50 detained in Sunday's deadly car bombing in Najaf Page 3

STARS AND STRIPES®

Swiss Army knives go high-tech
Page 15

Nonprofit firm to build homes for disabled veterans
Page 6

Manning passes on shot at record, but Colts win
Back page

Quarterback Peyton Manning

Volume 2, No. 255 © SS 2004 MIDEAST EDITION TUESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2004

Bush says Iraqi forces not ready to take over

President also backs Rumsfeld against lawmakers' criticism Page 8

The Christmas gift is in the mail

Page 4

PHOTOS BY SANDRA JONTZ/Stars and Stripes

Petty Officer 3rd Class Eric Watson, left, and other military postal workers work 12, 13 or even more hours a day at this time of year. Watson, stationed at Naval Support Activity, Naples, Italy, is shown sifting through holiday greeting cards that likely won't make it to their final destinations by Christmas morning.

Remember to thank your Command for today's copy of Stars and Stripes.

Your Stars and Stripes is now printed and delivered locally from Kuwait, Iraq, and Qatar giving you up-to-date daily news, sports and entertainment.

Without the assistance of local commands, your friends and fellow soldiers would be isolated without news from home.

Contact Stars and Stripes circulation with questions about delivery at 49-6155-601-455 DSN: 349-8455

To contact a reporter in the field, email Iraq@mail.estripes.osd.mil

STARS AND STRIPES
Your Hometown Newspaper

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

States

Celebrex advertising: The maker of best-selling arthritis pain reliever Celebrex said it plans to immediately stop advertising the drug.

The move comes after a study showed high doses of Celebrex were associated with an increased heart attack risk.

New York-based Pfizer Inc. spent more than $70 million advertising Celebrex to U.S. consumers in the first nine months of this year. Pfizer said it plans to continue marketing the drug to doctors.

Robert Blake trial: Prosecutors were expected to argue in opening statements Monday at actor Rober Blake's murder trial that he killed his wife because he despised her and did not want her to have contact with their daughter, Rosie.

Bonny Lee Bakley, the wife of the former "Baretta" television star, was fatally shot more than three years ago outside a restaurant where the couple had dined.

Blake, 71, could be sentenced to life in prison without parole if convicted. Prosecutors are not seeking the death penalty.

Immigrant smuggling: Jurors resumed deliberations Monday in the trial of two men accused of taking part in a deadly immigrant smuggling attempt in which more than 70 people were crammed inside a stifling tractor-trailer near Victoria, Texas. Nineteen of the illegal immigrants died.

The trial of Victor Jesus Rodriguez and Fredy Giovanni Garcia-Tobar is the first stemming from the deaths in 2003. Five of the 14 people indicted have pleaded guilty.

Jurors received the case last week.

Kerik flaws: White House investigators knew of many of the flaws that surfaced since Bernard Kerik withdrew as the nominee to lead the Homeland Security Department, Andrew Card, President Bush's chief of staff, said Sunday.

Kerik, 49, withdrew his name from consideration on Dec. 10, saying he had employed an illegal alien as a nanny and had failed to submit required Social Security payments.

Card did not say whether a decision was made that the former New York City police commissioner's shortcomings should be overlooked to approve his nomination. "It was Bernie Kerik's decision not to go forward," Card said.

Business

Microsoft-EU relations: Microsoft Corp. renewed its offer Monday to resume negotiations with the European Union in their five-year antitrust battle, saying it would do so immediately after a court rules this week on whether to suspend an order forcing the software giant to change business practices.

The two sides were involved in settlement talks before EU antitrust regulators fined Microsoft a record $666 million and told the company to reveal some of its trade secrets to competitors and produce a Windows platform without its digital Media Player.

A decision had been expected as early as last Friday.

Fannie Mae problems: The board of Fannie Mae has been discussing a possible executive shake-up as the embattled mortgage giant responds to regulators' allegations of accounting violations and faces a likely restatement of $9 billion or more in earnings.

A $9 billion restatement, which Fannie Mae previously had said would be likely if the SEC found its accounting was flawed, would wipe out about one-third of reported profit since 2001 at the biggest U.S. buyer and guarantor of home mortgage loans.

Afghan disarmament: Afghan authorities load pieces of an anti-aircraft gun onto the back of a truck Monday after it was handed over by former Afghan fighters as part of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program in Kabul, Afghanistan. Under the DDR scheme ex-combatants, after handing their weapons over, are given the choice of working in agriculture, training for the police, de-mining, starting a small business or being reintegrated back to Afghanistan's national army now being trained by foreign troops. More than 30,000 militiamen have already been disarmed since the program was started, officials say.

World

Chirac on Turkey/EU: French President Jacques Chirac reiterated on Monday that Turkey would have to make considerable effort to join the European Union and that French citizens will be allowed to make their voices heard in a referendum.

Speaking at a Cabinet meeting, Chirac discussed the significance of the Friday decision by the European Union to start membership negotiations with mostly Muslim Turkey in October.

Bus hijacking: Two Albanian housepainters were jailed Monday to await trial on charges of hijacking a bus in Athens and holding about two dozen passengers hostage for 18 hours, authorities said.

Gaz Resuli and Leonard Murati, both 24, charged with kidnapping and attempted murder, apologized for their actions at their arraignment.

They said they took the hostages and demanded a $1.3 million ransom to start a business in Albania.

They face up to 25 years in prison.

Ukraine election: Ukraine's two presidential candidates faced off Monday in a televised debate less than a week before a rerun of their disputed election, with opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko accusing his rival of trying to steal the Nov. 21 runoff vote.

Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych responded by saying his opponent was dragging up past accusations and refusing to look forward to Ukraine's future, and he suggested that a Yushchenko victory would further divide the nation.

Rules for the 100-minute debate allowed the two candidates to ask each other questions directly. Foreign policy, the economy and social benefits were expected to dominate.

French hostages: France is receiving information about the two French journalists held hostage in Iraq on a regular basis and, despite four months' captivity, they are in good health, Foreign Minister Michel Barnier said Monday.

France grimly marked the fourth month of captivity for Christian Chesnot, a 37-year-old journalist for RTL, or Radio France Internationale, and Georges Malbrunot, 41, of the daily Le Figaro, with campaigns of support.

The two men disappeared Aug. 20 along with their Syrian driver on the road to the Najaf. The driver was freed in November.

Terrorism in Indonesia: A rusty, unexploded grenade was found near the Hilton Hotel in Jakarta early Monday, police and hotel officials said, days after foreign governments warned that terrorists were planning attacks on Western targets ahead of Christmas.

A gardener found the grenade near a fence surrounding the sprawling, five-star complex in the Indonesian capital, said Emeraldo Parengkuan, Hilton's public relations director.

Afghan cabinet: President Hamid Karzai vowed Sunday that his new Cabinet, which he expects to name this week, would be "honest, accountable, austere" and able to deliver security and reconstruction.

Karzai was sworn in two weeks ago as Afghanistan's first democratically elected leader and is expected to make a number of changes in the ministerial lineup.

Gaza resistance: Israel's attorney general decided Monday not to press charges against a leader of West Bank settlers who called for resistance against government efforts to evacuate settlements, a Justice Ministry official said.

Settler leader Pinhas Wallerstein called on his followers to resist evacuation under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to remove all 21 settlements from Gaza and four from the West Bank next year.

Photo and stories from wire services

Correction

A story in Saturday's paper about the 37th Airlift Squadron's return from Iraq contained an error. All of the squadron's C-130 Hercules aircraft have not yet returned to Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

Comics, horoscopes and advice – every day in Stars and Stripes

50 suspects detained in Najaf car bombing

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Thousands of mourners attended funerals Monday and Iraqi authorities detained 50 suspects in connection with an explosion in the Shiite holy city of Najaf that killed 67 people and wounded 142.

Iraq's interim prime minister warned that the rebels were trying to foment a sectarian war in the country.

Najaf police chief Ghalib al-Jazaari said that 50 people were arrested Monday in connection with the bombings. They included "elements" who had confessed to having links with the intelligence services of neighboring Syria and Iran, he claimed.

Authorities in Najaf banned cars from entering the downtown area that houses the Imam Ali shrine to prevent future bombings, Gov. Adnan al-Zurufi said Monday.

Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi said the mainly Sunni Muslim insurgency, blamed for the deadly strikes Sunday against Iraq's majority Shiites, want to "create ethnic and religious tensions, problems and conflicts ... to destroy the unity of this country."

"These attacks are designed to stop the political process from taking place in Iraq," Allawi told reporters. He added that he expected more such strikes as key Jan. 30 parliamentary elections — the first free vote in Iraq since the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958 — get closer.

Illustrating continuing tensions in the region, a bomb exploded at a police checkpoint in Karbala on Monday, causing damage to surrounding buildings but inflicting no casualties. Police said they cordoned off the area and arrested the attacker.

Shiites, who make up around 60 percent of Iraq's population, have been strong supporters of the upcoming electoral process, which they expect will reverse the long-time domination of Iraq by the Sunni minority, the country's other main religious sect. The insurgency is believed to have been fomented by Sunnis, who made up the majority of Saddam Hussein's former Baath Party leadership.

Shiite officials and clerics blamed the Najaf and Karbala bombings — the worst carnage in Iraq since July — on Sunni insurgents wanting to ignite a sectarian war. The strikes appeared designed to cause massive casualties and eventual reprisals by the Shiites against Sunnis.

"We always have said that we are going to fight and defeat terrorism," Allawi said. "We are going to win definitely and the political process would continue in Iraq."

Najaf's police chief said that among the 50 people detained were those with links to Syria and Iran.

"The police arrested some elements who confessed that they have links with the Syrian intelligence ... and a person who confessed he had links with Iranian intelligence since 1995," al-Jazaari said.

The deadly strikes on Sunday — against a funeral procession in Najaf and at a packed bus station in Karbala — once again highlighted the capability of the guerrillas to inflict massive casualties.

They also have undermined confidence in repeated claims by U.S. military commanders that their successful campaign last month to retake the town of Fallujah had dealt a serious blow to the rebellion.

In New York, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan strongly condemned Sunday's violence and called on Iraqis "to come together in a spirit of national reconciliation," U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said.

Associated Press Writers Dusan Stojanovic in Baghdad, Gassid Jabbar in Karbala and Abdul Hussein al-Obeidi in Najaf contributed to this report.

AP

Onlookers gaze at destroyed buildings in Najaf, Iraq, on Monday, a day after a car bomb blast killed 67 people and wounded 142.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Sunday, at least 1,304 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 1,021 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is four higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 11:30 a.m. EST Friday.

The British military has reported 75 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia one death each.

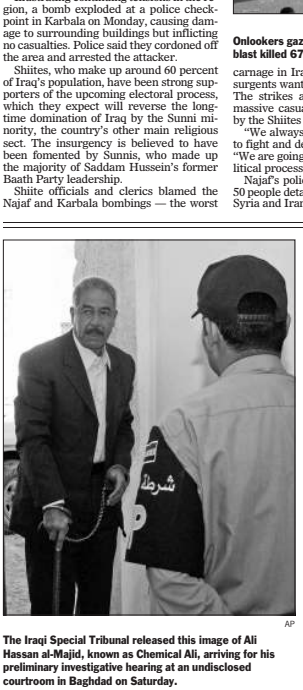
Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,166 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 912 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ No new deaths reported.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ No new identifications reported.



AP

The Iraqi Special Tribunal released this image of Ali Hassan al-Majid, known as Chemical Ali, arriving for his preliminary investigative hearing at an undisclosed courtroom in Baghdad on Saturday.

Confusion, criticism mark start of hearings for Hussein's aides

BY MARIAM FAM

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Human rights advocates and lawyers say Iraq's hush-hush legal proceedings against Saddam Hussein's ousted regime and the secrecy leading up to the investigative hearings that began late last week threaten to undermine the legitimacy of the trial process.

First, they complain, interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi surprised many by announcing the trials of several of Saddam's former regime members would begin sooner than had been expected, although no date was ever set.

Then, a judge made similarly unexpected news — announcing without notice Saturday that two high-profile defendants had already been interrogated. Ali Hassan al-Majid, better known as Chemical Ali for his role in poison gas attacks against the Kurdish minority, and former Defense Minister Gen. Sultan Hashim Ahmad appeared on that day at a preliminary hearing by investigative Judge Raad al-Juhyi.

Under Iraqi law the investigative hearings are the first step toward a trial. But the timing of the court appearances — just ahead of Jan. 30 general elections — has prompted accusations the legal procedings were being expedited to boost Allawi's political standing.

"There is no transparency and everything is mysterious," complained Badee Izzat Aref, lawyer of former deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz, one of Saddam's top lieutenants who has been jailed for over a year.

"They (the judges) are under pressure from the executive authority because of the elections."

Al-Juhyi provided few details about the investigative hearings, but said defense lawyers were present with their two clients. The exact date of the hearings wasn't previously announced and no press was invited. Footage of the proceedings was later released.

Judges and officials have not given a date for the start of the criminal trials or released any information on whether Saddam's aides will be tried individually or jointly.

The process has been criticized by foreign trial monitors.

"If the whole judicial process is going to have credibility and legitimacy, the government needs to be much more forthcoming with information about the rights that the accused are being given," Richard Dicker, director of the International Justice Program at the New York-based Human Rights Watch, said before Saturday's hearings.

It wasn't even clear what kind of access defense lawyers had been given to their clients, he noted.

Allawi's brief announcement Tuesday that the judicial proceedings would start in a matter of days left many questions unanswered, including whether Saddam himself was going to be among those to appear in court.

"So far, we know nothing about the trials. No one knows how they took the decision or who took the decision," to start the process now, said Mahmoud Othman, a prominent Kurdish politician.

"Suddenly they break the news and provide no explanation. People won't take it seriously."

Last-minute holiday mail keeping post offices busy

BY SANDRA JONTZ
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Well, better late than never.

That's how Petty Officer 1st Class William Sharon felt about the packages of Christmas gifts he mailed off Monday to parents and in-laws, a mere six days before the big day.

But he didn't mind that the gifts won't arrive in time to be opened Christmas morning.

"Usually, we don't send 'em anything, so I guess it's better late than never," he said, chuckling while standing in line Monday at the cramped, one-room post office at Naval Support Activity, Naples.

Miles away in Iraq, Marine Maj. Stephen Newsome avoided the whole last-minute rush for several reasons, some not so merry.

Christmas gift exchanging was "officially waved off" this year for Newsome, in Iraq all of four days. "Too busy at the Newsome house anyway. My sister is getting induced this morning to have a son and my dad is having bypass surgery next Monday. Not exactly the Christmas we all envisioned."

"I will, however, buy and mail some cards today," Newsome said in an e-mail from the Green Zone in Baghdad, where he is deployed to the Multinational Security Transition Command Iraq, Civilian Police Assistance Training Team.

"From what I see around here, … [mail flow] seems to be coming just fine. We are absolutely surrounded in care packages, and most everyone seems to just lump it all in a pile for community use," Newsome wrote.

The mailroom at Forward Operating Base Danger in Tikrit, Iraq, expanded operating hours about three weeks ago to "accommodate the large number of packages expected to be both incoming and outgoing during the holiday season," said Capt. Bill Coppernoll, spokesman for the Task Force Danger/1st Infantry Division.

"Many of our soldiers are taking advantage of this time to send Christmas packages back to friends and loved ones [and] … soldiers are taking advantage of the additional mailroom hours."

Postal clerks expect to work 12 hours a day or more this time of year, even if it's the week before Christmas and the recommended shipping dates have come and gone.

> *"It's been amazingly busy for the last three to four weeks."*
>
> **Air Force 2nd Lt. Jesus Raimundi**
> officer-in-charge of postal operations for the 835th Communications Squadron at Ramstein Air Base, Germany

"It's nonstop. Just nonstop," said Postal Clerk Petty Officer 3rd Class Eric Watson, 27, stationed at Naples.

"It's been amazingly busy for the last three to four weeks," said Air Force 2nd Lt. Jesus Raimundi, 24, officer-in-charge of postal operations for the 835th Communications Squadron at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

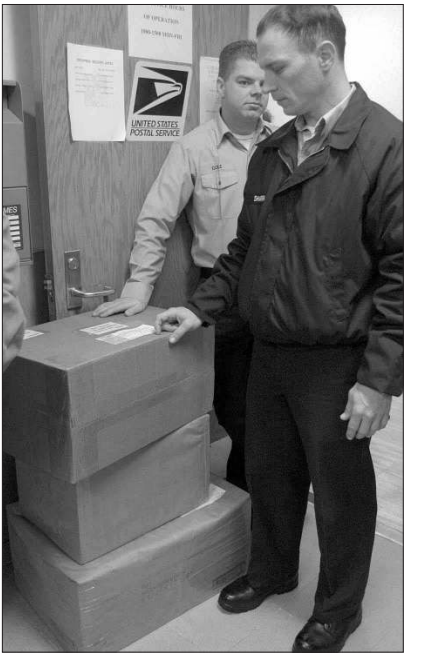
Handlers at Frankfurt, the central processing center for all U.S. mail coming in and out of Europe, process about 110 tons a day this time of year, up from the 50 tons to 55 tons otherwise processed, Raimundi said.

To handle the surge in mail and related services such as stamp sales and money orders, the 835th augments its usual staff of 77 military members and 21 civilian workers with 35 "seasonal overhires" from Nov. 15 to Jan. 15.

The additional workers help cover the influx in customers, mail volume and lets the post offices run operations 24 hours a day, with the night-shift processing incoming mail. Nevertheless, the unit is already 10 airmen short, based on a 2001 manning study based on half the current mail volume, he said.

"Since October, these kids have been working 12-hour shifts, five days a week, and they haven't batted an eye. They are the most motivated troops I've ever seen," Raimundi said.

E-mail Sandra Jontz at: jontzs@mail.estripes.osd.mil



SANDRA JONTZ/Stars and Stripes

Petty Officer 1st Class William Sharon, 33, who works at the "ciao hall" at Naval Support Activity, Naples, Italy, waited until six days before Christmas to send off bulky boxes of presents to his parents and in-laws. That's better than years past, he said, when the Sharons often didn't mail any gifts.

R&R flights in Iraq not immune to dangers of war

Long delays and cancelled flights aren't the only hassles facing soldiers flying in and out of Iraq. With the Rest and Recuperation program still in full swing, dozens of flights a day are going in and out of Baghdad International Airport.

And they're still occasionally getting shot at.

On a recent early-morning Air Force flight from Kuwait City to Baghdad, passengers were startled when — about 15 minutes before landing — a series of orange flashes shot by the right-side window.

At the same time, the pilots sharply turned and dove the plane in evasive maneuvers. Soldiers, who had been holding their helmets in their laps, strapped them on.

Later, when the plane was on the ground at Baghdad, one soldier turned and asked the C-130 crew chief, "Hey, did we get shot at?"

The crew chief gave a half-smile and simply replied, "We always get shot at."

Double vision

Some rumors may never leave Iraq. As new units rotate into Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom's third wave, troops are hearing the same thing those before them have heard.

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

Stars and Stripes

Many locals still think the Wiley X goggles — distributed to soldiers as part of the Rapid Fielding Initiative — have special powers.

If you believe the rumors circulating through Iraqi towns, the goggles also give their wearers the power to see through womens' clothing.

However, none of the glasses possess that power.

Wearing sunglasses while talking with local leaders has already been discouraged by military leaders, as a nod to the cultural norms in Iraq, where someone wearing sunglasses during a conversation is regarded as less than trustworthy.

Where's Bosley?

Three medics in Company C, 141st Engineer Combat Battalion have taken on a new name: "Charlie's Angels."

The dynamic trio of Sgt. Jessica Fisher, Sgt. Angela Magnuson and Sgt. Kristen Pagel have worked nonstop since arriving to Iraq more than eight months ago, saving soldiers and civilians' lives, according to a release from the unit.

Despite their harrowing experiences, the three — all members of the North Dakota National Guard — remain in good spirits, according to the release.

"We're doing a good job here," said Magnuson in the release. "It is nerve-racking. We are doing a good thing here for the people and other soldiers … This makes me feel like I am an active part of history."

Stars and Stripes reporter Joe Giordono contributed to this report. E-mail him at: giordonoj@pstripes.osd.mil

MARK GEISS/Special to Stars and Stripes

Medics, from left, Sgt. Angela Magnuson, Sgt. Kristen Pagel and Sgt. Jessica Fisher have a little fun posing as Charlie's Angels at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, near Baqoubah, Iraq. The soldiers are with Company C, 141st Engineer Combat Battalion.

Processing damage claims a work in progress

BY JOSEPH GIORDONO
Stars and Stripes

RADWANIYAH, Iraq — In a pair of cramped concrete buildings straddling the walls of Camp Victory, the U.S. military is trying to make things right.

Each Saturday, a handful of soldiers staff a regional government office, paying out claims for damage mistakenly done to Iraqi lives and property.

On an average weekend, the Government Information Center in Radwaniyah collects about 30 claims. U.S. military lawyers approve about half of those, with payouts ranging from a few hundred dollars to upward of $15,000.

The process can take weeks or months and claims filed when one U.S. unit was operating in a certain area are sometimes passed on to the next to arrive. The process is repeated at a dozen other centers across Iraq.

"I cannot make any promises as to whether your claim will be approved, but I will guarantee you that all of the facts get to the judge," Staff Sgt. Jared Robinson, of the 256th Brigade Combat Team, tells one man, whose claim for damaged property had been pending for months.

Robinson, 25, of Jennings, La., is literally the bag man. If a claim is approved, identities are confirmed and the paperwork is in order, Robinson reaches into a desert camouflage Army rucksack, then counts out the appropriate amount in crisp greenbacks.

"They always want new bills: in large denominations," he joked during a break from the process. Robinson, a Guardsman like the rest of the 256th, was finishing his second year of law school when the brigade was called to active duty.

BY JOSEPH GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes

Staff Sgt. Darryl Carter looks on as Staff Sgt. Jared Robinson of the 256th Brigade Combat Team hands cash over to an Iraqi citizen for damage caused to his property by the U.S. military.

Inside, Spc. Monty Johnson, 21, of Carencro, La., processes the claims.

He has each recipient read and sign paperwork releasing the military from any future claims. Johnson was a nursing student at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette before the call-up.

Most times, the short meetings end with a handshake and profuse thanks. But the process is not without its contradictions.

In one case, a 256th Brigade tank ran over an Iraqi man and his taxi.

The man lost his leg and his livelihood.

The military approved his claim, awarding him $10,000.

In another case, U.S. soldiers mistakenly killed three male members of an Iraqi family near Fallujah. The military awarded that family $9,700.

"At first, many local people didn't trust it," said the Iraqi translator running the center who identified himself only as Salladin.

"They think it's a center to collect information from people. But after the first compensation was paid, they see."

For the soldiers, the claims process is a work in progress.

"Some of the people are still a little skeptical," said Staff Sgt. Darryl Carter, of Plain Dealing, La. "When their claims are denied, they're disappointed, but I've never seen anyone really upset.

"The quicker we get the claim processed and adjudicated, we're better off."

As Saturday's claims session drew to a close, around 10 claims had been paid. But Carter announced he had one more.

"This is the surprise I had for you," he told Salladin.

Carter handed over a file containing a case that had languished since June. A young girl was hit in the face with bullet fragments, damaging both her eyes. She was taken to a U.S. military hospital in Germany, but doctors couldn't do much for her. She lost one eye, and is blind in the other.

Her father had tried to balance his work and caring for her, but couldn't afford the medication to keep down inflammation in the remaining eye. Carter had resubmitted the claim, which was originally denied. The father received $3,000.

"Until now, if you asked me, I would not believe it," Salladin said. "But here it is."

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

DODDS reschedules spring break at 1st ID-area schools

Officials make move to coincide with troops scheduled for block leave

BY STEVE LIEWER
Stars and Stripes

WÜRZBURG, Germany — School officials have handed 1st Infantry Division troops returning from Iraq a Christmas gift that some parents don't want: They've moved up their children's spring break one month so the weeklong holiday falls during the time most of the returning troops will be on block leave.

Late last week, the Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Europe announced that schools in Ansbach, Bamberg, Grafenwöhr, Kitzingen, Schweinfurt, Vilseck and Würzburg will hold spring recess from March 14-18. All other schools will take the holiday as scheduled, from April 11-15.

"This was in the best interests of military families," said Mary Ellen Riley, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction for DODDS' Bavaria District.

About 11,000 1st ID troops from northern Bavaria left in February for a difficult yearlong deployment in north central Iraq, and most are expected to return to Germany between late January and early March.

Upon returning, each soldier will work seven half-days of "reintegration training," then receive 30 days of block leave. If the troops return home as scheduled, the original school holiday would fall outside the troops' vacation time.

"When my husband comes back, if the kids are still in school we don't want to take them out," said Vanny Cao, the mother of two Würzburg American Elementary School children.

"It's a good decision," said Staff Sgt. Tiffany Lewis of the Kitzingen-based 4th Battalion, 3rd Air Defense Artillery, a mother of two elementary-school age daughters who is home on leave from Iraq. "Once we return, they'll be out of school. That's more time I'll get to spend with my family."

But the decision prompted fierce debate within DODDS before it was announced last week. For teachers and many families, the school calendar is a set-in-stone fixture around which they schedule their lives. Some have set vacations or purchased nonrefundable airline tickets.

"The school calendar is the gold standard, what we go by. This sets a terrible precedent for all future deployments," said Wendy Starnes of Würzburg, a parent-teacher association member. "The community should have been polled."

Last Wednesday, Ronald McIntire, the Bavaria district superintendent, sent a memo to faculty and administrators saying that the spring-break change — under consideration since September — had been rejected.

"I thought for sure it wasn't going to go," said Pinky Hall, a Schweinfurt teacher whose husband is deployed to Iraq.

