel	18.96	-.09	-2.7
Putnam Funds A: GlGvA px	13.04	-.02	-1.1

Exchange Rates

Military rates

Euro costs (Jan. 24)	$1.3312
Dollar buys (Jan. 24)	€0.7512
British pound (Jan. 24)	$1.92
Japanese yen (Jan. 24)	100.00
South Korean won (Jan. 22)	1,011.00

Commercial rates

Bahrain (Dinar)	0.377
British pound	$1.8797
Canada (Dollar)	1.2211
Denmark (Krone)	5.7337
Egypt (Pound)	5.9549
Euro	$1.3051/0.7662
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7981
Hungary (Forint)	190.26
Iceland (Krona)	62.645
Israel (Shekel)	4.3706
Japan (Yen)	102.67
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.292
Norway (Krone)	6.3198
Philippines (Peso)	55.54
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7503
Singapore (Dollar)	1.6332
South Korea (Won)	1,038.00
Switzerland (Franc)	1.1846
Thailand (Baht)	38.61
Turkey (New Lira)	1.4045

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

Precious Metals

New York Merc close

Gold	$426.70
Silver	$6.797

Interest Rates

Prime rate	5.25
Discount rate	3.25
Federal funds market rate	2.25
3-month bill	2.35
30-year bond	4.65

Sources: The Associated Press, Bank of America

Cents and Sensibility
Money tip of the day

Inventory your home

CBS MarketWatch

NEW YORK — Many retail stores conduct an inventory after the holidays, and it's also the perfect time for individuals to take stock of their own possessions.

A home inventory lists all your personal possessions, as well as their estimated value. Such a compendium can be vital when it comes to emergencies and being adequately insured, reports the Insurance Information Institute, which disseminates insurance information to the public.

Should your home be damaged in a natural disaster or other emergency, you'll be able to attach a dollar amount to the ruined items. If your home is burglarized, you will have documentation of what went missing. Having a home inventory also can speed your insurance claim and ensure that you have enough coverage to replace your possessions.

Here are some things you might list:

- Attic/Basement: Storage trunks, luggage, holiday decorations, exercise equipment
- Bathroom: Cosmetics, medicines, scale, towels
- Bedroom: Bed, mattress, jewelry, clocks, paintings, furniture, clothing
- Living room: TV, stereo equipment, CDs, piano
- Home office: Computer, answering machine, files, books
- Laundry room: Clothes washer/dryer, iron, cleaning supplies
- Outside: Patio furniture, grill, decorations
- Garage/Shed: Lawnmower, tools, bicycles
- Dining room/Kitchen: China, silverware, food, kitchen appliances, pots/pans

Remember to list the relatively little things, like toys, DVDs and books. Though they might not be worth much individually, think about what it would cost you to replace them all! You might supplement your list with photos or a videotaped walk-through of your home. Hold onto the receipts for any big purchases. Be sure to keep the inventory and any supplemental materials in a safe place — such as a fireproof metal box or with other important personal and financial papers.

Discover why so many people are saying... THANKS FIRST COMMAND!
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Sunday Horoscope

Holiday Mathis

Mother Moon is in Cancer, her native home. This and other astrological aspects could inspire you to call your own mother or honor her in some way. Any unresolved issues around the idea of mother now get another, hopefully more compassionate, look. It also becomes important that domestic life mirror life outside the home and life internal.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (January 23). The world wants you to succeed this year. The more you can see this, the better loved you feel and the more confident you are as a result. Believing the best about human nature is your key to success. Attention to detail attracts the interest of wealthy business partners! It's wonderful when someone invests in you. Love signs are Pisces and Taurus.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You wake up focused. From the first rays of sun to the whir of the coffee grinder, every sight and sound reminds you of the one with whom you're trying to connect. By sundown, you'll succeed.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). The picture of love you paint in your mind may be unrealistic, but it sure is a beautiful thing to gaze upon. Seldom do you indulge yourself in non-reality for as long as you will today.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). It's all about casting. The right people around you will keep the doldrums from setting in. Create social opportunities so you can revel in the sweet exclamations of lighthearted friends.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Whatever you take on, do it without a doubt because hesitation is the enemy now and second-guessing causes only problems. Let your well-honed instinct carry you toward the smart people who can help you succeed.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). It's not the last time you'll have one of those long, arduous conversations with an emotionally ailing friend, but it may be the first time this person follows your advice. Take a photo. You'll want to remember this.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Others would be wise to add you to their team, invite you to their party or, even better, propose to you. Your mental clarity (amidst bedlam) helps you prevent a mistake from happening.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). The thing about magic is, there will always be a certain percentage of the public that can't suspend its disbelief because it is too bent on figuring out the "trick." Today, you'll win over even those skeptics.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Be open-minded. If your sign mate Nelly can have a hit song with country artist Tim McGraw, you, too, can find a way to work with the Taurus in your life — and maybe even make some money together.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). No, you're not imagining things. There's real chemistry between you and that quirky someone. Don't even think about what your next move might be. Things unfold in an inevitable fashion.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). When it's not working, simply back off. Once you release the need to prove your point, you'll experience happiness. An emphasis on listening and receiving will allow you to accomplish much with very little effort.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). When you can't afford something, don't rationalize that you didn't need it in the first place. Instead, put your air-sign ingenuity to practical use, and figure out another way to get what you want.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Ease up on your expectations of a new project. Like cakes on the griddle, the first one usually doesn't turn out so great. Toss it, and try again. You'll soon get to something golden.

Creators Syndicate

'Down East' follows downwind

My husband and I have just returned from a vacation to Maine, or "Down East." While we were there we asked several people why the region is called "Down East," and not "Up East," as you would expect.

The term "Down East," an apparent misnomer applied broadly to the northeast coastal United States and parts of Canada — and specifically to the coast of Maine — has been around for quite some time, dating back perhaps as far as the colonial period. Several theories of origin have been put forth and debated over the years, but none can be proved.

The coast of Maine lies to the northeast of Boston. One theory ties the origin of "Down East" to the days when the majority of travel between Boston and Maine was done in sailing vessels. Because the winds were most often southwesterly, especially during the time of year when most travel took place, ships sailed downwind when sailing in a northeasterly direction. Travelers heading to Maine were thus said to be traveling "down" or "down east."

A second theory is that "down" was merely a way of implying that travel was taking place in a direction away from the hub.

This column was prepared by the editors of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition. Readers may send questions to Merriam-Webster's Wordwatch, P.O. Box 281, 47 Federal St., Springfield, Mass. 01102.

Stylist stepmom gets unkind cut

Dear Abby

Dear Abby: My father is upset with me and my sister-in-law because we don't ask his wife "Clarice" — who is a hairdresser — to cut, color or style our hair.

Clarice primarily services middle-aged and older females, who usually request haircuts and styles far different from what we want as young women.

She does a great job as a stylist on that particular kind of client, but we're less confident in her skills with trendier styles and colors — not because she's incapable, but because you become expert at what you do every day.

We have never discussed our feelings with Clarice; for years, we just got our hair done elsewhere. Dad recently let us know that our choice of stylists has hurt his wife's feelings.

We all love Clarice dearly and have a good relationship with her otherwise. Do we have a family obligation to use her services? How should this be addressed?

— Feeling Trapped in Georgia

Dear Feeling Trapped: It was wrong of your father to put you on the spot, but now that he has, you must talk to Clarice. Many women would rather curl up and "dye" than change hairdressers. Since you have a long-standing relationship with yours, explain that to Clarice.

However, please keep in mind that a good hairdresser is more than a one-trick pony.

Dear Abby: I have a big decision to make and I need your help. I am from New York but I have lived in Virginia for 10 years. I moved after I got divorced and took my two boys with me.

I went home to New York for the holidays and now would like to move back because my parents and grandmother are getting old. I am 44; my boys are 19 and 21. The problem is, they don't want to go.

I have no life because all I do is take care of my boys. I make good money but I have nothing to show for it because of them. They use me. Both of them live with me and neither one helps with the bills. They both earn as much money as I do, but I am always sacrificing myself to give them money.

I can't take it anymore. I feel if I don't leave them, they'll never grow up. It pains me that I'll be so far away from them, but my brother has offered to sell me his house, and I really want to go. Please help.

— Vacillating in Virginia

Dear Vacillating: Your "children" aren't children anymore. They are both self-supporting young men. The greatest gift a parent can give a child is independence.

The longer you remain a crutch, the longer your sons will lean. If you want to be nearer to your family, for heaven's sake, go! You have the chance of a lifetime, and you should take it.

Dear Abby: Thank you for completely debasing the act of giving my best friend a pair of diamond earrings on her retirement last year.

I find it reprehensible that you assume we had slept together or that we intend to. Is it really that incomprehensible that everything in this world is not about sex?

— Infuriated in Belton, Mo.

Dear Infuriated: The letter I printed wasn't from your wife. It came from a woman in Minnesota. Not only had her husband bought the woman diamond earrings, but he had also been buying her lingerie from Victoria's Secret. In addition, his wife had caught him lying about his relationship with the recipient. Cool off.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at **http://www.uexpress.com/dearabby**

Universal Press Syndicate

Don't let unsuccessful dating experiences bring you down

Annie's Mailbox

Dear Annie: I am 21 years old and was asked out on my first date a month ago. I was thrilled. "Brad" and I went out three times, and we really seemed to like each other. Well, it's been two weeks since our last date, and I haven't heard from Brad except once when we exchanged small talk. He's made no effort to see me and hasn't returned any of my calls. Yesterday, I left him a message, asking why he's been blowing me off for two weeks. I haven't heard back yet.

I'm really hurt by this. Brad was the first guy I ever dated, and now I'm afraid something must be terribly wrong with me. I've been trying to keep myself busy and forget him, but I can't. I don't want to date ever again if this is what it feels like. How can I get over the hurt?

— Heartbroken Hannah

Dear Hannah: Welcome to the world of dating — some men (and women) are jerks. Brad may have felt you were getting too serious, or he may have met someone else, but there is no reason to assume the fault is yours.

Since this was your first dating experience, it's possible you could use some pointers. Ask your closest friends to give you a brutally honest critique of your appearance and your approach.

Consider the "Brad experience" a way of getting your feet wet.

Dear Annie: While in high school, I could have written the letter from "Look What Followed Me Home in Texas." I, too, had a "tag-along" friend who wouldn't leave me and my friends alone even though she was unwanted company. I first politely asked her to go away, and then ignored her. Finally, I thought I could help her develop some needed social skills so someone would want her as a friend.

Optimistically, I tried to focus on her good qualities and stuck up for her when others maligned her. Soon my own friends began to move away from me, and eventually, I felt strangled by her desperation.

I put too much of my energy into trying to help her while important years of my high school life went by. And in the end, I was no help to her at all. I decided to separate myself from this girl, and in the effort, I, too, was mean after all else failed. One day, I just exploded. I'm not proud of what I said, but it worked. I never saw her after that, and I felt I'd had a hundred-pound sack of problems lifted from my back.

— Glad To Be Free

Dear Glad: We appreciate your honesty and agree that you aren't obligated to be friends with everyone. We only wish you had found a kinder way to extricate yourself, instead of piling additional hurt on this unfortunate girl.

Dear Annie: My wife died several years ago. At a recent bereavement meeting, we were asked to bring a love letter or note written to or from our loved one to share with the group. I read a short note my wife wrote me on our 40th anniversary, but surprisingly, very few people had anything. I then asked who had received comments written on birthday or anniversary cards, and one woman said, "My husband always signed his cards, 'With much love.' " Another found one of her husband's notes and framed it.

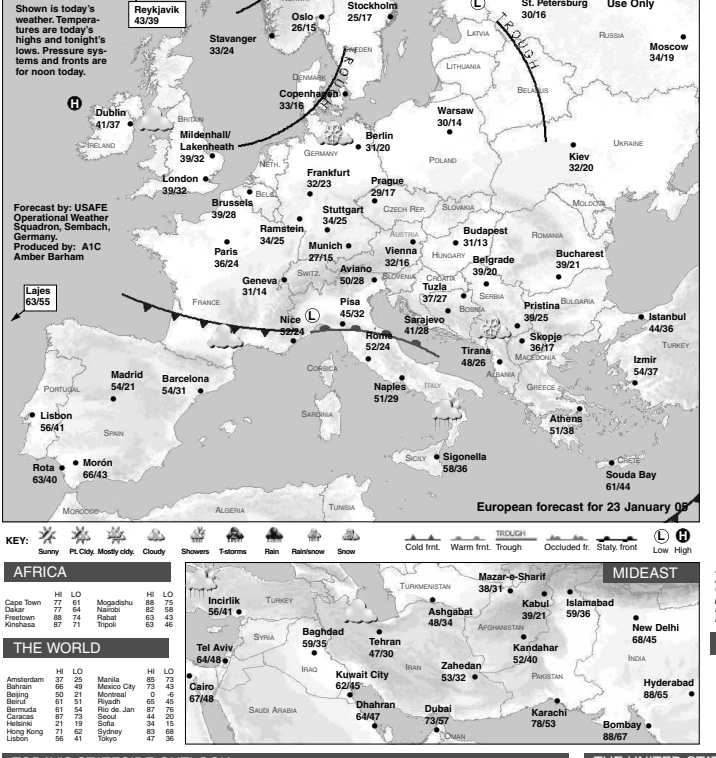
I wish I had more than the dozen handwritten notes from my wife that I read, clutched and now cherish.

— A Grieving Husband

Dear Grieving Husband: The art of the handwritten letter has gone the way of the Pony Express, and you have eloquently pointed out what has been lost. Our condolences.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to **anniesmailbox@comcast.net**, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Creators Syndicate



EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Mostly cloudy with rainshowers in the afternoon. Highs in the upper 30s. Monday lows in the upper 20s.

Britain, Ireland: Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 30s to lower 40s. Monday lows in the 30s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Mostly cloudy. Isolated snowshowers Monday morning. Highs in the upper 30s to lower 40s. Monday lows in the upper 20s.

France: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid to upper 30s in the north and highs in the lower 40s to lower 50s in the south. Monday lows in the mid 20s.

Northern Germany: Mostly cloudy with isolated rain and snow showers. Highs in the lower 30s. Monday lows in the lower 20s.

Southern Germany: Mostly cloudy with snowshowers. Highs in the upper 20s to mid 30s. Monday lows in the mid teens to mid 20s.

Hungary: Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 30s. Monday lows in the lower to mid teens.

Northern Italy: Mostly cloudy with isolated rainshowers. Highs in the mid 40s to lower 50s. Monday lows in the mid 20s to mid 30s.

Southern Italy: Mostly cloudy with isolated rainshowers. Highs in the 50s. Monday lows in the mid 20s to mid 30s.

Kosovo: Mostly cloudy. Snow Monday morning. Highs in the upper 30s. Monday lows in the lower to mid 20s.

Norway: Partly to mostly cloudy with isolated snowshowers. Highs in the mid 20s to lower 30s. Monday lows in the mid teens to mid 20s.

Portugal, Spain: Partly cloudy with isolated rainshowers. Highs in the mid 50s to mid 60s. Monday lows in the coastal areas in the lower 30s to lower 40s, inland lows in the 20s.

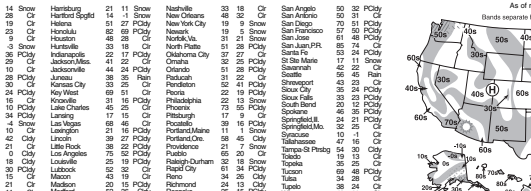
Turkey: Mostly cloudy with isolated rainshowers. Coastal highs in the mid 40s to mid 50s, inland highs in the 30s. Monday coastal lows in the mid 30s to lower 40s, inland lows in the 20s.