But after a strong reaction from Army leaders at 1st ID and U.S. Army Europe, DODDS-Europe Superintendent Joseph Tafoya reversed the decision the following day. The leaders persuaded him that the extreme hardship of the Iraq tour on 1st ID families outweighed the inconvenience to the school district.

Mike Thompson, assistant superintendent in the Bavaria District, said the rescheduled break may force schools to reschedule some sports events, and part of a three-week period of standardized testing also must be changed. The district may add a holiday as well, to break up the long stretch between spring break and Memorial Day. School officials also have been told to give plenty of latitude to teachers and families who have made plans for April.

"We had a little hesitation about it at first," said Harvey Gerry, DODDS-Europe's chief of staff. "Given the really extreme nature of what went on, we said 'OK, let's go ahead and make the change.' "

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

Allawi distances self from comments on Iran, Syria

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq's interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi distanced himself Monday from his defense minister's comments in which he accused Iran and Syria of supporting insurgents in Iraq, saying this did not represent the government's position.

Iraqi Defense Minister Hazem Shaalan said Wednesday that Iranian and Syrian intelligence agents, together with former operatives from Saddam Hussein's security forces, were cooperating with the al-Qaida group in Iraq led by Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Both Iran and Syria have denied the accusations saying they want to see a stable Iraq.

Asked to comment about Shaalan's statement, Allawi told reporters: "I have no comments. The minister of defense was talking from his own perspective, [it does] not represent the government attitude."

He declined to elaborate.

In July, Shaalan said Iran is Iraq's "first enemy" for allegedly supporting the insurgency against the U.S.-installed government.

Tehran welcomed the toppling of Saddam Hussein, who waged a bloody eight-year war against Iran in the 1980s, but it has opposed the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq.

Elite Polish soldiers return from Iraq

WARSAW, Poland — Soldiers from an elite Polish commando unit have returned home from Iraq, where they took part in operations to capture collaborators with Saddam Hussein's regime and insurgents, the Polish military said Monday.

GROM — a unit similar to the U.S. counterterrorism unit Delta Force or the British Army's elite Special Air Service — worked closely with U.S. troops in Iraq after being deployed there during last year's U.S.-led invasion.

Iran leader criticizes the U.S. role in Iraq

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's supreme leader on Monday accused America and Britain of planning to hold sham elections in Iraq next month in order to keep control of the country's resources.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also blamed the United States and Israel for the recent series of explosions in Iraq .

Iran approved the toppling of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, whom it blames for the 1980-88 war with Iraq, but it opposes the presence of the U.S.-led multinational force in Iraq.

From The Associated Press

Pilots fly into action when troops need help

BY BRADLEY GRAHAM
The Washington Post

AL UDEID AIR BASE, Qatar — A giant video screen, hung inside a warehouse here that has been transformed by the U.S. Air Force into a state-of-the-art operations center, provides a window on the military action that still occupies the skies over Iraq.

One day earlier this month, the radar signatures of a half-dozen U.S. fighter jets could be seen over Mosul, Fallujah and Babil province south of Baghdad, their locations reflecting the best guesses of military commanders about where trouble might flare.

The morning and early afternoon passed without incident, but the quiet was suddenly broken at 3:14 p.m., when soldiers in Mosul reported taking small arms fire.

Nothing gets higher priority for military planes involved in the Iraq mission than troops under attack. Within seconds of the alert, a yellow box with "TIC" — for Troops in Contact — popped up on the video map. The Navy fighter jets that had been over Mosul swooped low in a show of force, and the attackers faded away, forestalling more aggressive measures by the aircraft.

Such action and reaction have become the norm for the air war, a part of the conflict in Iraq that is largely overshadowed by the grittier, often bloodier efforts of forces on the ground to battle an elusive and determined insurgency.

In contrast to the opening days of the invasion of Iraq 21 months ago, when U.S. warplanes struck a series of planned targets in a display that some in the Pentagon dubbed "shock and awe," the air campaign has become more ad hoc and less showy.

Pilots now take their cues for missions not from Air Force strategists but from Army and Marine commanders who daily submit requests for where they think aircraft can help most in support of ground operations. Instead of taking to the air with a clear idea of what they will strike and when, pilots now largely wait for something to happen — an attack on U.S. forces, for instance, or the discovery of militants ensconced somewhere — and then fly into action.

With the exception of large offensive ground operations, such as last month's assault on Fallujah, days can pass without a bomb being dropped. This has led to using U.S. combat aircraft in nontraditional ways.

Fighters, for instance, now often are employed as surveillance and reconnaissance platforms. Using video and infrared cameras on their airframes, they cruise oil pipelines and power plants, scouting for evidence of attack damage or suspicious activity.

When an opportunity for an airstrike presents itself, the weapon of choice may be nontraditional, particularly if the desire is for a relatively small missile and a quick attack. Predator drones are a case in point. Built originally as spying platforms to linger high above targets, they're being used occasionally as shooters in Iraq, firing Hellfire missiles.

More than 500 U.S. and other coalition aircraft remain on duty in Central Command's area of responsibility, which covers Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa. More than a fourth of these are jet fighters: Air Force F-15s, F-16s and A-10s; Navy F-14s and F/A-18s; Marine AV-8s and F/A-18s; and British GR-4s and GR-7s.

At night, these strike aircraft are joined by slower-moving but particularly lethal AC-130 gunships. Operated by Special Operations forces, these propeller-driven planes can pour withering fire from any of three weapons that poke from their left side: a 25mm Gatling gun, a 40mm cannon or a 105mm howitzer.

An additional 55 or so aircraft are for gathering intelligence.

These include a Global Hawk drone and a small fleet of Predators, as well as high-flying U-2s, signals-scanning RC-135s and ground-spying E-8Cs. Rounding out the air forces are dozens of service planes, including KC-135 fuel tankers and C-130 transport aircraft.

At any given time, the skies over Iraq contain, in the words of one senior officer here, "a cocktail of weapons" — from 2,000-pound bombs to 100-pound Hellfire missiles — waiting to be let loose should the need arise. The biggest recent advance came in September, officers said, with the debut of a satellite-guided, 500-pound bomb designated the GBU-38.

The new munition, smaller than older 1,000-pound and 2,000-pound models, can still do serious damage to a building but with less risk of collateral harm to neighboring structures, officers said. Guided by Global Positioning System satellites, the bomb also can operate through cloud cover, unlike a laser-directed version, the GBU-12.

Nonprofit builds, renovates homes for disabled soldiers

The Associated Press

MIDDLEBORO, Mass. — A nonprofit organization has emerged to ease the return of disabled U.S. soldiers from Iraq by constructing houses adapted to their special needs.

Former National Guard Sgt. Peter Damon, who lost his arms in an accident when he was working on a military helicopter, is grateful he will be the first to own such a home built by the group Homes For Our Troops.

"I can imagine what it will look like," Damon said as he addressed about 100 people at a groundbreaking ceremony Sunday in Middleboro, about 35 miles south of Boston. "It will be awesome."

Homes For Our Troops is the brainchild of Wareham's John Gonsalves, a construction supervisor with 20 years' experience.

The Plymouth-based organization founded in February has raised $450,000 in donations, including some from Japan, Canada, France, England and New Zealand, Gonsalves said. Homes For Our Troops is working with four disabled servicemembers, including one in California who wants to adapt his existing home.

"We can do this for a lot of families as long as people support us," Gonsalves said.

Damon's home is expected to be ready sometime in March. The 32-year-old will live there with his wife, Jennifer, 28; and two children, Allura, 7, and Daniel, 2.

To help accommodate Damon's special needs, the three-bedroom, 2,000-square-foot ranch-style home will feature keyless entry, lower cabinets, bigger switches and wider hallways, The Standard-Times of New Bedford reported.

Gonsalves said the hope is that the Damons' mortgage on "their little piece of the American dream" will be completely paid off.

The groundbreaking came one day shy of the couple's first anniversary and featured a flyover by a Black Hawk helicopter.

"The generosity of Americans has made this happen," Damon said.

Damon was an electrician before he lost his arms changing a tire on a Black Hawk helicopter while assigned to the 126th Aviation Battalion.

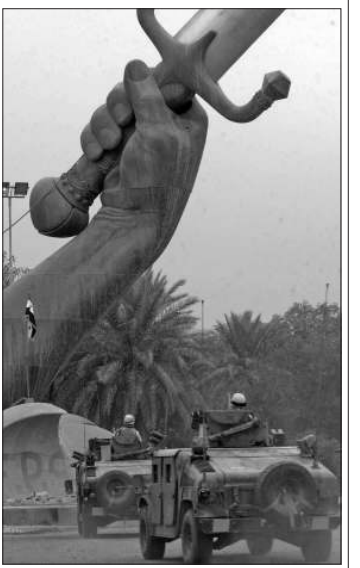
He said the house will give his family the stability and security of knowing they have a roof over their heads as he learns a new profession. He said he has always worked with his hands, and now must learn to work with his mind.

Damon lost his left arm below the elbow and his right arm above the elbow. He has a prosthesis on his left hand. He recuperated at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., until his discharge earlier this year.

He is unsure of his future plans, but said he and his wife want to go to college at some point.

"I never imagined the support when I got back," he said.

No torch of freedom here



JOE GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes

Soldiers approach Saddam Hussein's famed Hands of Victory monument in Baghdad. The monument has two sets of crossed swords marking the entrance and exit to a massive military parade ground. The arches were built to celebrate "victory" over Iran. According to Globalsecurity.org, the metal used to make the swords came from melted down Iraqi weapons from the Iran-Iraq war. Helmets thrown at the base of each sword are Iranian, collected on battlefields; and the hands are replicas of Hussein's.

Guardsman graduates via satellite

ST. LOUIS — Spc. Keith Lucas is a National Guardsman on duty in Iraq, where his job is clearing bombs from roads, but that didn't stop him from taking part in his college graduation.

Lucas, 26, participated Saturday in the commencement ceremony at the University of Missouri-St. Louis with the help of a satellite hookup.

Lucas, whose degree is in mass communications, was given a minute-long ovation. His parents, fiance and other relatives were invited to the stage.

Lucas, also a trauma specialist for the Missouri Guard's Company A, 1140th Engineer Battalion earned a 3.8 grade-point average. He finished his final course, Business Writing, over the Internet.

Lucas' family accepted the diploma on his behalf.

Two GIs killed in Kuwait accident

KUWAIT CITY — Two U.S. soldiers were killed and two injured in a traffic accident outside Kuwait City on Sunday, the U.S. military said in a statement.

The statement said the "hit-and-run" accident happened in the morning, and the injured soldiers were admitted to a civilian hospital. A Kuwaiti security official said the driver of the vehicle that hit the soldiers later surrendered to police.

The names of the soldiers were withheld pending notification of next of kin, the statement said.

The U.S. military and Kuwaiti authorities were investigating.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Embassy warned Americans here about the possibility of terrorist attacks.

From wire reports

Saddam urges Iraqis to unite against U.S., lawyer says

BY JAMAL HALABY

The Associated Press

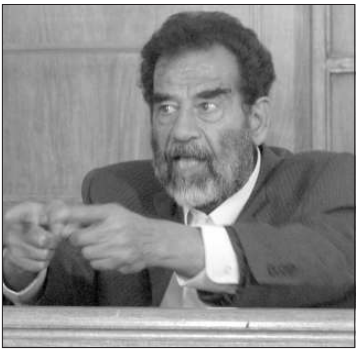
AMMAN, Jordan — From his prison cell, ousted Iraqi President Saddam Hussein urged his compatriots to remain united against the U.S. occupation and warned of the potential dangers of the upcoming elections, his lawyers said.

Iraqi lawyer Khalil al-Duleimi met for more than four hours with Saddam on Thursday, the first meeting Saddam had with legal counsel since he was captured a year ago. Al-Duleimi, who came to Jordan to brief the legal team on his meeting, did not speak to reporters before he returned to Iraq on Sunday.

"Our representative in Iraq told us that the president warned the people of Iraq and the Arabs to beware of the American scheme aimed at splitting Iraq into sectarian and religious divisions and weakening the (Arab) nation," said Bushra Khalil, a Lebanese member of the defense team.

"The president sent recommendations to the Iraqi people to remain united and not fall in the trap of America's slogans," she said Sunday. "He said Kurds, Arabs, Shiites, Sunnis and Christians are all Iraqis who all have to stand united against the American plot."

The statement could be construed as an attempt by Saddam to fuel further rebellion among Iraqis. Ziad al-Khasawneh, who heads Saddam's legal team, said the lawyers had "passed on a message from Iraq's leader to his people and he has all the right to address his subjects in any way he sees fit."



AP

In this image released by the U.S. military, former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein gestures in a courtroom at Camp Victory on the outskirts of Baghdad in July.

The legal team, which includes 20 lead lawyers and 1,500 volunteers from various countries, comprises lawyers who regularly take on high-profile cases and Arab nationalists who sympathize with Saddam's deposed Arab Baath Socialist Party.

Al-Duleimi said the deposed leader was in good health and his morale was high, according to al-Khasawneh.

Saddam is kept in a 3-by-5-meter cell "which lacks any information medium or connection with the outside world," al-Khasawneh told a news conference attended by nine of Saddam's 20 lead lawyers. Al-Duleimi told the lawyers that Saddam did not see anyone except his guards and the ICRC representatives who have visited him four times since his capture.

Al-Duleimi said he was taken to the meeting with Saddam in an armored vehicle with darkened windows and did not know where in Baghdad the detainee was being held. The meeting took place in the presence of an American military official.

Saddam and 11 other defendants, all former members of the ousted Iraqi regime, face charges of war crimes and genocide.

U.S. group links lung cancer to Gulf War fires

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf War exposed to pollution from oil well fires, exhausts and other sources face an increased risk of lung cancer, a government advisory group reported Monday.

A committee of the Institute of Medicine concluded there isn't enough evidence to determine whether most of veterans' health problems are associated with such exposures.

But it said occupational and environmental exposure to combustion products has been shown to increase danger of lung cancer.

"Studies of people exposed to air pollution, vehicle exhaust and burning of coal and other heating and cooking fuels consistently show that such exposures are linked to increased risk for developing lung cancer," committee chair Lynn Goldman said in a statement.

"This provides sufficient evidence that exposure to combustion products during the Gulf War could be associated with lung cancer for some veterans," said Goldman, a professor at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

However, Goldman added, "it should be emphasized that smoking is the major culprit for lung cancer, accounting for 80 percent of all cases, according to the American Cancer Society."

The committee said evidence is too weak to connect other cancers to exposure to combustion products. But it said there are indications that such exposure may be linked to asthma, cancers of the nose, mouth and throat, bladder and to low birth weight and premature births among women exposed while pregnant.

A major problem, the report said, is that there is little information about the actual exposure of individual servicemembers to these pollutants during the war.

Iraqi troops retreating from Kuwait ignited more than 600 oil well fires and the smoke and other combustion products sometimes remained low to the ground mixing with other products from vehicle exhaust, heaters and cooking.

The Institute of Medicine is a branch of the National Academy of Science, an independent organization chartered by Congress to advise the government on scientific matters.

White House budget requests signal end to defense buildup

BY MARK MAZZETTI

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — The White House is pressing Pentagon officials to cut tens of billions of dollars from their proposed budgets over the next several years, signaling that the Bush administration's massive defense buildup during the years following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks is coming to an end.

The White House move to rein in Pentagon spending — described by defense officials and outside experts monitoring the negotiations — comes as the nation faces rising budget deficits and growing costs for the Iraq war, currently about $4.4 billion a month.

The Pentagon budget cuts will not affect spending on the war in Iraq and operations in Afghanistan, which are paid through separate emergency allocations. The Pentagon is currently preparing a supplemental war budget for 2005 that officials said could total $80 billion, up from $66 billion the previous year.

If the Pentagon's emergency supplemental budget for 2005 is approved, Congress could end up authorizing nearly $500 billion for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year.

Yet, only weeks before President Bush submits his 2006 budget to Congress, the military services are scrambling to find areas that can be cut.

The Air Force and Navy could be especially hard hit, with each branch possibly losing $4 billion to $5 billion in 2006, officials said. The Navy also controls the budget of the Marine Corps.

Although the amount of the reductions has not been decided, officials at the Pentagon and the White House's Office of Management and Budget last week wrangled over a proposed cutback of $60 billion over the next six years, according to one source familiar with the negotiations.

The White House moves were not entirely unexpected.

Defense officials said they have been planning for months for the likelihood that 2006 spending not directly related to the Iraq war could be scaled back.

The Pentagon's budget for fiscal 2001, which began Oct. 1, 2000, was $310 billion. For fiscal 2002, which was approved before the Sept. 11 attacks, it was $317 billion, and in subsequent years, rose to $355 billion, $368 billion and $416 billion. These figures do not include supplemental appropriations for war-fighting efforts.

Last February, the Pentagon estimated it would need $424 billion for 2006 and $445 billion for 2007, not including supplemental funding. Officials say those figures could both end up shrinking by $10 billion and that similar cuts could occur in subsequent years.

The budget cutting will not be easy, especially since the military services have spent months pouring over spreadsheets to assess their needs for the next fiscal year.

"There's a sense that the buildup is really over, and that the cuts could be substantial going forward," said Andrew Krepinevich of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a defense think tank in Washington. "There stand to be some really big, tough choices that have to be made as we face the new budget realities."

Superior Motors MSP
Military Sales Program

- Take advantage of your military status while serving overseas by ordering your new BMW direct from the factory through the BMW Military Sales Program.
- Your new BMW will be delivered direct to your hometown Dealership awaiting your return.
- All the necessary transactions needed to order your BMW can be completed directly over the internet.
- All U.S. military members and DOD civilians and contractors qualify.

www.superiormotorsmsp.com

Superior Motors MSP
Tel: (00 973) 17 813 883
Fax: (00 973) 17 813 553
Kingdom of Bahrain

IN THE STATES

Bush criticizes Iraqi troops, defends Rumsfeld

Also signals spending cuts at press briefing

BY JENNIFER LOVEN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush pointedly acknowledged Monday that U.S.-trained Iraqi troops are not ready to take over their country's security, and cautioned that next month's elections there are only the beginning of a long process toward democracy.

"I certainly don't expect the process to be trouble-free," Bush said at a year-end news conference in which he signaled tough spending cuts to come and declined to offer specific solutions to Social Security's solvency.

Bush also gave a fresh vote of confidence to embattled Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld. "He's doing a very fine job," the president said.

The 55-minute session, the 17th solo news conference of his presidency, was part of Bush's effort to seize the momentum from his re-election victory and push several ambitious domestic and foreign policy priorities in his second term.

On Iraq, where a bloody insurgency continues unabated, Bush urged the American people to remain patient well beyond the Jan. 30 elections to give Iraqis time to craft a constitution and strengthen their security forces.

AP

President Bush answers questions Monday during a news conference on the White House compound in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington.

Bush said "I would call the results mixed" on a U.S. effort to put Iraqi security in the hands of its own people. He said U.S. officials in charge of the effort will "spend a lot of time and effort" on fixing the problem by improving the Iraqi command structure.

Essential to the American strategy for withdrawing its troops from Iraq is the effort to train Iraqi forces for security and combat. But doubts have been raised from several quarters about the effectiveness of the effort and the reliability of Iraqi security forces.

On domestic issues, Bush said he will submit a federal budget that will cut the deficit in half in five years in part by asking for strict spending discipline. His fiscal 2006 budget is due to Congress in February.

"We will submit a budget that fits the times. It will provide every tool and resource to the military, will protect the homeland, and meet other priorities of the government," he said.

As for Rumsfeld, a growing number of lawmakers, including Republicans, have voiced no confidence in the defense secretary.

But Bush defended his Pentagon chief.

"Beneath that rough and gruff no-nonsense demeanor is a good human being who cares deeply about the military and the grief that war causes," Bush said, batting away criticism that Rumsfeld had not personally signed condolence letters to the families of troops who have died.

Bush defended his close but "complex" ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, with whom he has had disagreements over the war on terror and, more recently, over the disputed elections in Ukraine. U.S. and Russian officials said Monday that Bush and Putin would meet in Slovakia on Feb. 24 as part of an effort to improve U.S. relations with European nations.

Bush didn't tip his hand about who might be nominated to be the new national intelligence director — a post created by the largest overhaul of U.S. intellience-gathering in a half-century that Bush signed into law last week.

Cold winds blow over East Coast

The Associated Press

Freezing temperatures hit northern Florida on Monday morning and snow made mountain highways treacherous in the Appalachians as the first big cold wave of the season swept southward.

Even North Carolina's Outer Banks got a rare seaside dusting of snow, and more than 2 feet fell near the Great Lakes.

The blast of Arctic air — one day before the official start of winter — drove temperatures in the Florida Panhandle down to 31 degrees at Crestview, 32 at Pensacola.

Greensboro, N.C., posted a record low for Dec. 20 at 9, and Crossville, Tenn., dropped to 6. Farther north, it was 18 below zero at 9 a.m. at Massena, N.Y., with a wind chill of 28 below, the National Weather Service said.

An autistic 9-year-old boy was missing in the woods near South Williamsport, Pa., where temperatures fell into the single digits during the night. Officials appealed to residents to search their property Monday for Logan Mitchel-tree, who was last seen Saturday.

Icy pavement was blamed for at least two traffic deaths in New Jersey.

The icy wind sucked up moisture from the Great Lakes and dumped 26 inches of snow on Michigan City in northern Indiana.

Poll: Half of Americans fret about debt

BY WILL LESTER
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — During a season with shoppers racing about to wrap up holiday spending, half of Americans say they worry about their overall level of debt, an Associated Press poll found.

That includes many — about two in 10 of those surveyed — who say they stay worried about their debt level most or all of the time.

Those debts can come from home and car loans as well as credit cards — even more so with December buying sprees. Three-fourths in the poll said they have credit cards.

Most people who have credit cards say they work to keep control of them, but one in six with cards say they don't trust their own spending with plastic. Young adults and those who make less than $25,000 a year were most likely to doubt their own ability to manage credit cards.

Most who have credit cards say they try to keep those card debts under control. But some still have trouble.

One-fourth of credit card users say they use plastic to buy things when they don't have the money.

More than 1 million people file for personal bankruptcy each year, said Stephen Brobeck, executive director of the Consumer Federation of America.

"My strong sense from looking at lots of data, is that the number of people with debt problems is declining, but the number with severe debt problems is increasing," he said.

The total amount of revolving credit debt, such as that caused by credit cards, was just over $600 billion five years ago and is almost $800 billion now, according to the Federal Reserve.

In the survey, about 10 percent of those with credit cards said they have missed making their minimum payment during the past six months.

Economists say people are missing fewer credit card payments by juggling their debts and getting new credit cards.

In recent years, low interest rates have helped many people get home equity loans and pay off credit card debts. But that simply shifts the debt around.

Experiencing the highest levels of stress from debts were people at their credit card spending limit, those who are unmarried and have children, those without jobs and minorities.

Those with the lowest levels of stress from debt were retirees, Republicans, married people, college graduates and people between age 30 and 49.

Those groups' stress levels were measured based on their responses to a series of questions asked of 1,000 adults about debt and stress.

About four in 10 of all people questioned said their total debt is at least "somewhat stressful." Also, more than half expect their debt will cause them problems over the next five years.

The AP-Ipsos poll of 1,000 adults was taken Dec. 6-8. It has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points, slightly larger for the 790 people with credit cards.

Trevor Tompson, Associated Press manager of news surveys, contributed to this story.

Jackson's lawyers seek delay in molestation case

BY PAUL CHAVEZ
The Associated Press

SANTA MARIA, Cali. — Michael Jackson's lawyers went to court Monday to seek a six-week delay in his child molestation trial, saying they need the extra time to sort through 14,000 pages of evidence filed by prosecutors over the past two months.

Prosecutors had been expected to argue Monday that they should be allowed to present at Jackson's trial evidence of wrongdoing in the pop star's past. But according to a court calendar released Monday, that motion won't be brought up until next month.

In another motion made public last week, Jackson's attorneys asked that the trial, scheduled to begin Jan. 31, be delayed until mid-March. That motion is to be argued at Monday's hearing.

Jackson

Jackson, 46, is charged with molesting a boy, conspiracy and administering an intoxicating agent, alcohol, to his alleged victim. The entertainer — who on Friday personally greeted a group of children touring his Neverland Ranch before the Christmas holidays — was not required to attend this week's hearings.

They also asked that the charges against Jackson be dismissed on grounds of "vindictive prosecution and outrageous government conduct," pointing to the execution of more than 100 search warrants including this month's unusual raid on Jackson's estate near Los Olivos. Superior Court Judge Rodney Melville previously rejected a similar defense effort that sought removal of District Attorney Tom Sneddon.

Hearings on pretrial motions were scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday as well.

Inauguration security to be tightest ever

BY CURT ANDERSON
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush will be sworn in next month for a second term amid the tightest security in inaugural history, with police planning to search every one of the tens of thousands of people expected to line the parade route.

Behind the scenes, thousands of specialized law enforcement and military personnel will stand ready to respond to any emergency.

Security planners say they have seen no intelligence indicating terrorists will attempt to target the first inauguration since al-Qaida's attack against the United States on Sept. 11, 2001. But authorities are preparing for the worst, even as they strive for as open and accessible an event as possible.

"We are aware we are at war," said Terrance W. Gainer, police chief at the Capitol, where the ceremony will be held. "The whole world will truly be watching. We have to be on guard."

The Jan. 20 inauguration is the latest in a string of major events highly symbolic of U.S. democracy — the Democratic and Republican party conventions last summer and the election itself in November. Counterterrorism officials have warned since spring that al-Qaida operatives are interested in disrupting the democratic process.

To the millions watching the inauguration on television worldwide, the ceremony and parade will look much as it has in the past. But each person attending the swearing-in and parade will be subjected to a search by metal detectors, security personnel or both. And there will be more Washington streets closed and more security fencing than ever to create a large buffer zone.

"We have it as well covered as it can possibly be," said Michael A. Mason, head of the FBI's Washington field office.

The inauguration is designated a National Special Security Event, giving the Secret Service the lead among about 40 federal agencies involved in security planning and execution. A joint command center has been set up in suburban Virginia to enable top officials at these agencies to make quick, coordinated decisions in the event of an attack, violent protest or other problem.

"We're going to work as a team," Secret Service spokesman Tom Mazur said.

The extra security measures include bomb-sniffing dogs, sophisticated sensors to detect chemical, radiological or biological material, and expanded use of police helicopters and military aircraft. Thousands of police officers from the Washington suburbs and other cities will arrive to help with traffic, crowd control and other duties.

More will be ready to respond behind the scenes. The FBI, for example, will have investigators, evidence technicians, hostage rescue teams, heavily armed SWAT personnel, hazardous materials experts and bomb technicians in place.

"Our whole focus is a smooth operation if something does happen," Mason said. "We will be able to bring quite a robust force."

The military will have a heightened security role. This inauguration is the first since creation of the Joint Force Headquarters-National Capital Region, set up after the Sept. 11 attacks to protect the Washington area. It includes all branches of the military.

AP

Maj. Gen. Galen B. Jackman stands on a giant map during a preview of the parade route for President Bush's inauguration.

Preparing for worst

Important components of security preparations for President Bush's Jan. 20 inauguration:

- Enhanced security checkpoints at ceremony and along parade route. Each spectator to undergo a search, go through a metal detector, or both.
- More fencing and a wider buffer zone around parade route, with more streets closed.
- Use of bomb-sniffing dogs, chemical, biological and radiological sensors, and heightened aerial surveillance.
- About 40 agencies involved in security planning, led by Secret Service.
- Up to 4,000 military personnel available to assist or react to emergencies.
- Hundreds of specialized law enforcement personnel on standby, including FBI SWAT teams, evidence recovery technicians, bomb experts and hazardous material workers.

From The Associated Press

FLY HOME
Jan - Mar Specials
Atlanta..... $ 339
New York..... $ 299
New Orleans..... $ 339
Phoenix..... $ 339
Los Angeles..... $ 465
San Francisco..... $ 439
Detroit..... $ 339
Tax not incl- All fares are roundtrip for travel Jan-Mar 05.
Great fares to all destinations.
Vacations by Air
Egypt 1week EU 1050
Russia 1 week $ 1390
St. Petersburg-Moscow - With Lufthansa
full week sighseeing incl.
CRUISES EU 699 up
3 NIGHTS
Istanbul $ 339up
TOP TOURistik
Call tollfree 0800FLYHOME
E-mail: toptouristik@t-online.de
web:www.toptourist.de

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR NEW WORLDWIDE
CAREER OPPORTUNITIES?
LOOK AT SPARTAN!
Professional Pilot
Aviation Mechanic
Avionics
Communications
Quality Control
Nondestructive Testing
Degree and Diploma Programs
12 Months to 30 Months
50% hands-on training
Most programs approved for VA Benefits
SPARTAN
COLLEGE OF AERONAUTICS AND TECHNOLOGY
Tulsa, OK • Licensed by: OBPVS
www.spartan.edu
1-918 / 831-8686
Email: spartan@mail.spartan.edu

3.2 Ghz
OUR 1024MB Ram
$175
per month
Wireless
800HighTech.com

Bush's aides mum on details of Social Security overhaul

BY WILLIAM C. MANN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two of President Bush's top advisers refused on Sunday to rule out the possibility that wealthy people might have to pay more to help cover the cost of his move to partially privatize Social Security.

Neither Treasury Secretary John Snow nor Andrew Card, the White House chief of staff, would say whether Bush's ideas about overhauling the federal retirement program would include raising the limit on incomes subject to Social Security taxes.

People currently pay those taxes on income up to $87,900. That level will climb to $90,000 next year. One proposal to help compensate for the private accounts would raise or eliminate the tax cutoff, which would mean that wealthier people would pay more.

Asked on ABC's "This Week" whether that was possible, Card said: "The rate that you and I pay, contribute, to our Social Security, the president does not want to see that rate increased."

He would go no further in subsequent questioning.

Both Card and Snow, who appeared on "Fox News Sunday," said Social Security is beyond repair as it now stands. They said details of a plan to overhaul it remain to be worked out.

Card suggested "an open and honest debate about all of the ramifications" of Bush's ideas.

"Let's get smart people like Alan Greenspan involved, and members of the House and the Senate, and the president will be looking for wise counsel as he prepares to put a package together." Greenspan is the longtime chairman of the Federal Reserve, highly respected in Congress for his stewardship of the economy.

Asked whether Bush's ideas would remove guarantees of Social Security benefits to younger workers, Card said: "Under no one's plan will younger workers receive benefits they've been promised because the Social Security system doesn't have the financial underpinning, the foundation to support the expectations of social security 75 years from now, 50 years from now."

Bush expects to present a plan to Congress in his budget proposals in February.

What has been laid out so far is that people retiring or near retirement would suffer no cuts in benefits, Social Security taxes would not go up and younger workers could opt into a 401(k) style private investment plan with part of their contributions.

Baby girl cut from womb in good condition

Mom's alleged killer scheduled for court appearance

BY HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH
The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — An infant girl who was cut from her strangled mother's womb remained in good condition Monday as the alleged attacker prepared to make a first court appearance.

Lisa Montgomery, of Melvern, Kan., was set to appear Monday afternoon at the federal courthouse in Kansas City, Mo., before Chief Magistrate Judge John Maughmer. A spokesman for U.S. Attorney Todd Graves said the magistrate would read the charge — kidnapping resulting in death — and possibly appoint a lawyer for Montgomery and scheduled an arraignment.

Authorities said Montgomery, 36, confessed to strangling Bobbie Jo Stinnett of Skidmore, Mo., on Thursday, cutting out the fetus and taking the baby back to Kansas. She is accused of trying to pass the child off as her own to family and friends.

Victoria Jo Stinnett, the baby girl, was later recovered unharmed.

The child remained in the neonatal intensive care unit Monday at Stormont-Vail Regional Health Center in Topeka, Kan.

"She's in remarkably good condition for what has happened to her," hospital spokeswoman Tami Motley said. There was no immediate indication when the infant might go home.

The court appearance came one day after churchgoers in two communities struggled to understand the death.

In the small northwestern Missouri town of Skidmore, the minister who presided over Stinnett's wedding last year is offering his services at her funeral on Tuesday.

"They were kids in the neighborhood, nice young kids," said the Rev. Harold Hamon of Skidmore Christian Church. "She's just a real nice girl, real pretty, quiet and reserved."

Though Hamon didn't discuss the death directly in the sermon, it was very clearly on the mind of the congregation, he said. A member of the congregation who spoke at the couple's wedding performed the communion meditation Sunday, and his subject was forgiveness.

"It's almost unbelievable that right under your nose something terrible can be happening," Hamon said.

Stinnett's mother found her daughter's body in a pool of blood inside the couple's small white home on Thursday afternoon.

Stinnett had been eight months pregnant with her first child.

Police recovered Stinnett's baby a day later after tracking down Montgomery through e-mails she had sent Stinnett about buying a dog.

Montgomery, a mother of two, lied to family and friends about being pregnant with twins and suffering a miscarriage, investigators said. Detectives doubt whether she was pregnant at all.

Associated Press writer David Twiddy contributed to this report.

AP

This undated photo shows LisaMontgomery, of Melvern, Kan., who was charged with kidnapping resulting in death of Bobbie Jo Stinnett, who was strangled and whose fetus was cut out of her womb.

Race, revenge may be possible motives in Maryland arsons, investigators say

BY STEPHEN MANNING
The Associated Press

INDIAN HEAD, Md. — Federal investigators say two possible motives have emerged for fires that caused $10 million in damage at an upscale housing development in the Washington suburbs.

Four men have been charged with arson at the Hunters Brooke development, where fires on Dec. 6 destroyed 10 houses and damaged 16 others. No one was hurt; many of the homes were still under construction.

Three of the men had a hearing scheduled Monday in federal court.

Race and revenge are among the theories that emerged as authorities questioned the four men. A federal law enforcement official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said Sunday two allegedly made racial statements.

The suspects are white, and many of the families moving into the homes are black.

The federal official said that one of the suspects, Jeremy Daniel Parady, was turned down when he tried to get a job with Lennar Corp., the company building the houses about 30 miles south of Washington.

Another suspect, Aaron Speed, 21, told investigators he was upset his employer did not show enough sympathy after his infant son died this year, according to court documents. He worked for a security company hired to guard the development, and is being held until a hearing Tuesday.

Michael Campbell, a spokesman for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said investigators are considering revenge and race, along with several other possible motives.

"Two typical motives for arson are revenge and race," Campbell said. "It's something investigators are looking at."

None of the suspects has been charged with a hate crime.

On Saturday, officials arrested three of the men — Parady, Patrick Stephen Walsh and Michael McIntosh Everhart, all 20.

Initially, there was speculation the fires were set by environmental extremists because some environmental groups had complained the houses threatened a nearby bog. But no evidence has been found to support that theory, police said.

Derrick Potts, who is black and lives with his girlfriend and children in the only occupied house in the section of Hunters Brooke that burned, said he doubts race was the prime motive.

His family has been warmly received by the Indian Head community following the fires, and Potts has not sensed any racial animosity.

"I've never looked at this area as having racial problems," he said.

Potts' home suffered little damage and the family was able to return home last week.

Another homeowner, Jacque Hightower, said he has never seen any open racial hostility in the fast-growing region south of Washington.

"Charles County is one of the only places in the (Washington) D.C. metro area that seemed friendly to us," he said.

Associated Press writer Foster Klug in Baltimore contributed to this story.

Report: Most rentals in U.S. unaffordable to nation's poor

BY GENARO C. ARMAS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Most Americans who rely on just a full-time job earning the federal minimum wage cannot afford the rent and utilities on a one- or two-bedroom apartment, an advocacy group on low-income housing reported Monday.

For a two-bedroom rental alone, the typical worker must earn at least $15.37 an hour — nearly three times the federal minimum wage, the National Low Income Housing Coalition said in its annual "Out of Reach" report.

That figure assumes that a family spends no more than 30 percent of its gross income on rent and utilities — anything more is generally considered unaffordable by the government.

Yet many poor Americans are paying more than they can afford because wage increases haven't kept up with increases in rent and utilities, said Danilo Pelletiere, the coalition's research director.

The median hourly wage in the United States is about $14, and more than one-quarter of the population earns less than $10 an hour, the report said.

"A lot of people continue to be squeezed out," said Judy Levey, executive director of the Homeless and Housing Coalition of Kentucky. "Housing here is relatively inexpensive, but because the wages are so low, people can't afford housing."

The report quoted federal Bureau of Labor Statistics data that showed hourly wages rising about 2.6 percent over the past year, slower than the 2.9 percent rise in rents recorded in the Consumer Price Index.

In addition, Pelletiere said, government spending on Section 8 rental vouchers, which helps 2 million Americans — mainly poor — pay rent hasn't kept up with demand.

The study analyzed data from the Census Bureau and the Housing and Urban Development Department to derive the hourly wage figures.

In only four of the nation's 3,066 counties could a full-time worker making the federal minimum wage afford a typical one-bedroom apartment, the coalition said. Three were in Illinois: Lawrence, Crawford and Wayne counties; the other was Washington County, Fla.

California topped all states in the hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment, at $21.24, followed by Massachusetts, New Jersey, Maryland and New York.

States with more residents in rural areas were generally the most affordable, although no state's housing wage was lower than the federal minimum wage of $5.15 an hour, which has not changed since 1997.

West Virginia was the lowest at $9.31 an hour for a two-bedroom rental, followed by North Dakota, Arkansas, Mississippi and Alabama.

Pelletiere said the coalition's data for 2004 could not be compared with previous years because of changes in the way that HUD calculated "Fair Market Rents," which is the cost of rent and most utilities for a typical apartment. The fair rent varies widely by metropolitan area.

Overall, though, utility costs appear to be rising at a faster rate than rents, Pelletiere said. Add in stagnant wages and the housing situation for the nation's poor "has gotten worse over the last year," he said.

NYC is most sued city in the country

BY LARRY MCSHANE
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Consider the case of the soused spouse.

Shortly after midnight on Nov. 14, 1999, a drunken Jose Ordonez returned to his East Harlem home and demanded dinner. When his wife refused, the 240-pound Ordonez allegedly beat her. Police arrived and arrested Ordonez; as they walked the intoxicated suspect down the stairs, he stumbled, missed a step and broke his ankle.

Ordonez's next step? He called a lawyer and sued the cops.

He wasn't alone. Each year, 37,000 people sue New York City.

Some of those cases strain the imagination.

There was the Bronx man, legally blind, who drove his car into a concrete barrier — and sued. (An underpass where the crash happened should have been lighted better, he argued.) The guy who bought a stolen SUV in a city airport parking lot for $75 — and sued. (Wrongful arrest, he argued when released in a technicality.) The two inmates who shot themselves with a smuggled handgun in their Rikers Island jail cells — and sued. (A guard was responsible, they argued before a judge kicked out their case.)

Representing the Big Apple in the nation's most litigious city is Michael Cardozo, named in January 2002 as New York City corporation counsel. The city's top legal gun runs an office of 650 lawyers in all five boroughs.

Ordonez sought $6.5 million for his ankle, but wound up with zip from a Manhattan jury.

IN THE WORLD

Russia's freedom steps backward

Watchdog faults Putin as nation restricts rights

BY JUDITH INGRAM
The Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia has restricted rights to such an extent that it has joined the countries that are not free for the first time since the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union, Freedom House said Monday, marking Moscow's march away from the Western democracies it has embraced as diplomatic partners.

"This setback for freedom represented the year's most important political trend," the U.S.-based nongovernmental organization wrote in its annual study, Freedom in the World 2005.

Freedom House noted increased Kremlin control over national television and other media, limitations on local government, and parliamentary and presidential elections it said were neither free nor fair.

"Russia's step backward into the Not Free category is the culmination of a growing trend under President Vladimir Putin to concentrate political authority, harass and intimidate the media, and politicize the country's law-enforcement system," Executive Director Jennifer Windsor said.

"These moves mark a dangerous and disturbing drift toward authoritarianism in Russia, made more worrisome by President Putin's recent heavy-handed meddling in political developments in neighboring countries, such as Ukraine."

The report accused Putin of exploiting the terrorist seizure of a school in southern Russia to ram through what Freedom House called the dismantlement of local authority. In the wake of the attack, which killed more than 330 people, Putin introduced a plan to end the election of governors by popular vote and the election of legislators in individual races.

Currently, the 450 seats in the lower house of parliament are equally split between those filled through party lists and those contested in district races.

The Russian Foreign Ministry had no immediate comment on the report, which said that Russia had reached its lowest point where political rights and civic freedoms are concerned since 1989. Freedom House said that on balance, the world saw increased freedom in 2004: 26 countries showed gains while 11 showed decline.

Of the world's 192 countries, it judged 46 percent free, 26 percent not free, and the rest partly free. Eight rated as the most repressive: Burma, Cuba, Libya, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and Turkmenistan.

Freedom House, a Washington-based, nonpartisan group, was founded nearly 60 years ago by Americans concerned about threats to democracy. It conducts advocacy, research and training to encourage and nurture democracy.

ITAR-TASS/AP

Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with the Cabinet on Monday in Moscow's Kremlin. Freedom House, a U.S.-based organization that tracks the progress of political rights and civil liberties across the world, said Monday that Russia had declined to the status of "not free."

Six killed in firefight at Afghan checkpoint

The Associated Press

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — A vehicle carrying a group of suspected Taliban fighters attacked a military checkpoint in southern Afghanistan, sparking a firefight that left six dead and at least four wounded, police said Monday.

Kandahar police chief Khan Mohammed said the attack occurred at 6 p.m. Sunday in Maivand district, 90 miles west of Kandahar city.

The exchange of gunfire killed four soldiers and a civilian, and the attackers left behind the body of one fighter as they drove away, police said. Security forces were pursuing them.

In a separate incident, two American soldiers were wounded Saturday when their patrol came under small arms fire northeast of Shinkay, in adjacent Zabul province, U.S. Maj. Mark McCann told reporters.

Both were evacuated after the firefight and are in stable condition awaiting transport to a U.S. medical facility in Germany, he said.

Message for our men and women in uniform...

WE ARE PROUD OF YOU!

From coast to coast, thousands of Americans are grateful for what you do and want to show you that they care. To see the actions and messages of support from these groups and individuals from all across America, visit www.stripes.com.

This is just a small token of appreciation, a way to say...

AMERICA SUPPORTS YOU
OUR MILITARY MEN & WOMEN

Please visit the site at www.stripes.com and click on the America Supports You button to view the messages of support and to submit your own thank you notes as well!

STARS AND STRIPES
Your Hometown Newspaper

STARS AND STRIPES

THOMAS E. KELSCH, Publisher
THOMAS BIERMANN, General Manager, Europe
LT. COL. CYRIL J. SOCHA, Commander

News and Editorial
DAVID MAZZARELLA, Editorial Director
DOUG CLAWSON, Managing Editor
ROBB GRINDSTAFF, Associate Editor
SAM AMRHEIN, Europe Bureau Chief
SCOTT BURGESS, Middle East Bureau Chief
JOE GROMELSKI, Electronic Edition Editor
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITORS:
Sharon Olson, News Peter Pheklove, Photo/Graphics
Brian Bowers, Features Sean Moores, Sports

Addresses
U.S. MAIL: Unit 29480, APO AE 09211
INTERNATIONAL MAIL: Postfach 1330, 64345 Griesheim, Germany
FAX: DSN 349-8416; civ. (+49) (0) 6155/601416
E-MAIL: News: news@mail.estripes.osd.mil
Letters: letters@mail.estripes.osd.mil
CENTRAL OFFICE: 529 14th Street NW, Suite 350, Washington DC 20045-1301. Phone DSN 312-763-0900 or civ. (+1) (202) 761-0900. Fax (+1) (202) 761-0890
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: David Mazzarella, 529 14th St. NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC 20045-1301. Phone DSN 312- 763-0945 or civ. (+1) (202) 761-0945.
E-mail:mazzarellad@stripes.osd.mil
OMBUDSMAN: Joe Ungaro. Send comments to: Ombudsman, Stars and Stripes, 529 14th St. NW, Suite 350, Washington, D.C. 20045-1301. Phone civilian (+1) (401) 364-6032; fax (+1) (401) 364-8696;
or e-mail: ombudsman@stripes.osd.mil.

How to call us
Editor: DSN 349-8237; civ. (+49) (0) 6155/601237
Letters: DSN 349-8400 civ. (+49) (0) 6155/601400
Sports: DSN 349-8225; civ. (+49) (0) 6155/601225
Circulation: DSN 349-8437; civ. (+49) (0) 6155/601437
Advertising: DSN 349-8335/443;
civ. (+49) (0) 6155/601335/443.

News Bureaus
GERMANY (country code +49)
Bamberg: Rick Emert, 279th BSB, Unit 27535, Box 23541, APO AE 09139-7535; tel. DSN 469-7957 or civ. (0) 951/56896; fax DSN 469-8007 or civ. (0) 951/300-8007;
e-mail: emertr@mail.estripes.osd.mil
Baumholder: Terry Boyd, 222nd BSB, APO AE 09034; tel. DSN 485-6089; or civ. (0) 6783-900776; e-mail:
boydt@mail.estripes.osd.mil
Darmstadt: Kevin Dougherty, Unit 29480, APO AE 09211; tel. DSN 349-8406 or civ. (0) 6155-601406;
e-mail: doughertyk@mail.estripes.osd.mil. Ward Sanderson, Unit 29480, APO AE 09211; tel. DSN 349-8326 or civ. (0) 6155-601326; e-mail: sandersonw@mail.estripes.osd.mil; and Jessica Ilingo, Unit 29480, APO AE 09211; tel. DSN 349-8290 or civ. (0) 6155-601290; e-mail: ingoj@mail.estripes.osd.mil
Heidelberg/Mannheim: Jon R. Anderson, Room 117, Romerstr. 104, 69115 Heidelberg; tel. DSN 370-7010 or civ. (0) 6221/600554; fax civ. (0) 6221/23421; e-mail:
andersonj@mail.estripes.osd.mil.
Kaiserslautern/Spangdahlem: APO AE 09227-3717, tel. DSN 489-5585 or civ. (0) 631/52104 or (0) 631/57140; fax civ. (0) 631/50696
Stuttgart: Charlie Coon, CMR 423, Box 465, APO AE 09107-0465; tel. DSN 421-2088 or civ. 0711-7292088; e-mail:
coonc@mail.estripes.osd.mil
Würzburg: Steve Lower, Tel. DSN 350-6508 or civ. 0931-467-7001; fax civ. (0) 0931-700372; e-mail: lowers@mail.estripes.osd.mil

ITALY
Aviano/Vicenza: Kent Harris, tel. DSN (314) 632-7652 or civ. (39) 0434-66-7652; second line DSN (314) 632-4222 or civ. (39) 0434-66-4222; e-mail: harrisk@mail.estripes.osd.mil
Naples: Sonda Jordan and Jason Chady, PSC 810, Box 56, FPO AE 09619; tel. DSN 626-5157 or civ. (+39) (081) 568-5157; fax DSN 626-5150 or civ. (+39) (081) 568-5150; e-mail:
jordzs@mail.estripes.osd.mil; chadyj@mail.estripes.osd.mil

SPAIN
Rota: Scott Schonauer, PSC 819, Box 1, FPO AE 09645; tel. DSN 727-1099 or civ. (+34) (956) 82-1099; fax DSN 727-1034 or civ. (+34) (956) 82-1034
e-mail: schonauers@mail.estripes.osd.mil

UNITED KINGDOM
RAF Mildenhall: Ron Jensen, Building 603 ECSS-UK, RAF Mildenhall, APO AE 09459; tel. DSN 238-4868 or civ. (+44) (0) 1638/544868; fax civ. (+44) (0) 1638/ 718013;
e-mail: jensenr@mail.estripes.osd.mil

WASHINGTON D.C.
Bureau editor: Patrick Dickson, 529 14th Street NW, Suite 350, Washington DC 20045-1301; tel. (+1) (202) 761-0859;
e-mail: dicksonp@stripes.osd.mil
Lisa Burgess, tel civ. (+1) (703) 692-1875, and Leo Shane, 529 14th Street NW, Suite 350, Washington DC 20045-1301; tel civ. (+1) (202) 761-1183; fax civ. (+1) (202) 761-0890; e-mail:
burgesslr@stripes.osd.mil and shanel@stripes.osd.mil

Printed in Italy by Editrice Telestampa

Stars and Stripes (USPS 017252) is published daily (except Christmas and New Year's) for 52 weeks daily and 51 Sunday by the Stars and Stripes central office, 529 14th St. NW, Suite 350, Washington DC 20045-1301. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. Postmaster: Send address changes to European Stars and Stripes, Unit 29480, APO AE 09211.
© European and Pacific Stars and Stripes 2004

This newspaper is authorized for publication by the Department of Defense for members of the Military Services overseas. However, the contents of the STARS and STRIPES are unofficial, and are not to be considered as the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, including the Department of Defense or the U.S. European Command. As a DoD newspaper, the STARS and STRIPES may be distributed through official channels and use appropriated funds for distribution to remote and isolated locations where overseas DoD personnel are located.

The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense or the STARS and STRIPES of the products or services advertised.

Products or services advertised in this publication shall be made available for purchase, use, or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation, or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user, or patron.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please return missing goods

I recently returned from serving in Iraq. Prior to leaving theater, I, like many other servicemembers, mailed some personal belongings back to the States to reduce the amount of stuff I would have to carry. I bought a plastic footlocker from the post exchange, loaded it up and took it to the post office. After they inspected it, I locked it with a padlock and sent it on its way.

Imagine my surprise when the footlocker showed up at my house, minus the lock. It had been sealed with plastic banding. I opened it and discovered most of what was inside wasn't mine. Only a couple of articles of clothing actually belonged to me. After sorting through everything, I discovered that there was property of three other persons inside. Using some of the correspondence I found inside, I tracked down two of the people and called them. One lives in Arkansas, the other in Florida. I told them who I was and what the situation was. Both were also missing items.

I mailed what I had of theirs to them, and one of them is mailing some of my stuff to me. The rest of what I am missing is why I am writing. Somewhere along the line, someone cut the lock off my footlocker and removed an ammo can that contained several DVDs and PlayStation 2 games. Whoever was responsible for this then filled the empty space with three other persons' property. One of the persons I contacted told me that he was missing a GameBoy Advance and several games.

I don't know if whoever got into my footlocker was military or not, or even where the theft occurred. I really don't care. I appeal to whoever took my things to contact me and return them. My e-mail is **brian.thomas.reynolds@usarmy.mil**. I will send my stateside address, and if my stuff is sent back to me, I will mail the sender a money order to cover the cost of shipping, no questions asked. I realize this is a long shot, but it's worth a try.

Also, this should serve as an example to anyone else mailing stuff. Be sure to insure packages and think twice about what you send. It might be worth it to carry stuff by hand rather than take the chance of it coming up missing.

Spc. Brian T. Reynolds
South Bend, Ind.

Stop whining over badge

To the writer of "No CIB in an Army of One" (Dec. 9): First and foremost, I think soldiers need to stop whining about not being awarded a badge that is distinctive to a particular military occupational specialty. Let's look at the name of the badge: Combat *Infantryman* Badge. It is not the Combat Military Policeman Badge or the Combat Truck Driver Badge.

I believe every MOS contributes toward taking the fight to the enemy. Particular ones are just more directly involved in engaging the enemy. Everyone faces danger every time they roll outside the wire, but let's keep the badges where they belong.