For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the USAFE Operational Weather Squadron home page at:
https://ows.sembach.af.mil
http://ows.public.sembach.af.mil

AFRICA

	Hi	LO		Hi	LO
Cape Town	77	61	Mogadishu	88	75
Dakar	77	64	Nairobi	82	58
Freetown	88	74	Rabat	63	43
Kinshasa	87	71	Tripoli	63	46

MIDEAST



THE WORLD

	Hi	LO		Hi	LO
Amsterdam	37	25	Manila	85	73
Bahrain	66	49	Mexico City	73	43
Beijing	50	21	Montreal	0	-6
Beirut	61	51	Riyadh	65	45
Bermuda	61	54	Rio de. Jan	87	76
Caracas	87	73	Seoul	44	20
Helsinki	21	19	Sofia	34	15
Hong Kong	71	62	Sydney	83	68
Lisbon	56	41	Tokyo	47	36

SUN & MOON

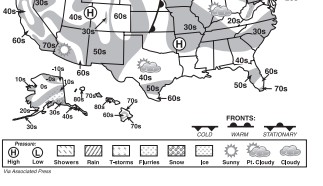
	Today	Tomorrow
Sunrise (Baghdad)	7:04AM	7:04AM
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	8:11AM	8:10AM
Sunset (Baghdad)	5:26PM	5:27PM
Sunset (Frankfurt)	5:05PM	5:07PM

Full moon 25 Jan 05 · Last qtr. 2 Feb 05 · New moon 8 Feb 05 · First qtr. 16 Feb 05

TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

	Hi	Lo	Otlk
Abilene,Tex.	50	36	Cir
Akron,Ohio	17	10	Cir
Albany,N.Y.	13	-1	Snow
Albuquerque	55	32	PCldy
Allentown,Pa.	16	5	Snow
Amarillo	49	28	Cir
Anchorage	23	30	Cldy
Asheville	27	14	Cir
Atlanta	34	21	Cir
Atlantic City	21	7	Snow
Austin	61	24	Cir
Baltimore	21	14	Cir
Baton Rouge	48	26	Cir
Billings	58	38	Cir
Birmingham	40	22	Cir
Bismarck	39	21	PCldy
Boise	36	29	Cldy
Boston	22	6	Snow
Bridgeport	19	2	Snow
Brownsville	60	38	PCldy
Buffalo	13	8	Snow
Burlington,Vt.	9	-4	Snow
Caribou,Maine	3	-6	Cir
Casper	53	30	PCldy
Charleston,S.C.	40	22	Cir
Charleston,W.Va.	22	11	Snow
Charlotte,N.C.	35	16	PCldy
Chattanooga	36	19	PCldy
Cheyenne	33	33	Cir
Chicago	24	17	PCldy
Cincinnati	19	14	Cir
Cleveland	17	14	Snow
Colorado Springs	62	28	Cir
Columbia,S.C.	39	19	Cir
Columbus,Ga.	42	23	Cir
Columbus,Ohio	16	9	Cir
Concord,N.H.	8	-3	Snow
Corpus Christi	55	36	PCldy
Dallas-Ft Worth	43	29	Cir
Dayton	16	10	Cir
Daytona Beach	50	28	PCldy
Denver	63	30	Cir
Des Moines	26	24	PCldy
Detroit	19	16	Cir
Duluth	20	10	PCldy
El Paso	54	34	PCldy
Elkins	10	-4	Snow
Erie	15	10	Cir
Eugene	57	42	Cldy
Evansville	26	21	Cir
Fairbanks	1	0	Cldy
Fargo	28	18	Cldy
Flagstaff	51	30	PCldy
Flint	18	15	Cir
Fort Smith	36	21	Cir
Fort Wayne	18	11	Cir
Fresno	50	43	Cldy
Goodland	36	36	Cir
Grand Junction	54	28	Cir
Grand Rapids	20	18	PCldy
Great Falls	44	42	PCldy
Green Bay	19	14	Cldy
Greensboro,N.C.	30	15	PCldy
Harrisburg	21	11	Snow
Hartford Sgfld	14	-1	Snow
Helena	51	27	PCldy
Honolulu	82	69	PCldy
Houston	48	28	Cir
Huntsville	33	18	Cir
Indianapolis	22	17	PCldy
Jackson,Miss.	41	22	Cir
Jacksonville	44	24	PCldy
Juneau	38	30	Rain
Kansas City	33	25	Cir
Key West	63	51	Cir
Knoxville	31	16	PCldy
Lake Charles	45	25	Cir
Lansing	17	15	Cir
Las Vegas	68	46	Cir
Lexington	21	16	PCldy
Lincoln	39	27	PCldy
Little Rock	38	22	PCldy
Los Angeles	75	52	PCldy
Louisville	25	19	PCldy
Lubbock	52	32	Cir
Macon	43	19	Cir
Madison	20	15	PCldy
Medford	52	36	Cldy
Memphis	37	25	Cir
Miami Beach	70	43	Cldy
Midland-Odessa	49	31	PCldy
Milwaukee	22	20	PCldy
Mpls-St Paul	12	15	PCldy
Mobile	47	23	Cir
Montgomery	41	21	Cir
Nashville	33	18	Cir
New Orleans	48	32	Cir
New York City	19	9	Snow
Newark	19	5	Snow
Norfolk,Va.	31	21	Snow
North Platte	51	28	PCldy
Oklahoma City	37	27	Cir
Omaha	32	25	PCldy
Orlando	51	28	PCldy
Paducah	31	22	Cir
Pendleton	52	41	PCldy
Peoria	22	19	PCldy
Philadelphia	22	13	Snow
Phoenix	73	55	PCldy
Pittsburgh	17	9	Cir
Pocatello	39	16	PCldy
Portland,Maine	11	1	Snow
Portland,Ore.	58	45	Cldy
Providence	21	7	Snow
Pueblo	65	20	Cir
Raleigh-Durham	32	18	Snow
Rapid City	61	34	PCldy
Reno	34	26	Cldy
Richmond	24	13	Cldy
Roanoke	25	15	PCldy
Rochester	14	5	Snow
Rockford	23	16	PCldy
Sacramento	50	40	Rain
St Louis	32	25	PCldy
St Thomas	83	74	Cldy
Salem,Ore.	58	44	Cldy
Salt Lake City	33	28	Cldy
San Angelo	50	32	PCldy
San Antonio	50	31	Cir
San Diego	70	51	PCldy
San Francisco	57	50	PCldy
San Jose	61	48	PCldy
San Juan,P.R.	85	74	Cir
Santa Fe	53	24	PCldy
St Ste Marie	17	11	Snow
Savannah	42	22	Cir
Seattle	56	45	Rain
Shreveport	43	23	Cir
Sioux City	35	24	PCldy
Sioux Falls	33	23	PCldy
South Bend	20	12	PCldy
Spokane	46	35	PCldy
Springfield,Ill.	22	18	PCldy
Springfield,Mo.	32	25	Cir
Syracuse	10	-1	Cir
Tallahassee	47	16	Cir
Tampa-St Pbsbg	54	30	Cldy
Toledo	19	13	Cir
Topeka	35	25	Cir
Tucson	69	48	PCldy
Tulsa	34	28	Cir
Tupelo	38	24	Cir
Waco	47	28	Cir
Washington,D.C.	22	14	Cir
W.Palm Beach	65	39	Cldy
Wichita	36	26	Cir
Wichita Falls	41	28	Cir
Wilkes-Barre	13	4	Snow
Wilmington,Del.	23	9	Snow
Yakima	48	38	PCldy

THE UNITED STATES TODAY



Via Associated Press

Scheduled to ETS or PCS?

Check our Relocation Guide every Saturday to find Realtors at your new station.

STARS AND STRIPES®
Your Hometown Newspaper

SCOREBOARD

AFN TV & Radio

Sunday

AFN-Sports, 9 a.m.—College basketball: Teams TBD (dld).
AFN-Atlantic, 1 p.m.—College basketball: Teams TBD (dld).
AFN-Sports, 1 p.m.—NBA: Celveland at Golden State (dld).
AFN-Sports, 7 p.m.—Bowling: PBA Dallas Open.
AFN-Sports, 8:30 p.m.—Motor racing: Paris-Dakar Rally (dld).
AFN-Atlantic, Pacific and Radio, 9 p.m.—NFL: NFC championship game, Atlanta at Philadelphia.
AFN-Sports, 9:30 p.m.—Golf: Buick Invitational, final round.

Monday

AFN-Atlantic, Pacific and Radio, 12:30 a.m.—NFL: AFC championship game, New England at Pittsburgh.
AFN-Sports, 1 a.m.—Motorcycle racing: THQ World Supercross GP (Anaheim).
AFN-Sports, 3 a.m.—Tennis: Australian Open, round of 16.
AFN-Sports, 9 a.m.—College basketball: North Carolina St. at Maryland (dld).
AFN-Sports, 1 p.m.—NFL: NFC championship game, Atlanta at Philadelphia (dld).
AFN-Sports, 6:30 p.m.—NFL: AFC championship game, New England at Pittsburgh (dld).

All Times are Central European Time; dld indicates delayed broadcast. All listings are subject to change. Visit **www.myafn.net** for more information.

Pro football

NFL playoffs

Wild-card Playoffs
Saturday, Jan. 8
St. Louis 27, Seattle 20
N.Y. Jets 20, San Diego 17, OT
Sunday, Jan. 9
Indianapolis 49, Denver 24
Minnesota 31, Green Bay 17
Divisional Playoffs
Saturday, Jan. 15
Pittsburgh 20, N.Y. Jets 17, OT
Atlanta 47, St. Louis 17
Sunday, Jan. 16
Philadelphia 27, Minnesota 14
New England 20, Indianapolis 3
Conference Championships
Sunday, Jan. 23
Atlanta at Philadelphia
New England at Pittsburgh
Super Bowl
Sunday, Feb. 6
Jacksonville, Fla.
AFC vs. NFC

College basketball

AP Men's Top 25 schedule

Saturday's games
Villanova 83, No. 2 Kansas 62
No. 3 Wake Forest at No. 20 Cincinnati
No. 4 Duke at Florida State
No. 5 Oklahoma State vs. Baylor
No. 6 North Carolina vs. Miami
No. 7 Syracuse vs. West Virginia
No. 8 Kentucky vs. LSU
No. 9 Boston College at St. John's
No. 11 Gonzaga at San Diego
No. 12 Georgia Tech vs. Virginia Tech
No. 13 Arizona at Oregon State
No. 14 Louisville vs. Tennessee
No. 15 Texas at No. 18 Oklahoma
No. 16 Connecticut vs. No. 21 Pittsburgh
No. 17 Mississippi State vs. South Carolina
No. 19 Michigan State at Minnesota
No. 22 Alabama at Mississippi
No. 23 Iowa vs. Purdue
No. 24 Wisconsin at Michigan
No. 25 Marquette vs. Charlotte
Sunday's game
No. 10 Washington vs. Washington State

Friday's men's scores

EAST
Alfred 68, Hartwick 50
American U. 72, Army 37
Amherst 68, Wesleyan, Conn. 58
Bard 80, N.Y. Maritime 60
Baruch 84, Medgar Evers 59
Bates 86, Middlebury 66
Bucknell 71, Lafayette 54
Carnegie-Mellon 81, Chicago 72
Colgate 61, Lehigh 54
Geneseo St. 72, Cortland St. 67
Hamilton 68, Union, N.Y. 66
Hilbert 114, Mount Aloysius 94
Hobart 70, Skidmore 61
Holy Cross 79, Navy 56
Iona 93, St. Peter's 88
Nazareth, N.Y. 72, Elmira 54
Oswego St. 71, Oneonta 51
Penn St. Behrend 79, Lake Erie 70
Penn St.-Altoona 71, Medaille 60
Plattsburgh 81, Fredonia St. 62
Rochester 71, Washington, Mo. 63
St. John Fisher 80, Utica 51
Tufts 95, Williams 78
Vassar 66, St. Lawrence 62
SOUTH
Belmont 71, Lipscomb 61, OT
Emory 95, NYU 89
Johnson Bible 78, Appalachian Bible 57
Palm Beach Atl. 91, Johnson & Wales, Fla. 74
Troy 97, Mercer 70
MIDWEST
Bellevue 92, Oklahoma Wesleyan 69
Brandeis 74, Case Reserve 66
Dakota St. 89, Valley City St. 78
DePauw 81, Rhodes 56
Dickinson St. 63, Mary 62
Hendrix 55, Rose-Hulman 51
Illinois College 70, Carroll, Wis. 67
Knox 68, Beloit 58
Mayville St. 75, Si Tanka-Huron 64
Minn.-Morris 83, Bethany Lutheran 69
Minot St. 72, Jamestown 70
Monmouth, Ill. 74, St. Norbert 68
Newman 75, Peru St. 71
Northwestern, Minn. 83, St. Scholastica 65
Presentation 82, Martin Luther 68
SOUTHWEST
Trinity, Texas 73, Centre 65
FAR WEST
Carroll, Mont. 90, Montana Tech 58
Lewis-Clark St. 58, Great Falls 44
Montana-Western 85, Rocky Mountain 69
Oregon Tech 81, Concordia, Ore. 79
Westminster, Utah 64, Mont. St.-Northern 54

AP Women's Top 25 fared

Friday
1. Duke (18-1) did not play. Next: at No. 9 North Carolina, Monday, Jan. 24.
2. LSU (17-1) did not play. Next: at No. 17 Vanderbilt, Sunday.
3. Ohio State (18-2) did not play. Next: vs. Northwestern, Sunday.
4. Baylor (13-2) did not play. Next: at No. 15 Texas, Saturday.
5. Stanford (16-2) did not play. Next: vs. Southern Cal, Saturday.
6. Rutgers (13-3) did not play. Next: at No. 11 Notre Dame, Sunday.
7. Tennessee (13-3) did not play. Next: vs. Kentucky, Sunday.
8. Michigan State (16-2) did not play. Next: at Penn State, Sunday.
9. North Carolina (14-3) did not play. Next: vs. No. 1 Duke, Monday, Jan. 24.
10. Texas Tech (14-2) did not play. Next: vs. No. 20 Kansas State, Saturday.
11. Notre Dame (15-3) did not play. Next: vs. No. 6 Rutgers, Sunday.
12. Minnesota (15-3) did not play. Next: vs. Illinois, Sunday.
13. Connecticut (11-4) did not play. Next: vs. Seton Hall, Saturday.
14. Boston College (13-2) did not play. Next: at Providence, Sunday.
15. Texas (9-6) did not play. Next: vs. No. 4 Baylor, Saturday.
16. Maryland (13-3) did not play. Next: vs. North Carolina State, Sunday.
17. Vanderbilt (13-4) did not play. Next: vs. No. 2 LSU, Sunday.
18. DePaul (14-3) beat Tulane 80-50. Next: at Southern Mississippi, Sunday.
19. Iowa State (14-1) did not play. Next: at Kansas State, Tuesday, Jan. 25.
20. Kansas State (13-3) did not play. Next: at No. 10 Texas Tech, Saturday.
21. Georgia (14-5) did not play. Next: at Mississippi State, Sunday.
22. Iowa (14-3) did not play. Next: at No. 24 Purdue, Sunday.
23. Virginia Tech (12-4) did not play. Next: vs. Florida State, Monday, Jan. 24.
24. Purdue (10-7) did not play. Next: vs. No. 22 Iowa, Sunday.
25. UCLA (11-6) did not play. Next: at California, Saturday.

Friday's women's scores

EAST
American U. 71, Army 64, OT
Bard 47, N.Y. Maritime 46
Bates 75, Middlebury 50
Buffalo St. 76, Potsdam 55
Chicago 75, Carnegie-Mellon 32
Cortland St. 55, Geneseo St. 45
Duquesne 63, Massachusetts 53
Elmira 76, Nazareth, N.Y. 64
Hartwick 54, Alfred 52
Holy Cross 73, Navy 48
Hunter 75, St. Joseph's, N.Y. 54
La Salle 67, Dayton 61
Lafayette 55, Bucknell 53
Lehigh 72, Colgate 59
Oswego St. 93, Oneonta 84, 4OT
Penn St. Behrend 77, Lake Erie 43
Penn St.-Altoona 67, Medaille 60
Plattsburgh 53, Fredonia St. 45
RPI 65, Clarkson 45
St. John Fisher 72, Utica 60
St. Lawrence 61, Vassar 24
Union, N.Y. 56, Hamilton 54
Washington, Mo. 59, Rochester 50
Wesleyan, Conn. 54, Amherst 44
Xavier 72, Saint Joseph's 55
SOUTH
DePaul 80, Tulane 50
Kentucky Christian 58, Phila. Bible 45
Louisville 63, TCU 57
Marquette 71, Southern Miss. 58
Memphis 51, UAB 47
NYU 71, Emory 56
South Florida 67, Saint Louis 49
Washington & Lee 71, S. Virginia 55
MIDWEST
Beloit 58, Knox 45
Bethany, Kan. 74, Minn.-Morris 70
Bradley 57, Illinois St. 55
Brandeis 71, Case Reserve 56
Carroll, Wis. 61, Illinois College 53
Creighton 71, Wichita St. 59
Dakota St. 74, Valley City St. 69
DePauw 78, Rhodes 55
Houston 63, Cincinnati 56
Indiana St. 74, N. Iowa 70
Lawrence 93, Grinnell 80
Mary 73, Dickinson St. 50
Minot St. 62, Jamestown 60
Newman 60, Peru St. 49
Northwestern, Minn. 71, St. Scholastica 55
Presentation 52, Martin Luther 42
Rose-Hulman 80, Hendrix 67
SW Missouri St. 79, Drake 63
Si Tanka-Huron 77, Mayville St. 57
St. Norbert 71, Monmouth, Ill. 58
SOUTHWEST
Trinity, Texas 72, Centre 39
FAR WEST
Carroll, Mont. 79, Montana Tech 56
Great Falls 74, Lewis-Clark St. 64
Mont. St.-Northern 76, Westminster, Utah 57
Montana-Western 68, Rocky Mountain 53
N.M. Highlands 62, Western St., Colo. 49
Oregon Tech 73, Concordia, Ore. 37

Golf

Buick Invitational

Friday
At Torrey Pines South 7,568 yards
At Torrey Pines North 6,874 yards
San Diego
Purse: $4.8 million
Par: 72
Partial Second Round
Note: Due to fog the second round was to be completed Saturday.