If the letter writer still feels he deserves a CIB, here is my suggestion: The next time his re-enlistment window opens up, talk to his career counselor about reclassifying to the appropriate MOS that will allow him to be eligible for it. Unless he is willing to do that, I suggest he stop whining.

The infantry earned the right to wear a CIB by being an infantry soldier. If the writer is keen on changing Army regulations so that other MOSs are eligible for the CIB, then there are other avenues he can pursue instead of complaining in a letter.

Sgt. Michael C. Ramirez
Camp Falcon, Iraq

Worry about surviving, not CIB

I did my active duty as an infantryman in Fort Campbell, Ky., with the hard-core 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment and with the 2nd Infantry Division Currahee Scouts up in the demilitarized zone in South Korea. I have been serving as a military policeman at Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad for the past 10 months.

Do I think that I deserve a Combat Infantryman Badge? Of course not. I clearly understand AR 600-8-22. What's so hard to understand? If you are not infantry, you just don't get it. Period. Back in garrison nobody wants to be a grunt, probably because we were always out in the field training, while everybody else, well almost everybody, was back on post enjoying everything else the Army had to offer. Now, all of a sudden, everybody wants to be infantry. Why? To wear the CIB because it looks cool on your uniform?

I'm not saying those in other military occupational specialties don't do as much as infantry units do out there, because everybody is doing an outstanding job, and if we all did our job without worrying about what award we will get for doing it, it would make everyone's life a whole lot easier. If you wanted to wear the CIB, you should have gone infantry. You knew that there was a slight possibility that you would be going to combat, unless you signed up just for the college money.

Guess what? This is reality. Welcome. Now, would you just please stop complaining about it and just keep doing the outstanding job every one of you has been doing so we can, one day, all be back home with our loved ones ... with or without a CIB? And yes, we are an Army of One.

Sgt. Jaime Rodriguez
Abu Ghraib, Iraq

Tell us what you think

Stars and Stripes welcomes your comments on editorials and columns that are published in the newspaper, and values letters on topics of importance in the lives of our readers. All letters must be signed, and must include the writer's address or base and telephone number. Please limit all letters to 300 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, taste and clarity.

Send your letters to:

U.S. Mail:	International mail:
Stars and Stripes	Stars and Stripes
Unit 29480	Postfach 1330
APO AE 09211	64345 Griesheim

Via fax: [Country code +49] (0) 6155/601395; DSN 349-8395

E-mail: letters@mail.estripes.osd.mil

A complaint on complaining

That's it! I've had it with all the whining letter writers and I've decided to throw in my 2 cents' worth. All my wrath is from selected letters to the editor from the past week.

■ The Combat Infantryman Badge is for infantry only (which I am not). Everyone who complains about not being authorized a CIB sounds like a little kid: "Mommy, mommy, I want what that man has." Good for you. When re-up time comes, utilize the Bonus Extension and Retraining program and you can earn one, too. Why do you even care about awards/entitlements right now? Worry about everyone in your unit making it back to the world alive.

■ Smoking is bad. People are complaining about the Marlboro man picture. I agree that smoking is bad (I don't smoke) but so are bullets, mortars, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and roadside bombs. I'd rather die smoking.

■ Kuwait. Are you kidding me? How's the vay-cay going? Yes, everyone there says they want to be here. So put your money where your mouth is and come join us up in the real deal. So I won't be confused with a "pog," I am on my second tour in Iraq (I volunteered to come back). I am a Purple Heart recipient who would not leave my unit when my father passed away because I was raised by my parents to honor my commitments. I have been over here more in the past two years than I've been with my wife and kids (whom I both dearly love). I am not doing this for the awards (or lack thereof); I am doing this for the honor of serving my country, like my father and grandfather did before me.

Spc. Jonathan B. Nunemaker
Iraq

Hunting has positive purpose

I would like to ask the writer of the letter "Hunting promotes suffering?" (Dec. 11) what hunting has to do with proving our manhood. Does that mean the numerous women who hunt are trying to prove their womanhood? But maybe she is right, it is so much better to see an "innocent animal" starve to death, suffering for months, because of overpopulation and lack of food.

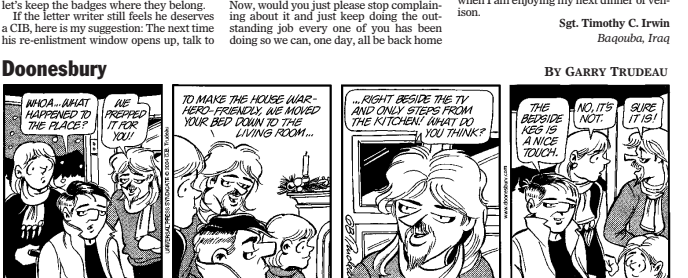
I will agree with the writer on one thing: Yes there are a few people who are barbaric with hunting and to my knowledge that is called poaching.

I understand that people have different views on everything, but to be called a "coward" and a "yahoo" because of a sport that I and many others enjoy is just too much. I could think of many names that people with her point of view could be called, but I refuse to stoop to name-calling. Instead I will think of her and smile when I am enjoying my next dinner of venison.

Sgt. Timothy C. Irwin
Baqouba, Iraq

Doonesburg

BY GARRY TRUDEAU



OPINION

Time is right for 'Chemical Ali' to face trial

Los Angeles Times

There are plenty of complications involved in trying Saddam Hussein and others from his regime for crimes committed against the Iraqi people, but none that argues for further delay. Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi was right to announce that some of the war-crimes trials would start this week, including that of Ali Hassan al-Majid, known as "Chemical Ali," a cousin of Saddam's believed to have used poison gas to murder thousands of Kurds.

If the trials don't get under way, Saddam and his henchmen may never face justice. It's true that Allawi's every move in the run-up to the Jan. 30 elections is politically motivated, especially now that he has declared his own candidacy. But it could be a long wait before a democratic government with more legitimacy could initiate these proceedings, and the mostly Sunni defendants would still accuse the majority Shiites of unfairness. Indeed, the legal safeguards afforded the defendants, combined with the weight of the evidence, will determine whether these trials are deemed credible. For that reason, the government should televise the proceedings.

There is also a matter of basic fairness and due process. Keeping Saddam's lieutenants indefinitely locked up without charging them is hardly the way to launch a new democracy, even if Washington has set a poor example at Guantanamo Bay.

It's almost unavoidable, as the Nuremberg war crimes trials showed, that these trials will be seen to some extent as "victor's justice."

In 1945, Chief Justice of the United States Harlan Fiske Stone called the prosecution being led by his colleague Robert Jackson a "high-grade lynching party."

It's a foregone conclusion that Saddam and his cohorts, like the Nazis, are guilty of heinous crimes. The accomplishment of Nuremberg was to shock and re-educate the German people by creating a documentary record of the Nazi regime's crimes and atrocities. In a traumatized Iraq, trials could have a similarly cathartic effect.

The real question is whether Iraq's judges are capable of carrying out the trials. The prosecutors need to work their way through mounds of documents and carefully prepare for belligerent defendants, especially the canny Saddam, who will attempt, as much as possible, to disrupt the proceedings and turn them into a circus.

The Bush administration, which has refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the permanent International Criminal Court in The Hague, has asked for the help of the United Nations in assisting prosecutors and judges. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has disgracefully refused to help, claiming that Iraq's death penalty prevents the United Nations from participating. But that hasn't prevented the United Nations from helping to carry out judicial reform in Rwanda and Afghanistan, which have the death penalty.

AP

The war-crimes trial for Ali Hassan al-Majid, who is shown in Beirut, Lebanon, last year, began this week. Al-Majid, a member of Saddam Hussein's government, is known as "Chemical Ali."

Those seeking to postpone justice can always point to some logistical or political reason for putting off these trials. But given their length — the main Nuremberg war crimes trial dragged on for more than a year, and former Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic continues to tie up the proceedings in his trial at The Hague — Allawi is right to want to get started.

Democracy in Afghanistan can be an example for Iraq

BY DONALD RUMSFELD

"The ladies are coming to vote, because the future belongs to us — to us and our children." — Provincial elections official, Afghanistan, October 2004

Contrast that with this quote about women from a Taliban minister only a few years ago: "It's like having a flower, or a rose. You water it and keep it at home for yourself to look at. … It is not supposed to be taken out of the house."

Rumsfeld

On Dec. 7, I attended the inauguration of the first democratically elected national leader in Afghanistan's history.

It is something we would have considered not just unlikely, or naive — but downright extraordinary not that long ago.

History has a way of overcoming expectations and conventional wisdom. In my lifetime, I have seen Germany become a genocidal and expansionistic dictatorship and then a democratic ally of the United States within a span of a relatively few years. I have seen the Berlin Wall first rise and then fall — along with the totalitarian empire that built it.

Consider Afghanistan's October election, another such watershed moment in history. Just over three years ago, an extremist, barbaric regime ruled that country — a country that had suffered through decades of civil war, drought and Soviet occupation, and had no experience with democracy or individual rights. The Taliban beat women for exposing their ankles, forbade them from attending school, walking unaccompanied on city streets or seeing a male doctor. Kabul's soccer stadium was used not for soccer, but for public executions.

And as Americans know all too well, Afghanistan served as the base for al-Qaida's planning, training and operations. Osama bin Laden was the Taliban's favored guest.

On Oct. 9, 2004, as a result of the bravery and hard work of coalition forces and, most of all, the Afghan people, more than 8 million people were able to vote — some 40 percent of them women — in the first free elections in Afghanistan's history.

In addition, 3 million Afghan refugees have returned to their homeland since 2002 and it is estimated that the economy is growing at a rate of some 7 percent per year.

Thousands of brave young men have volunteered to serve in Afghanistan's multiethnic army, which is taking the fight to extremists and those terrorists who may still be harboring fantasies of returning to power and privilege.

And Kabul's soccer stadium is now used not for public beheadings, but for soccer.

None of this was considered possible, much less likely, by much if not most of so-called expert opinion three years ago.

The mantra is now familiar: Afghanistan could not pursue democracy because it was neglected and ignored by a Bush administration obsessed with Iraq; that the Taliban were making a comeback and al-Qaida was on the march; that democracy and voting were irrevocably alien to the Afghan people and their culture.

In every instance, the critics were wrong. Afghans — including millions of women — braved threats and intimidation, traveled great distances, and waited in line for hours to cast ballots for their first democratically elected president. They will do so again next year when Afghanistan has its parliamentary elections — another important milestone, as well as a logistical and security challenge.

In Iraq, many of the widely popular negative sentiments are the same as we heard about Afghanistan, but so too is the potential for success. We are still less than two years from when Iraq was ruled by a murderous dictator who brutalized his country, looted its wealth and neglected its infrastructure.

No doubt the Iraq insurgency is more widespread, the casualties heavier, the obstacles seemingly more daunting. The reward for success — a free and peaceful Iraq — and the unthinkable consequences of failure are extraordinarily high, as the extremists well know. They have so much to lose.

Democratic elections in Iraq will deal a similarly devastating blow to the terrorists seeking to take that country back to a dark place. And the impact will be felt not just in Iraq — wedged as it is between two dangerous regimes in the heart of the Middle East — but in that entire region.

So we should take stock — and take pride — in what has been accomplished in the global war on terror, but stay vigilant and clear-eyed about the challenges ahead in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. And these challenges are real.

As in Afghanistan, success in Iraq will come from the perseverance of the free world, embodied by the valor and professionalism of the men and women in uniform, the coalition forces, and the new Iraqi security forces who are risking their lives every day, working with the newly liberated people to overcome intimidation and violence and to build a better life and future for themselves and their families.

In the last analyses, it will be up to the Iraqi people and I believe they have a good crack at making it. I say this because the great sweep of human history is for freedom. And that is on our side.

Donald Rumsfeld is secretary of defense.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY

AIDS marks its toll on orphans in Zimbabwe

Report: Nearly a million children have lost parents due to HIV-related illnesses

The Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe — Nearly a million children in Zimbabwe have lost one or both parents to AIDS and HIV-related illnesses, the United Nations Children's Fund said Monday.

Girls as young as nine were caring for siblings or for ailing parents and relatives in Zimbabwe, UNICEF said in its annual State of the World's Children report.

With an estimated 26 percent of the country's 12.5 million people infected with HIV, orphans were dropping out of school, often suffered from malnutrition and were "more likely to be involved in hazardous forms of labor" including prostitution, said Festo Kavishe, UNICEF's chief representative in Harare.

The fund's report on Zimbabwe said the social and economic consequences of HIV/AIDS were underscored by the decline in life expectancy from age 52 to 37 since 1990.

In traditionally polygamous African societies, HIV is mostly spread by heterosexual contact as well as needles and blades contaminated with infected blood.

Zimbabwe is facing its worst economic crisis since independence, with soaring prices and record unemployment. Public health services have crumbled.

Most of the estimated 2,000 people who die from AIDS-related illnesses each week are unable to afford treatment and are usually sent home to die if they have been briefly hospitalized.

The nation is suffering acute shortages of hard currency and essential imports, including medicines.

The government estimates that 26 percent of Zimbabwe's people are infected with HIV/AIDS, but officials acknowledge the rate could be higher because of a stigma that leaves many conditions unreported as being HIV-related.

Cuba wraps up military defense exercises

BY VANESSA ARRINGTON
The Associated Press

HAVANA — Cubans awoke to air raid sirens and practiced shooting, putting on gas masks and doing duck-and-cover drills as the communist nation wrapped up a week of preparation after Fidel Castro's government has warned against possible attacks from the United States.

The activities, called the Strategic Bastion 2004 Exercise, were intended as an evaluation of how prepared Cuba is to face military attack during President George W. Bush's second term.

State-run newspapers reported Sunday that the exercises were a success and that Cuba's "capacity to resist and overcome an imperialist aggression" was demonstrated.

Since even before the United States launched its unilateral attack on Iraq last year, Cuba has insisted that a similar U.S. strike is possible.

"The risks of (U.S.) aggression are real," President Fidel Castro said Sunday on Cuban television.

American authorities have repeatedly rejected that idea, saying there are no plans to attack Cuba. Last week, the U.S. State Department said the large-scale exercises in Cuba were held to distract people from the hardships of their lives.

AP

A Cuban woman gets instructions on how to put on her gas mask at a neighborhood military committee in Havana, Cuba, on Sunday. Weeklong military exercises aimed at evaluating how prepared Cuban society is to face a possible attack by the United States ended Sunday.

Cuban army troops, reserves and militia spent the week firing rockets, launching grenades and practicing drills with civilians.

Soldiers put up barricades in Havana neighborhoods as fighter jets flew overhead.

Thousands of Cubans took to the streets, taking their prearranged places under the doctrine of "The Peoples' War," in which every citizen, young and old, participates in the defense of the country.

Children were sent to schools early Sunday to practice duck-and-cover drills. Civilians practiced shooting, conducted first aid and gas masks drills.

Work groups gathered to discuss how to guarantee food, water and health care for the population in the event of an attack, as well as to plan evacuations, arrange security and set up a system for communicating with civilians.

State media reported that a total of four million Cubans participated in the drills, the biggest of their kind in 18 years.

Cubans from defense organizations that include much of the general population participated as did defense forces of the Interior Ministry, which oversees internal security.

Defense Minister Raul Castro, who oversaw the operation, toured several sites to motivate participants.

"There are Cubans of every color, making up a precious rainbow, but all have the same language, purpose, ideal: that unity is our most powerful weapon," Castro told civilians in Havana, according to Sunday's edition of Juventud Rebelde, the Communist Party's youth newspaper.

Report: China to begin jury trials soon

The Associated Press

BEIJING — China will start holding jury trials next year as part of court reforms that also will increase the number of judges, state media reported Monday.

The measures were announced by China's highest court after a meeting last week on how to best prepare the courts to handle cases stemming from the country's sweeping economic changes, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Jurors are to be elected to five-year terms and must have at least two years of university education, the Xinhua report and other state media said. Under the current system, judges are the sole arbiters in court cases.

Elections are not unheard of in China. The communist government has used nonpartisan "village elections" in recent years to pick its lowest-level officials and members of local legislatures.

However, it wasn't clear how the use of juries would affect the two biggest public complaints about Chinese courts — corruption by court officials and interference by Communist Party officials.

The number of judges in Chinese courts will increase by 10 percent, the reports said, citing Xiao Yang, president of the Supreme People's Court.

Xiao promised that courts would be tougher on corruption and intellectual property theft — two politically sensitive issues — as well as smuggling and dereliction of duty, the reports said.

Courts face rising numbers of cases involving state-owned company reforms, disputes of back pay, illegal land acquisitions and burglaries, Xiao said.

"During such a period, the country needs improvement in its judicial capacity," he was quoted as saying.

2 skiers killed in avalanche

INNSBRUCK, Austria — Avalanches killed two skiers and seriously injured another Monday, and experts warned that recent storms have created unstable conditions ripe for more snow slides in Austria's Alps.

A 41-year-old American and a 39-year-old German died in an avalanche in Lech am Arlberg in the southwestern province of Vorarlberg that also critically injured the American's wife, also 41, the Austria Press Agency reported.

Officials did not immediately release the names or hometowns of the victims, who were located after a 30-minute search by 15 mountain rescue experts using a pair of specially trained dogs.

They said the German was dead at the scene and that the American died later at a hospital where he had been airlifted by helicopter.

The victims were skiing off-trail in deep powder and were not wearing avalanche transmitters that emit a signal to help rescuers locate people buried in snow, Austrian television reported.

Army chief to be replaced

PODGORICA, Serbia-Montenegro — The head of the Serbia-Montenegro army and some of his closest associates could be replaced later this week as part of routine staff changes, the president of tiny Montenegro was quoted as saying on Monday.

Filip Vujanovic told Montenegrin daily Pobijeda that the changes among the top generals, many of who are retiring, could take place at a session of the country's top defense body on Friday.

Vujanovic added that "we will appoint not only the new army chief of staff, but also new members of the army headquarters as some of the people will retire."

It was not immediately clear who could replace Gen. Branko Krga and his associates. Serbia-Montenegro officials have said that Krga's retirement was routine and expected.

Vujanovic said that "the most important thing is that (the new army chief of staff) be a reformist, a man that will carry out sensitive reforms, including reduction of the army troops."

From The Associated Press

Snow job

Fans of original snow globe maker include presidents, schoolchildren

BY GEORGE JAHN
The Associated Press

VIENNA, Austria — As his grandson tells it, it began as a project by a man trying to build stronger lights for a Vienna operating room. Instead, the first snow globe was born.

More than 100 years later, a Vienna craftsman has turned his grandfather's fluke discovery into an enterprise beloved the world over.

"I have customers everywhere, even the Falkland Islands," Erwin Perzy said.

He says he sells 300,000 globes a year from his busting-at-the-corners Vienna workshop, where machines that make the plastic molds for his figurines vie for space with a showroom and a "museum" featuring signature pieces.

Orders range from consignments in the hundreds to individual items with a history.

Among the most treasured is a "confetti globe" made for friends of former President Clinton. As Perzy relates it, the globe, filled with glitter thrown at Clinton's presidential inauguration parade, had pride of place on the president's desk until he turned the Oval Office over to President Bush.

"Cartier of New York made the base from sterling silver and they engraved the presidential emblem on it," said Perzy, proudly hefting a copy of his creation to set off a glittering light show.

There's also a replica of the globe ordered up by former President Reagan's friends for his ranch, and a copy of the classic made by Perzy's father for "Citizen Kane."

Customers include Dubai's Education Ministry, and children in the dry and dusty Gulf state have been able to stir up a regular blizzard. A tip, shake or nudge of one of Perzy's globes on their school desks sends white flakes swirling around Christmas motifs.

AP

Snow globes with various motifs are displayed at the Vienna workshop of craftsman Erwin Perzy. Perzy sells 300,000 of the globes a year worldwide.

Most of the dozens of pieces in Perzy's workroom have Christmas scenes, but Perzy says he will make anything — "except for war themes; they have nothing to do with Christmas."

So some of the globes have unorthodox centerpieces. One ordered for an Austrian lingerie chain features a lissome young woman clad in the barest necessities. Others have snowmen holding cell phones.

Grandpa Perzy might be proud of what his chance discovery 104 years ago has wrought.

He was trying to build a stronger light for surgeries. So he added semolina flakes to a glass water-filled globe used by shoemakers of the time as a magnifying glass. The idea was to increase refraction. Instead, he created a snow globe.

"He was fascinated by the idea," said Perzy. "And when friends liked it he decided to make a job out of it."

Health officials warn of threat of flu pandemic

BY YEOH EN-LAI
The Associated Press

SINGAPORE — Health officials warned Monday that the world was close to its next pandemic — a powerful and highly contagious mix of avian influenza and flu virus that would likely be centered in Asia.

Authorities also warned that humans, and not animals as initially thought, would probably be the carriers.

"We are getting closer, but when it's going to happen, I don't know," said François-Xavier Meslin, the World Health Organization's coordinator for disease control, prevention and eradication.

"If it happens, which is not yet proven, it's going to be worse than SARS," he said at a task force meeting on bird flu led by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. "A full-blown flu virus, you can transmit easily to people in your family or people you work with. It's a very highly contagious disease compared to SARS."

The H5N1 bird flu virus killed 32 people in Thailand and Vietnam this year, while SARS — severe acute respiratory syndrome — killed 774 and infected nearly 8,000, mostly in Asia, in 2003.

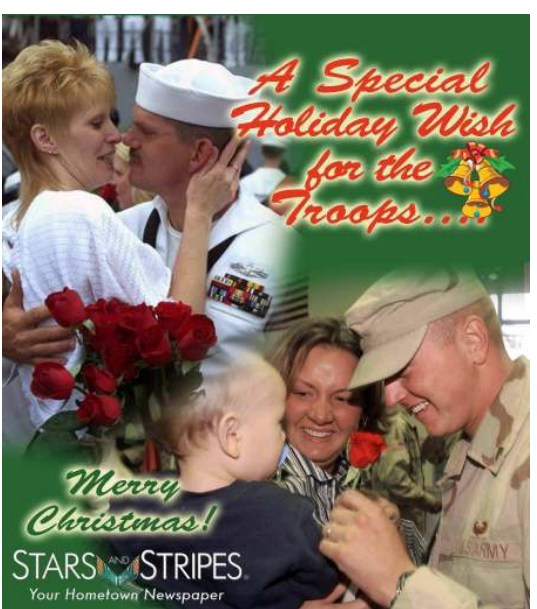
Both outbreaks caused widespread economic losses throughout the region.

Meslin said the proximity of high-tech farms and backyard operations, coupled with high human-to-animal contact, could spur another outbreak of avian influenza in Asia.

WHO had warned previously that bird flu mixed with a human flu virus could spread rapidly and cause as many as 7 million deaths.

"Asia is an area with very high poultry density, human density. Asia has always been a center of flu, so all these factors come together," said Hans Wagner of the Food and Agriculture Organization.

Officials, including those from Japan, China and South Korea, were discussing ways to increase bird flu surveillance and inter-agency reporting between countries.



Swiss Army knife goes high-tech for Christmas

BY BRADLEY S. KLAPPER
The Associated Press

GENEVA — These marvels of craftsmanship have fascinated generations of boys with their unfolding fan of blades, their pop-out corkscrews and hidden magnifying glasses. Now, the Swiss Army knife is going high-tech with a new model that includes a memory chip that can store up to 512 megabytes of data.

It's all part of a strategy to win back consumers — especially Christmas shoppers — after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks deprived the two official makers of the Swiss Army knife of a big part of a crucial market: travelers who bought knives as souvenirs and gifts.

After the Sept. 11 attacks, the pocket knives suddenly became much less attractive for travelers as airport screeners started confiscating anything sharp or pointed, including nail files.

This season, Victorinox — the biggest maker of the knives — is pinning its hopes on the "Swiss-Memory" series, first introduced in March at the Hamburg Computer Fair. Its innovation is the inclusion of a small data chip that can store anything from photos to MP3 files and can be plugged directly into a computer's USB port.

AP

Karin Mueller demonstrates a Victorinox Swiss Army knife with an integrated 128MB USB Memory Stick at the March computer fair CeBIT in Hanover, Germany.

"We have been planning this for a long time now — since USB first came on the market — but until now the technology was too big and complex to be put in a pocket knife," said Hans Schorno, press spokesman for Victorinox.

"We wanted to make a strong move on the market this year, because we have been having a difficult time," said Schorno. "We used to sell many pocket knives in the duty-free section, but now this happens increasingly less because they must be packed before flying."

Victorinox's SwissMemory products augment more than 400 other pocket knives in the company's inventory, including the glow-in- the-dark "Stay Glow" and flashlight-embedded "Midnite Manager."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Paddling moratorium

TX DALLAS — The Dallas school board has voted to implement a two-month moratorium on corporal punishment.

That will allow administrators to come up with a proposal — which would still require board approval — to ban paddling and provide alternatives to discipline students.

Trustee Ron Price, who supports paddling, suggested the moratorium. It took the place of a recommendation to immediately ban paddling in the district.

"This gives our administration the opportunity to go back and study these issues ... and bring forth a legitimate plan," he said.

Man charged after crash

VT BURLINGTON — A Milton man who crashed a car at high speed and then wandered into a house and kissed a sleeping couple is facing a variety of charges.

Thomas Popke, 26, is hospitalized at Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington. The charges he's facing are unlawful trespass, operating without owner's consent and careless and negligent operation. He had not been drinking, police said. Popke is due in court Jan. 24.

Popke was driving at more than 100 mph, said Vermont State Police Trooper Brian Penders.

Popke lost control and crashed. The vehicle flipped at least twice. Popke banged his head, received a large gash, lost a tooth and cut his hand, Penders said.

Then Popke walked a mile to the home of Sandra and Reginald Robinson. The couple awoke when Popke greeted them as they slept, Sandra Robinson, 66, said.