Tom Lehman	62-67—129	-15
Kevin Sutherland	68-66—134	-10
Dudley Hart	65-69—134	-10
Luke Donald	68-67—135	-9
Arron Oberholser	64-72—136	-8
Ernie Els	65-71—136	-8
Sott Hend	72-64—136	-8
Aaron Baddeley	66-70—136	-8
Sott McCarron	72-65—137	-7
Fredrik Jacobson	69-69—138	-6
Tom Pernice Jr.	65-73—138	-6
Carl Paulson	68-71—139	-5
Joe Durant	71-68—139	-5
Len Mattiace	73-66—139	-5
Mark Wilson	73-66—139	-5
Charles Howell III	72-67—139	-5
Daniel Chopra	73-66—139	-5
Craig Barlow	68-71—139	-5
Sergio Garcia	69-70—139	-5
Phil Mickelson	72-67—139	-5
Franklin Langham	71-69—140	-4
Bob Tway	68-72—140	-4
Brett Quigley	69-71—140	-4
John Rollins	69-71—140	-4
Phillip Price	71-69—140	-4
Charles Warren	66-74—140	-4
Mario Tiziani	69-71—140	-4
Charley Hoffman	71-69—140	-4
Bill Glasson	72-68—140	-4
Vijay Singh	71-69—140	-4
Tommy Armour III	71-69—140	-4
Billy Mayfair	71-70—141	-3
Brandt Jobe	71-70—141	-3
Michael Allen	69-72—141	-3
Will MacKenzie	74-67—141	-3
Jay Haas	71-70—141	-3
Mark O'Meara	72-69—141	-3
Darron Stiles	66-75—141	-3
Dennis Paulson	71-70—141	-3
Danny Briggs	74-68—142	-2
Alex Cejka	71-71—142	-2
Ted Purdy	75-67—142	-2
Woody Austin	70-72—142	-2
John Daly	72-70—142	-2
Fred Couples	74-68—142	-2
Corey Pavin	73-69—142	-2
Jonathan Byrd	72-70—142	-2
Charlie Wi	72-70—142	-2
Skip Kendall	72-70—142	-2
Bob Estes	72-70—142	-2
Kevin Na	75-67—142	-2
Tag Ridings	68-75—143	-1
Doug Barron	72-71—143	-1
Justin Rose	73-70—143	-1
Cameron Beckman	67-76—143	-1
Billy Andrade	69-74—143	-1
Joey Snyder III	73-70—143	-1
David Hearn	70-73—143	-1
Dan Forsman	68-75—143	-1
Hunter Mahan	71-72—143	-1
Robert Allenby	73-70—143	-1
Vaughn Taylor	73-70—143	-1
Rick Fehr	74-70—144	E
Patrick Sheehan	68-76—144	E
Andre Stolz	69-75—144	E
Chris Riley	67-77—144	E
Stephen Ames	75-69—144	E
Justin Bolli	74-70—144	E
Rich Beem	72-72—144	E
Tim Petrovic	69-76—145	+1
Brad Faxon	73-72—145	+1
Rob Rashell	73-72—145	+1
Jim Carter	73-72—145	+1
Thomas Levet	73-73—146	+2
Jason Allred	72-74—146	+2
Paul Claxton	76-70—146	+2
Omar Uresti	71-75—146	+2
Duffy Waldorf	75-71—146	+2
Bo Van Pelt	72-75—147	+3
Neal LaNaster	70-77—147	+3
John Cook	75-72—147	+3
Steve Lowery	74-73—147	+3
Euan Walters	68-80—148	+4
Paul Holtby	76-72—148	+4
Rory Sabbatini	71-78—149	+5
Chris Starkjohann	74-75—149	+5
Jeff Hart	72-79—151	+7
D.A. Points	76-76—152	+8
Gregory Casagranda	75-78—153	+9
Steven Hakes	74-82—156	+12
Michael Beard	83-75—158	+14

Failed to complete the second round

Dean Wilson	63	-9
Pat Perez	66	-6
Jason Bohn	66	-6
Carl Pettersson	66	-6
Peter Lonard	67	-5
K.J. Choi	67	-5
D.J. Trahan	67	-5
Tom Gillis	68	-4
Jerry Kelly	68	-4
J.J. Henry	68	-4
J.P. Hayes	68	-4
Ryuji Imada	68	-4
Harrison Frazar	68	-4
Steven Alker	68	-4
Kevin Stadler	68	-4
Tiger Woods	69	-3
Brian Davis	69	-3
Bernhard Langer	69	-3
Shigeki Maruyama	69	-3
Zach Johnson	69	-3
Sott Simpson	69	-3
Ben Curtis	69	-3
Michael Long	69	-3
Hidemichi Tanaka	69	-3
Sean O'Hair	69	-3
Jesper Parnevik	69	-3
Robert Damron	70	-2
Chris Smith	70	-2
Brendan Jones	70	-2
Sott GutShewski	70	-2
Hideto Tanihara	70	-2
Bob Heintz	70	-2
Bill Haas	71	-1
D.J. Brigman	71	-1
James DriSoll	71	-1
J.L. Lewis	71	-1
Joey Sindelar	71	-1
Kent Jones	71	-1
Ian Poulter	71	-1
Hunter Haas	71	-1
Greg Owen	71	-1
Bradley Hughes	71	-1
Paul Gow	72	E
Boyd Summerhays	72	E
Frank Lickliter II	72	E
Dick Mast	72	E
Todd FiSher	73	+1
Nick Watney	73	+1
Gavin Coles	73	+1
Matt Davidson	73	+1
Toru Taniguchi	74	+2
Steve Pate	74	+2
Roland Thatcher	74	+2
Justin Leonard	74	+2
Lucas Glover	74	+2
Brett Wetterich	74	+2
John Elliott	75	+3
Chris Perry	76	+4
Craig Perks	77	+5
Briny Baird	71—WD	
Mark Calcavecchia	75—WD	
Jeff Brehaut	75—WD	
Chris M. Anderson	77—WD	
David Duval	79—WD	
Hank Kuehne	80—WD	

MasterCard Championship

Friday
At Hualalai Golf Club
Kaupulehu-Kona, Hawaii
Purse: $1.6 million
Yardage: 7,097; Par 72 (36-36)
First Round

Tom Watson	32-32—64	-8
Wayne Levi	33-33—66	-6
Vicente Fernandez	33-34—67	-5
John Jacobs	34-33—67	-5
Morris Hatalsky	35-32—67	-5
Dana Quigley	32-35—67	-5
Craig Stadler	35-32—67	-5
D.A. Weibring	33-35—68	-4
Tom Purtzer	35-33—68	-4
Fuzzy Zoeller	35-33—68	-4
Bob Gilder	36-32—68	-4
Gil Morgan	33-35—68	-4
Rodger Davis	35-33—68	-4
Bruce Summerhays	34-35—69	-3
Don Pooley	35-34—69	-3
Tom Jenkins	35-34—69	-3
Peter Jacobsen	36-33—69	-3
Bruce Fleisher	39-30—69	-3
Larry Nelson	34-35—69	-3
Hale Irwin	35-34—69	-3
Mark McNulty	34-35—69	-3
Stewart Ginn	37-32—69	-3
David Eger	34-36—70	-2
Jim Thorpe	37-33—70	-2
Tom Kite	34-36—70	-2
Jim Ahern	36-34—70	-2
Mark James	37-34—71	-1
Ed Fiori	34-37—71	-1
Allen Doyle	36-35—71	-1
Jay Sigel	36-36—72	E
Bruce Lietzke	35-37—72	E
Lee Trevino	36-36—72	E
Dave Barr	38-36—74	+2
Doug Tewell	37-37—74	+2
Gary Player	37-37—74	+2
Pete Oakley	38-37—75	+3
Arnold Palmer	42-38—80	+8

Skiing

Women's World Cup GS

At Maribor, Slovenia
Saturday
Goldenfox Course
(heat times in parentheses):

1. Tina Maze, Slovenia, 2 minutes 16.36 seconds (1:06.49-1:09.87).
2. Karen Putzer, Italy, 2:16.58 (1:06.66-1:09.92).
3. Martina Ertl, Germany, 2:17.29 (1:07.33-1:09.96).
4. Anja Paerson, Sweden, 2:17.48 (1:07.31-1:10.17).
5. Julia Mancuso, United States, 2:17.58 (1:07.57-1:10.01) 5. Nicole Hosp, Austria, 2:17.58 (1:07.13-1:10.45.
7. Tanja Poutiainen, Finland, 2:17.59 (1:07.12-1:10.47).
8. Anna Ottosson, Sweden, 2:17.61 (1:07.49-1:10.12).
9. Lindsey Kildow, United States, 2:17.99 (1:07.77-1:10.22).
10. Allison Forsyth, Canada, 2:18.10 (1:07.85-1:10.25) 11. Maria Jose Rienda Contreras, Spain, 2:18.21 (1:07.73-1:10.48).
12. Genevieve Simard, Canada, 2:18.31 (1:07.70-1:10.61).
13. Jessica Lindell, Sweden, 2:18.56 (1:08.54-1:10.02).
14. Nadia Fanchini, Italy, 2:18.61(1:08.11-1:10.50).
15. Gail Kelly, Canada, 2:18.86 (1:08.14-1:10.72).
16. Michaela Dorfmeister, Austria, 2:18.92 (1:08.85-1:10.07).
17. Maria Pietilae-Holmner, Sweden, 2:18.95 (1:08.60-1:10.35).
18. Eveline Rohregger, Austria, 2:18.98 (1:07.94-1:11.04).
19. Manuela Moelgg, Italy, 2:19.37 (1:08.99-1:10.18).
20. Marlies Oester, Switzerland, 2:19.24 (1:08.84-1:10.40).
21. Janica Kostelic, Croatia, 2:19.25 (1:08.81-1:10.44).
22. Sarah Schleper, United States, 2:19.37 (1:08.97-1:10.40).
23. Sonja Nef, Switzerland, 2:19.43 (1:08.43-1:11.00) 24. Kathrin Zettel, Austria, 2:19.49 (1:08.73-1:10.76).
25. Renate Goetschl, Austria, 2:19.51 (1:08.34-1:11.17).
26. Kristina Koznick, United States, 2:20.00 (1:09.04-1:10.96).
27. Franzi Aufdenblatten, Switzerland, 2:20.19 (1:09.04-1:11.15).

DNF Second Run—Silvia Berger, Austria; Audrey Peltier, France; Brigitte Acton, Canada.
DNS—Elisabeth Georgl, Austria; Jessica Kelley, United States; Kaylin Richardson, United States; Nika Fleiss, Croatia.

Overall World Cup Standings
(After 22-of-34 Events)
1. Tanja Poutiainen, Finland, 842 points.
2. Renate Goetschl, Austria, 804.
3. Janica Kostelic, Croatia, 799.
4. Anja Paerson, Sweden, 756.
5. Michaela Dorfmeister, Austria, 727.
6. Lindsey Kildow, United States, 667.
7. Hilde Gerg, Germany, 594.
8. Marlies Schild, Austria, 497.
9. Tina Maze, Slovenia, 482.
10. Martina Ertl, Germany, 443.

World Cup Giant Slalom Standings
(After 6 Races)
1. Tanja Poutiainen, Finland, 381 points.
2. Anja Paerson, Sweden, 350.
3. Tina Maze, Slovenia, 328.
4, Karen Putzere, Italy, 200, 4. Maria Jose Rienda Contreras, Spain, 184.

Deals

Friday's transactions

BASEBALL
American League
ANAHEIM ANGELS—Agreed to terms with INF Lou Merloni on a minor league contract.
BALTIMORE ORIOLES—Agreed to terms with RHP Steve Reed on a one-year contract. Purchased the contract of INF Chris Gomez from Ottawa of the IL. Designated RHP Dave Borkowski and RHP Brian Forystek for assignment.
CLEVELAND INDIANS—Agreed to terms with OF Casey Blake on a two-year contract.
TEXAS RANGERS—Agreed to terms with Buck Showalter, manager, on a three-year contract extension through the 2009 season, and John Hart, general manager, on a two-year contract.
National League
HOUSTON ASTROS—Agreed to terms with RHP Roger Clemens on a one-year contract.
PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES—Claimed RHP Edwin Moreno off waivers from Texas.
PITTSBURGH PIRATES—Agreed to terms with RHP Albie Lopez on a minor league contract.
SAN DIEGO PADRES—Agreed to terms with RHP Steve Sparks on a minor league contract.
BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
BOSTON CELTICS—Placed F Tom Gugliotta on the injured list. Activated G Delonte West from the injured list.
DETROIT PISTONS—Acquired G Carlos Arroyo from Utah for C Elden Campbell and a first-round draft pick after 2006.
GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS—Placed F Zarko Carbarkapa on the injured list. Activated F Eduardo Najera from the injured list.
NEW ORLEANS HORNETS—Waived F Matt Freije and G Junior Harrington.
PHOENIX SUNS—Traded G-F Casey Jacobsen, F Maciej Lampe and F Jackson Vroman to New Orleans for G Jim Jackson and a 2005 second-round draft pick.
PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS—Waived F Qyntel Woods.
FOOTBALL
National Football League
JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS—Signed S Nick Sorensen to a multiyear contract extension. Signed WR Chris Cole.
ST. LOUIS RAMS—Fired Mike Stock, special teams coach. Named Bob Ligashesky special teams coach.
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS—Named Mike Singletary assistant head coach and linebackers coach.
NFL Europe
AMSTERDAM ADMIRALS—Announced the resignations of Jeff Reinebold, secondary coach and special teams coordinator, to become NFL Europe's senior manager of international player development, and Jeff Lewis, offensive line coach.
SOCCER
Major League Soccer
NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION—Agreed to terms with D Joe Franchino, MF Steve Ralston and G Matt Reis. Agreed to terms with D Marshall Leonard on a contract extension. Announced the transfer of G Adin Brown to Aalesund FK of the Norwegian Premier League.
COLLEGE
BIG 12—Agreed to terms with Kevin Weiberg, commissioner, on a four-year contract extension.
ABILENE CHRISTIAN—Named Chris Thomsen football coach.
ARKANSAS—Named Josh Maxson assistant sports information director.
CARROLL, MONT.—Named Maureen Boyle women's volleyball coach.
FLORIDA—Named Stan Drayton running backs coach.
ILLINOIS—Named Bob Heffner assistant football coach.
MIAMI (OHIO)—Named Bret Ingalls tight ends and tackles coach and DeAndre Smith running backs coach.
MONTANA—Announced men's basketball F Kamarr Davis has regained academic eligibility.
NEVADA—Named Tim DeRuyter secondary coach and co-defensive coordinator.
NOTRE DAME—Named Ruben Mendoza strength and conditioning coach.
SAN DIEGO—Named LeCharls McDaniel tight ends coach.

Lehman leads Woods by three in Buick Inv.

The Associated Press

Golf roundup

SAN DIEGO — Soupy fog made it impossible to see the ball.

And the way Tom Lehman is playing in the Buick Invitational, it might be hard for the rest of the field to find him.

Lehman made two straight birdies to regain the lead, then returned from a three-hour fog delay to close out his second round with two more birdies for a 5-under 67 on the South course at Torrey Pines, matching the 36-hole record and giving him a three-stroke lead going into the weekend.

Lehman was at 15-under 129, tying the record set by Lennie Clements in 1996.

Peter Lonard of Australia was at 12-under par and playing his final hole on the par-5 ninth hole on the North course when the second round was suspended by darkness.

Tiger Woods also got into contention, making four birdies in five holes after the fog delay. He was at 12-under.

Kevin Sutherland and Dudley Hart completed 36 holes in 10-under.

Lehman is gaining confidence with every day, and every shot.

The Ryder Cup captain easily handled the difficult South course, site of the 2008 U.S. Open, by finishing his round with four straight birdies. He closed with six straight birdies on the North course Thursday.

"I felt the fog delay actually worked in my favor," Lehman said. "I was struggling a bit with my swing, and I went to the range and hit balls for an hour and a half, and felt like I got my rhythm back."

He can only hope for a different outcome than when Clements set the 36-hole record nine years ago. Clements shot 72-71 on the weekend and finished third.

Lehman, too, has struggled to close out tournaments. He has not won since the 2000 Phoenix Open, and ended last year by playing in the final group in three straight tournaments, failing to win.

"I think your good golf comes when you're not thinking about the results," Lehman said. "You're just thinking about executing. I think I made 19 birdies in 36 holes. That's without question a personal best for me."

But he looks stronger than ever, and really showed his stuff to anyone who could see in the fog.

He got up-and-down from the bunker on the par-5 sixth, then made a 10-foster for birdie on the seventh and was cruising along on what appeared to be another brilliant day along the cliffs over the Pacific Ocean.

The fog came out of nowhere.

"I was on the 12th tee when they blew the horn," Chris Smith said. "Thirty seconds later, I couldn't see the green."

Fog quickly engulfed Torrey Pines, with visibility down to about 150 yards. The second round was suspended more than three hours.

Watson takes two-shot lead in Champions Tour opener

KAUPULEHU-KONA, Hawaii — Exhibiting a putting touch reminiscent of his prime, Tom Watson shot a bogey-free, 8-under-par 64 Friday to take a two-stroke lead over Wayne Levi after the first round of the Master-Card Championship.

Watson made eight birdies and didn't have a 5 on his scorecard at Hualalai Golf Club in shooting his lowest round since a 66 last year in the season-opening event on the Champions Tour.

Vicente Fernandez chipped in twice for birdie to lead a large group at 5-under 67 that included 2004 player of the year Craig Stadler, Dana Quigley, Morris Hatalsky and John Jacobs.

Tennis scoreboard

Australian Open

Saturday
At Melbourne Park
Melbourne, Australia
Purse: $14.8 million (Grand Slam)
Surface: Hard-Outdoor

Singles
Men
Third Round

Guillermo Canas (12), Argentina, def. Radek Stepanek, Czech Republic, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2.
Guillermo Coria (6), Argentina, def. Juan Carlos Ferrero (31), Spain, 6-3, 6-2, 6-1.
Nikolay Davydenko (26), Russia, def. Tim Henman (7), Britain, 6-4, 6-2, 6-2.
Philipp Kohlschreiber, Germany, def. Jean-Rene Lisnard, France, 7-5, 6-3, 6-2.
Andy Roddick (2), United States, def. Jurgen Melzer (32), Austria, 6-2, 6-2, 7-5.
David Nalbandian (9), Argentina, def. Fernando Gonzalez (23), Chile, 6-7 (3), 7-5, 6-2, 6-3.
Rafael Nadal, Spain, def. Bobby Reynolds, United States, 6-1, 6-1, 6-3.
Lleyton Hewitt (3), Australia, def. Juan Ignacio Chela (25), Argentina, 6-2, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4.

Women
Third Round

Anastasia Myskina (3), Russia, def. Lisa Raymond (25), United States, walkover.
Karolina Sprem (13), Croatia, def. Elena Likhovtseva (18), Russia, 6-4, 6-3.
Lindsay Davenport (1), United States, def. Nicole Vaidisova, Czech Republic, 6-2, 6-4.
Venus Williams (8), United States, def. Anna Smashnova (27), Israel, 6-3, 6-4.
Nathalie Dechy (19), France, def. Francesca Schiavone (14), Italy, 6-3, 6-3.
Alicia Molik (10), Australia, def. Tatiana Panova, Russia, 6-3, 6-2.
Patty Schnyder (12), Switzerland, def. Abigail Spears, United States, 7-6 (4), 6-3.
Elena Dementieva (6), Russia, def. Daniela Hantuchova (26), Slovakia, 7-5, 5-7, 6-4.

Doubles
Men
Second Round

Jonathan Erlich and Andy Ram (13), Israel, def. Lee Hyung-taik, South Korea, and Jarkko Nieminen, Finland, walkover.
Bob and Mike Bryan (2), United States, def. Mario Karansic, Croatia, and Uros Vico, Italy, 6-0, 6-2.
Michael Llodra and Fabrice Santoro (6), France, def. Jordan Kerr, Australia, and Jim Thomas, United States, 6-4, 6-4.
Ashley Fisher, Australia, and Travis Parrott, United States, def. Cyril Suk and Pavel Vizner (9), Czech Republic, 7-6 (8), 6-4.
Wesley Moodie, South Africa, and Nenad Zimonjic, Serbia-Montenegro, def. Xavier Malisse and Olivier Rochus (12), Belgium, 6-3, 6-4.
Karol Beck, Slovakia, and Sargis Sargsian, Armenia, def. Karsten Braasch, Germany, and Jeff Coetzee, South Africa, 6-4, 6-7 (2), 7-5.
Tomas Berdych, Czech Republic, and Andrei Pavel, Romania, def.
Wayne Arthurs and Paul Hanley (8), Australia, 7-6 (8), 7-5.