"He kissed me on the cheek and said, 'Hi, Mom,' " she said. "Then he went around to the other side of the bed and kissed my husband and said, 'Hi, Dad.' "

Hearse driver not dead

MO KANSAS CITY — The dead driving the dead.

At least that's how the government seemed to have it in the case of Frank Jansky, a 75-year-old Kansas City man who drives a hearse part-time. Even as he lived and breathed, the Social Security Administration seemed to think he was no longer alive.

Jansky was traveling in England in September and October. He returned home in November to find his checking account mysteriously depleted and a letter from Medicare denying payment for diabetes treatment.

John Garlinger, a spokesman for Social Security, said the mix-up came from New York, where Jansky had lived for decades before moving to Kansas City in 1990.

A funeral home or family member apparently mistakenly reported Jansky's death, Garlinger said."It was funny," Jansky said. "But it's not funny."

Multicolored poinsettias

OR COBURG — Forget the red poinsettias. Now, you can deck the halls in purple, peach or even tie-dyed.

Oregon's largest producer of poinsettias is offering the traditional Christmas plant in multiple colors.

The dye is permanent. It's a mixture of ethanol and special pigment that is actually beneficial to the plant, said Sherrie Lewis, who manages the annuals department of the Johnson Brothers Greenhouse.

The dyed plants cost about a dollar or two more than the nursery's selection of red, white and hybridized poinsettias, and so far sales have been pretty small.

"We must have sold at least 300 or so of the blue," Lewis said.

The dyed poinsettias have been popular for years in Europe, but have been slow to catch on in the United States.

Olympic medals stolen

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — A janitor was charged with stealing more than 100 Olympic medals and other memorabilia from the International Swimming Hall of Fame.

Paul Nichols Christow, 48, was charged with dealing in stolen property and grand theft over $100,000. Police said he used his unfettered access to swipe the medals, valued at nearly $500,000, from the museum's collection.

Christow's alleged scheme was discovered after the medals were sold to a collector over the Internet.

The collector contacted the Hall of Fame after acquiring medals won by Johnny Weissmuller, who played Tarzan in movies during the 1930s and 1940s.

Police said they traced the theft to Christow, set up a sting, and caught him on tape trying to sell more Olympic goods.

When cows fly...

A state patrol helicopter hauls a cow off an island in southwest Georgia's Lake Blackshear. The cow became stranded on the uninhabited island when water levels dropped and is believed to have spent three to four weeks on the island.

Memorabilia found

TX DALLAS — Authorities found a card bearing Jack Ruby's fingerprints, Bonnie and Clyde autopsy photos and other police-related memorabilia during a drug raid at an apartment.

Police said they found the memorabilia in Michael Roppolo's apartment in a raid on March 24, 2003. Roppolo was convicted of drug possession in November last year and received a five-year probationary sentence.

He told authorities that a relative who used to work for the department gave him the materials.

Police say items related to the assassination of John F. Kennedy appear to be authentic and apparently were taken from police archives several decades ago. They are to be included in a new police headquarters museum.

Sanctuary to close

CA PACIFIC GROVE — City Manager Ross Hubbard recommended closing a sanctuary for wintering Monarch butterflies to allow removal of dangerous trees. A New York woman was killed last month when a dead pine fell on her as she strolled through the popular tourist destination. An arborist found many risky trees in the grove. The sanctuary will reopen in April.

Gymnastics bias lawsuit

WI STEVENS POINT — A male junior at Stevens Point Area Senior High has filed a court injunction against the state's high school sports association, seeking to compete on the girls gymnastics team. Junior Keith Michael Bukowski claims he's being sexually discriminated. The school doesn't have a boys gymnastics team. More than 300 students have signed a petition backing him.

Bleach assault

RI NEWPORT — A 68-year-old woman was in critical condition at Rhode Island Hospital after her niece allegedly attacked her with bleach.

Evangeline Henry, 44, of Middletown, was charged with felony assault for the attack on the woman.

The victim, who was later determined to be Henry's aunt, was bleeding profusely from several head wounds.

She also was soaked in bleach, and suffered chemical burns over a large portion of her body. Woods said that the victim was intubated and unable to speak to the police.

Henry was also transported to the hospital, where she was also treated and released.

Henry appeared in District Court, where she posted $2,000 surety bail.

Making rounds

With his three-legged pit bull in tow, Onnie Tienhaara, 5, plays cowboy while racing across his lawn in Kalispell, Mont.

Frozen feathers

A trumpeter swan's breath is visible in the cold air at the Akron Zoo in Ohio. There are several animal exhibits that are open year-round for patrons to view in the winter.

Big givers

Bob Rickmers, left, carries two bags full of toys for delivery in Jersey City, N.J. Rickmers and his fellow employees collected more than $1,000 worth of toys for UBS Investment Bank's "Toys for Tots" drive.

Sitting pretty

Reflected in a mirror, Professional Cosmetology Institute student Lindsey Centarri styles the hair of seventh-grade student Connie Schillinger. More than 20 students from Hoyt Middle School in Des Moines, Iowa, visited the institute in Ames for haircuts and nail treatments as part of the Charity for Success program.

Learning new moves

Stephanie Lum Yee and the rest of the advanced hula of the Ke Aloha Dance Company class learn a new dance in Anchorage, Alaska.

Sunset drive

A motorcyclist drives through an intersection in Adelanto, Calif., as the sun sets.

Inauguration reports

NH CONCORD — Governor-elect John Lynch pledged that his inaugural committee would file annual public financial reports, which aren't legally required. The committee is a nonprofit group responsible for planning Lynch's inauguration, inaugural balls and other formal activities. Lynch, who made ethics a campaign cornerstone, said no committee funds would be used to benefit him personally.

ID cards for theft victims

OH CLEVELAND — The state will begin issuing identification cards for identity theft victims to show police, banks and creditors while they recover. Attorney General Jim Petro says the program will help victims recoup losses more quickly and endure less scrutiny from authorities. Victims must report the theft and the authorities have to verify the crime before a card can be issued.

Tuition freeze proposed

NC CHAPEL HILL — The head of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors wants his colleagues to freeze tuition next year because he believes the state has enough money to provide a good education.

Chairman Brad Wilson made the point in a memo distributed to board members, state university chancellors and UNC system President Molly Broad. Fifteen of the state's 16 public universities increased tuition last year.

Parking meters arrest

PA PITTSBURGH — In the opening scene of the classic 1967 movie "Cool Hand Luke," Paul Newman's title character is arrested for cutting the heads off a row of parking meters.

So, when four city burglary detectives were assigned to find the person who stole at least 400 parking meters from city streets and lots over the past year, they didn't have to think long before giving their probe a name: "Operation Cool Hand Luke."

They arrested a man in the case. But unlike Newman's fictional character, whose motive was, "Small town, not much to do in the evenin'," the real-life meter suspect was after "scrap metal and the coins inside," police Detective Mike Pilyih said.

The suspect, Wade Harris, 39, who has an arrest record dating to 1983 primarily for thefts involving scrap metals, was charged with theft, receiving stolen property and criminal mischief.

Son arrested in burglary

VT BENNINGTON — A local teen has been charged with burglarizing his mother's second-hand clothing store, as well as the gas station where he worked and a hair salon.

Casey A. Gras, 17, is also facing charges for allegedly selling cocaine. Police said he told them he committed the robberies to support his crack addiction, according to reports.

Gras could face up to 55 years in jail if he is convicted on all six counts. He pleaded innocent to the crimes in Bennington District Court.

Police allege that Gras burglarized Eclipz Hair Salon using a rock to smash the window and taking $179 from the cash register.

On the same night, Gras allegedly broke into Second Time Around on River Street, which is owned by his mother. In that case, a cinder block was used and $887 was reported stolen.

New university hospital

KY LEXINGTON — University of Kentucky HealthCare officials announced plans to build a new patient care facility on the campus that could cost an estimated $375 million. University trustees unanimously approved the plan. It would be funded from existing revenues generated by the university's hospital and a $250 million bond issue financed by UK HealthCare.

School recruiting cards

NE CRETE — A private college raised eyebrows with a recruiting postcard that shows a man surrounded by women and says students have the opportunity to "play the field."

Doane College sent the cartoon postcard to about 13,500 prospective students in California. Based on criticism it sparked, the college announced it was discontinuing the card.

"Doane College further expresses its regret if anyone associated with the college or potential applicants were in any way offended by the postcard's content," the college said in a statement.

One frame showed a student playing football for the Doane Tigers, with the caption: "Finally, a place where he could work toward the career of his choice. And also play the field."

Auto theft ring arrests

GA LAWRENCEVILLE — Authorities have arrested five people accused of being part of a large automobile theft ring that sold stolen cars to unsuspecting Hispanics around the Southeast.

The group has been stealing cars from citizens and dealerships in the Miami and Atlanta areas, marking them with fake titles and then selling them around Georgia and the Carolinas to Hispanic customers who pay in cash, investigators said.

Once a police officer discovers the car is stolen, the car is impounded and the victims have no way to regain their money.

Authorities in Georgia, Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina have recovered about 26 stolen vehicles, mainly sport utility vehicles and trucks. And they know of about 50 vehicles registered in Georgia with counterfeit Florida titles, said Pete McFarlane of the Georgia Department of Motor Vehicle Safety Auto Crime Unit.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

TLC searching for vocal help

Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas and **Tionne "T-Boz" Watkins** are looking to collaborate with a new voice, but the TLC stars insist they're not trying to replace the late **Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes**.

"Nothing has changed. We're not replacing Lisa," Thomas said in a recent interview. "We're not looking for a new member."

Watkins

Last month, the pair announced they were launching a search to find a vocalist to perform with them in concert and for one track on TLC's upcoming greatest hits project — a journey that will be the subject of a UPN reality show, "R U The Girl with T-Boz and Chilli."

Some fans were concerned that Thomas and Watkins were seeking to fill the shoes of Lopes, who died in a car crash in Honduras in 2002.

But the duo said then that they would never try to replace Lopes — perhaps the most dynamic member of the trio, with her colorful personality and energetic raps. Instead, they say they're simply looking for a fan to perform with them for a one-time performance and for a song on the greatest hits project.

Sandler not getting too serious

Although he shows more dramatic range than usual in "Spanglish," **Adam Sandler** isn't running away from comedies.

"I do love the movies I've done in the past," Sandler told reporters. "I work hard at my movies. But looking back at my career, when I end up having kids and I say, 'Throw in that "Spanglish," ' I know I'm going to be very proud of it."

Sandler

In "Spanglish," Sandler plays the husband of **Tea Leoni**, whose Mexican housekeeper (**Paz Vega**) finds herself in a contest of wills with the neurotically overbearing Leoni.

Sandler has no illusions on whether his work in the comic drama is Oscar-worthy, although **Jack Nicholson**, **Helen Hunt** and **Shirley MacLaine** all received Academy Awards for movies directed by **James L. Brooks**, who also directed "Spanglish."

'Idol' had her doubts

Even though millions of people voted **Fantasia Barrino** as their "American Idol," the singer admits there was a time when she doubted America's fondness for her.

"Towards the end, I didn't think I was gonna win, when it was me and **Diana [DeGarmo]**," the 20-year-old said in a recent interview.

Barrino

Some of that skepticism crept into her psyche after fellow contestants **Jennifer Hudson** and **La Toya London** got the boot. Public discussion centered on whether voters would pick another black singer as their champion. Even **Elton John** chimed in that their low-vote tallies were racist.

Any concerns about her universal appeal were squashed after she won the contest earlier this year with a 1.3 million vote edge over DeGarmo.

"Every nationality would come up to me and say 'I voted for you, I love you.' So I stopped thinking like that," she said.

Opera in the classroom

Dawn Upshaw, one of opera's great voices, is holding more than a master class — she's giving a master course.

Upshaw has joined the faculty at Bard College Conservatory of Music, located in New York state's Hudson Valley. As the **Charles Franklin Kellog** and **Grace E. Ramsey** Professor of the Arts and Humanities, she will be responsible for creating a program for the conservatory's vocal and vocal-dramatic programs.

"I am thrilled to have been invited to create a course of study for young singers at Bard," the soprano said in a statement. "My first experiences with new music were as an undergraduate student, and I think it is vitally important that singers and performers have the chance to create works together."

The conservatory is scheduled to open next fall, and the vocal programs are set to debut in the fall of 2006.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

An 'Idiot' is born

Demo theft leads Green Day to alter its musical approach, spawning the acclaimed 'American Idiot'

BY MARK BROWN
Scripps Howard News Service

The praise for Green Day's punk opera, "American Idiot," has been overwhelming and a bit insulting. The tone is: Who expected such a great album from these guys?

"Oh, yeah?" drummer Tre Cool says. "Well, they can just ... "

Let's call it a draw on all sides. The critics have been somewhat dismissive of Green Day — Cool, singer-guitarist Billie Joe Armstrong and bassist Mike Dirnt — since the band brought its punk/pop sound out from the Oakland, Calif., area with the 1994 breakthrough album "Dookie."

> *"We threw the rules out the window. [Billie] said: 'Let's just have fun. If there's anything you wanna do, do it. If you feel like you've hit a wall, then change gears. Make a polka, do whatever. Make dirty Christmas songs.' It was pretty cool."*
>
> **Tre Cool**

Green Day acknowledges that "American Idiot" — a political look at America that is by no means irrelevant now that the elections are over — is the most ambitious project it's ever undertaken, after falling into a bit of a lull.

KRT

Green Day members, from left, are Mike Dirnt, Billie Joe Armstrong and Tre Cool.

"American Idiot" happened in part because the band wasn't challenging itself. Green Day was in the studio working on the next album, which band members admit was going to be much the same as what they'd done before.

"We kind of started demo-ing stuff and were putting a bunch of songs together on tape and those songs got stolen," Cool says. No joke; the band swears that, improbably, all the tapes of all the songs it was working on disappeared from the recording studio. "It was a hectic time. We had two studios running next to each other at the same time, a lot of people going in and out. We were pretty bummed, needless to say."

That frustration, however, suddenly seemed like an opportunity.

They realized the songs they'd been working on weren't anything special.

"We just kinda turned a curve when Billie wrote 'American Idiot,' and we just kept on that," Cool says. "We threw the rules out the window. He said: 'Let's just have fun. If there's anything you wanna do, do it. If you feel like you've hit a wall, then change gears. Make a polka, do whatever. Make dirty Christmas songs.' It was pretty cool."

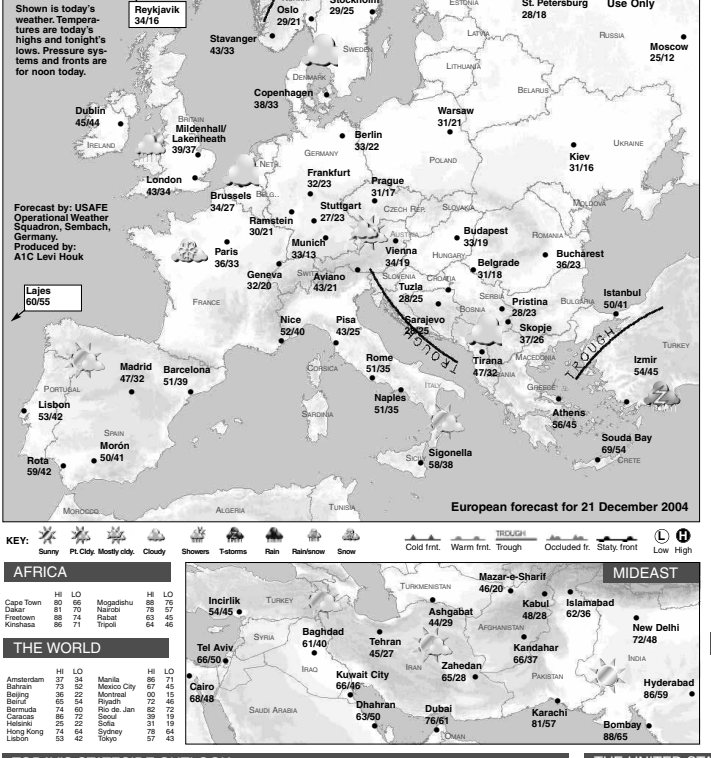
They began putting together bits and pieces of songs that eventually turned into the epic "Jesus of Suburbia," a song that the band acknowledges was hugely influenced by The Who's mini-opera "A Quick One (While He's Away)."

Armstrong began working out a complex story line revolving around a few characters, including St. Jimmy. (For a full interpretation, Cool suggests picking up the deluxe edition of "American Idiot" with the accompanying book; even he can't explain the story line.)

"The political aspect of the album just sets the climate of the story. There are three voices on the record — the political voice, the musical voice and the interpersonal struggles and choices the characters have to make," Cool says. "Even though people relate it to George Bush, it's just about the establishmen

BILLIE JOE ARMSTRONG
AP

AP



KEY: Sunny, Pt. Cldy, Mostly cldy, Cloudy, Showers, T-storms, Rain, Rain/snow, Snow, Cold frst, Warm frnt, Trough, Occluded fr, Stady. front, Low, High

EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Mostly cloudy with morning rain/snowshowers. Highs in the mid 30s, Wednesday lows in the mid 20s.

Britain, Ireland: Mostly cloudy with isolated rainshowers. Highs in the upper 30s to mid 40s, Wednesday lows in the mid 30s to mid 40s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Cloudy with fog and isolated rain/snowshowers. Highs in the upper 20s, Wednesday lows in the mid 20s.

France: Partly to mostly cloudy with isolated snowshowers. Highs in the mid 30s to low 50s near the southern coast, Wednesday lows in the low 30s and low 40s near the southern coast.

Northern Germany: Partly to mostly cloudy. Highs in the low 30s, Wednesday lows in the low 20s.

Southern Germany: Mostly cloudy with morning fog. Highs in the mid 20s to low 30s, Wednesday lows in the low teens to low 20s.

Hungary: Partly cloudy. Highs in the low 30s, Wednesday lows in the upper teens.

Northern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 40s, Wednesday lows in the low to mid 20s.

Southern Italy: Partly cloudy with thunderstorms in the extreme southern coast. Highs in the low to upper 50s, Wednesday lows in the mid 30s.

Kosovo: Mostly cloudy with fog and isolated rain/snowshowers. Highs in the upper 20s to mid 30s, Wednesday lows in the lower to mid 20s.

Norway: Mostly cloudy with rain/snowshowers. Highs in the upper 20s to low 40s, Wednesday lows in the low 20s to low 30s.

Portugal, Spain: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid 40s to upper 50s, Wednesday lows in the low 30s to low 40s.

Turkey: Mostly cloudy with isolated thunderstorms on the west coast. Highs in the low to mid 50s, Wednesday lows in the low to mid 40s.

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	80	66	Mogadishu	88	76
Dakar	81	70	Nairobi	78	57
Freetown	88	74	Rabat	63	45
Kinshasa	86	71	Tripoli	64	46

MIDEAST

	Hi	LO		Hi	LO
Incirlik	54/45		Mazar-e-Sharif	46/20	
Ashgabat	44/29		Kabul	48/28	
Islamabad	62/36		Baghdad	61/40	
Tehran	45/27		New Delhi	72/48	
Tel Aviv	66/50		Kandahar	66/37	
Zahedan	65/28		Cairo	68/48	
Kuwait City	66/46		Hyderabad	86/59	
Dhahran	63/50		Dubai	76/61	
Karachi	81/57		Bombay	88/65	

THE WORLD

	Hi	LO		Hi	LO
Amsterdam	37	34	Manila	86	71
Bahrain	73	52	Mexico City	67	45
Beijing	36	22	Montreal	00	15
Beirut	65	54	Riyadh	72	46
Bermuda	74	60	Rio de. Jan	82	72
Caracas	86	72	Seoul	39	19
Helsinki	25	22	Sofia	31	19
Hong Kong	74	64	Sydney	78	64
Lisbon	53	42	Tokyo	57	43

SUN & MOON

	Today	Tomorrow
Sunrise (Baghdad)	7:03am	7:03am
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	8:22am	8:22am
Sunset (Baghdad)	5:00pm	5:00pm
Sunset (Frankfurt)	4:26pm	4:26pm

New moon 10 Jan · First qtr. 17 Jan · Full moon 26 Dec · Last qtr. 3 Jan

TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

	Hi	Lo	Otlk
Abilene,Tex.	59	29	PCldy
Akron,Ohio	39	30	Cldy
Albany,N.Y.	26	25	PCldy
Albuquerque	48	25	PCldy
Allentown,Pa.	33	26	PCldy
Amarillo	38	21	Cldy
Anchorage	19	19	Cldy
Asheville	48	33	PCldy
Atlanta	52	39	PCldy
Atlantic City	37	28	PCldy
Austin	74	41	PCldy
Baltimore	41	33	PCldy
Baton Rouge	77	58	PCldy
Billings	27	10	Cldy
Birmingham	61	49	PCldy
Bismarck	10	-7	Cldy
Boise	33	18	PCldy
Boston	35	31	PCldy
Bridgeport	32	29	PCldy
Brownsville	81	67	PCldy
Buffalo	34	29	PCldy
Burlington,Vt.	26	25	PCldy
Caribou,Maine	16	7	Cir
Casper	26	5	PCldy
Charleston,S.C.	57	40	Cir
Charleston,W.Va.	47	37	Cldy
Charlotte,N.C.	48	35	Cir
Chattanooga	50	41	PCldy
Cheyenne	39	9	PCldy
Chicago	37	15	Snow
Cincinnati	47	33	Cldy
Cleveland	38	27	Cldy
Colorado Springs	32	9	Cldy
Columbia,S.C.	53	34	Cir
Columbus,Ga.	58	41	PCldy
Columbus,Ohio	46	34	Cldy
Concord,N.H.	27	15	PCldy
Corpus Christi	79	58	Cldy
Dallas-Ft Worth	61	37	PCldy
Dayton	44	30	PCldy
Daytona Beach	65	56	PCldy
Denver	30	12	PCldy
Des Moines	31	5	PCldy
Detroit	36	23	Cldy
Duluth	11	-10	Snow
El Paso	64	31	PCldy
Elkins	46	29	PCldy
Erie	36	27	Cldy
Eugene	46	31	PCldy
Evansville	48	31	Cldy
Fairbanks	3	-6	PCldy
Flagstaff	40	22	PCldy
Flint	34	19	Cldy
Fort Smith	55	35	PCldy
Fort Wayne	40	20	PCldy
Fresno	59	34	Cir
Goodland	35	10	Cldy
Grand Junction	46	13	PCldy
Grand Rapids	35	20	Cldy
Great Falls	24	7	Cldy
Green Bay	26	1	Snow
Greensboro,N.C.	47	33	PCldy
Harrisburg	36	29	PCldy
Hartford Sgqfd	30	24	PCldy
Helena	26	11	Cldy
Honolulu	82	71	Cir
Houston	72	56	PCldy
Huntsville	54	43	Cldy
Indianapolis	43	23	PCldy
Jackson,Miss.	65	50	Cldy
Jacksonville	62	45	Cir
Juneau	34	33	Snow
Kansas City	43	17	PCldy
Key West	72	67	Cldy
Knoxville	46	36	PCldy
Lake Charles	72	58	PCldy
Lansing	35	20	Cldy
Las Vegas	60	37	Cir
Lexington	47	38	PCldy
Lincoln	36	6	Snow
Little Rock	57	39	Cldy
Los Angeles	68	50	PCldy
Louisville	47	36	PCldy
Lubbock	47	23	PCldy
Macon	57	38	PCldy
Madison	26	4	Snow
Medford	44	26	PCldy
Memphis	58	40	Cldy
Miami Beach	72	65	PCldy
Midland/Odessa	59	33	PCldy
Milwaukee	28	10	Snow
Mpls-St Paul	11	-7	Snow
Mobile	67	56	PCldy
Montgomery	66	50	PCldy
Nashville	51	40	Cldy
New Orleans	70	58	PCldy
New York City	36	34	PCldy
Newark	35	31	PCldy
Norfolk,Va.	48	37	Cir
North Platte	34	6	PCldy
Oklahoma City	50	29	Cldy
Omaha	32	2	Snow
Orlando	67	54	Cir
Paducah	50	32	Cldy
Pendleton	40	27	PCldy
Peoria	38	15	PCldy
Philadelphia	36	34	PCldy
Phoenix	70	44	Cir
Pittsburgh	39	34	Cldy
Pocatello	27	10	PCldy
Portland,Maine	27	19	PCldy
Portland,Ore.	46	35	Cldy
Providence	36	29	PCldy
Pueblo	34	9	Cldy
Raleigh-Durham	49	33	PCldy
Rapid City	23	4	Cldy
Reno	46	19	Cir
Richmond	47	31	PCldy
Roanoke	43	33	PCldy
Rochester	33	29	PCldy
Rockford	35	13	Snow
Sacramento	61	34	Cir
St Louis	45	22	Cldy
St Thomas	85	75	PCldy
Salem,Ore.	45	32	Cldy
Salt Lake City	32	18	PCldy
San Angelo	64	34	PCldy
San Antonio	75	44	PCldy
San Diego	65	47	Cir
San Francisco	61	45	Cir
San Juan,P.R.	83	62	Cir
Santa Fe	43	15	PCldy
St Ste Marie	27	10	Snow
Savannah	59	40	Cir
Seattle	46	36	PCldy
Shreveport	68	49	Cldy
Sioux City	21	1	Snow
Sioux Falls	17	-4	Snow
South Bend	37	17	PCldy
Spokane	32	21	Cldy
Springfield,Ill.	41	18	PCldy
Springfield,Mo.	46	25	PCldy
Syracuse	35	30	Cldy
Tallahassee	64	43	PCldy
Tampa-St Pbsbg	67	54	Cir
Toledo	39	23	Cldy
Topeka	43	18	PCldy
Tucson	68	35	Cir
Tulsa	51	29	PCldy
Tupelo	61	46	Cldy
Waco	66	40	PCldy
Washington,D.C.	42	36	PCldy
Wichita Beach	45	26	PCldy
Wichita	43	23	Cldy
Wichita Falls	54	31	PCldy
Wilkes-Barre	35	32	Cldy
Wilmington,Del.	36	30	PCldy
Yakima	42	25	PCldy

THE UNITED STATES TODAY

As of noon, Eastern U.S. time

Scheduled to ETS or PCS?

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

STARS AND STRIPES
Your Hometown Newspaper

Horoscope

Happy birthday to the sun! The passage of our solar daddy into the Tropic of Capricorn is one of the original reasons to party — ask any sophisticated caveman, Roman or ancient Egyptian. The days grow longer, the nights grow shorter, and we grow more aware that if we're to get that thing done before year's end, we'd better get busy.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (December 21). When you narrow your focus to one big goal, instead of being restricted, you feel your life broadening! Use what you're learning to up your income! Passionate encounters in the new year lead quickly to a commitment. Just be sure you're really ready! Friends have excellent tips in financial and romantic realms. Virgo and Pisces are love signs.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You've hoped, wished and prayed — now, it's ultimatum time. A certain situation in your life simply can't go on as it was. Take a stand, and all of the correct elements will align to support you.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You're fearless. Ferocious competition is out there, to be sure, but you're so convinced of your talent that nothing can stop you from winning. Tonight, you're in the mood to reconnect with friends you seldom call.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Your wild streak emerges to help you out in even the most sophisticated and structured environments. Release the constraints of artificial rules. Follow nature. Sagittarius helps in your pursuit of love.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Create more space in your life, and what you want might just drop into that opening. Peaceful environments help you come up with brilliant solutions or calm your nerves long enough to see the truth.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Instead of complaining, you just fix it. Doing so earns you high character marks in the eyes of someone who is known to promote those with outstanding qualities. It's nice to be generally well liked.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Obstacles can be overcome, not with force but with a different kind of strength. You're the sign of all things green. Think of the root that can crack concrete or the reeds that sway in the storm.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Pride goeth before being broke. You've got nothing to prove, so put down the wallet. Someone who wants to pay your way shouldn't be battled — you deserve it. Taurus and Scorpio are particularly attractive to you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You see clearly what should be done, but the cooperation of many is required. Listen to friends. Do not, however, lend them money now unless you're sure you can afford to take a loss.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You'll have spurts of energy and dramatic peaks of joy. The power of your personality carries influence. Don't be enticed by extravagance, which provides only a temporary high; find a permanent solution.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You've got the chance to paint a certain picture of your life in the mind of someone new. Count your blessings, and de-emphasize what you do not have. Tonight's mood is exceptionally romantic.

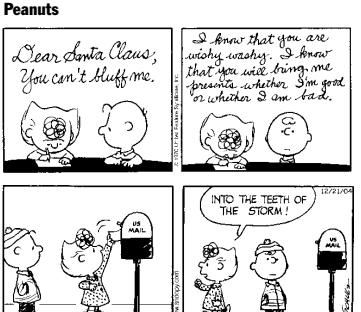
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). There's no problem that can't be solved before it occurs — prevention is your motto. From car trouble to holiday planning to dealing with the in-laws, an ounce of prevention is worth well over $100.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Your communication skills are superior. You could even pick up a few words in a new language. Seize the chance (or create your own opportunity) to make up for a wrong move in the past.

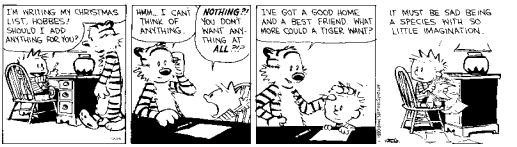
Holiday Mathis

Creators Syndicate

Peanuts



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start

Zits

Cathy

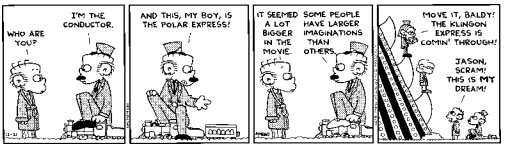
Hi and Lois

Beetle Bailey

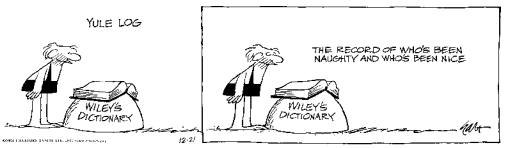
Red and Rover

Better or Worse

Foxtrot



B.C.



Baby Blues

Spider Man

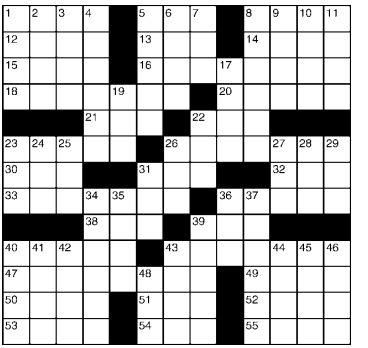
Blondie

Dilbert

Hagar

Garfield

Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

1 Rollerblader's protection
5 A somebody
8 Furniture brand
12 Great Lake
13 Expert
14 Rent
15 Dermatology subject
16 Unlikely winner
18 Front-seat passenger's place
20 Cardiff people
21 Weeding need
22 Aviv preceder
23 Took off
26 Oater sound effects
30 Ostrich's kin
31 TV network
32 Hasty departure
33 Arsonist
36 Leaves at the altar
38 Gist
39 Selleck or Seaver
40 Unoccupied
43 Goblin
47 Cabin rug, maybe
49 Busy with
50 — carotene
51 Adlai's opponent
52 Nitwit
53 Footfall
54 Hosp. supply
55 Salinger heroine

Down

1 Carrots' mates
2 St. Louis landmark
3 Pebbles' pet
4 Boil
5 Worth
6 PC symbol
7 Corral
8 "... is fear —"
9 German ex-chancellor
10 Cupid's counterpart
11 Lit. collection
17 Verdon or Stefani
19 Pantheon figure
22 Monkey suit
23 Ump
24 "— Blue?"
25 Mean mutt
26 Throttle
27 Misfortune
28 Informer
29 North Sea feeder
31 Tavern
34 Catch
35 Purchases
36 Trot
37 Drink
39 Fixed a flat?
40 Recedes
41 Encounter
42 Hors d'oeuvre spread
43 Armstrong's transport
44 Grandson of Eve
45 Teensy bit
46 Judge's raiment
48 Kipling hero

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	H	A	M		W	A	D		B	L	A	B
L	I	M	A		E	G	O		R	I	L	E
A	F	A	R		L	O	D	G	I	N	G	S
P	I	S	T	O	L		O	U	T	G	A	S
			Y	A	R	D		Y	O	U		
Q	U	A	R	T	E	R	S		N	I	C	E
E	S	C		H	A	O	L	E		N	O	G
D	E	A	N		D	W	E	L	L	I	N	G
		D	A	B		N	E	L	L			
A	C	E	T	I	C		P	S	A	L	M	S
D	O	M	I	C	I	L	E		M	I	E	N
O	L	I	O		T	A	R		A	S	I	A
S	T	A	N		E	M	S		S	A	N	G

12-21 CRYPTOQUIP

D M I H Q L J V H V D R I B H Q E I R G I Q C M J E Q J X L T U W H D L " H T T J C A I G J D R G Q J L X B I A U W M I T V ! "

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IN ANY CHEMIST'S LABORATORY, YOU COULD PROBABLY SAY THERE IS COMPOUND INTEREST.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals L

Brother should stand firm on loan

Dear Abby: I just read the letter from "Able but Unwilling in Alabama," whose mother and sister are urging him to "lend" money to his spendthrift brother. "Able" said he and his wife had always lived frugally and have saved diligently, while his brother and his wife lived far beyond their means. You responded that if "Able" was comfortable with this decision, he wouldn't have written to you.

He should stick to his guns. The brother and sister-in-law will be siphoning money from here to eternity. Just like an alcoholic, if you give money to folks like that, they'll take and take until the money is gone. I know — I was one of those takers. I was never taught how to handle money.

— Hopefully Doing Better in Florida

Dear Doing Better: I did get mail from readers who felt I should have encouraged the writer to stand firm. Read on:

Dear Abby: It's time for that brother and his wife to grow up and learn to budget their own money. If "Able's" mother and sister aren't willing to put THEIR money where their mouths are, they should keep quiet. It never makes sense to loan money to a bottomless pit.

Dear Abby

Strange, how "Able," the responsible son, is criticized, while the spendthrift, spoiled son runs to Mom and Sis to lay guilt and put pressure on the responsible brother. If the situation were reversed, would the big spender help his brother, I wonder? I don't think so. His selfish lifestyle should not be rewarded. The irresponsible brother should end the pity party and go to work!

— Hard- Working Mom in Providence, R.I.

Dear Hard-Working Mom: More readers agreed with you than with me.

Dear Abby: The brother made his choices and is reaping the "rewards." If "Able" bails him out, it won't be a one-time thing. It will open the door to keep the money flowing. There is a children's story about the Little Red Hen. The little hen asked for help to plow the garden, plant the seed and pull the weeds. The rest of the farm animals refused. However, when it came time to eat the bread, they all wanted some. Little Red Hen then said "no," because they had done nothing to help.

It's the same with saving money; we go without to build savings to cover our needs in leaner times.

— Brenda in Aurora, Colo.

Dear Brenda: That's a lesson many people need to learn. Too many are living on credit and accruing a mountain of debt while trying to keep up with the Joneses.

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 fret over ex visiting relatives

Dear Annie: Ten years ago, I went through a bitter divorce, and now I have minimal contact with my ex-wife. My ex used many tactics to prevent me from maintaining a healthy relationship with our two (now grown) children.

I recently learned that my ex-wife spent her vacation visiting with my family members who live 2,000 miles away. She stayed in my sister's home. It obviously was not a casual drop-in. My ex has no other friends or family living in that area.

I asked my sister why she was so willing to welcome this woman after all the years of grief she put me through. Sis told me the family had maintained some contact with my ex over the years and that they had a very nice visit. Apparently, Sis even invited the other family members over for a "reunion dinner."

I am very hurt and betrayed by the lack of family allegiance, yet my family feels they did nothing wrong. They think they are being magnanimous. I think they are being disloyal.

Annie's Mailbox

I have a new wife and a happy life now, but my ex still wears the divorce like a badge and won't let go of our past.

— Tired of the Games

Dear Tired: We can understand why this aggravates you, but if your family members wish to maintain a relationship with your ex-wife, that is entirely their business. Instead of considering it "disloyal," think how much your children appreciate knowing their mother can enter their aunt's home without a fight. Your ex may have been a nightmare, but the kids are grown now, and it accomplishes nothing to insist your relatives avoid her.

Dear Annie: My husband and I have been married for six years and never had a problem until his friend "Ralph" came along.

Ralph is a nice guy, but he's a moocher. We play darts at our house once a week, and he is one of several friends who come over. Everyone brings beer or food, except Ralph, but that doesn't stop him from drinking most of the alcohol and soda, eating most of the food and bumming cigarettes off the smokers.

These parties take a big chunk out of our wallet, and our guests' contributions help defray the costs.

My husband and I have gotten into several arguments over this, but he refuses to talk to Ralph, and he doesn't want me to say anything, either.

— Tapped Out in Virginia

Dear Tapped Out: Of course not. Perhaps one of your other regular guests could mention to Ralph that everyone is expected to bring something to the party, and suggest that next time, it's his turn to bring pretzels and chips (or whatever).

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

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

KNACS

TOODU

OCHOLS

BLOTEG

©2004 Tribune Media Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

www.jumble.com

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here:

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: GAUZE PUPPY SECOND MURMUR
Answer: What the family did to their home for the holidays — "SPRUCED" IT UP

Family Circus

"Look at this one, Mommy! Baby Jesus in a nest!"

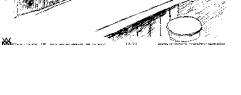
Dennis the Menace

©Gary Larson

The Far Side

Creative dog writing

Non Sequitur



SCOREBOARD

AFN TV & Radio

Tuesday

AFN-Sports, 9 a.m.—College basketball: Princeton at Temple (did).
AFN-Pacific, 11 a.m.—NFL: New England at Miami (did).
AFN-Sports, noon—NBA: Phoenix at Denver (did).
AFN-Sports, 3:30 p.m.—NBA: Memphis at L.A. Lakers (did).
AFN-Sports, 7 p.m.—NFL: New England at Miami (did).

Wednesday

AFN-Atlantic, 1 a.m.—College basketball: Texas Tech at Iowa.
AFN-Sports and Radio, 1:45 a.m.—College football: Champs Sports Bowl, Syracuse vs. Georgia Tech.
AFN-Atlantic, 3 a.m.—College basketball: UCLA at Michigan St.
AFN-Sports, 9 a.m.—NBA: Dallas at New York (did).
AFN-Sports, 1 p.m.—College basketball: Texas Tech at Iowa (did).
AFN-Sports, 3 p.m.—College basketball: UCLA at Michigan St. (did).
AFN-Sports, 6 p.m.—Golf: PGA Tour Season Review Special (did).
AFN-Sports, 7 p.m.—College football: Champs Sports Bowl, Syracuse vs. Georgia Tech (did).

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

College basketball

AP Men's Top 25 fared

Sunday

1. Illinois (10-0) beat Valparaiso 93-56. Next: vs. Missouri, Wednesday.
2. Kansas (7-0) did not play. Next: vs. Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Wednesday.
3. Georgia Tech (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. Charleston Southern, Wednesday.
4. Oklahoma State (8-0) did not play. Next: vs. Northwestern Oklahoma, Tuesday.
5. North Carolina (8-1) beat Virginia Tech 85-51. Next: vs. Vermont, Tuesday.
6. Wake Forest (9-1) did not play. Next: at New Mexico, Wednesday.
7. Duke (8-0) did not play. Next: vs. Clemson, Sunday, Jan. 2.
8. Syracuse (9-1) did not play. Next: vs. Cornell, Monday.
9. Kentucky (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. William & Mary, Wednesday.
10. Pittsburgh (8-0) did not play. Next: vs. Richmond, Thursday.
11. Connecticut (5-1) beat Rice 81-72. Next: vs. Central Connecticut State, Wednesday.
12. North Carolina State (8-1) lost to No. 18 Washington 66-64.
Next: at Brigham Young, Tuesday.
13. Louisville (5-2) did not play. Next: vs. Indiana-Purdue-Indianapolis, Tuesday.
14. Texas (7-2) did not play. Next: vs. Centenary, Wednesday.
15. Arizona (7-2) did not play. Next: vs. Manhattan, Tuesday.
16. Iowa (9-1) did not play. Next: vs. Texas Tech, Tuesday.
17. Alabama (9-1) did not play. Next: vs. Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, Wednesday.
18. Washington (8-1) beat No. 12 North Carolina State 68-64.
Next: vs. Sacred Heart, Wednesday.
19. George Washington (7-1) did not play. Next: at Florida International, Thursday.
20. Mississippi State (9-2) did not play. Next: vs. Florida A&M, Monday.
21. Michigan State (6-2) did not play. Next: vs. UCLA, Tuesday.
22. Gonzaga (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. Eastern Washington, Tuesday.
23. Maryland (6-2) beat Florida State 90-88 in OT. Next: vs. American, Thursday.
24. Virginia (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. Loyola Marymount, Thursday.
25. Cincinnati (7-0) did not play. Next: vs. Jackson State, Monday.

Sunday's men's scores

BC-BKC—College Bkb Scores,0309 Sunday's College Basketball Scores By The Associated Press

EAST
Boston College 82, Yale 80, 2OT
Briar Cliff 79, Berkeley 56
Connecticut 81, Rice 72
Keystone 88, Farmingdale 68
Long Island U. 70, Old Westbury 60
Massachusetts 70, Davidson 67
S. New Hampshire 96, Felician 55
St. John's 74, Marist 66
Stonehill 85, St. Michael's 81
Vermont 83, Binghamton 53
Yeshiva 74, St. Joseph's, L.I. 66

SOUTH
Bridgewater, Va. 74, Ferrum 62
Chaffey 64, N.C.-Asheville 52
Chowan 68, Muhlenberg 63
Florida 100, Georgia Southern 68
Gallaudet 66, E. Mennonite 61
Georgia 93, Wofford 89, OT
Lynn 72, Lake Superior St. 71
Maryland 90, Florida St. 88, OT
Nebraska-Omaha 76, Rollins 58
North Carolina 85, Virginia Tech 51
Nova Southeastern 85, Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras 81
Tennessee Tech 92, Jacksonville 74

MIDWEST
Illinois 93, Valparaiso 56
Iowa St. 62, Wagner 50
Minn.-Mankato 75, Minn.-Moorhead 56
Missouri 56, Indiana 53
North Dakota 76, Dakota Wesly n 56
Notre Dame 71, Army 52
Ohio St. 74, Morehead St. 48
Quincy 66, Mercyhurst 41
SW Missouri St. 69, Miami (Ohio) 63
Saginaw Valley St. 72, Winona St. 68
Seattle Pacific 90, Cent. Missouri 80
St. Ambrose 75, Cardinal Stritch 64
St. Francis, Ind. 66, Viterbo 61
St. Xavier 68, Benedictine,Kan. 46
W. Illinois 81, Illinois College 64

SOUTHWEST
Texas A&M 90, Chicago St. 70
Texas-Dallas 83, Scheine 64

FAR WEST
Cal Lutheran 66, Chapman 55
Montana St. 87, N. Colorado 75
St. Mary's, Cal. 66, Hampton 55
UC Santa Cruz 98, Cal Tech 48
Washington 68, N.C. State 64

TOURNAMENT
Las Vegas International Second Round
E. New Mexico 79, St. Mary's, Texas 41

AP Women's Top 25 fared

Sunday

1. LSU (10-0) did not play. Next: at UC Santa Barbara, Tuesday.
2. Stanford (8-0) did not play. Next: at No. 9 Tennessee, Tuesday.
3. Duke (10-1) did not play. Next: at Ball State, Monday.
4. Texas (5-2) did not play. Next: vs. Texas-Arlington, Tuesday.
5. North Carolina (9-1) beat Georgia State 79-44. Next: vs. Lipscomb, Tuesday, Dec. 28.
6. Baylor (9-1) beat Florida 89-62. Next: vs. Montana State, Wednesday, Dec. 29.
7. Notre Dame (10-1) beat Marquette 50-47. Next: at Northern Illinois, Thursday, Dec. 30.
8. Connecticut (4-1) did not play. Next: at No. 23 Arizona State, Tuesday.
9. Tennessee (7-2) beat TCU 82-55. Next: vs. No. 2 Stanford, Tuesday.
10. Ohio State (10-1) did not play. Next: vs. No. 16 UCLA, Tuesday.
11. Michigan State (9-1) beat Texas A&M-Corpus Christi 62-56. Next: vs. Vermont, Tuesday.
12. Texas Tech (6-2) lost to Virginia Tech 71-70 in OT. Next: vs. Penn State, Tuesday.
13. Minnesota (8-2) did not play. Next: vs. Drake, Thursday.
14. Boston College (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. Saint Joseph's, Wednesday.
15. Georgia (8-3) beat Iona 96-52. Next: at Marist, Tuesday.
16. UCLA (6-2) lost to Illinois 78-63. Next: at No. 10 Ohio State, Tuesday.
17. Vanderbilt (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. BYU at Mallibu, Calif., Monday.
18. Maryland (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. Coppin State, Monday.
19. Houston (9-1) did not play. Next: at Long Beach State, Monday.
20. Purdue (6-3) did not play. Next: vs. South Dakota State, Tuesday, Dec. 28.
21. DePaul (7-2) did not play. Next: at St. Peter's, Tuesday.
22. Rutgers (6-2) did not play. Next: vs. No. 9 Tennessee, Wednesday, Dec. 29.
23. Arizona State (5-2) did not play. Next: vs. No. 8 Connecticut, Tuesday.
24. Iowa (9-0) did not play. Next: vs. Western Illinois, Tuesday.
25. Kansas State (6-2) did not play. Next: at Villanova, Tuesday, Dec. 28.

Men's schedule

Monday, Dec. 20

EAST
Niagara at St. Bonaventure
Cornell at Syracuse
Princeton at Temple

SOUTH
Toledo vs. Middle Tennessee at Guillermo Angulo Coliseum,Carolina,Puerto Rico
Auburn at Delaware at Guillermo Angulo Coliseum, Carolina,Puerto Rico
East Carolina vs. South Carolina at the Mitchell Center, Mobile,Ala.
Longwood at Old Dominion
E. Kentucky at Savannah St.
Fla. International at South Florida
William & Mary at UNC-Greensboro
Jacksonville St. at Tennessee St.
Belmont at Tennessee
Georgia St. at Louisiana-Lafayette
Southern, NO at Louisiana-Monroe
Louisiana Tech at Memphis
Cent. Michigan at Vanderbilt
Florida A&M at Mississippi St.
Southern Miss. at South Alabama

MIDWEST
Northwestern St. at Dayton
E. Michigan at Detroit
N. Dakota St. at Oakland, Mich.
Jackson St. at Cincinnati

SOUTHWEST
McNeese St. at Ark.-Little Rock
Lipscomb at Arkansas
Ark.-Pine Bluff at SMU
Arkansas St. at Sam Houston St.
Alabama A&M at Stephen F.Austin
Birmingham-Southern at Texas-Pan American

FAR WEST
Northwestern at Arizona St.
Drake at S. Utah
Coppin St. at Utah
Weber St. at Utah Valley St.
Winthrop at Portland
Montana at San Francisco
Sacramento St. at UC Riverside
Dartmouth at UC Davis

TOURNAMENTS
Outrigger Hotels Rainbow Classic
At Honolulu
First Round
Georgetown at Oral Roberts
Long Beach St. at Hawaii

Tuesday, Dec. 21

EAST
Holy Cross at Brown, 7 p.m.
Loyola Marymount at Colgate, 7 p.m.
Navy at Mount St. Mary's, Md., 7 p.m.
Northeastern at Stony Brook, 7 p.m.
Loyola, Md. at UMBC, 7 p.m.
New Hampshire at West Virginia, 7 p.m.
Buffalo at Penn St., 7:30 p.m.
Maine at Providence, 7:30 p.m.
Drexel at Seton Hall, 7:30 p.m.

SOUTH
Toledo vs. Delaware at Guillermo Angulo Coliseum, Carolina,
Puerto Rico, 11 a.m.
Auburn vs. Middle Tennessee at Guillermo Angulo Coliseum,
Carolina,Puerto Rico, 1 p.m.
Virginia-Wise at Chattanooga, 7 p.m.
Union, Tenn. at ETSU, 7 p.m.
Jacksonville at Florida St., 7 p.m.
Newberry at Furman, 7 p.m.
High Point at Marshall, 7 p.m.
Taylor at Morehead St., 7 p.m.
Vermont at North Carolina, 7 p.m.
W. Carolina at The Citadel, 7:15 p.m.
Troy at Alabama St., 8 p.m.
Texas Southern at Nicholls St., 8 p.m.
Tenn.-Martin vs. Mississippi at Bancorp-South Center, Tupelo,
Miss., 9:15 p.m.
New Orleans at Austin Peay, 9:30 p.m.
N. Carolina A&T at Tulane, 9:30 p.m.

MIDWEST
Ind.-Pur.-Ft. Wayne at Bowling Green, 7 p.m.
Texas Tech vs. Iowa at the United Center, 7 p.m.
Liberty at Miami (Ohio), 7 p.m.
Loyola of Chicago at Youngstown St., 7 p.m.
Lehigh at Xavier, 7:30 p.m.
Samford at Bradley, 8 p.m.
W. Illinois at E. Illinois, 8 p.m.
Wis.-Parkside at Ill.-Chicago, 8 p.m.
N. Illinois at Kansas St., 8 p.m.
Wagner at N. Iowa, 8 p.m.
Saint Louis at S. Illinois, 8 p.m.
Texas-San Antonio at Wichita St., 8 p.m.
Nebraska at Marquette, 9 p.m.
UCLA at Michigan St., 9 p.m.

SOUTHWEST
LSU at Houston, 6 p.m.
NW Oklahoma at Oklahoma St., 8 p.m.
Oregon St. at Prairie View, 8:30 p.m.
Md.-Eastern Shore at TCU, 9 p.m.
Occidental at UTEP, 9 p.m.

FAR WEST
Manhattan at Arizona, 8:30 p.m.
N.C. State at BYU, 9 p.m.
UMKC at Colorado, 9 p.m.
E. Washington vs. Gonzaga at Spokane Arena, 9 p.m.
San Jose St. at Montana St., 9 p.m.
Quinnipiac at N. Arizona, 9 p.m.
Elon at Boise St., 9:30 p.m.
Texas St. at Colorado St., 10 p.m.
Cal Baptist at CS Northridge, 10 p.m.
Pacific at Fresno St., 10 p.m.
Warner Pacific at Portland St., 10 p.m.
Cal St.-Fullerton at San Diego St., 10 p.m.
New Mexico St. at UC Irvine, 10:30 p.m.
Gardner-Webb at UNLV, 10:30 p.m.

TOURNAMENTS
Outrigger Hotels Rainbow Classic
At Honolulu
First Round
UAB vs. Clemson, 10 p.m.
Southern Cal vs. Indiana St., 12:30 a.m.

Billy Mandi Classic
At Louisville, Ky.
First Round
Ind.-Pur.-Indpls. at Louisville, 7 p.m.
New Orleans vs. Austin Peay, 9:30 p.m.