Women
Second Round

Li Ting and Sun Tian Tian (10), China, def. Denisa Chladkova, Czech Republic, and Lubomira Kurhajcova, Slovakia, 3-6, 6-0, 6-3.
Jennifer Russell, United States, and Mara Santangelo, Italy, def. Yulia Beygelzimer, Ukraine, and Ipek Senoglu, Turkey, 6-3, 6-7 (4), 6-3.
Anabel Medina Garrigues, Spain, and Dinara Safina, Russia, def. Gisela Dulko, Argentina, and Maria Vento-Kabchi (11), Venezuela, 6-1, 6-7 (6), 6-4.
Shinobu Asagoe, Japan, and Katarina Srebotnik (14), Slovenia, def. Ruxandra Dragomir Ilie, Romania, and Maureen Drake, Canada, 6-4, 3-6, 7-5.
Eva Birnerova, Czech Republic, and Andreea Vanc, Romania, def. Cara Black, Zimbabwe, and Liezel Huber (2), South Africa, 6-7 (6), 7-5, 6-3.

Roddick rides serve to straight-sets win

BY PAUL ALEXANDER
The Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Andy Roddick kept the crowd buzzing with his aces, riding his big serve into the fourth round of the Australian Open.

Lleyton Hewitt and Juan Ignacio Chela also kept fans buzzing Saturday. Hewitt bellowed and gestured during his 6-2, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4 victory in the third round and said Chela spit toward him during a changeover.

"I was spitting, but not in Lleyton's direction," Chela said. "It was a very tense moment in the match. There was a lot of pressure."

An earlier jolt came courtesy of Nicolay Davydenko. The 26th-seeded Russian upset Tim Henman 6-4, 6-2, 6-2. The seed-ended Englishman reached at least the quarterfinals in the last three Grand Slams.

Roddick dropped only seven points in his last 10 service games and finished with 22 aces to beat Austria's Jurgen Melzer 6-2, 6-2, 7-5.

After beating three consecutive left-handers, next up for Roddick is 102nd-ranked Philipp Kohlschreiber, a German with a 10-18 career record who won only one Grand Slam match before this tournament.

Roddick, seeded third, started his first service game with two aces. He soon was cracking serves at up to 139 mph. Melzer, seeded 32nd, had three break points in Roddick's next service game, then never got another chance.

Hewitt clearly upset Chela as he served at 2-2 in the fourth set. After Hewitt set up triple break point, he did one of his trademark bellows of "Come on!" while pointing his fingers at his forehead.

Chela slammed a first serve that nearly hit Hewitt without bouncing. Hewitt finished off the break, then appeared to curse at the 25th-seeded Argentine during the changeover.

Chela then spat, an action captured by TV cameras and photographers.

"He spat in my direction," Hewitt said. "I don't think it's the right thing."

"It's unfortunate because we're having a good dogfight match out there," he added. "He apologized to me at the net when we shook hands. I said, 'Just forget about it, mate.' "

Chela said he didn't recall trying to hit Hewitt and didn't hear the Australian curse him.

The International Tennis Federation said although no warning or code violation was given during the match by the chair umpire, tournament referee Peter Bellinger was told about what happened by both players. Bellinger and other tournament officials most likely will review tapes Sunday.

French Open finalist Guillermo Coria beat former No. 1 Juan Carlos Ferrero 6-3, 6-2, 6-1.

Women's French Open champion Anastasia Myskina joined Russia's two other Grand Slam champs in the fourth round when Lisa Raymond withdrew with a torn abdominal muscle.

Top-ranked Lindsay Davenport beat 15-year-old Czech qualifier Nicole Vaidisova 6-2, 6-4 to move into a fourth-round match against 13th-seeded Karolina Sprem, who ousted Russia's Elena Likhovtseva 6-4, 6-3.

Sixth-seeded Elena Dementieva became the seventh Russian woman to advance, outlasting Daniela Hantuchova 7-5, 5-7, 6-4.

Texas making pitch for Delgado; A-Rod, Schilling still bickering

The Associated Press

Baseball roundup

With the chance to impress Carlos Delgado, Texas Rangers owner Tom Hicks made an offer Friday that got the attention of the free-agent first baseman.

"Tom Hicks said that he was going to come to Puerto Rico and give it his best shot," Delgado's agent, David Sloane, said in an e-mail. "He did all that and more."

Texas, competing with the New York Mets, Florida and Baltimore, made progress during the four-hour session in Puerto Rico.

"I think they recognize it was a very strong offer, I think they recognize we went certainly farther ... it was more aggressive than anything we talked about before," Hicks said. "I think we made a very compelling offer."

Hicks wouldn't go into details about the offer. He expects Delgado will decide on the Rangers' offer by the end of the weekend.

Sloane said he expected to talk to Texas again this weekend "in an attempt to sustain the positive momentum we generated today."

General manager John Hart and manager Buck Showalter, who got contract extensions Friday, joined Hicks for the meeting. The group then returned to Texas. Hart and Showalter had also met with Delgado during the winter meetings last month.

Delgado would be an impressive addition to a youthful Texas lineup that includes All-Stars Alfonso Soriano, Michael Young and Hank Blalock, and switch-hitting slugger Mark Teixeira, like Delgado a first baseman.

A former Rangers star, Alex Rodriguez, also made news Friday, taking a shot at Boston's Curt Schilling as the never-ending Yankees-Red Sox rivalry heated up in the dead of winter.

"I just hope he continues to talk about me and my teammates," the New York Yankees third baseman said. "It's going to give us great motivation to beat him up in the future."

Schilling called it a "bush-league play" after Rodriguez was called out for interference in Game 6 of the AL championship series last October. A-Rod, trying to beat out an infield dribbler, slapped the ball away from pitcher Bronson Arroyo near first base.

"To me it was just odd, because I mean we beat him a couple of times during the year and he was crying on the bench," Rodriguez said, referring to Schilling. "And then he lost Game 1 and he wouldn't talk or anything. And obviously, he wins Game 6 and then he's still talking until today. So it's just something we as players have been accustomed to. But it's something I'm not worried about."

Schilling, reached on a cell phone Friday, said Rodriguez had his facts wrong.

"It's not true. I talked after Game 1," Schilling said. "I don't care what Alex says. When someone says that, you consider the source."

He also denied shedding tears in the dugout.

"I was upset, but I wasn't crying on the bench," Schilling said.

Also, Chicago Cubs General Manager Jim Hendry hopes the team and Sammy Sosa can patch up their differences once spring training begins next month. Sosa left the clubhouse early without permission before last season's final game, disappointing teammates and drawing a fine from the team.

"He did a wrongful thing the last day of the season. He missed a game without an excuse and he made some comments publicly about Dusty," Hendry said Friday, referring to manager Dusty Baker.

"Really there is no reason once camp starts and Sammy comes out with a good effort and we get off to a good start, there is no reason the story should continue," Hendry said. "Professional athletes are like the rest of us, we all make mistakes and we live in a forgiving society. If handled the right way, with the right amount of contrition, you can put it behind you."

Also, outfielder Casey Blake agreed to a $5.4 million, two-year contract with Cleveland, leaving 34 players in salary arbitration.

Among free agents, reliever Steve Reed agreed to a $1.05 million, one-year contract with Baltimore, and knuckleballer Steve Sparks agreed to a minor league contract with San Diego that would pay him $550,000 if he makes the big league roster.

AFC championship game - New England Patriots at Pittsburgh Steelers - 12:30 a.m. CET Monday; AFN-Atlantic, Pacific, Radio

Brady has been in Roethlisberger's shoes

Patriots QB, two-time Super Bowl MVP, excelled when he got in lineup

BY DAVE GOLDBERG
The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — When Tom Brady started the AFC championship game here three years ago, he was a second-year quarterback who had barely gotten on the field as a rookie.

So he knows what Ben Roethlisberger faces when the Pittsburgh Steelers play the New England Patriots in Sunday's conference title game.

"It was my second year but my first year as a player," Brady recalled. "My rookie year there's no way I could have done what he did. I was awful. I couldn't do anything."

The Patriots are seeking their third NFL title in four years.

And they enter the game as the favorite even though they lost to the Steelers 34-20 on Oct. 31 and Pittsburgh has won 15 consecutive games.

Why are they favored over a team New England coach Bill Belichick and his players repeatedly call "the best team in the NFL?"

Maybe it's because the guys who make the odds and the public that lays down the money has more confidence in Brady's two Super Bowl MVP trophies than in Roethlisberger, whose two interceptions in his first postseason game last week against the New York Jets almost led to Pittsburgh's elimination.

However, Big Ben's season has been the most successful ever for a rookie quarterback. In Brady's eyes, Roethlisberger is already all grown up.

"I wish I didn't lose a game this year," Brady said. "Maybe I should get some pointers from him."

Roethlisberger became a starter in the third game after Tommy Maddox was hurt in a loss in Baltimore — the Steelers' only defeat of the season. He went on to shatter the record for consecutive victories (six) by a rookie QB, winning 14 straight and becoming the first quarterback to be voted offensive rookie of the year. At that position, rookies either struggle or sit.

There were different expectations when each arrived in the NFL.

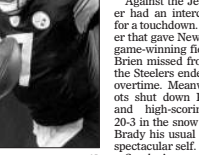
Brady was a sixth-round pick after starting at Michigan only in his senior year.

As a rookie in 2000, he threw three passes, completing one for 6 yards and was considered a long-range project — at best. He was behind Drew Bledsoe, seemingly locked into the starter's spot; veteran journeyman John Friesz, and the much more athletic Michael Bishop.

But he moved up to No. 2 behind Bledsoe the next year and became the starter when Bledsoe was injured in the second game. He went on to lead the Patriots to a Super Bowl victory and was voted the game's MVP after leading a last-minute drive that led to Adam Vinatieri's game-winning field goal.

KRT

New England Patriots QB Tom Brady (12), a sixth-round draft pick, capitalized on his opportunity to play when Drew Bledsoe was injured early in the 2001 season.



AP

Pittsburgh Steelers QB Ben Roethlisberger has won his first 14 starts, an NFL record for a rookie. He's also the first QB to be chosen offensive rookie of the year.

Brady was MVP again last year in a 32-29 victory over Carolina and is often compared to Joe Montana because of his calm under pressure. Neither was a first-round pick (Montana was a third-rounder) and neither has the powerful arm of John Elway, Dan Marino — or Roethlisberger for that matter.

Roethlisberger, a mobile 6 feet 5, 241 pounds, was a first-round pick, 11th overall from Miami of Ohio and the third quarterback taken last April after Eli Manning and Philip Rivers.

He got his chance right away, but broke in slowly as the defense and running backs Duce Staley and Jerome Bettis carried the team.

But he performed when he had to, leading late drives to beat Dallas and Jacksonville and his passer rating of 98.1 was fifth in the NFL behind only Peyton Manning, Daunte Culpepper, Drew Brees and Donovan McNabb.

"It's not like he is 14th in the league or anything," Belichick says. "He is up there at the top with and above a lot of guys who have a lot more experience. I don't think he is just a guy to stand there and hand the ball off to Bettis and Staley. He makes plenty of plays himself in that offense."

But that was before last week.

Against the Jets, Roethlisberger had an interception returned for a touchdown. He threw another that gave New York a shot at a game-winning field goal — Doug Brien missed from 43 yards and the Steelers ended up winning in overtime. Meanwhile, the Patriots shut down Peyton Manning and high-scoring Indianapolis 20-3 in the snow at Foxboro with Brady his usual efficient but unspectacular self.

Sunday's game will be a test of Roethlisberger's resilience — he says it took just 10 minutes to put last week's game behind him. (It would have been a lot longer had the Steelers lost).

"You can't afford to feel like a rookie," he said. "If I go out and play like a rookie this week like I did last week, we'll definitely lose the game."

Brady had his ups and downs in his first playoff season — his "rookie" year as a starter.

In his first postseason game, he "fumbled" in the snow of Foxboro with the Patriots trailing Oakland by 3 points in the final minutes. But the fumble was negated by the infamous "tuck rule" replay, the Patriots tied it and Brady was 6-for-6 in overtime to set up a game-winning field goal by Vinatieri.

SEE QBs ON PAGE 27

How the Patriots and Steelers match up:

PITTSBURGH — Matchups for Sunday's AFC championship game between the New England Patriots and the Pittsburgh Steelers:

WHEN THE PATRIOTS HAVE THE BALL

Steelers **QB Ben Roethlisberger (7)** has an unequaled 14-0 record to start his career, but **Tom Brady's (12)** 7-0 playoff record is even more impressive. Brady, the two-time Super Bowl MVP, lacks the Pro Bowl receivers Peyton Manning and Roethlisberger throw to, but makes up for it with his decision-making skills and ability to spread the ball around. Ten players — nearly one-quarter New England's active roster that day — caught passes against the Colts last weekend.

Corey Dillon (28), an import from playoff-allergic Cincinnati, gives the Patriots the big-play, big-yardage back they lacked during last season's Super Bowl run. He was third in the league with 1,635 yards. He missed the Patriots' 34-20 loss in Pittsburgh on Oct. 31 with a thigh injury, and the effect was obvious — New England's six rushing attempts tied for the fewest in an NFL game since 1933. Dillon had only two 100-yard games in 13 starts against Pittsburgh with Cincinnati, and none in his last seven. If he can break some runs early against the NFL's top-ranked rushing defense, the Steelers will be forced to bring disruptive Pro Bowl **S Troy Polamalu (43)** down to the line of scrimmage, which could create holes in a secondary that has been suspect all season but has yet to have a bad game. The Patriots also must control Pro Bowl **LB Joey Porter (55)**, who sacked Brady three times.

Much has been made of New England's ability to adapt without injured **CBs Ty Law** and **Tyrone Poole**, yet the Steelers have done the same thing without injured **NT Casey Hampton** and **LB Kendrell Bell (97)**, their top two run stuffers. Bell hasn't played in nearly two months and won't start Sunday. **NT Chris Hoke (76)** sat for three years without playing a game, but has been so solid the Patriots may need to support second-year **C Dan Koppen (67)** with an extra blocker to defend him.

WHEN THE STEELERS HAVE THE BALL

The matchup of the game. If Roethlisberger attempts the off-balance, ill-conceived throws that led to two interceptions by the Jets — one for a touchdown — the Steelers almost certainly can't win. But Big Ben has been remarkably resilient, often rebounding from poor games with excellent ones. He looked neither unsettled nor confused while throwing for 196 yards and two touchdowns against New England's depleted secondary, which still uses **WR Troy Brown (80)** as a nickel back and just signed **CB Hank Poteat (31)** out of a Pitt classroom; he hadn't played all season until last weekend.

Plaxico Burress (80) made two touchdown catches in the first quarter of the earlier game, when Roethlisberger quickly realized the injured Law was out and immediately targeted rookie replacement **Randall Gay (21)**. Patriots coach **Bill Belichick** and defensive coordinator **Romeo Crennel** will concoct some innovations for Roethlisberger, but Steelers coach **Bill Cowher** said New England's schemes are no more complex than any other Roethlisberger has seen.

And Burress, Pro Bowl **WR Hines Ward (86)** and speedy slot receiver **Antwaan Randle El (82)** create mismatch problems for Gay, safety-turned-cornerback **Asante Samuel (22)**, **Earthwind Moreland (25)** and Brown.

Still, the Steelers offense has been slowed of late, with only seven touchdowns in seven games. Roethlisberger has thrown 10 interceptions and four touchdowns in four games after throwing 12 TD passes and only four interceptions in his first 10 starts.

The Steelers badly need power backs **Jerome Bettis (35)**, who has seven 100-yard games in as many starts, and **Duce Staley (22)**, healthy again after a nagging knee injury layoff, to pound the Patriots again. Staley had 125 yards and Bettis 94 in the Halloween game behind the league's most physical offensive line. Led by All-Pros **Alan Faneca (66)** and **Jeff Hartings (64)**, the line is the only one in the league to start every game this season with the same five-man unit.

New England will be at a big disadvantage if disruptive **DE Richard Seymour (93)** can't go because of a sore knee.

Outside linebackers **Willie McGinest (55)** and **Mike Vrabel (50)** likely will be needed in run support, and playmaking **LB Tedy Bruschi (54)** will spend considerable time dealing with run-block specialist fullback **Dan Kreider (35)**.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Special teams decided New England's 24-17 victory in the January 2002 AFC title game in Pittsburgh, when Brown scored on a punt return through the middle of the Steelers' coverage and the Patriots also scored on a blocked field-goal attempt. Last week, three defenders overran the Jets' Santana Moss on a 75-yard punt return score — the first against Pittsburgh since Brown's. Maybe that wasn't a surprise; there were punt return scores in each of the Steelers' last four home playoff games, three by the opposition.

The kickers are two of the AFC's best: All-Pro **Adam Vinatieri (4)**, the master of the game-winning field goal, and Pittsburgh's underrated **Jeff Reed (3)**, who has made a team record-tying 19 in a row, including the game-winning 33-yarder against the Jets.

The Steelers know Patriots punter **Josh Miller (8)**; they let him go in a surprise move last winter to sign **Chris Gardocki (17)**.

Gardocki has never had one blocked in 1,045 regular-season attempts. Gardocki's net average (37.4) was much higher than Miller's 33.7. Randle El is a dangerous returner and had a punt return touchdown against Cleveland in a playoff game after the 2002 season.

COACHING

Build around defense and a play-action quarterback who limits his mistakes, strong special teams and a team-is-everything concept — it's worked great in New England, and the Steelers have adopted the same approach. It's why Brown plays both ways for New England and why Bettis and Staley share a job in Pittsburgh without dissent.

The most intriguing coaching-staff matchup is first-year Steelers offensive coordinator **Ken Whisenhunt**, in his first championship game, against Belichick-Crennel. Conversely, there's plenty of experience as Notre Dame-bound **Charlie Weis'** Patriots offense opposes Steelers zone blitz king **Dick LeBeau**, who, at age 67 and with more than 40 years in the league as a player and coach, is still looking for his first NFL championship.