Sunday's women's scores

EAST
Army 79, Cent. Connecticut St. 49
Auburn 66, Syracuse 35
Delaware 68, La Salle 67
Duquesne 97, Howard 76
Georgia 96, Iona 52
Merrimack 65, Bentley 56
Penn St. 76, Old Dominion 68
S. New Hampshire 69, Felician 54
Stonehill 62, St. Michael's 57

SOUTH
Coll. of Charleston 59, Coastal Carolina 54
Fla. International 66, UCF 55
Indiana St. 70, High Point 47
Jacksonville St. 86, Carson-Newman 79
Louisville 97, Murray St. 45
Marshall 86, Colgate 68
North Carolina 79, Georgia St. 44
South Alabama 62, Southern Miss. 59
South Florida 74, William & Mary 23
Tennessee 82, TCU 55
Tennessee Tech 73, Winthrop 54
Tulane 73, Nicholls St. 68
Va. Commonwealth 67, Loyola, Md. 46
William Jewell 85, Ferrum 73

MIDWEST
Arizona 70, Chicago St. 59
Evansville 58, Butler 52
Illinois 78, UCLA 63
Ind.-Pur.-Indpls. 74, Charleston Southern 60
Kent St. 77, St. Bonaventure 52
Marian, Ind. 57, Rose-Hulman 48
Michigan St. 62, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi 56
Millikin 71, Newport News 42
Minn.-Moorhead 86, Ferris St. 74
Missouri-Rolla 83, Oakland City 79, 2OT
Notre Dame 50, Marquette 47
Oakland, Mich. 71, Niagara 42
Ohio 62, Cleveland St. 56
Ohio Dominican 83, Maryville, Mo. 79
S. Indiana 80, W. Va. Wesleyan 60
St. Cloud St. 92, Minn.-Crookston 73
UTEP 72, Illinois St. 71, OT
W. Illinois 67, Quincy 50

SOUTHWEST
Baylor 89, Florida 62
Lawrence 69, Texas Lutheran 61
Texas A&M 70, Northwestern St. 61
Texas-Dallas 80, Schreiner 58

FAR WEST
Concordia, Calif. 76, Cal Lutheran 68

TOURNAMENT
Fun in the Sun Shootout
First Round
Oral Roberts 87, Memphis 79
UMKC 78, W. Kentucky 70

Las Vegas Bowl in the Desert-Gray Championship
Virginia Tech 71, Texas Tech 70, OT

Third Place
Arkansas St. 75, W. Michigan 43

Las Vegas Bowl in the Desert-Scarlet Championship
Iowa St. 86, UNLV 78, OT

Third Place
N. Arizona 85, E. Kentucky 64

Mississippi State Classic
First Round
Louisiana-Monroe 81, Grambling St. 73
Mississippi St. 65, San Jose St. 60

Raymond James Financial Shootout Championship
Franklin 80, Wilmington, Ohio 75

Wells Fargo Classic Championship
SMU 60, Denver 42

Third Place
Texas-San Antonio 75, Tenn.-Martin 59

College football

NCAA Division I-AA playoffs

Championship
Friday, Dec. 17
At Finley Stadium/Davenport Field
Chattanooga, Tenn.
James Madison 31, Montana 21
NCAA Division III playoffs
Championship
Saturday, Dec. 18
Stagg Bowl
At Salem Stadium
Salem, Va.
Linfield, Ore. 28, Mary Hardin-Baylor 21

College volleyball

NCAA Division I tournament

Semifinals
Thursday, Dec. 16
At Long Beach, Calif.
Stanford def. Washington, 3-1 (30-25, 23-30, 30-27, 30-24)
Minnesota def. Southern California, 3-1 (30-25, 29-31, 30-26, 30-20).

Championship
Saturday, Dec. 18
At Long Beach, Calif.
Stanford def. Minnesota, 3-0 (30-23, 30-27, 30-21)

Golf

World rankings

Final

1. Vijay Singh	Fiji	12.79
2. Tiger Woods	USA	11.60
3. Ernie Els	SAf	10.98
4. Retief Goosen	SAf	7.47
5. Phil Mickelson	USA	7.00
6. Padraig Harrington	Ire	5.55
7. Sergio Garcia	Spn	5.40
8. Mike Weir	Can	5.40
9. David Love III	USA	5.38
10. Stewart Cink	USA	4.65
11. Adam Scott	Aus	4.33
12. Miguel Angel Jimenez	Spn	4.32
13. Stuart Appleby	Aus	4.16
14. Darren Clarke	Nlr	4.14
15. Chris Dimarco	USA	3.86
16. Todd Hamilton	USA	3.72
17. Stephen Ames	T&T	3.59
18. Kenny Perry	USA	3.53
19. Chad Campbell	USA	3.51
20. David Toms	USA	3.44
21. Jim Furyk	USA	3.44
22. Scott Verplank	USA	3.38
23. Thomas Bjorn	Den	3.24
24. Lee Westwood	Eng	3.21
25. Choi Kyung-Ju	Kor	3.13
26. Luke Donald	Eng	3.05
27. Jay Haas	USA	3.02
28. Shigeki Maruyama	Jpn	2.99
29. Paul Casey	Eng	2.97
30. Angel Cabrera	Arg	2.96
31. Fred Couples	USA	2.92
32. Jerry Kelly	USA	2.77
33. Robert Allenby	Aus	2.77
34. Rory Sabbatini	SAf	2.74
35. Ian Poulter	Eng	2.66
36. Steve Flesch	USA	2.63
37. Peter Lonard	Aus	2.62
38. Mark Hensby	Aus	2.60
39. Justin Leonard	USA	2.59
40. Fredrik Jacobson	Swe	2.58
41. John Daly	USA	2.51
42. Thomas Levet	Frn	2.50
43. David Howell	Eng	2.49
44. Zach Johnson	USA	2.49
45. Nick O'Hern	Aus	2.36
46. Chris Riley	USA	2.32
47. Jonathan Kaye	USA	2.29
48. Joakim Haeggman	Swe	2.23
49. Trevor Immelman	SAf	2.19
50. Rodney Pampling	Aus	2.19
51. Nick Price	Zim	2.15
52. Kirk Triplett	USA	2.13
53. Fred Funk	USA	2.12
54. Shingo Katayama	Jpn	2.11
55. Graeme McDowell	Nlr	2.10
56. Alex Cejka	Ger	2.07
57. Charles Howell III	USA	2.08
58. Jeff Maggert	USA	2.03
59. Tom Lehman	USA	2.00
60. Stephen Leaney	Aus	2.02
61. Richard Green	Aus	2.01
62. Toru Taniguchi	Jpn	2.01
63. Brad Faxon	USA	1.98
64. Bob Tway	USA	1.92
65. Tim Herron	USA	1.91
66. Stephen Gallacher	Sco	1.90
67. Duffy Waldorf	USA	1.86
68. Paul McGinley	Ire	1.80
69. Briny Baird	USA	1.77
70. Geoff Ogilvy	Aus	1.77
71. Justin Rose	Eng	1.77
72. Carlos Franco	Par	1.76
73. Shaun Michael	USA	1.74
74. Tim Clark	SAf	1.74
75. Jesper Parnevik	Swe	1.71

Deals

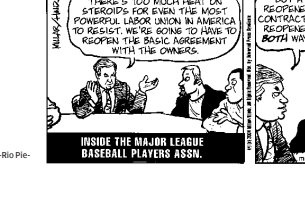
Weekend transactions

BASEBALL
American League
OAKLAND ATHLETICS—Traded LHP Mark Mulder to St. Louis for RHP Dan Haren, RHP Kiko Calero and C Darin Barton.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
CLEVELAND CAVALIERS—Suspended G Eric Snow one game without pay for his side-line confrontation with coach Paul Silas during a Dec. 16 game against Detroit.
MILWAUKEE BUCKS—Signed G Eddie House.
PHOENIX SUNS—Activated F Jackson Vroman from the injured list. Waived G Yuta Tabuse.

FOOTBALL
National Football League
CINCINNATI BENGALS—Placed C Rich Braham on injured reserve. Signed RB Quincy Wilson to a three-year contract.
DENVER BRONCOS—Signed DT Demetrin Veal.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS—Placed CB Tyrone Poole on injured reserve.

TANK McNAMARA



Former champ Spadafora pleads guilty

The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Former IBF lightweight boxing champion Paul Spadafora pleaded guilty to aggravated assault and a weapons charge on Monday for shooting his girlfriend last year.

Prosecutors dropped charges of attempted homicide and reckless endangerment.

Spadafora was charged with shooting Nadine Russo in the abdomen on Oct. 26, 2003, because he was upset she had flattened two tires on his sport utility vehicle. The couple has since become engaged, and Russo did not comment when leaving court on Monday.

The two counts to which Spadafora pleaded guilty are felonies.

Aggravated assault carries a maximum prison sentence of 10 years, while the weapons charge carries a maximum sentence of seven years.

Spadafora's attorney said he expected a sentence of no more than two years, not counting time served. A sentencing date will be set following a pre-sentencing hearing.

The troubled fighter was jailed earlier this month after a urine test revealed he had been using cocaine, a violation of his bond.

Shortly before his fiancee was shot, he was arrested for urinating on a Pittsburgh street while intoxicated and was later convicted of disorderly conduct and public intoxication.

Spadafora is a former International Boxing Federation lightweight champion. He gave up his IBF title in 2003 and said he was moving up to junior welterweight, where he could maintain his weight.

Sports briefs

Lab charged with destroying cyclist Hamilton's sample

ATHENS, Greece — An Olympic doping laboratory was charged Monday with destroying a sample that belonged to gold medalist cyclist Tyler Hamilton.

Prosecutors charged "unknown perpetrators" with destroying a backup sample of the U.S. rider's blood.

After winning his event at the Athens Games, Hamilton took a doping test, and an initial sample and backup sample were kept by the lab. A test of the initial sample showed evidence of a blood transfusion, but the case against Hamilton was dropped after his backup sample was frozen, leaving too few red blood cells to analyze.

Hamilton tested positive again at a September race, with both samples confirming the result. He has questioned the reliability of the testing system for blood doping, which boosts endurance by raising the level of oxygen-carrying red blood cells.

Prosecutors also charged Greek weightlifter Leonidas Sampanis with taking banned substances during the Olympics. Sampanis was stripped of his bronze medal in the 137-pound category after a drug test showed an abnormally high level of testosterone. He faces a single misdemeanor charge.

The prosecutors are Spyros Mouzakitis and Athena Theodoropoulou, who are involved in a number of doping cases related to the Athens Olympics. Among them is the case against Greek sprinters Kostas Kenteris and Katerina Thanou. The two were charged last month with avoiding a drug test and faking a motorcycle accident hours later.

On Friday, Kenteris and Thanou submitted written explanations to the International Association of Athletics Federations on why they missed drug tests on the eve of the Olympics. The IAAF said it would decide by the end of the month whether the explanations were acceptable.

Dellucci, Rangers reach $1.8M deal

The Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Outfielder David Dellucci agreed to terms on a two-year, $1.8 million contract with the Texas Rangers on Sunday.

The deal, which includes up to $700,000 in performance bonuses, is contingent on Dellucci passing a physical, the team said.

Dellucci batted .242 with 17 homer and 61 RBIs in 107 games with Texas last season. He batted .261 with 44 homers and 224 RBIs in 648 games over eight seasons with Baltimore, Arizona, the New York Yankees and Texas.

MLB briefs

Alou not injured in car mishap

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic — Free-agent outfielder Moises Alou escaped injury when his car hit a pothole and momentarily spun out of control.

Alou was driving alone Saturday night in Santo Domingo, where he lives in the offseason.

"I'm grateful that everybody worries about me, but thank God I'm OK," he told The Associated Press on Sunday. "Two of the tires blew out and I had to call for help to tow it. There was not a crash or any injuries."

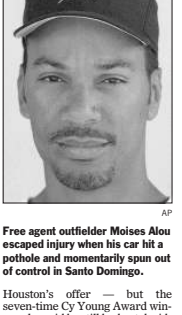
Alou hit 39 home runs with 106 RBIs last season with the Chicago Cubs. The Mets made Alou an offer about two weeks ago, general manager Omar Minaya told the AP on Friday after a news conference announcing a $53 million, four-year deal with Dominican pitcher Pedro Martinez.

The left fielder has spent 13 seasons in the major leagues with five teams. He has batted .300 with 278 home runs and 1,092 RBIs with Pittsburgh, Montreal, Florida, Houston and the Cubs, winning a World Series ring with the Marlins in 1997.

The Cubs declined an $11.5 million mutual option on Alou, and the decision to not bring him back was hardly a surprise. Although Alou topped 100 RBIs for the fifth time and said he wanted to return to Chicago, the Cubs were looking for a younger and cheaper player as they remake their roster after a late-season collapse that cost them a playoff spot.

He hit .283 with 76 home runs and 258 RBIs in three seasons with the Cubs.

"To go somewhere else is going to be tough," Alou said at the end of the season.



AP

Free agent outfielder Moises Alou escaped injury when his car hit a pothole and momentarily spun out of control in Santo Domingo.

Houston's offer — but the seven-time Cy Young Award winner also said he still had not decided whether he would pitch in 2005 or retire.

Players who accept arbitration are considered to have re-signed with their former teams and no longer are free agents.

Catcher Jason Varitek, shortstop Orlando Cabrera and pitcher Derek Lowe rejected arbitration offers from Boston, and pitcher Orlando Hernandez and designated hitter Ruben Sierra rejected offers from the New York Yankees.

Center fielder Carlos Beltran turned down the arbitration offer made by Houston.

Polanco hit .298 for the Phillies last season with 17 homers and 55 RBIs. Villone was 8-6 with a 4.08 ERA in 10 starts and 46 relief appearances with the Mariners last season.

Baseball has another deadline Monday: It's the last day for teams to offer 2005 contracts to unsigned players on their 40-man rosters. Players not offered contracts become free agents.

Polanco, Villone accept arbitration

Second baseman Placido Polanco accepted the Philadelphia Phillies' offer of salary arbitration on Sunday night, and left-hander Ron Villone agreed to arbitrate with the Seattle Mariners.

Just three of the 41 free agents offered arbitration by their former teams on Dec. 7 accepted the offers. Roger Clemens announced last weekend at the winter meetings that he was taking

Eischen, Nationals reach deal

WASHINGTON — Left-handed reliever Joey Eischen agreed Monday to a one-year, $1.04 dollar deal with Major League Baseball's new Washington team.

Eischen is the only one of seven former Montreal Expos players eligible for arbitration expected to re-sign with the team by Monday's deadline.

Interim general manager Jim Bowden was deciding whether to tender offers to the other six: outfielder Brad Wilkerson, catcher Brian Schneider, first baseman Nick Johnson and pitchers Tony Armas Jr., Tomo Ohka and T.J. Tucker.

The Expos will become the Nationals if their move from Montreal to Washington overcomes a financial impasse between the league and the District of Columbia Council.

Eischen made only 21 appearances last season because of elbow injuries. He went 0-1 with a 3.93 ERA in 18 1/3 innings.

Palmer among five Nationwide qualifiers for 2005 Masters field

BY DOUG FERGUSON

The Associated Press

The Masters will have a guy named Palmer playing at Augusta National next year — just not the King.

Ryan Palmer was among five Nationwide Tour graduates who earned a spot in the 2005 Masters on Monday, when the final world ranking of the year was published and allowed Augusta National to start putting invitations in the mail.

Palmer — no relation to Arnold Palmer, who played his 50th and final Masters last year — qualified by finishing in the top 40 on the PGA Tour money list. He got there with a final-round 62 to win the Funai Classic at Disney in October.

Four other players were on the Nationwide Tour in '03 and earned a Masters invitation by finishing in the top 40 on the money list: Zach Johnson, Mark Hensby, Bo Van Pelt and Ted Purdy.

They were among 14 players who will make their first Masters appearance April 7-10.

The big winner Monday was Trevor Immelman of South Africa, who was No. 53 in the world going into the final week of the season.

Because his points were not devalued as much as those in front of him, Immelman moved ahead of four players and ended the year at No. 49.

Two players he passed who fell out of the top 50 — Nick Price and Kirk Triplett — had already qualified for the Masters by finishing in the top 16 at Augusta National last April.

David Howell, whose 6-iron into the 17th green at the Ryder Cup swung momentum toward Europe, earned his first trip to the Masters by finishing the year in the top 50 in the world ranking. Other Masters newcomers who qualified through the world ranking were Nick O'Hern of Australia (No. 45) and Joakim Haeggman of Sweden (No. 48).

This will be the second time Ryan Palmer has been to Augusta National — but first as a player.

He cobbled together as many tickets as he could find one year as a birthday present for his father.

"The four of us went up there for Thursday and Friday. It was an awesome experience, just getting to see the place and Magnolia Lane and everything," Palmer said after winning at Disney. "What an unbelievable dream come true to get to drive down there with my wife and my parents ... as a player. I'm looking forward to that."

The initial field has 87 players, including six-time Masters champion Jack Nicklaus and two-time winner Seve Ballesteros, both of whom have indicated they might play.

The final field will not be set until March 28, and there are four ways to get in: — top 10 on the '05 money list after The Players Championship.

■ top 50 in the world ranking after The Players Championship.

■ winning The Players Championship, which comes with a three-year exemption to the Masters.

■ special invitations to foreign-born players.

Phil Mickelson is the defending champion, winning his first major last year with five birdies on his last seven holes, including an 18-footer on the 18th for a one-shot victory over Ernie Els. He is among 22 past Masters champions expected to compete.

Only three amateurs qualified because Ryan Moore won the U.S. Amateur and the U.S. Amateur Public Links.

Augusta National changed its criteria five years ago, doing away with automatic invitations for PGA Tour winners and placing more emphasis on consistent play through the world ranking and money list.

Seven players who won on the PGA Tour since the Masters are not eligible for next year's tournament: Joey Sindelar (Wachovia Championship), Jonathan Byrd (B.C. Open), Vaughn Taylor (Reno-Tahoe Open), Woody Austin (Hartford), Bart Bryant (Texas Open), Brent Geiberger (Greensboro) and Andre Stolz (Las Vegas).

'Tis the season for glut of games, points

Low-profile matchups often more entertaining than BCS counterparts

BY RALPH D. RUSSO
The Associated Press

The bowl season has arrived and college football fans can expect two things: lots of games and lots of points.

Nineteen of the 28 bowl games will be played between Tuesday and New Year's Eve. Many of the matchups seem mundane, even odd.

Memphis against Bowling Green? Toledo vs. Connecticut? But don't be fooled. Often the pre-New Year's Day games are some of the most entertaining.

Early bowl picks

Check out some of these scores from last year's second-tier bowl games: Hawaii 54, Houston 48; California 52, Virginia Tech 49; Miami (Ohio) 49, Louisville 28; Minnesota 31, Oregon 30.

There are a few potential shootouts this year, too — starting Wednesday with Memphis vs. Bowling Green in GMAC Bowl.

The Falcons are one of a record five Mid-American Conference teams in the postseason and rank fourth in the nation in scoring at 43.6 points per game. Memphis, making its second straight bowl appearance after a 32-year drought, averages over 35 points.

Bowling Green quarterback Omar Jacobs is one of the nation's least-publicized stars. He's the country's fourth-rated passer (167.8), and has thrown for 3,637 yards and 36 touchdowns.

Memphis counters with maybe the most underrated running back in the country in DeAngelo Williams. The junior is third in rushing with 166.2 yards per game.

The Hawaii Bowl on Friday could also be a fun one, with the hometown Warriors facing UAB.

Timmy Chang, who holds the NCAA career record for yards passing, and wide receiver Chad Owens, a second-team All-American, put up plenty of points and yards for Hawaii. And the Warriors defense usually allows the same.

UAB's Darrell Hackney, a quarterback in the mold of the Minnesota Vikings' Daunte Culpepper, and wideout Roddy White, a third-team All-American, should make a good impression on NFL scouts.

Toledo and UConn in the Motor City Bowl on Dec. 27 features two more prolific passers in the Rockets' Bruce Gradkowski and the Huskies' Don Orlovsky. They have combined for 6,590 yards and 48 touchdown passes.

"We sure don't want a shootout," UConn coach Randy Edsall said.

Texas Tech's Air Raid will try to keep up with a surly and very good California team in the Holiday Bowl, but for pure entertainment the Liberty Bowl could blow them all away.

No. 7 Louisville is No. 1 in scoring, averaging 50.3 points per game. No. 10 Boise State ranks second in that stat, at 49.7 points per game.

Liberty Bowl officials weren't thrilled with losing Utah to the Bowl Championship Series, but got a great consolation prize in Boise State.

"It's such a unique matchup," Liberty Bowl executive director Steve Ehrhart said. "We're always having to battle the bowls that have beaches and fancy new stadiums. That's why, this time, we have a terrific opportunity to showcase Memphis."

The picks:

Tuesday, Dec. 21
Champs Sports Bowl

Georgia Tech (minus 4½) vs. Syracuse: No shootout here with Tech's tough defense ... **GEORGIA TECH 22-14**.

Wednesday, Dec. 22
GMAC Bowl

Memphis (plus 4½) vs. Bowling Green: Both teams looking for a second straight bowl victory ... **MEMPHIS 47-43**.

Thursday, Dec. 23
Fort Worth (Texas) Bowl

Cincinnati (minus 1½) vs. Marshall: Bearcats quarterback Gino Guidugli likely to return from injury ... **CINCINNATI 33-28**.

Las Vegas Bowl

Wyoming (plus 12) vs. UCLA: Cowboys' first bowl since 1993 ... **UCLA 41-17**.

Friday, Dec. 24
Hawaii Bowl

UAB (plus 3½) vs. Hawaii: Warriors have scored 82 points in last two Hawaii Bowls ... **UAB 45-38**.

Monday, Dec. 27
MPC Computers Bowl

Fresno State (plus 5½) vs. No. 18 Virginia: Not what the Cavaliers were hoping for ... **VIRGINIA 36-16**.

Motor City Bowl

Toledo (minus 3½) vs. Connecticut: Huskies go bowling for first time ... **UCONN 38-37**.

Tuesday, Dec. 28
Independence Bowl

Iowa State (plus 3) vs. Miami (Ohio): Cyclones are 1-6 in bowls ... **MIAMI 29-23**.

Insight Bowl

Oregon State (minus 3½) vs. Notre Dame: Irish try to snap six-bowl game losing skid ... **NOTRE DAME 22-17**.

Wednesday, Dec. 29
Houston Bowl

Texas-El Paso (plus 3) vs. Colorado: Miners coach Mike Price is 3-2 in bowl games ... **COLORADO 31-21**.

Alamo Bowl

No. 24 Ohio State (plus 1½) vs. Oklahoma State: Last time Buckeyes played in a bowl before Jan. 1 was 1993 ... **OHIO STATE 27-21**.

Thursday, Dec. 30
Continental Tire Bowl

No. 25 Boston College (plus 3) vs. North Carolina: BC gets taste of life in ACC ... **NORTH CAROLINA 27-21**.

Emerald Bowl

New Mexico (minus 2½) vs. Navy: Middies' last bowl victory was in 1996 ... **NAVY 21-19**.

Holiday Bowl

No. 4 California (minus 11½) vs. Texas Tech: Beware angry Bears ... **CAL 48-14**.

Silicon Valley Classic

Troy (pick) vs. Northern Illinois: Troy's first bowl; Huskies' second ... **NORTHERN ILLINOIS 30-17**.

Friday, Dec. 31
Music City Bowl

Alabama (minus 3½) vs. Minnesota: Tide returns to postseason after two-year absence ... **ALABAMA 27-26**.

Sun Bowl

Purdue (minus 7) vs. No. 21 Arizona State: Sun Devils quarterback Andrew Walter is out with an injury ... **PURDUE 28-14**.

Liberty Bowl

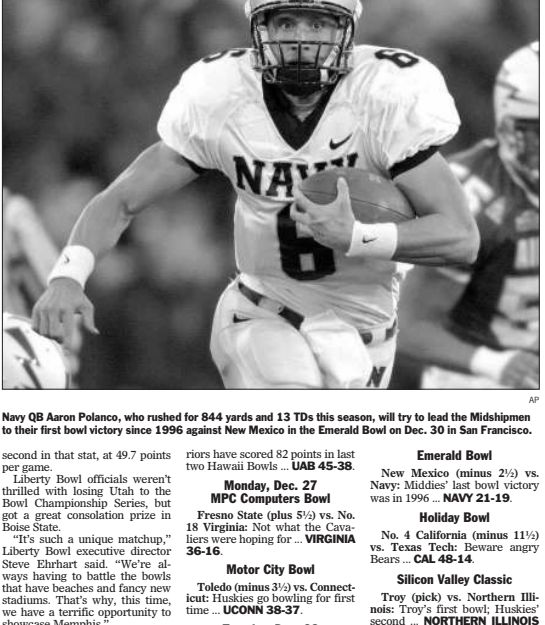
No. 10 Boise State (plus 14) vs. No. 7 Louisville: This should be more fun than Graceland ... **LOUISVILLE 56-40**.

Peach Bowl

No. 14 Miami (minus 2½) vs. No. 20 Florida: So, who exactly is coaching the Gators? ... **MIAMI 32-21**.

Last week of regular season: 5-2 (straight); 4-9 (vs. points).

Season: 194-52 (straight); 125-114-5 (vs. points).



AP

Navy QB Aaron Polanco, who rushed for 844 yards and 13 TDs this season, will try to lead the Midshipmen to their first bowl victory since 1996 against New Mexico in the Emerald Bowl on Dec. 30 in San Francisco.