INTANGIBLES

Heinz Field is one of the toughest and loudest venues for a visiting team, and the Steelers are 9-0 there this season. Never before has an NFL playoff game featured two teams that each were on such long runs during the same season. The Steelers ended the Patriots' record 21-game winning streak, and now the Patriots can end Pittsburgh's 15-game run, which ties New England's own 2003 streak as the second-longest in a season to Miami's 17 in a row in 1972.

— By Alan Robinson, The Associated Press

AFC CHAMPIONSHIP

Sunday, Jan. 23 at Heinz Field

Looking to get back to familiar territory

New England Patriots 15-2 — **Pittsburgh Steelers** 16-1

The Patriots are a victory away from playing in their third Super Bowl in four seasons. The Steelers are looking for payback from a loss at the hands of the Patriots in the 2001 AFC championship game at Heinz Field.

W 20-3 vs. Indianapolis **DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS** W 20-17 OT vs. N.Y. Jets

FINAL 2004 STANDINGS

	W	L	PCT	PF	PA	HOME	AWAY	AFC	NFC	DIV
	14	2	.875	437	260	8-0	6-2	10-2	4-0	5-1
	15	1	.938	372	251	8-0	7-1	11-1	4-0	5-1

Avg. yards per game	Offense (regular season) PATRIOTS	Offense STEELERS	Defense (postseason) PATRIOTS	Defense STEELERS
Scoring	27.3 • 20.0	23.2 • 20.0	16.2 • 3.0	15.7 • 17.0
Passing	224.2 • 115.0	170.0 • 171.0	212.5 • 230.0	177.2 • 165.0
Rushing	133.4 • 210.0	154.0 • 193.0	98.2 • 46.0	81.2 • 110.0
Total	357.6 • 325.0	324.0 • 364.0	310.8 • 276.0	258.4 • 275.0

Team leaders

	PATRIOTS	STEELERS
PASSING YARDS	Tom Brady (3,692)	Ben Roethlisberger (2,621)
RUSHING YARDS	Corey Dillon (1,635)	Jerome Bettis (941)
RECEIVING YARDS	David Givens (874)	Hines Ward (1,004)

SOURCE: National Football League AP

AFC championship game - New England Patriots at Pittsburgh Steelers - 12:30 a.m. CET Monday; AFN-Atlantic, Pacific, Radio

Steelers backs want to atone for failures

Bettis, Staley both know feeling of losing in conference championships

BY ALAN ROBINSON
The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — If Duce Staley needed a team that could sympathize with his three consecutive NFC championship game losses, the Pittsburgh Steelers were it.

When Staley moved cross-state from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh as a free agent early last year, he went from one team determined to prove it wasn't a big-game failure to another.

The Steelers are 1-3 since 1995 as a home-field favorite in AFC championships — a record not quite as bad as the Eagles', but close. No wonder the Eagles, who play Atlanta on Sunday, and the Steelers are desperate to avoid a fourth loss each as they play host to the two conference title games.

"He's focused in on this game," running back Jerome Bettis said of Staley's role in Sunday's Patriots-Steelers AFC championship. "He thinks it's his best opportunity."

Staley, a three-time 1,000-yard rusher in Philadelphia, left after his carries were cut by two-thirds last season amid a three-back rotation. He was Pittsburgh's primary runner when the season started, with four 100-yard games in a five-game stretch before he injured a hamstring Oct. 31 against New England.

Bettis, the No. 5 rusher in NFL history but mostly a goal-line specialist until Staley got hurt, stepped in with seven 100-yard games in as many starts.

Whatever disappointment Staley felt in at least temporarily losing his job has been tempered by his friendship with Bettis.

With the Super Bowl just one victory away, he also doesn't want to disrupt an unimaginably good season that has seen the Steelers win a club-record 15 in a row.

"This wouldn't work on a lot of teams — two guys that love the ball, two guys that want the ball, two guys that are competitive," Staley said.

To Bettis, it's worked because both have put their egos aside at key moments: Bettis when he was benched to start the season, Staley when Bettis remained the starter even after Staley was healthy again.

Staley had only 123 yards in three games during the second half of the season, but had 54 yards on 11 carries in Pittsburgh's 20-17 overtime playoff victory over the Jets on Saturday. He took over in the fourth quarter after Bettis developed leg cramps.

The 255-pound Bettis will start against New England, but coach Bill Cowher said the 242-pound Staley will play in the first half.

"You have two guys who understand the situation and the gravity of it, who do not want to derail the train because of egos," Bettis said.

Staley ran for 125 yards and Bettis had 65 in Pittsburgh's 34-20 victory Oct. 31 that ended New England's record 21-game winning streak. The Steelers again want to pound the two power backs behind All-Pro linemen Alan Faneca and Jeff Hartings, to force the Patriots to commit extra defenders to the run and create opportunities for rookie Ben Roethlisberger to throw.

"You really have to bring your lunch when you tackle these guys because they are so big," Patriots linebacker Tedy Bruschi said.

"We are going to have to stop the run to win this game. They are going to roll Bettis at us. They are going to roll Staley at us."

Getting the running game going is the Steelers' No. 1 priority, especially since Patriots star Corey Dillon has three 100-yard games in his past four starts. He ran for 144 yards in a 20-3 victory Sunday over the Colts.

Dillon "has provided an awful lot to this team and an awful lot for the offense," quarterback Tom Brady said. "Last week's game, he really controlled the whole game with the way he ran and the way those offensive linemen blocked for him."

Dillon missed the previous game in Pittsburgh, with predictable results: The Steelers outrushed the Patriots 221-5, and New England's six rushing attempts were the fewest for an NFL team in 71 years.

Dillon had only two 100-yard performances in 13 games against the Steelers while with Cincinnati, and none in his past seven starts.

While the Steelers can return to the Super Bowl for only the second time in 25 years by winning, Faneca said they can't make up for their 24-17 upset loss to New England in the January 2002 AFC title game in Pittsburgh.

"What's payback?" Faneca said. "They beat us, won the Super Bowl and got Super Bowl rings. Beyond meeting them back at the bus, we can't take their rings."

KRT

Pittsburgh Steelers running back Jerome Bettis (36) started the season as a backup used in goal-line situations but rushed for at least 100 yards in each of his seven starts when Duce Staley was injured.

AP

Running back Duce Staley (22) left the Philadelphia Eagles, losers of three straight NFC title games, for the Pittsburgh Steelers, who since 1995 are 1-3 as a home-field favorite in AFC championship games.

QBs: Brady, Roethlisberger pile up wins, not statistics

QBs, FROM PAGE 26

The next week in Pittsburgh, he injured his ribs in the first half against the Steelers and Bledsoe relieved him and threw for the Patriots' only offensive touchdown in a 24-17 win. Brady was back for the Super Bowl, led the Patriots to an upset over St. Louis and established himself as one of the game's top quarterbacks — not a statistical machine, but a winner.

Both quarterbacks have a lot of support, especially on defense.

The Patriots set a record with 21 straight wins — 18 in the regular season — before the loss in Pittsburgh.

They have done it with everyone on the roster making big plays — especially Willie McGinest, Tedy Bruschi, Mike Vrabel and Richard Seymour on defense and Corey Dillon and five wide receivers on offense.

But when starters go down, others step up — like wide receiver Troy Brown, who had a punt return for a touchdown in the title game in Pittsburgh three years ago. Brown plays offense, special teams and is a third cornerback because both starters are out.

The Steelers averaged 154 rushing yards a game in the regular season, second in the league. Their defense allowed the fewest points and the fewest yards as James Farrior had a career year at linebacker and second-year safety Troy Polamalu emerged as a playmaker.

But quarterback is a glamour position, so Brady and Roethlisberger are likely to get the credit.

Or blame.

"This business is about being accountable," Steelers coach Bill Cowher said of Roethlisberger, who made no excuses for last week's mistakes. "To admit when you haven't done well is not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of strength. Sometimes you're going to have a bad game. But you learn from it, you move on, you grow from it."

Being underdog is extra motivation for Pittsburgh

BY DAVE GOLDBERG
The Associated Press

The Pittsburgh Steelers got some extra motivation when odds were released for the AFC championship game: They were 3-point underdogs to New England despite having the NFL's best record, despite being at home and despite having beaten the Patriots.

Some were surprised by the perceived slight, given that Pittsburgh carries a 15-game winning streak into Sunday.

The Steelers love it, though. What's better than being able to trot the old "We get no respect" line? In other words, no one wants to be the favorite.

"They deserve it," Pittsburgh cornerback Chad Scott says.

NFL picks

"They're the champions. They played very well against the Colts and we just barely beat the Jets. That's why they're favored."

True, though the odds seem to ignore the Steelers' 34-20 victory over the Patriots on Oct. 31. Then again, the Patriots played that game without Corey Dillon, who ran for 144 yards against Indianapolis last weekend.

This is the first time the visiting team is favored in the AFC title game since the 1997 season, when Denver was favored by 2½ at Pittsburgh. The Broncos won 24-21 and went on to win the Super Bowl.

Minnesota was a 2-point road favorite against the New York Giants four years ago in the NFC and that didn't work very well: The Giants won 41-0.

In Patriots-Steelers, the spread reflects the quarterbacks.

Tom Brady has been the Super Bowl MVP in two of his three seasons as New England's starter, while the Steelers' Ben Roethlisberger is a rookie whose two interceptions almost did in his team last week against the Jets.

Yes, Roethlisberger is 14-0, far better than any rookie quarterback ever fared in the league, and he was a unanimous choice for NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year. But "rookie" and "championship" are words that don't mesh. And yes, the Patriots' party line about Pittsburgh is, "We're playing the best team in the league."

Not until proven otherwise. ... **PATRIOTS, 20-19**.

Atlanta (plus 5) at Philadelphia: The Eagles demonstrated in their win over Minnesota last week that they don't need Terrell Owens to be effective on offense. That game also showed why Philadelphia lost its third straight NFC title game last season — they didn't have Brian Westbrook, who like Owens is a threat from anywhere on the field.

The Falcons have a guy like that, too.

His name is Michael Vick and he plays quarterback with his legs as much as with his arm. In fact, he might be the answer to the Eagles' blitzes: They might be able to get by blockers, but Vick is an escape artist like no one else.

Still, no one man can beat Philadelphia by himself. And Donovan McNabb is a pretty good escape artist at QB for the Eagles.

The Eagles probably have the most to fear from their own psyche — those three straight losses have their fans scared. But Philadelphia should win this one, especially if it snows, as is forecast. The Falcons are an indoor team, and indoor teams have trouble in elements (see, Minnesota above).

Unless Vick is even more slippery on slippery footing.

Probably not. ... **EAGLES, 24-13**.

Last week: 3-1 (spread), 3-1 (straight up).

Playoffs: 5-3 (spread), 4-4 (straight up).

NFC championship game - Atlanta Falcons at Philadelphia Eagles - 9 p.m. CET Sunday; AFN-Atlantic, Pacific, Radio

History: Title games haunt Philadelphia

HISTORY, FROM BACK PAGE

Last year, Carolina came to Philadelphia, ignored the elements and stunned the Eagles 14-3. Two years ago, Tampa Bay closed out Veterans Stadium with a 27-10 win, its first playoff victory when the temperature was under 40 degrees. In 2002, the Eagles lost at St. Louis 29-24.

"This is a totally different team, different players, different philosophies," said running back Brian Westbrook, who missed last year's playoffs with an injury. "We're going in with a fresh attitude and we're ready to play.

"We have some pressure. We put that pressure on ourselves because we want to win. Anytime you expect a lot of success, you're going to put a little bit of pressure on yourself. I don't think as a team we feel any pressure from anybody else except from the people that we have inside our own locker room."

The Eagles can't afford to be uptight this time. They realize another loss would be devastating for a city that is starved for a winner. Philly hasn't celebrated a major championship since the 76ers won the NBA title in 1983, and the city hasn't had an NFL title since 1960.

Fans have pinned their hopes on the beloved football team. But considering how often teams seem to come up short here, no one is planning a parade down Broad Street just yet.

"I want to win this for myself, but I would love to see those people have a great time after that victory, because they have definitely supported us through some real tough times when we were trying to get to the position we're in," Eagles All-Pro safety Brian Dawkins said.

Atlanta fans know a little about heartbreaking losses. The Braves have won an unprecedented 13 consecutive division titles, but only one World Series championship in that span.

The Falcons made it to the Super Bowl five years ago, with two players — Pro Bowl linebacker Keith Brooking and backup defensive lineman Travis Hall — remaining from the team's only NFC title.

Atlanta upset the Vikings in Minnesota to reach the 1999 Super Bowl, before losing to Denver 34-19.

One stat working in the Falcons' favor: Since 1990, the No. 1 seed is just 8-6 in the NFC championship.

"It was great for them in '98, but that was still a long time ago and it was a different team. We want to go to the Super Bowl," linebacker Chris Draft said. "That's our ultimate goal. So if we don't get there, that's not good enough."

Same goes for the Eagles — again.

AP

The Eagles' Brian Dawkins says, "I want to win this for myself."

McKay key to Falcons' fortunes

After rift with Gruden, GM turned Atlanta into a winner

BY STEVE SPRINGER
Los Angeles Times

FLOWERY BRANCH, Ga. — It was a clash of wills that threatened to tear apart the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

On one side was coach Jon Gruden, once the boy wonder of coaching, a renowned workaholic so confident in his own philosophy and methods that he walked out on Al Davis, rather than submit to the Raider way.

On the other side was general manager Rich McKay, whose claim to fame in his younger years was that he was the son of legendary Southern Cal coach John McKay.

Whom would you take? The Glazer family, owners of the Buccaneers, cast their lot with Gruden. Arthur Blank, owner of the Atlanta Falcons, hired McKay away in December 2003.

A year later, the Buccaneers, winners of a Super Bowl only two years ago, finished at the bottom of their division — where they had been through much of their existence — having gone 5-11.

The Falcons, 5-11 and last in their division a year ago, went 11-5 and will play the Eagles on Sunday in Philadelphia in the NFC championship game.

Is McKay just one lucky guy, fortunate to be in the right place at the right time?

Nobody around the Falcons, or in the corridors of NFL headquarters, thinks so. Nobody talks about good fortune or coincidence when McKay's name comes up.

Having built a Super Bowl winner in Tampa Bay and then rebuilt the Falcons in one year, McKay has an image so strong that, when speculation turns to a possible successor for NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue, the first name on most lists is Rich McKay's.

"It doesn't happen because the guy was lucky," said Reggie Roberts, Falcons vice president of communications. "It happened because the guy is in charge of football operations and knows what he is doing."

McKay isn't about to get into a public feud with Gruden, and he's not about to pat himself on the back, either.

"It's nice to hear some of the things people say, but I just feel very fortunate to be here," he said.

Having co-founded Home Depot, and then spent an estimated $545 million to buy the Falcons, Blank knows about high finance. But he also knows that what he doesn't know is football personnel.

"I knew the best thing I could do was to hire the right people," Blank said. "I know where I belong."

Not in the general manager's chair, making trades or picking draft choices. So Blank began his search for someone who could effectively fill that seat.

"The name that constantly surfaced as being one of the tops in the league was Rich McKay," Blank said.

Thus began a long courtship.

When Gruden was hired, without McKay's being consulted, McKay started to talk seriously with Blank.

It soon became increasingly obvious that he and Gruden had different views of the future.

"I'm not going to badmouth him, but his approach and mine were very different," McKay said. "Where the franchise was going philosophically didn't fit in with my vision. He had done a great job as coach of getting us over the top. I thought it was better if the general manager moved on."

Having inherited the league's worst defense, McKay signed Jim Mora Jr., who had never been a head coach, but had been a defensive specialist as an assistant.

Under McKay, the Falcons got rid of several players who they said lacked the right attitude, and switched from a 3-4 to a 4-3 defensive alignment. Atlanta went on to lead the league in sacks for the first time in its history and moved up to 14th in defense this season.

There were 25 new names on this year's roster, but the biggest change, says one organization figure after another, is the attitude.

And the 45-year-old McKay.

Said Roberts, "He's super smart, with an Ivy League (Princeton) education, but he never puts on a face that says, 'I'm smarter than you.' He can mix with corporate CEOs, but he can also be one of the boys and that's what endears him to the players."

And to Blank.

"The important thing is not just the rings and the championships," the Falcon owner said. "It's also who was in the boat with you, who was paddling beside you. At the end of the day, we are all human beings."

How the Falcons and Eagles match up:

PHILADELPHIA — Matchups for Sunday's NFC championship game between the Atlanta Falcons and the Philadelphia Eagles:

WHEN THE FALCONS HAVE THE BALL

Atlanta is a run-first offense led by a quarterback who is more dangerous using his legs than his arm. **QB Michael Vick (7)** had 902 yards on the ground, while the backfield tandem of **Warrick Dunn (28)** and **T.J. Duckett (45)** combined for 1,615 yards, giving the Falcons the league's most prolific rushing attack during the regular season (167 yards per game).

Dunn, who ran for 1,106 yards and nine TDs, is a speedy, elusive back, while Duckett (509 yards, 8 TDs) is a power runner.

The Falcons will try to exploit the Philadelphia defense, knowing its only weakness is stopping the run. But the Eagles showed significant improvement after Pro Bowl **MLB Jeremiah Trotter (54)** reclaimed his starting job midway through the season. Frigid temperatures, windy conditions and a potential snow storm also make it likely Atlanta will stay on the ground.

Trotter and **DTs Corey Simon (90)**, **Darwin Walker (97)** and **Hollis Thomas (78)** are critical to slowing the run when the Falcons' running backs get the ball. If Vick keeps it and takes off, it'll be up to **DE Jevon Kearse (93)** and either **FS Brian Dawkins (20)** or **SS Michael Lewis (32)** to contain him. Look for the Eagles to use a spy — Kearse volunteered to do it — on Vick in certain situations. But defensive coordinator Jim Johnson doesn't like to designate one player to shadow the QB.

Philadelphia has a major edge in the passing matchups with an exceptional secondary that includes three Pro Bowl players: Dawkins, Lewis and **CB Lito Sheppard (26)**. **CB Sheldon Brown (24)** also had an outstanding season and **CB Rod Hood (29)** is solid in nickel situations.

They'll face a mediocre receiving corps in which **TE Alge Crumpler (83)** poses the biggest threat. **WRs Peerless Price (81)** and **Dez White (89)** combined for only 75 catches and five TDs. Crumpler caught 48 passes for 774 yards and six TDs.

Vick is the X-factor, capable of single-handedly turning the game in Atlanta's favor with his unique combination of speed, quickness and escapablity. Vick threw for only 82 yards in last weekend's 47-17 rout of St. Louis, but ran for 119. He's already faced the Eagles in the playoffs, a 20-6 loss in a second-round matchup two years ago in which he was held to 30 yards rushing.

Vick's scrambling ability could negate Philly's pass rush of Kearse and **Derrick Burgess (56)**, and Johnson's constant barrage of blitzes.

WHEN THE EAGLES HAVE THE BALL

QB Donovan McNabb (5) excels at spreading the ball around, keeping defenses off-balance. Even without his favorite target, injured All-Pro **WR Terrell Owens (81)**, McNabb has multiple options, including **RB Brian Westbrook (36)**.

Westbrook, who missed last year's playoffs with an injury, is a playmaker with the ability to score each time he gets the ball. He'll get plenty of opportunities on handoffs and passes, especially if he's lined up against a safety or a linebacker — a definite mismatch that McNabb always tries to exploit.

Atlanta's front four is led by Pro Bowl **DE Patrick Kerney (97)**, and **DT Rod Coleman (75)** applies plenty of pressure. Like Vick, McNabb is dangerous when he keeps the ball and takes off, though he prefers to sit in the pocket.

Without Owens, the Eagles' receiving corps is average. **Freddie Mitchell (84)**, starting in Owens' spot, had a big game against the Vikings last week, and has caught three TD passes in the last three games. If he doesn't shy away from a hit, **Todd Pinkston (87)** can stretch the field, and **Greg Lewis (83)** is emerging. McNabb also likes to use **TEs Chad Lewis (89)** and **L.J. Smith (82)**.

McNabb could have success throwing against a secondary that includes **CBs DeAngelo Hall (21)** and **Jason Webster (36)** and **safeties Bryan Scott (21)** and **Cory Hall (27)**. The Falcons gave up 220.4 yards passing per game, along with 19 TDs. But Atlanta's defense does a good job of denying the big play and giving up most of its yards in the middle of the field.

If the weather conditions neutralize the Eagles' passing attack, Westbrook is a superb runner, though he's carried the ball more than 18 times just once in his career. Atlanta's run defense, centered around Pro Bowl **LB Keith Brooking (56)**, allowed just 105.1 yards per game.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Former Eagles returner **Allen Rossum (20)** set an NFL record with 152 yards on three punt returns against the Rams last week, including a 68-yard TD. He also had one TD in the regular season on a punt return, and averaged 21.6 yards on kick returns.

Philadelphia rookie **J.R. Reed (30)** is a solid kick returner, averaging 23.1 yards per return with a long of 66 yards. **Dexter Wynn (31)** averaged 10.8 yards on punt returns.

The Eagles have an advantage in the kicking game behind Pro Bowler **David Akers (2)**. The left-footer made 27 of 32 field goals, including an NFL-record 17 from 40 yards or longer. Atlanta's **Jay Feely (4)** made just three of six from 40 and beyond.

Philadelphia's **Dirk Johnson (8)** was ahead of **Chris Mohr (13)** in the punting rankings. Johnson averaged 42.1 yards per punt, with Mohr at 40.6.

COACHING

Atlanta's rookie coach, **Jim Mora**, turned around a 5-11 team that wasn't nearly as bad as its record last season, when Vick missed 11 games with a broken leg. The son of a former coach — the elder Jim Mora was 0-6 in the playoffs — Junior was born to coach. He's aggressive and a strong motivator, though a bit sensitive to criticism.

Andy Reid already is the winningest coach in Eagles history, leading the team to the playoffs in five of his six seasons. He took over a dreadful 3-13 team in 1999 and completely remade the roster. A meticulous coach who pays close attention to detail, Reid is offensive-minded with a pass-first philosophy. He's one of several disciples of Mike Holmgren.

INTANGIBLES

The Falcons are coming off a 30-point rout of the Rams and have nothing to lose. They're 5-point underdogs and already have advanced further than most expected when the season began. "We've got the house money," Mora said.

After losing the last three NFC championship games, including the last two at home, the Eagles have all the pressure.

Philadelphia hasn't had a major league champion since the 76ers won the NBA title in 1983. The city is starved for a team to bring home the crown, pinning all hopes on its beloved football team. The players insist they're not uptight, but a loss would be devastating.

The Eagles should get a strong boost from the frenzied crowd at "The Linc," where they are 8-1. Bad weather should favor Philly, considering the Falcons play in a dome, but Atlanta's strong running game could offset the elements.

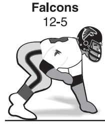
— By Rob Maaddi, The Associated Press

NFC CHAMPIONSHIP

Sunday, Jan. 23 at Lincoln Financial Field

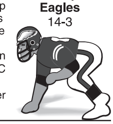
Philly hopes for a different outcome

Atlanta Falcons
12-5



The Eagles, losers of three straight NFC championship games, look to turn things around when they host the Atlanta Falcons. The Falcons upset the Vikings in Minnesota in the 1998 NFC championship game to advance to their only Super Bowl appearance.

Philadelphia Eagles
14-3



W 47-17 vs. St. Louis	**DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS**	W 27-14 vs. Minnesota

FINAL 2004 STANDINGS

	W	L	PCT	PF	PA	HOME	AWAY	AFC	NFC	DIV
Falcons	11	5	.688	340	337	7-1	4-4	3-1	8-4	4-2
Eagles	13	3	.812	386	260	7-1	6-2	2-2	11-1	6-0

Avg. yards per game — regular season • postseason

	Offense FALCONS	Offense EAGLES	Defense FALCONS	Defense EAGLES
Scoring	21.2 • 47.0	24.1 • 27.0	21.1 • 17.0	16.2 • 14.0
Passing	150.8 • 70.0	248.7 • 286.0	220.4 • 262.0	200.8 • 288.0
Rushing	167.0 • 327.0	102.4 • 109.0	105.1 • 77.0	118.9 • 97.0
Total	317.8 • 397.0	351.1 • 395.0	325.4 • 339.0	319.7 • 385.0

Team leaders

	FALCONS	EAGLES
PASSING YARDS	Michael Vick (2,313)	Donovan McNabb (3,875)
RUSHING YARDS	Warrick Dunn (1,106)	Brian Westbrook (812)
RECEIVING YARDS	Alge Crumpler (774)	Terrell Owens (1,200)

SOURCE: National Football League — AP

NFC championship game - Atlanta Falcons at Philadelphia Eagles - 9 p.m. CET Sunday; AFN-Atlantic, Pacific, Radio

Kearse: Pass-rushing end figures to be Vick's spy

KEARSE, FROM BACK PAGE

"He's the kind of player that if you break down and try to do anything, he'll make you look so silly," Kearse said. "He'll leave you right there looking so silly. In a lot of situations, we're hoping to try to run through and make him pick a side, and hopefully the rest of our defense will be in pursuit to do whatever to contain him or stop him.

"Hopefully, we'll be able to match up speed with speed. I'm not saying in any way that I'm faster than Vick, but I think I can do some pretty good things as far as not letting him get outside and helping (to keep) our defensive backs from covering (him) all day."

Kearse, 28, lived up to his nickname, "The Freak," during his five seasons with the Tennessee Titans because of his rare combination of speed and strength. He led Philadelphia this season with 7½ sacks despite being double-teamed in most games. Some in the NFL believed Kearse had become overrated in recent years — he produced 36 sacks in his first three seasons but just 19 in three seasons since — but the Eagles made him their primary defensive target after a 14-3 loss to Carolina in the NFC championship game last January. Coach Andy Reid has repeatedly praised Kearse's ability to harass a quarterback and alter his rhythm.

AP

In seven NFL seasons, Jevon Kearse has 62½ sacks.

Kearse was a persistent nuisance to Minnesota quarterback Daunte Culpepper — another willing and able runner — last Sunday, but Vick's rushing skills surpass anything seen before at his position. He is also a left-handed passer, using a side of the field on rollouts and bootlegs that most quarterbacks do not, so Kearse, a natural left end, likely will be positioned more on the right side to put him in closer striking distance. He is relishing the opportunity to blitz Vick, as well as shadow him when the Eagles think he will run.

"I prefer to do both of them," Kearse said. "I prefer to be a pass rusher if that's what we need, or if we need a spy, I'm ready to do that."

The Eagles can ill-afford to allow Vick to get comfortable, and they are intent on pounding him whenever possible. They took a similar approach to Minnesota wide receiver Randy Moss, and he ended up having no impact on the game. Vick will have the ball in his hands on every offensive play and does not shy away from contact, creating ample opportunities to punish him.

"With a guy like Mike, as many times as you can put a hat (helmet) on him, put a hat on him," Eagles Pro Bowl safety Brian Dawkins said, "to make it known and clear that if you do run the ball, there is a chance you will be hit. I'm not saying that there's going to be anything done outside the lines, but you have to make sure that it's an emphasis: If you run the ball and you do get some yards, we are looking to tackle with this defense."

Philadelphia defensive coordinator Jim Johnson espouses aggressive packages, and the Falcons expect him to concoct some creative measures to address their three-pronged running attack. Vick is aided by the combination of bulldozing running back T.J. Duckett and the slithery Warrick Dunn, who can turn the slightest cranny into a huge gain. The Falcons ran for 327 yards against St. Louis last week, giving Johnson much to ponder in preparation for Sunday.

"I'm partial; I think (Johnson) is the best in the game at what he does," Reid said. "He does such a great job of studying offenses, particularly protections and the schemes. He has anticipation, skills and instincts. A lot of that is from work study and a lot of it he just has. He does a heck of a job."

If this defense is at all vulnerable, it is against the run. The Eagles routinely conceded more than 150 yards per game early in the season — Pittsburgh rushed for 252 yards against them in November — but middle linebacker Jeremiah Trotter, who returned to the Pro Bowl after being released by Washington before the season, was adamant those problems are behind them.

"We still won't have a problem (stopping the run)," Trotter repeated Wednesday. "We still won't have a problem."

Trotter, who was credited with seven tackles, a half-sack, an interception and two pass defenses against Minnesota, realizes what type of effort it will take for this defense — which is not particularly large up front — to stop Atlanta on the ground.

"I've definitely got to have probably my greatest game ever, and I look forward to doing that," Trotter said. "You're definitely going to see myself making a lot more plays than I did last week because they do run the ball. The middle linebacker is supposed to make a lot of plays when a team runs the ball on you. I'm looking forward to do that."

Trotter was a part of the Eagles team that lost in the NFC championship game to St. Louis in 2002 (29-24), then watched on television the past two years as they fell to Tampa Bay (27-10) and then Carolina. Another loss in the title game would crush Philadelphia's rabid fan base and mark the franchise as the Buffalo Bills of the conference championship game, and Trotter has no intention of losing to an underdog team in the biggest game of the season yet again.

AP

In a 20-6 playoff loss at Philadelphia two years ago, Michael Vick, above, threw for 274 yards and ran for 30 but the Falcons failed to score a touchdown.

AP

Philadelphia's Donovan McNabb, above, had his best season this year: 64 percent completions, 3,875 yards, 31 touchdowns and only eight interceptions.

Revolutionary quarterbacks blow away all stereotypes

BY PAUL NEWBERRY
The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — They are quarterbacks for a new age, transcending racial stereotypes and tossing aside the accepted notions of how the job should be done once the ball is snapped.

Donovan McNabb never viewed the pocket as some protective cocoon, to be defended at all costs. The Philadelphia Eagles' star demonstrated that a 20-yard run sure beats a 10-yard sack. Imagine that.

Then along came Michael Vick, who took the door that McNabb nudged open and ripped it from its hinges. The Atlanta Falcons have a quarterback like no one that has come before — an implausible morphing of John Elway's powerful arm, Barry Sanders' jittery moves and Deion Sanders' one-gear-higher-than-everyone-else speed.

Now, they meet again, two old friends who've had such a profound impact on the NFL.

Get ready for McNabb vs. Vick, The Sequel.

And this time, one of them is going to the Super Bowl.

"I don't care what sport you're talking about. It don't get no better than this," said Falcons safety Keion Carpenter, who sat out the season with an injury.

The buildup to this enticing matchup showed just how much times have changed since Doug Williams was asked, "How long have you been a black quarterback?"

There was plenty of talk about the white stuff — snow was predicted in Philly, accompanied by all sorts of theories about its impact on the game. Barely anyone mentioned the color of the two quarterbacks' skin, which just happens to be black.

Still, this is a socially significant game for quarterbacks of color. For the first time, two black QBs will meet in a conference final. Either McNabb or Vick will go on to become just the third black QB to start in the Super Bowl, following Williams (1988) and Steve McNair (2000).

The one that traces those historic footsteps most likely will be the one who gets the most help from his teammates — particularly if the game bogs down in windy, icy conditions, becoming a battle of attrition that must be won with defense and the fewest mistakes on offense.

If nothing else, history shows the folly of turning a game that involves so many into a personal battle between two quarterbacks, no matter how wondrous their talents. Two years ago, McNabb's Eagles hosted Vick's Falcons in a second-round playoff game that had the buildup of a heavyweight fight.

Alas, McNabb had to protect a gimpy ankle, having missed the final six games of the regular season, and Vick struggled against Philadelphia's fearsome defense. The Eagles advanced to the NFC championship game by grinding out a 20-6 victory.

Philadelphia lost the following week to Tampa Bay, the second of what has grown to three straight defeats in the season's penultimate round. Even more galling to the green-clad faithful, the past two NFC title game losses have come at home.

At this point, it's Super Bowl or bust for the Eagles, who carry the hopes — and the weight — of an entire city. Philadelphia hasn't won a major sports championship since the 76ers captured the NBA title in 1983. The Eagles' last NFL crown came in 1960 — six seasons before the Super Bowl was born.

"I don't know who the pressure's on," Vick said, "but I know the pressure's not on us."

McNabb's résumé is impressive — five straight Pro Bowl selections, four straight division titles, six playoff victories — but it's incomplete. As Dan Marino and Jim Kelly can attest, a quarterback gets only so many chances to achieve ultimate greatness in the Super Bowl. Who's to say that McNabb, while only 28, will ever get this close again.

"Your first goal as a quarterback is to win the Super Bowl," he said. "It's sad sometimes. So many great quarterbacks have played this game … who didn't have the opportunity to win a Super Bowl. They get overlooked because of that. It's not fair."

Vick is four years younger than McNabb and appearing in the playoffs for the second time. Still, the Atlanta quarterback shows the impatience of youth. He's only two wins from a Super Bowl ring and — no offense to his friend — wants to get there first.

"It is the standard," Vick said. "In order to be recognized in this league, you have to get to a Super Bowl and win it."

While these two quarterbacks are linked by their unconventional styles, there's a definite disparity on the stat sheet.

McNabb has run less this season than in any of his previous five years (even 2002, when he played only 10 regular-season games).

While still a threat with his legs — 41 carries for 220 yards and three touchdowns — he spent more time using his arm. It paid off with the best passing numbers of his career: 64 percent completions, 3,875 yards, 31 touchdowns, only eight interceptions.

By comparison, Vick's passing numbers look downright mediocre — 56 percent, 2,313 yards, 14 touchdowns, 12 interceptions — but he isn't measured by the same standard as any other quarterback, even McNabb.

Vick is the Falcons' second-leading rusher with 902 yards, and led the NFL with 7.5 yards per carry. At any moment, he is capable of transforming an ordinary play into something spectacular.

Wilkens resigns as Knicks coach

Assistant Williams will guide team for rest of season

BY JOHN NICHOLSON
The Associated Press

GREENBURGH, N.Y. — Lenny Wilkens resigned as coach of the New York Knicks on Saturday, likely ending his Hall of Fame career after barely a year with his hometown team.

General manager Isiah Thomas said assistant coach Herb Williams will direct the team for the rest of the season. Williams coached the Knicks for one game a year ago between Don Chaney's firing and the hiring of Wilkens.

"This is a difficult decision for me to make at this time because I really wanted to help the New York team get back to being an elite team," Wilkens said in a prepared statement. "But after a lot of consideration, I feel it's the right time for me. The right move and best for all involved."

Thomas offered the 67-year-old Wilkens a front-office position, but Wilkens said he is not sure whether he will remain with the team. Wilkens, who did not take questions after reading his statement, has two years and $10 million left on his contract, which Thomas said the team will honor no matter what Wilkens decides.

"It's something I'll consider," Wilkens said. "Right now I feel I need to get away for a little time with my family."

The resignation, the first time Wilkens has stepped down or been fired during a season, followed a lengthy meeting with Thomas after the Knicks' last-second home loss to Houston on Friday night, their ninth defeat in 10 games.

"It's a very difficult day for myself and for the players," Thomas said. "He's a great man and a great coach. We'll miss him. … I think he just came to a point where enough was enough."

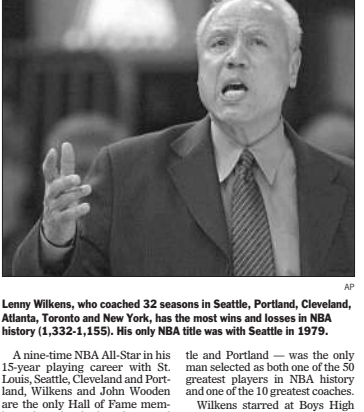
Wilkens is the winningest and losingest coach in NBA history, with a 1,332-1,155 record in 32 seasons with Seattle, Portland, Cleveland, Atlanta, Toronto and New York. He won his lone NBA title with the SuperSonics in 1979 and coached the United States to a gold medal in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

Last season, Wilkens led the Knicks to their first playoff berth since 2001, going 23-19 after taking over the team following Chaney's firing. The Knicks were then swept by New Jersey in the first round.

The 46-year-old Williams finished his 18-year playing career with the Knicks and joined the coaching staff in December 2001. He also has coached the club's summer league team.

"I'm excited for Herb to have this opportunity," Thomas said. "He's very knowledgeable about the game and the players respect him."

The free-falling Knicks have three games left on their four-game homestand — Milwaukee, Phoenix and Cleveland — before hitting the road for a six-game trip that includes stops in Detroit, Sacramento and Phoenix. They will then return home to play Shaquille O'Neal and Eastern Conference-leading Miami.



AP

Lenny Wilkens, who coached 32 seasons in Seattle, Portland, Cleveland, Atlanta, Toronto and New York, has the most wins and losses in NBA history (1,332-1,155). His only NBA title was with Seattle in 1979.

A nine-time NBA All-Star in his 15-year playing career with St. Louis, Seattle, Cleveland and Portland, Wilkens and John Wooden are the only Hall of Fame members elected as both a player and coach.

And in 1997, Wilkens — a player-coach for four seasons in Seattle and Portland — was the only man selected as both one of the 50 greatest players in NBA history and one of the 10 greatest coaches.

Wilkens starred at Boys High School in Brooklyn and was an All-America guard at Providence.

AP Basketball Writer Chris Sheridan contributed to this report.

New Mexico St. hoops coach Henson retires with 779 wins

The Associated Press

LAS CRUCES, N.M. — Ailing New Mexico State coach Lou Henson retired Saturday, 21 wins shy of becoming only the fifth Division I basketball coach with 800 victories.

Henson, 73, has been in a wheelchair and faced assorted health problems in recent years, from cancer to viral encephalitis. He has not coached this season but had planned to return Jan. 8. However, he was hospitalized with pneumonia Jan. 6.

"I have always been a very demanding coach. I expect my players to give 100 percent or they come out of the game," Henson said in a news conference on campus. "I can expect no less of myself. So because I am physically unable to give my all, I am taking myself out of the game."

Henson retires with a career record of 779-413, the sixth winningest in Division I history. Among active coaches, only Bob Knight has more victories.

Henson coached last season despite being diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a form of cancer. The cancer is now in remission, but in September he was hospitalized with viral encephalitis, a disease that left him partially paralyzed.

Sports briefs

Pats DL Seymour won't start, but might play in title game

FOXBORO, Mass. — New England defensive lineman Richard Seymour will not start in Sunday's AFC title game against the Pittsburgh Steelers because of a left knee injury, though might play as a substitute.

"We'll see where he is," coach Bill Belichick said Friday before the team's flight to Pittsburgh. "Maybe he can give us some situational play during the game."

Seymour, one of two Patriots on the All-Pro team, remained on the injury report as questionable, meaning there was a 50 percent chance he would not play. The only other Patriots reported as injured were linebacker Ted Johnson, who was probable with the flu, and fullback Patrick Pass, who was questionable with a sore ankle.

Starting cornerbacks Ty Law and Tyrone Poole finished the season on injured reserve.

Niners hire HOF LB Singletary as Nolan's top assistant

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Hall of Fame linebacker Mike Singletary was hired to be the San Francisco 49ers' assistant head coach and linebackers coach on Friday.

Singletary, who spent 12 NFL seasons with the Chicago Bears, spent the past two seasons as a linebackers coach with the Baltimore Ravens in his first coaching job. He worked closely with Ravens defensive coordinator Mike Nolan, who was hired as the 49ers' head coach on Wednesday.

Singletary, 46, played for the Bears from 1981-92 and was voted the NFL's top defensive player in 1985 and 1988. After finishing his career with 1,488 tackles, he was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1998.

Miller's chance for sweep halted by postponement

KITZBUEHEL, Austria — Bode Miller's chance for a rare sweep of five events in a season ended Saturday when a World Cup downhill was postponed because of wet snow, forcing the cancellation of the combined.

The race will be rescheduled in Kvitfjell, Norway, the International Ski Federation said. The combined adds times from Saturday's downhill and Sunday's slalom.

Organizers called off the Hahnenkamm downhill for the first time in 12 years but the slalom was expected to run Sunday despite predictions of poor weather.

There are only two combined events on the World Cup schedule this season. The other, a new version of the competition, was held last week in Wengen, Switzerland.

In December, Miller won a night slalom for a sweep of all four disciplines — slalom, giant slalom, super giant slalom and downhill. He did so in 16 days, the shortest span in World Cup history.

Miller leads the overall World Cup rankings with 1,048 points, with Austria's Benjamin Raich next at 850.

Slovenia's Maze wins women's giant slalom

MARIBOR, Slovenia — Tina Maze won a World Cup giant slalom before her home fans Saturday, her third victory in the event this season.

She was first on both runs on the Goldenfox course on a cold, sunny day, finishing in 2 minutes, 16.36 seconds.

The top finishers for the United States were Julie Mancuso (tied for fifth) and Lindsey Kildow (ninth).

U.S. Soccer sides bicker over length of no-strike clause

NEW YORK — With the U.S. Soccer Federation still threatening to use a replacement team of minor leaguers in next month's World Cup qualifier, lawyers for players and management argued over the length of a no-strike clause when they met with a federal mediator for the first time.

The players' association, which says it is being locked out, offered a five-month no-strike pledge to end the dispute, the union said after Thursday's bargaining session in Chicago.

Management and the union have been without a contract for more than two years and are fighting over money and other issues.

The USSF said it would use the regular national-team players for the Feb. 9 game at Trinidad and Tobago if the union gave a no-strike pledge through the end of qualifying in November.

Sixth S. Carolina football player charged with theft

COLUMBIA, S.C. — A sixth South Carolina football player has been charged with stealing more than $10,500 worth of computer and video equipment from Williams-Brice Stadium, university officials announced Friday.

Former tight end Brian Brownlee was charged with grand larceny, a felony. An arrest warrant says Brownlee confessed to taking two laptop computers, each valued at $4,000, and two computer projectors, worth about $1,675 and $850.

His lawyers told a judge that all items had been returned and Brownlee, who graduated in December, had turned himself into police. The judge granted Brownlee bond and permission to travel to Atlanta to train for the NFL.

Five players were charged Thursday in the case. Offensive lineman Woodly Telfort was charged with grand larceny, while quarterbacks Syvelle Newton and Dondrial Pinkins, defensive lineman Freddy Saint-Preux and safety Rodriques Wilson were charged with petit larceny, a misdemeanor.

The thefts, totaling $18,000, occurred the night of Nov. 22 after the team was informed it would not go to a bowl game as punishment for an on-field brawl with Clemson.

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Spurs, Pacers claim victories in overtime

The Associated Press

Roundup

Two of the top contenders in the Western Conference went to overtime in Phoenix. Two of the East's best teams did the same in Miami.

Manu Ginobili scored 48 points Friday night and the San Antonio Spurs rallied from a 17-point fourth-quarter deficit to hand the Suns their sixth consecutive loss, 128-123.

The Miami Heat and Indiana Pacers met in the night's other marquee matchup, and the rematch of last year's Eastern Conference semifinals also was a thriller.

Jamaal Tinsley scored 30 points, including a jumper to force overtime, and Reggie Miller hit two three-pointers in the extra session to lead Indiana to a 106-100 victory.

Tim Duncan had 30 points and 19 rebounds for the Spurs, who became the first team to beat Phoenix twice this season.

Steve Nash had 16 points and 13 assists in 46 minutes, returning to action after missing the past 3½ games with injuries.

Shawn Marion scored 37 points and grabbed 15 rebounds for the Suns. His three-pointer just before the fourth-quarter buzzer sent the game into overtime. Amare Stoudemire scored 35 in an intense matchup befitting the teams with the two best records in the NBA.

"I think they're tired and dejected right now," Suns coach Mike D'Antoni said of his players, "but in the back of their mind, they know, hey, we're pretty good."

The Pacers (20-18) have been pretty good, even without suspended All-Star Ron Artest.

Tinsley has picked up his game lately, averaging 29.7 points over his past three. He hit an awkward shot over Miami's Keyon Dooling to tie Friday's game with 0.9 seconds left in regulation.

Miller opened the overtime with a three-pointer, then added another for a 101-96 Indiana lead with 1:36 remaining.

Jermaine O'Neal had 26 points and 14 rebounds for Indiana.

Miller had 18 points.

Dwyane Wade scored 30 points for Miami, Shaquille O'Neal scored 24 and Udonis Haslem had 16 points and 11 rebounds.

Rockets 92, Knicks 91: At New York, Scott Padgett hit an off-balance, one-hander from just inside the free-throw line in the final second for Houston. Tracy McGrady scored 35 points, six on two three-pointers in Houston's 13-0 run to start the second half.

The Knicks had a chance to put the game away with a basket, but gave the Rockets a chance with a shot-clock violation. Padgett got the ball after the Knicks swarmed McGrady and just beat the buzzer with his winning shot.

Wizards 118, Raptors 109: At Washington, Antawn Jamison had 26 points and 13 rebounds, and Juan Dixon scored 26 for the Wizards, who raced to a 15-point first-quarter lead and then withstood a Jalen Rose-led comeback in the second half.

Nets 104, Celtics 98: At East Rutherford, N.J., Jason Kidd hit a three-pointer just before the shot clock expired with 57.9 seconds to play and New Jersey posted a season-high third straight win.

Mavericks 105, Bobcats 99: At Charlotte, N.C., Michael Finley and Dirk Nowitzki scored 20 points each to lead Dallas to its fourth consecutive victory.

Emeka Okafor had 24 points and 15 rebounds for Charlotte, losers of seven straight.

Bucks 89, Pistons 86: At Milwaukee, Mike James scored 20 points and the Bucks won when Richard Hamilton missed a desperation three as the buzzer sounded.

Bulls 95, Hawks 85: At Chicago, Kirk Hinrich had 23 points, nine assists and seven rebounds, and Antonio Davis added a season-high 17 points to lead the Bulls to their sixth straight victory at home. The Hawks have lost eight straight on the road.

Timberwolves 112, SuperSonics 107: At Seattle, Wally Szczerbiak scored a season-high 34 points and Kevin Garnett added 24 for Minnesota, which had lost eight of nine road games. Szczerbiak set a scoring record for a Wolves reserve in 39 minutes.

Nuggets 92, Grizzlies 82: At Denver, Earl Boykins scored 25 points with a season-high 10 assists, giving interim coach Michael Cooper his first winning streak since taking over Dec. 31.

Lakers 105, Warriors 101: At Los Angeles, Chucky Atkins had 26 points and 10 assists to lead the Lakers over Golden State for the second time in a week.

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NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	18	20	.474	—
Boston	18	21	.462	½
New York	17	22	.436	1½
Toronto	17	24	.415	2½
New Jersey	15	24	.385	3½
Southeast Division				
Miami	29	12	.707	—
Washington	23	15	.605	4½
Orlando	21	17	.553	6½
Charlotte	8	28	.222	18½
Atlanta	7	30	.189	20
Central Division				
Cleveland	23	15	.605	—
Detroit	23	16	.590	½
Indiana	20	18	.526	3
Chicago	18	19	.486	4½
Milwaukee	14	24	.368	9

Western Conference

Southwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	33	9	.786	—
Dallas	26	12	.684	5
Houston	22	19	.537	10½
Memphis	22	19	.537	10½
New Orleans	6	32	.158	25
Northwest Division				
Seattle	27	11	.711	—
Minnesota	20	19	.513	7½
Denver	17	22	.436	10½
Portland	15	23	.395	12
Utah	14	26	.350	14
Pacific Division				
Phoenix	31	10	.756	—
Sacramento	27	11	.711	2½
L.A. Lakers	22	16	.579	7½
L.A. Clippers	18	21	.462	12
Golden State	12	28	.300	18½

Friday's games

Washington 118, Toronto 109
Dallas 105, Charlotte 99
Houston 92, New York 91
New Jersey 104, Boston 98
Indiana 106, Miami 100, OT
Chicago 95, Atlanta 85
Milwaukee 89, Detroit 86
Denver 92, Memphis 82
San Antonio 128, Phoenix 123, OT
Minnesota 112, Seattle 107
L.A. Lakers 105, Golden State 101

Saturday's games

Boston at Atlanta
Philadelphia at Orlando
Chicago at Detroit
Washington at Indiana
L.A. Clippers at New Orleans
Memphis at Utah
Minnesota at Portland
Cleveland at Golden State

Sunday's games

Charlotte at Toronto
Denver at Dallas
Milwaukee at New York
New Orleans at Miami
New Jersey at Phoenix
Utah at Seattle
San Antonio at Sacramento

Monday's games

Washington at Cleveland
Chicago at Atlanta
Detroit at Minnesota
Orlando at Houston
San Antonio at Portland
Dallas at L.A. Clippers
Miami at Philadelphia

Friday

Wizards 118, Raptors 109

TORONTO — Peterson 6-17 2-2 18, Bosh 5-9 6-6 16, Araujo 0-0 0-0 0, E.Williams 1-4 0-0 3, Alston 7-18 4-5 20, Marshall 1-5 3-4 6, Rose 11-23 9-10 32, Murray 1-3 0-0 2, Palacio 2-6 0-0 4, Bonner 4-7 0-0 8, Aa.Williams 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 38-92 24-27 109.

WASHINGTON — Jamison 11-24 3-6 26, Jeffries 5-8 2-2 13, Haywood 3-5 6-9 12, Hayes 6-11 3-4 16, Arenas 3-14 17-20 23, Dixon 11-16 0-0 26, Thomas 1-3 0-0 2, Ruffin 0-1 0-0 0, Profit 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 40-82 31-41 118.

Toronto	20	22	35	32	—109
Washington	35	30	28	25	—118

Three-Point Goals—Toronto 9-29 (Peterson 4-9, Alston 2-7, E.Williams 1-2, Rose 1-4, Marshall 1-5, Murray 0-1, Bonner 0-1), Washington 7-23 (Dixon 4-8, Jeffries 1-1, Hayes 1-3, Jamison 1-5, Arenas 0-6). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—Toronto 54 (Peterson 9), Washington 55 (Jamison 13). Assists—Toronto 21 (Alston 7), Washington 23 (Arenas 8). Total Fouls—Toronto 28, Washington 23. A—15,424. (20,674).

Mavericks 105, Bobcats 99

DALLAS — Howard 4-12 3-4 11, Nowitzki 7-22 6-6 20, Dampier 1-4 6-10 8, Terry 8-11 0-0 17, Finley 8-14 1-2 20, Bradley 2-3 0-0 4, Stackhouse 5-9 9-9 19, Dev.Harris 0-1 0-0 0, Henderson 3-3 0-0 6. Totals 38-79 25-31 105.

CHARLOTTE — Wallace 3-8 0-0 6, Okafor 11-18 2-5 24, Brezec 7-12 0-0 14, Hart 6-10 0-0 13, Rush 4-18 2-2 11, Sampson 1-2 2-4 4, Bogans 1-7 0-0 3, Ely 1-3 0-0 2, Robinson 1-1 0-0 2, Kapono 4-11 3-3 14, S.Smith 2-5 2-2 6. Totals 41-95 11-16 99.

Dallas	23	33	23	26	—105
Charlotte	27	21	18	33	— 99

Three-Point Goals—Dallas 4-15 (Finley 3-4, Terry 1-3, Dev.Harris 0-1, Stackhouse 0-1, Howard 0-2, Nowitzki 0-4), Charlotte 6-14 (Kapono 3-5, Bogans 1-1, Hart 1-2, Rush 1-4, S.Smith 0-2). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—Dallas 50 (Nowitzki 9), Charlotte 56 (Okafor 15). Assists—Dallas 17 (Terry 7), Charlotte 23 (Hart 10). Total Fouls—Dallas 16, Charlotte 25. Technicals—Stackhouse, Wallace. A—17,186. (23,319).

Nets 104, Celtics 98

BOSTON — Pierce 7-16 7-7 22, LaFrentz 2-6 0-0 4, Blount 4-7 1-2 9, Welsch 1-7 8-8 10, Payton 5-9 3-3 16, A.Jefferson 4-9 0-2 8, R.Davis 4-11 4-5 13, Banks 0-2 2-2 2, Perkins 1-3 1-2 3, Allen 1-2 0-2 2, McCarty 1-4 2-4 4, West 2-3 0-0 5. Totals 32-79 28-37 98.

NEW JERSEY — Buford 2-9 0-0 4, Collins 2-5 6-8 10, Krstic 6-14 1-3 13, Carter 9-20 5-5 25, Kidd 3-8 7-8 14, Best 8-11 5-5 24, Smith 0-2 1-2 1, Thomas 0-1 0-0 0, Vaughn 1-2 0-0 2, Scalabrine 2-4 4-4 8, Moiso 1-1 1-2 3. Totals 34-77 30-37 104.

Boston	18	30	25	25	— 98
New Jersey	19	29	32	24	—104

Three-Point Goals—Boston 6-21 (Payton 3-5, West 1-1, R.Davis 1-4, Pierce 1-5, McCarty 0-3, LaFrentz 0-3), New Jersey 6-16 (Best 3-5, Carter 2-6, Kidd 1-4, Buford 0-1). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—Boston 49 (Pierce, Blount 7), New Jersey 57 (Krstic 12). Assists—Boston 22 (R.Davis 7), New Jersey 24 (Kidd 9). Total Fouls—Boston 32, New Jersey 28. Technicals—Boston coach Rivers, New Jersey Defensive Three Second, Carter, New Jersey coach Frank. A—15,461. (19,860).

Rockets 92, Knicks 91

HOUSTON — Howard 3-9 1-2 7, McGrady 13-27 4-5 35, Ming 9-14 4-4 22, Sura 3-5 1-1 7, Wesley 2-7 0-0 4, Barry 1-2 0-0 3, Mutombo 1-4 0-0 2, Strickland 0-1 0-0 0, Padgett 4-8 2-2 12, Barrett 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 36-77 12-14 92.

NEW YORK — K.Thomas 4-13 3-4 11, T.Thomas 1-4 0-0 2, Mohammed 4-12 1-1 9, Crawford 6-19 4-4 18, Marbury 8-17 4-5 20, Ariza 1-3 1-1 3, Sweetney 5-8 5-6 15, Brewer 2-4 0-0 5, Williams 2-3 4-4 8. Totals 33-83 22-25 91.

Houston	22	21	29	20	—92
New York	22	24	17	28	—91

Three-Point Goals—Houston 8-17 (McGrady 5-12, Padgett 2-2, Barry 1-2, Wesley 0-1), New York 3-10 (Crawford 2-7, Brewer 1-2, Marbury 0-1). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—Houston 47 (Ming 12), New York 49 (K.Thomas 13). Assists—Houston 17 (McGrady 5), New York 14 (Crawford 5). Total Fouls—Houston 22, New York 18. A—19,763. (19,763).

Pacers 106, Heat 100 (OT)

INDIANA — J.Jones 1-3 3-3 6, J.O'Neal 8-23 10-12 26, Pollard 4-9 0-0 8, Tinsley 13-23 1-1 30, Miller 5-8 6-6 18, F.Jones 3-10 1-2 10, Bender 2-3 0-0 4, Foster 1-2 0-0 2, Curry 0-0 0-0 0, Johnson 1-6 0-0 2. Totals 38-87 21-24 106.

MIAMI — E.Jones 5-11 0-1 11, Haslem 6-10 4-7 16, S.O'Neal 10-16 4-13 24, D.Jones 2-7 1-3 7, Wade 11-27 8-12 30, Dooling 0-1 0-0 0, Doleac 1-2 0-0 2, Butler 2-5 0-0 6, Laettner 2-2 0-0 4. Totals 39-81 17-36 100.

Indiana	30	17	26	20	13	—106
Miami	23	23	23	24	7	—100

Three-Point Goals—Indiana 9-22 (Tinsley 3-7, F.Jones 3-7, Miller 2-3, J.Jones 1-2, Foster 0-1, Johnson 0-2), Miami 5-17 (Butler 2-5, D.Jones 2-7, E.Jones 1-5). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—Indiana 53 (J.O'Neal 14), Miami 60 (Haslem 11). Assists—Indiana 11 (Tinsley 4), Miami 15 (D.Jones 5). Total Fouls—Indiana 26, Miami 20. Technicals—Indiana Defensive Three Second, Miami Defensive Three Second 2. A—20,131. (19,600).

Bulls 95, Hawks 85

ATLANTA — A.Harrington 7-20 7-9 21, Walker 7-24 10-14 25, Collier 1-4 1-2 3, J.Smith 2-6 3-4 7, Lue 3-5 3-4 9, Drobnjak 3-11 0-0 8, Delk 2-5 1-4 5, Childress 0-0 0-0 0, Anderson 3-6 1-2 7, Ekezie 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 28-82 26-39 85.

CHICAGO — Davis 8-10 1-3 17, Deng 1-7 0-0 2, Curry 7-11 4-8 18, Hinrich 8-22 5-7 23, Duhon 2-5 2-2 7, Chandler 2-4 9-9 13, Gordon 2-7 0-0 5, O.Harrington 0-1 1-2 1, Nocioni 1-4 0-0 2, Piatkowski 1-1 0-0 3, Griffin 2-2 0-0 4. Totals 34-74 22-31 95.

Atlanta	20	23	28	14	—85
Chicago	23	32	19	21	—95

Three-Point Goals—Atlanta 3-10 (Drobnjak 2-4, Walker 1-4, A.Harrington 0-2), Chicago 5-17 (Hinrich 2-7, Piatkowski 1-1, Gordon 1-3, Duhon 1-3, Deng 0-3). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—Atlanta 66 (J.Smith 12), Chicago 50 (Davis 8). Assists—Atlanta 10 (Walker 4), Chicago 23 (Hinrich 9). Total Fouls—Atlanta 26, Chicago 31. A—18,815. (21,711).

Bucks 89, Pistons 86

DETROIT — Prince 11-19 2-3 26, R.Wallace 6-16 0-0 14, B.Wallace 1-4 0-0 2, Billups 7-15 3-4 18, R.Hamilton 5-12 4-4 14, McDyess 4-6 0-0 8, Hunter 1-2 1-2 4, Dupree 0-1 0-0 0, Goldwire 0-0 0-0 0, Ham 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 35-75 10-13 86.

MILWAUKEE — Mason 3-13 4-4 10, Smith 6-11 2-4 14, Gadzuric 4-6 1-2 9, Redd 5-11 1-2 13, M.Williams 2-6 0-0 5, James 6-9 4-6 20, Fizer 2-5 0-0 4, Van Horn 2-6 2-2 7, Pachulia 2-3 3-4 7. Totals 32-70 17-24 89.

Detroit	26	22	18	20	—86
Milwaukee	29	15	22	23	—89

Three-Point Goals—Detroit 6-16 (R.Wallace 2-3, Prince 2-6, Hunter 1-2, Billups 1-4, R.Hamilton 0-1), Milwaukee 8-11 (James 4-5, Redd 2-3, M.Williams 1-1, Van Horn 1-2). Fouled Out—Billups. Rebounds—Detroit 36 (R.Wallace 8), Milwaukee 52 (Smith 9). Assists—Detroit 22 (Billups, R.Hamilton 7), Milwaukee 17 (James, M.Williams, Fizer 4). Total Fouls—Detroit 18, Milwaukee 16. A—16,145. (18,717).

Spurs 128, Suns 123 (OT)

SAN ANTONIO — Bowen 0-7 2-2 2, Duncan 12-20 6-9 30, Nesterovic 3-5 0-0 6, T.Parker 1-9 0-0 2, Ginobili 16-22 11-12 48, Barry 6-10 0-0 16, Rose 3-6 0-0 6, Udrih 3-8 2-2 9, Brown 2-6 2-2 7, Massenburg 1-3 0-2 2. Totals 47-96 23-29 128.

PHOENIX — Richardson 5-18 0-1 11, Marion 13-21 6-6 37, Stoudemire 15-19 5-10 35, Nash 6-13 2-2 16, J.Johnson 7-14 4-5 21, Voskuhl 1-1 1-2 3, Hunter 0-0 0-2 0, S.Parker 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 47-87 18-28 123.

San Antonio	24	31	16	40	17	—128
Phoenix	24	32	32	23	12	—123

Three-Point Goals—San Antonio 11-29 (Ginobili 5-7, Barry 4-6, Brown 1-3, Udrih 1-5, T.Parker 0-2, Bowen 0-6), Phoenix 11-21 (Marion 5-6, J.Johnson 3-5, Nash 2-3, Richardson 1-7). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—San Antonio 52 (Duncan 19), Phoenix 53 (Marion 15). Assists—San Antonio 26 (Ginobili 6), Phoenix 30 (Nash 13). Total Fouls—San Antonio 20, Phoenix 24. Technicals—Phoenix Defensive Three Second. A—18,422. (18,422).

Nuggets 92, Grizzlies 82

MEMPHIS — Gasol 4-12 0-0 8, Posey 5-7 0-0 15, Wright 7-10 3-6 17, Williams 1-8 1-3 4, Battier 5-9 1-2 13, Watson 1-4 0-0 2, Wells 3-9 0-0 6, Swift 3-8 4-4 10, Cardinal 1-3 2-4 4, Jones 1-1 0-0 3, Emmett 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 31-72 11-19 82.

DENVER — D.Johnson 3-8 0-0 6, Martin 5-16 3-8 13, Camby 9-14 0-0 18, Buckner 1-3 2-2 4, A.Miller 5-10 4-4 14, Elson 0-2 0-0 0, Russell 4-7 1-2 10, Boykins 10-13 4-4 25, White 0-1 0-0 0, Tskitishvili 1-3 0-0 2. Totals 38-77 14-20 92.

Memphis	24	21	20	17	—82
Denver	19	31	24	18	—92

Three-Point Goals—Memphis 9-20 (Posey 5-5, Battier 2-3, Jones 1-1, Williams 1-6, Watson 0-1, Cardinal 0-1, Wells 0-3), Denver 2-11 (Boykins 1-2, Russell 1-3, Tskitishvili 0-1, D.Johnson 0-1, Buckner 0-2, Martin 0-2). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—Memphis 34 (Wright 7), Denver 60 (Camby 13). Assists—Memphis 24 (Williams 15), Denver 23 (Boykins 10). Total Fouls—Memphis 20, Denver 20. Technicals—Denver Defensive Three Second. Flagrant fouls—Gasol. A—18,056. (19,099).

Lakers 105, Warriors 101

GOLDEN STATE — Dunleavy 8-17 0-0 18, Murphy 7-15 1-1 16, Foyle 1-3 0-0 2, Richardson 10-26 2-4 26, Fisher 9-14 2-3 23, Davis 1-2 1-2 3, Najera 4-5 0-2 9, Cheaney 1-2 0-0 2, Flores 1-1 0-0 2, Pietrus 0-3 0-0 0. Totals 42-88 6-12 101.

L.A. LAKERS — Jones 6-11 0-0 16, Odom 10-16 3-6 25, Mihm 4-10 0-2 8, Butler 5-14 4-4 14, Atkins 9-18 4-5 26, Walton 0-1 0-0 0, Cook 2-8 1-2 7, Brown 1-1 0-0 3, Grant 3-3 0-0 6, Vujacic 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 40-82 12-19 105.

Golden State	24	27	26	24	—101
L.A. Lakers	26	26	29	24	—105

Three-Point Goals—Golden State 11-27 (Richardson 4-9, Fisher 3-6, Dunleavy 2-6, Murphy 1-2, Najera 1-2, Pietrus 0-2), L.A. Lakers 13-30 (Jones 4-7, Atkins 4-11, Odom 2-4, Cook 2-5, Brown 1-1, Walton 0-1, Butler 0-1). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—Golden State 48 (Murphy 10), L.A. Lakers 53 (Butler, Jones 9). Assists—Golden State 25 (Fisher 7), L.A. Lakers 28 (Atkins 10). Total Fouls—Golden State 20, L.A. Lakers 18. A—18,997. (18,997).

Timberwolves 112, SuperSonics 107

MINNESOTA — Garnett 10-15 4-4 24, Sprewell 1-5 0-0 2, Johnson 3-3 0-0 6, Carter 0-0 0-0 0, Hassell 3-6 2-3 8, Hudson 8-15 0-0 20, Szczerbiak 11-19 10-12 34, Griffin 3-5 0-0 7, Hoiberg 4-6 0-0 11. Totals 43-74 16-19 112.

SEATTLE (107)

Evans 1-2 2-4 4, Lewis 7-19 2-2 18, James 5-7 1-3 11, Allen 7-23 9-9 25, Ridnour 7-8 2-2 19, Radmanovic 6-14 0-0 15, Daniels 3-5 0-0 7, Collison 1-2 0-0 2, Fortson 0-0 0-0 0, Murray 2-3 1-2 6. Totals 39-83 17-22 107.

Minnesota	25	37	26	24	—112
Seattle	18	33	25	31	—107

Three-Point Goals—Minnesota 10-17 (Hudson 4-6, Hoiberg 3-4, Szczerbiak 2-2, Griffin 1-3, Sprewell 0-2), Seattle 12-25 (Ridnour 3-3, Radmanovic 3-6, Lewis 2-7, Allen 2-7, Murray 1-1, Daniels 1-1). Fouled Out—James. Rebounds—Minnesota 41 (Garnett 8), Seattle 42 (Radmanovic 10). Assists—Minnesota 23 (Szczerbiak 8), Seattle 17 (Allen, Daniels 4). Total Fouls—Minnesota 24, Seattle 18. Technicals—Seattle Defensive Three Second 2. A—17,072. (17,072).

NBA leaders

Through Jan. 20

Scoring

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Iverson, Phil.	36	348	283	1022	28.4
Bryant, LAL	34	285	298	934	27.5
Nowitzki, Dall.	36	314	300	980	27.2
Stoudemire, Phoe.	40	371	269	1011	25.3
McGrady, Hou.	38	335	209	950	25.0
James, Clev.	38	357	190	940	24.7
Allen, Sea.	37	297	195	883	23.9
Wade, Mia.	36	297	261	858	23.8
Garnett, Minn.	38	327	223	881	23.2
Arenas, Wash.	35	262	201	811	23.2
O'Neal, Mia.	39	349	200	898	23.0
Jefferson, N.J.	33	238	227	733	22.2
Redd, Mil.	37	304	151	818	22.1
Webber, Sac.	35	325	113	769	22.0
Francis, Orl.	38	280	250	830	21.8
Pierce, Bos.	38	260	259	825	21.7
Maggette, LAC	36	225	297	773	21.5
Duncan, S.A.	41	338	198	876	21.4
Hughes, Wash.	34	256	176	721	21.2
Hamilton, Det.	38	276	217	784	20.6

FG Percentage

	FG	FGA	PCT
O'Neal, Mia.	349	578	.604
Stoudemire, Phoe.	371	663	.560
Haslem, Mia.	180	341	.528
Boozer, Utah	304	577	.527
Mohammed, N.Y.	184	350	.526
Mihm, LAL	151	288	.524
Curry, Chi.	204	391	.522
Terry, Dall.	150	288	.521
Yao, Hou.	248	477	.520
Blount, Bos.	162	313	.518

Rebounds

	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Garnett, Minn.	38	127	433	560	14.7
B. Wallace, Det.	30	125	250	375	12.5
Duncan, S.A.	41	137	343	480	11.7
Murphy, G.S.	38	134	305	439	11.6
Okafor, Char.	35	138	255	393	11.2
O'Neal, Mia.	39	142	279	421	10.8
Marion, Phoe.	40	117	307	424	10.6
Odom, LAL	37	76	306	382	10.3
Randolph, Port.	33	109	227	336	10.2
Nowitzki, Dall.	36	46	313	359	10.0

Assists

	G	AST	AVG
Nash, Phoe.	37	402	10.9
Knight, Char.	29	271	9.3
Marbury, N.Y.	38	331	8.7
Wade, Mia.	36	274	7.6
Iverson, Phil.	36	263	7.3
James, Clev.	38	277	7.3
Alston, Tor.	40	286	7.2
Hinrich, Chi.	36	254	7.1
Francis, Orl.	38	265	7.0
Tinsley, Ind.	32	220	6.9

SPORTS

Hall of Fame coach Wilkens steps away from Knicks' bench, Page 30

Boom or bust — again — in Philly

Eagles fighting a frightening playoff history

BY ROB MAADDI
The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Andy Reid is tired of going to Hawaii.

For the past three years, Reid and the rest of the Philadelphia Eagles' coaching staff have spent the week after the Super Bowl in Honolulu leading the NFC's Pro Bowl team, the result of losing the conference championship game.

Reid will gladly trade those floral shirts and leis for a trip to Jacksonville this year.

"I never thought I'd say I don't want to go to Hawaii," Reid said. "You get to this point, you really aren't that worried about what happened in the past. You are so focused in on what you need to do right now and the type of things that you are doing right now."

Playing in the past three NFC championship games gives the Eagles a significant edge over Atlanta in big-game experience.

Losing all three of those games also puts all the pressure on Philadelphia to get to the Super Bowl for the first time in 24 years.

The Falcons, meanwhile, have far less to lose. A year ago, they were 5-11. Now they're a victory away from the second Super Bowl appearance in franchise history; the other was in 1999.

"We're just going to go up there and play loose and let it roll," Falcons rookie coach Jim Mora said. "We don't feel any pressure. It's house money we're gambling with. So we're just going to go up there and fling it around and see if we can't stay on the field with them for a little while."

The Eagles have traveled this road before, only to get detoured at the last stop before playing for the NFL title. They were favorites at home the past two years against teams which played in a warmer climate and had trouble winning on the road and in cold weather.

It could be downright freezing when the Eagles (14-3) host the Falcons (12-5) on Sunday afternoon, with forecasters calling for snow.

"I don't think it'll be a factor," Falcons quarterback Michael Vick said. "Football is played in all types of conditions: rain, sleet, snow or whatever. The game is not going to be called off. This is for all the marbles."

SEE HISTORY, ON PAGE 28

Out of reach

Since losing to Oakland in the Super Bowl on Jan. 25, 1981, the Eagles are 8-11 in the playoffs. Here's a look at some of the setbacks:

NFC championship games
2003 — 14-3 to Carolina
2002 — 27-10 to Tampa Bay
2001 — 29-24 at St. Louis

Divisional round
2000 — 20-10 at N.Y. Giants
1996 — 30-11 at Dallas
1992 — 34-10 at Dallas
1988 — 20-12 at Chicago

Wild-card round
1990 — 20-6 to Washington
1981 — 27-21 to N.Y. Giants

Note: Year denotes season, not date of game

Eagles QB Donovan McNabb (5) gets a lift from lineman Hank Fraley.

AP

Kearse will be chasing Vick and the Super Bowl

BY JASON LA CANFORA
The Washington Post

PHILADELPHIA — On Monday morning, the Philadelphia Eagles' day off, defensive end Jevon Kearse showed up at the team's training facility with only one thing on his mind. He was seeking out Tommy Brasher, the team's defensive line coach, to lobby for a more integral role in the game plan for Sunday's NFC championship game, volunteering to shadow Atlanta's gifted quarterback, Michael Vick.

Kearse did not want to reveal too much about the outcome of that meeting when speaking with the media this week — secrecy, after all, is a hallmark of the NFL — but his huge smile and hearty chuckle gave plenty away.

While the Eagles will not use a spy to follow Vick on every play, when they do, that player frequently will be Kearse, who has quickness and pass-rushing ability to go with his size (6 feet 4, 265 pounds).

Philadelphia signed the three-time Pro Bowler to an eight-year, $66 million contract on the first day of free agency last year with precisely this game in mind, believing Kearse's impact on its defense would help end the team's three-year habit of losing in the NFC title game.

The Eagles once again will be a single afternoon away from their first trip to the Super Bowl since 1981, and Kearse figures to be at the center of the effort to contain Vick, who is considered by many to be the best pure runner in football and whose unpredictable quarterbacking style makes him the league's biggest wild card. Kearse expects to line up at right and left defensive end, and he plans to both pressure Vick, 24, on the pass rush and prevent him from getting to the outside and taking off on highlight-reel runs that are his specialty.

SEE KEARSE ON PAGE 29

AP

Philadelphia signed three-time Pro Bowl end Jevon Kearse to an eight-year, $66 million contract last year and he led the team with 7½ sacks.

Brady familiar with a rookie QB's plight Page 26

Staley, Bettis familiar with failure in championship games Page 27

Anticipated McNabb-Vick matchup significant on several levels Page 29