Bowl glance

Tuesday, Dec. 14
New Orleans Bowl
Payout: $750,000
Southern Mississippi 31, North Texas 10

Tuesday, Dec. 21
Champs Sports Bowl
At Orlando, Fla.
Payout: $850,000
Georgia Tech (6-5) vs. Syracuse (6-5)

Wednesday, Dec. 22
GMAC Bowl
Mobile, Ala.
Payout: $750,000
Memphis (8-3) vs. Bowling Green (8-3)

Thursday, Dec. 23
Fort Worth (Texas) Bowl
Payout: $750,000
Cincinnati (6-5) vs. Marshall (6-5)

Las Vegas Bowl
Payout: $575,000
Wyoming (6-5) vs. UCLA (6-5)

Friday, Dec. 24
Hawaii Bowl
At Honolulu
Payout: $750,000
UAB (7-4) vs. Hawaii (7-5)

Monday, Dec. 27
MPC Computers Bowl
At Boise, Idaho
Payout: $750,000
Fresno State (8-3) vs. Virginia (8-3)

Motor City Bowl
At Detroit
Payout: $750,000
Toledo (9-3) vs. Connecticut (7-4)

Tuesday, Dec. 28
Independence Bowl
At Shreveport, La.
Payout: $1.2 million
Iowa State (6-5) vs. Miami (Ohio) (8-4)

Insight Bowl
At Phoenix
Payout: $750,000
Oregon State (6-5) vs. Notre Dame (6-5)

Wednesday, Dec. 29
Houston Bowl
Payout: $1.1 million
Texas-El Paso (8-3) vs. Colorado (7-5)

Alamo Bowl
At San Antonio
Payout: $1.55 million
Ohio State (7-4) vs. Oklahoma State (7-4)

Thursday, Dec. 30
Continental Tire Bowl
At Charlotte, N.C.
Payout: $750,000
Boston College (8-3) vs. N. Carolina (6-5)

Emerald Bowl
At San Francisco
Payout: $750,000
New Mexico (7-4) vs. Navy (9-2)

Holiday Bowl
At San Diego
Payout: $2 million
California (10-1) vs. Texas Tech (7-4)

Silicon Valley Classic
At San Jose, Calif.
Payout: $750,000
Troy (7-4) vs. Northern Illinois (8-3)

Friday, Dec. 31
Music City Bowl
At Nashville, Tenn.
Payout: $780,000
Alabama (6-5) vs. Minnesota (6-5)

Sun Bowl
At El Paso, Texas
Payout: $1.5 million
Purdue (7-4) vs. Arizona State (8-3)

Liberty Bowl
At Memphis, Tenn.
Payout: $1.35 million
Boise State (11-0) vs. Louisville (10-1)

Peach Bowl
At Atlanta
Payout: $2.2 million
Miami (8-3) vs. Florida (7-4)

Saturday, Jan. 1
Cotton Bowl
At Dallas
Payout: $3 million
Tennessee (9-3) vs. Texas A&M (7-4)

Outback Bowl
At Tampa, Fla.
Payout: $2.75 million
Wisconsin (9-2) vs. Georgia (9-2)

Gator Bowl
At Jacksonville, Fla.
Payout: $1.6 million
Florida State (8-3) vs. West Virginia (8-3)

Capital One Bowl
At Orlando, Fla.
Payout: $5.187 million
Iowa (9-2) vs. LSU (9-2)

Rose Bowl
At Pasadena, Calif.
Payout: $14.5 million
Michigan (9-2) vs. Texas (10-1)

Fiesta Bowl
At Tempe, Ariz.
Payout: $11-14 million
Utah (11-0) vs. Pittsburgh (8-3)

Monday, Jan. 3
Sugar Bowl
At New Orleans
Payout: $11-14 million
Auburn (12-0) vs. Virginia Tech (10-2)

Tuesday, Jan. 4
Orange Bowl
At Miami
Payout: $11-14 million
Southern Cal (12-0) vs. Oklahoma (12-0)

Roy has a hand in victory over Wolfpack

Washington center deflects last shot by No. 12 N.C. State

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Last week in practice with Washington's scout team, Brandon Roy was pretending to be North Carolina State standout Julius Hodge.

Men's Top 25 roundup

On Sunday, Roy defended Hodge on the decisive play, and got just enough of his finger on Hodge's final shot to help the No. 18 Huskies to a 68-64 victory over the 12th-ranked and previously unbeaten Wolfpack.

Will Conroy and Tre Simmons each scored 12 points and Roy returned earlier than expected from arthroscopic knee surgery to add 10 points.

"This was obviously a huge game for us going in," Huskies coach Lorenzo Romar said. "It was an even bigger game the way we won it. We didn't shoot the ball well from the perimeter and we didn't make foul shots, but we found a way to win."

It didn't hurt Washington (8-1) that Roy was back in uniform.

The Huskies led 66-64, and the clock was ticking down the final seconds when Hodge went up for a short jumper that would have tied it. He slipped past Washington's Nate Robinson, leaned into Roy and launched the shot.

"I knew he was going to shoot it," Roy said. "He went up and I just kind of tipped it. I got high enough, and then it went off his hands and slipped out of bounds. But I got a piece of it."

AP

Washington's Brandon Roy wins a battle for a loose ball with N.C. State's Julius Hodge.

Simmons came away with the ball before it went out of play, drew a foul and made two free throws with 0.2 seconds to seal the victory. That left the Wolfpack (8-1) looking back on a questionable no-call.

"When I watch the film, I will be able to tell you," N.C. State coach Herb Sendek said.

Said Hodge: "I went straight up and I felt the little guy, Nate, get me in the body some. My shot was a little off target, but I've still got to find a way to put the ball in the bucket. I'm not going to blame them (officials) on that last play."

Hodge scored 15 points and Robinson, Washington's leading scorer, was limited to seven after missing nine of 11 shots.

No. 1 Illinois 93, Valparaiso 56: At Champaign, Ill., Dee Brown had 19 points and all five Illinois starters in double figures.

Brown scored five points in a 20-5 run midway through the second half that gave the Illini (10-0) a 39-point lead over the Crusaders (2-6).

The Illini, playing their first game in eight days, shot 59 percent from the field.

Dan Oppland had 16 points for the Crusaders, who shot 34 percent and committed 15 turnovers.

No. 5 North Carolina 85, Virginia Tech 51: At Blacksburg, Va., Jawad Williams and Sean May each scored 17 points and the Tar Heels gave Virginia Tech a rough welcome to Atlantic Coast Conference basketball.

The Tar Heels (8-1), who won their eighth straight, scored 17 of the last 21 points to lead 41-27 at halftime, then started the second half on a 16-5 run.

Zabian Dowdell scored 21 points for Virginia Tech (5-3).

No. 11 Connecticut 81, Rice 72: At Hartford, Conn., Rashad Anderson scored 27 points and went 7-for-8 from the free throw line over the final 2 minutes for the Huskies.

Josh Boone added a career-high 20 points and dominated inside with 14 rebounds for UConn (5-1), which was coming off its first loss — a 61-59 upset at Massachusetts 10 days ago.

The Huskies outrebounded the Owls 61-34 and had 31 offensive rebounds that led to 24 second-chance points.

Michael Harris led Rice (5-2) with 22 points and nine rebounds.

No. 23 Maryland 90, Florida St. 88 (OT): At College Park, Md., John Gilchrist made two free throws with 6.6 seconds left in overtime to cap a 21-point, 13-rebound performance as the Terrapins won their Atlantic Coast Conference opener.

Six players scored in double figures for the Terrapins (6-2), who held on after having blown a 13-point lead. D.J. Strawberry had five of his 11 points in overtime.

Adam Waleskowski had 23 points for the Seminoles (5-5).

Carter's former team outscores his new one

The Associated Press

NBA roundup

TORONTO — Lamond Murray scored 12 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter and the Toronto Raptors beat the New Jersey Nets 110-99 on Sunday, their first victory since Vince Carter was traded to the Nets.

Carter wasn't at the game because Toronto's trade with New Jersey wasn't expected to be finalized until noon Monday.

The Raptors traded their biggest star on Friday to the Nets for Eric Williams, Aaron Williams, Alonzo Mourning and two first-round draft picks.

Murray, who could play more now that Carter is gone, recorded his highest scoring game with Toronto. He scored 12 points as the Raptors began the fourth quarter on a 17-4 run.

Morris Peterson added 20 points for the Raptors. Richard Jefferson had 38 points for the Nets.

Knicks 94, Jazz 93: At New York, Jamal Crawford scored 11 of his 24 points in the final five minutes in New York's victory over Utah.

Crawford's running floater made it 90-86 with 27 seconds left and Stephon Marbury's two free throws with 6.4 seconds remaining gave New York a four-point lead.

Marbury had 19 points and 12 assists, Michael Sweetney scored 13 and Kurt Thomas grabbed 17 of the Knicks' 29 rebounds as New York won at home over the Jazz for the first time in more than eight years.

Matt Harpring scored 21 for the Jazz, who dropped their seventh consecutive road game.

Heat 117, Magic 107: At Miami, Shaquille O'Neal sparked a 13-point run late in the fourth quarter and Miami won its eighth game in a row, its longest winning streak since March 1998.

The Heat trailed 103-102 with five minutes left before O'Neal helped then surge ahead.

O'Neal finished with 27 points, Eddie Jones scored 25 and Dwyane Wade added 22.

Steve Francis led Orlando with 31 points.

Kings 107, Hornets 71: At Sacramento, Peja Stojakovic scored 21 points, and Sacramento pulled away in the second half for a blowout victory over New Orleans, which lost for the 21st time in 23 games.

Grizzlies 92, Clippers 82: At Los Angeles, Pau Gasol scored six of his 20 points in the final 5:05 and Jason Williams added two three-pointers down the stretch to lift Memphis.

Corey Maggette scored 22 points for the Clippers.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	13	11	.542	—
Boston	11	12	.478	1½
Philadelphia	10	13	.435	2½
Toronto	9	17	.346	5
New Jersey	7	16	.304	5½
Southeast Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	19	7	.731	—
Washington	13	9	.591	4
Atlanta	14	10	.583	4
Charlotte	6	14	.300	10
Atlanta	4	20	.167	14
Central Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	14	10	.583	—
Detroit	12	11	.522	1½
Indiana	12	11	.522	1½
Chicago	7	15	.318	6
Milwaukee	6	15	.286	6½

Western Conference

Southwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	20	5	.800	—
Dallas	16	9	.640	4
Houston	11	13	.458	8½
Memphis	11	15	.423	9½
New Orleans	2	21	.087	17
Northwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	18	5	.783	—
Minnesota	15	8	.652	3
Denver	13	11	.542	5½
Portland	12	11	.522	6
Utah	10	15	.400	9
Pacific Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Phoenix	21	3	.875	—
Sacramento	16	7	.696	4½
L.A. Lakers	13	10	.565	7½
L.A. Clippers	11	12	.478	9½
Golden State	7	17	.292	14

Sunday's games

New York 94, Utah 93
Toronto 110, New Jersey 99
Miami 117, Orlando 107
Sacramento 107, New Orleans 71
Memphis 92, L.A. Clippers 82

Monday's games

Utah at Philadelphia
Toronto at Houston
Portland at Chicago
Phoenix at Denver
Memphis at L.A. Lakers
Washington at Golden State

Tuesday's games

Minnesota at Cleveland
New Jersey at Charlotte
Boston at Miami
Dallas at New York
Washington at Sacramento
New Orleans at L.A. Clippers

Wednesday's games

Utah at Toronto
New York at Boston
Philadelphia at Indiana
San Antonio at Orlando
Dallas at Atlanta
Chicago at Detroit
Cleveland at New Jersey
Portland at Milwaukee
Charlotte at Houston
Denver at Seattle
Memphis at Golden State
New Orleans at L.A. Lakers

Sunday

Raptors 110, Nets 99

NEW JERSEY — Jefferson 12-20 11-11 38, Scalabrine 1-4 1-2 3, Collins 5-8 0-7 10, Buford 5-13 0-0 10, Kidd 4-8 0-0 10, Krstic 6-8 3-4 15, Vaughn 2-4 5-5 10, Dickens 1-4 0-0 3. Totals 36-69 20-29 99.

TORONTO — Peterson 8-11 0-0 20, Bosh 1-7 1-1 3, Woods 1-3 2-4 4, Rose 7-10 1-2 17, Alston 2-9 6-6 12, Marshall 4-8 3-4 11, Bonner 5-10 2-2 12, Murray 4-5 7-8 18, Palacio 5-6 0-0 10. Totals 37-69 22-27 110.

New Jersey	**22**	**27**	**24**	**26—**	**99**
Toronto	**22**	**28**	**29**	**31—**	**110**

Three-Point Goals—New Jersey 7-21 (Jefferson 3-7, Kidd 2-5, Vaughn 1-2, Dickens 1-3, Collins 0-1, Buford 0-3), Toronto 14-23 (Peterson 4-4, Murray 3-3, Marshall 3-6, Rose 2-3, Alston 2-6, Palacio 0-1). Fouled out—Scalabrine. Rebounds—New Jersey 42 (Kidd 6), Toronto 37 (Peterson 6). Assists—New Jersey 23 (Kidd, Jefferson, Vaughn 5), Toronto 26 (Alston 7). Total fouls—New Jersey 25, Toronto 27. Technical—Rose. A—16,938 (19,800).

Knicks 94, Jazz 93

UTAH — Boozer 6-14 7-14 19, Harpring 8-16 5-7 21, Radojevic 0-1 1-6 5, Bell 9-15 0-0 20, Lopez 1-6 1-2 3, Arroyo 3-10 3-3 9, Okur 5-7 2-2 13, Humphries 0-1 0-0 0, Giricek 0-1 0-0 0, Borchardt 1-1 0-0 2, Snyder 0-0 1-2 1. Totals 33-72 24-36 93.

NEW YORK — K.Thomas 3-7 0-0 6, T.Thomas 5-11 1-2 12, Mohammed 3-7 2-4 8, Crawford 7-16 7-7 24, Marbury 5-12 9-9 19, Houston 4-6 0-0 10, Sweetney 5-10 3-3 13, Ariza 0-0 0-0 0, Williams 0-2 2-2 2. Totals 32-71 24-27 94.

Utah	**16**	**20**	**27**	**30—**	**93**
New York	**19**	**22**	**24**	**29—**	**94**

Three-Point Goals—Utah 3-5 (Bell 2-3, Okur 1-1, Harpring 0-1), New York 6-16 (Crawford 3-8, Houston 2-3, T.Thomas 1-3, Marbury 0-2). Fouled out—K.Thomas. Rebounds—Utah 56 (Okur 14), New York 37 (K.Thomas 14). Assists—Utah 16 (Lopez 4), New York 20 (Marbury 12). Total fouls—Utah 22, New York 23. Technical—K.Thomas. A—19,763 (19,763).

Heat 117, Magic 107

ORLANDO — Hill 8-14 4-4 20, Howard 0-3 7-8 7, Battie 2-6 1-1 5, Mobley 8-13 3-4 22, Francis 13-23 4-8 31, Turkoglu 4-11 2-2 11, Nelson 1-3 0-0 2, Kasun 2-2 0-0 4, Garrity 2-3 0-0 5, Augmon 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 40-78 21-27 107.

MIAMI — E.Jones 8-10 5-5 25, Haslem 4-7 2-2 10, O'Neal 12-18 3-5 27, D.Jones 3-7 0-0 9, Wade 6-20 10-11 22, Butler 0-4 0-0 0, Doleac 2-2 0-0 4, Dooling 4-8 1-2 10, Laettner 4-7 2-2 10. Totals 43-83 23-27 117.

Orlando	**30**	**33**	**23**	**21—**	**107**
Miami	**30**	**24**	**32**	**31—**	**117**

Three-Point Goals—Orlando 6-10 (Mobley 3-4, Turkoglu 1-1, Garrity 1-2, Francis 1-3), Miami 8-17 (E.Jones 4-5, D.Jones 3-6, Dooling 1-3, Butler 0-1, Haslem 0-1, Wade 0-1). Fouled out—None. Rebounds—Orlando 46 (Howard 9), Miami 42 (Haslem 9). Assists—Orlando 12 (Nelson 4), Miami 24 (Dooling 6). Total fouls—Orlando 21, Miami 20. Technicals—Orlando coach Davis, Francis, Mobley, Miami Defensive Three Second 2. A—20,128 (19,600).

Kings 107, Hornets 71

NEW ORLEANS — Lynch 1-5 2-2 4, Freije 1-4 1-2 3, Brown 2-11 2-2 14, Wesley 2-8 0-0 5, Harrington 1-9 0-0 2, Dickau 5-10 3-4 14, Nailon 4-8 1-2 9, Andersen 2-6 6-8 10, Baxter 1-6 0-2 2, Smith 2-7 2-2 7, Edwards 0-3 1-2 1. Totals 25-77 18-26 71.

SACRAMENTO — Stojakovic 7-14 4-4 21, Songaila 4-8 5-6 13, Miller 6-9 4-4 17, Christie 3-3 0-0 6, Bibby 5-9 5-6 16, Ostertag 3-3 0-0 6, Jackson 5-11 0-0 14, Barnes 2-6 2-4 6, Evans 4-9 0-0 8, Daniels 0-1 0-0 0.

Totals 39-75 20-24 107.

New Orleans	**28**	**11**	**14**	**18—**	**71**
Sacramento	**28**	**22**	**35**	**22—**	**107**

Three-Point Goals—New Orleans 3-12 (Wesley 1-1, Smith 1-4, Dickau 1-4, Freije 0-1, Lynch 0-2), Sacramento 9-23 (Jackson 4-8, Stojakovic 3-8, Miller 1-1, Bibby 1-3, Evans 0-1, Barnes 0-2). Fouled out—Ostertag. Rebounds—New Orleans 46 (Andersen 7), Sacramento 54 (Songaila 11). Assists—New Orleans 18 (Brown 5), Sacramento 30 (Christie, Miller 6). Total fouls—New Orleans 24, Sacramento 19. A—17,317 (17,317).

Grizzlies 92, Clippers 82

MEMPHIS — Posey 2-6 0-0 6, Gasol 6-11 8-9 20, Wright 5-7 2-5 12, Miller 5-9 0-0 14, Williams 6-11 2-2 17, Wells 3-10 1-4 7, Watson 3-6 0-2 6, Swift 1-6 1-2 3, Battier 0-4 2-2 2, Humphrey 2-6 1-4 5. Totals 33-76 17-30 92.

L.A. CLIPPERS — Simmons 6-11 1-2 14, Brand 9-18 1-1 19, Kaman 3-5 0-0 6, Maggette 4-10 14-17 22, Jaric 3-8 0-2 6, Ross 0-1 0-0 0, Brunson 1-5 0-0 3, Moore 3-6 4-5 10, Wilcox 1-2 0-0 2. Totals 30-68 20-27 82.

Memphis	**33**	**13**	**22**	**24—**	**92**
L.A. Clippers	**21**	**18**	**29**	**14—**	**82**

Three-Point Goals—Memphis 9-16 (Miller 4-5, Williams 3-7, Posey 2-4), L.A. Clippers 2-9 (Simmons 1-1, Brunson 1-2, Jaric 0-2, Maggette 0-4). Fouled out—Moore. Rebounds—Memphis 50 (Gasol 8), L.A. Clippers 51 (Brand 12). Assists—Memphis 22 (Williams 7), L.A. Clippers 21 (Jaric 6). Total fouls—Memphis 25, L.A. Clippers 26. A—16,297 (18,964).

NFL scoreboard

American Conference

East	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-New England	12	1	0	.923	365	217
N.Y. Jets	10	4	0	.714	297	206
Buffalo	8	6	0	.571	330	248
Miami	2	11	0	.154	213	289
South						
y-Indianapolis	11	3	0	.786	474	287
Jacksonville	8	6	0	.571	248	253
Houston	6	8	0	.429	274	317
Tennessee	4	10	0	.286	304	383
North						
x-Pittsburgh	13	1	0	.929	323	220
Baltimore	8	6	0	.571	280	225
Cincinnati	6	8	0	.429	313	340
Cleveland	3	11	0	.214	247	366
West						
y-San Diego	11	3	0	.786	391	262
Denver	8	6	0	.571	311	274
Kansas City	8	6	0	.429	435	381
Oakland	5	9	0	.357	284	398

National Conference

East	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Philadelphia	13	1	0	.929	369	202
Dallas	5	9	0	.357	367	367
N.Y. Giants	5	9	0	.357	293	300
Washington	5	9	0	.357	209	234
South						
y-Atlanta	11	3	0	.786	301	283
Carolina	6	8	0	.429	267	306
New Orleans	6	8	0	.429	301	374
Tampa Bay	5	9	0	.357	274	255
North						
x-Green Bay	8	6	0	.571	359	335
Minnesota	6	6	0	.500	304	300
Chicago	5	9	0	.357	204	281
Detroit	5	9	0	.357	258	313
West						
Seattle	7	7	0	.500	319	326
St. Louis	6	8	0	.429	267	356
Arizona	5	9	0	.357	251	291
San Francisco	2	12	0	.143	245	390

y-clinched playoff spot
x-clinched division

Saturday's games

Pittsburgh 33, N.Y. Giants 30
Washington 35, San Francisco 16
Atlanta 34, Carolina 31, OT

Sunday's games

Houston 24, Chicago 5
Minnesota 28, Detroit 27
N.Y. Jets 37, Seattle 14
Kansas City 45, Denver 17
Buffalo 33, Cincinnati 17
Philadelphia 12, Dallas 7
San Diego 21, Cleveland 0
Arizona 31, St. Louis 7
New Orleans 21, Tampa Bay 17
Jacksonville 28, Green Bay 25
Oakland 40, Tennessee 35
Indianapolis 20, Baltimore 10

Monday's game

New England at Miami

Friday's game

Green Bay at Minnesota, 3 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 25

Oakland at Kansas City
Denver at Tennessee

Sunday, Dec. 26

Chicago at Detroit
San Diego at Indianapolis
Baltimore at Pittsburgh
Houston at Jacksonville
Atlanta at New Orleans
N.Y. Giants at Cincinnati
Buffalo at San Francisco
New England at N.Y. Jets
Arizona at Seattle
Washington at Dallas
Carolina at Tampa Bay
Cleveland at Miami

Monday, Dec. 27

Philadelphia at St. Louis

Sunday

Texans 24, Bears 5

Houston	0	7	0	**17—24**
Chicago	0	0	2	**3— 5**

Second Quarter

Hou—Bradford 37 pass from Carr (K.Brown kick), :27.

Third Quarter

Chi—Safety, Carr intentional grounding, 4:06.

Fourth Quarter

Chi—FG Edinger 43, 14:09.
Hou—FG K.Brown 20, 11:37.
Hou—Davis 11 run (K.Brown kick), 4:23.
Hou—Anderson 60 fumble recovery (K.Brown kick), 2:37.
A—62,122.

	Hou	Chi
First downs	15	11
Total Net Yards	314	203
Rushes-yards	34-106	26-54
Passing	208	149
Punt Returns	5-44	3-3
Kickoff Returns	2-23	6-107
Interceptions Ret.	2-40	0-0
Comp-Att-Int	13-28-0	17-35-2
Sacked-Yards Lost	2-12	2-19
Punts	7-30.7	7-42.1
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	5-2
Penalties-Yards	10-89	5-50
Time of Possession	31:34	28:26

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Houston, Davis 25-95, Carr 6-8, Wells 3-3. **Chicago**, Jones 15-40, Thomas 6-21, Hutchinson 3-0, Berrian 2-(minus 7).

Passing—Houston, Carr 13-28-0-220. **Chicago**, Hutchinson 17-34-1-168, Edinger 0-1-0-0.

Receiving—Houston, Gaffney 4-109, Davis 4-22, Bradford 3-58, Johnson 2-31. **Chicago**, Jones 7-37, Terrell 3-41, Wade 2-26, Thomas 1-19, Gage 1-18, Clark 1-14, Berrian 1-9, McKie 1-7.

Missed field goals—Houston, K.Brown 42 (WR). **Chicago**, Edinger 39 (WL).

Vikings 28, Lions 27

Minnesota	7	0	0	**14—28**
Detroit	3	10	0	**14—27**

First Quarter

Det—FG Hanson 32, 8:34.

Min—Burleson 36 pass from Culpepper (Andersen kick), 1:58.

Second Quarter

Min—Moss 82 pass from Culpepper (Andersen kick), 9:53.

Det—Jones 16 run (Hanson kick), 3:21.

Det—FG Hanson 23, :30.

Fourth Quarter

Min—Burleson 37 pass from Culpepper (Andersen kick), 8:44.

Det—R.Williams 9 pass from Harrington (Streets pass from Harrington), 6:11.

Min—M.Williams 11 run (Andersen kick), 1:37.

Det—R.Williams 1 pass from Harrington (kick failed), :08.

A—62,337.

	Min	Det
First downs	21	24
Total Net Yards	461	463
Rushes-yards	23-91	25-113
Passing	370	350
Punt Returns	3-27	2-15
Kickoff Returns	5-94	4-83
Interceptions Ret.	2-14	1-24
Comp-Att-Int	25-35-1	25-44-2
Sacked-Yards Lost	5-34	2-11
Punts	5-40.6	3-45.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	2-1
Penalties-Yards	9-70	4-25
Time of Possession	30:27	29:33

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Minnesota, Bennett 13-51, Culpepper 4-22, M.Williams 2-12, Smith 4-6. **Detroit**, Jones 19-79, Bryson 2-19, Harrington 3-13, Schlesinger 1-2.

Passing—Minnesota, Culpepper 25-35-1-404. **Detroit**, Harrington 25-44-2-361.

Receiving—Minnesota, Wright 6-39, Burleson 5-134, Moss 4-102, Bennett 3-51, Berton 3-23, Smith 2-18, M.Williams 1-28, Robinson 1-9. **Detroit**, R.Williams 7-104, Streets 6-78, Jones 4-35, Streets 4-30, Bryson 3-51, Alexander 2-26, Schlesinger 1-7.

Missed field goals—None.

Jets 37, Seahawks 14

Seattle	7	0	0	**—14**
N.Y. Jets	3	21	6	**—37**

First Quarter

NYJ—FG Brien 21, 9:54.

Sea—Rice 1 pass from Hasselbeck (J.Brown kick), 5:27.

Second Quarter

NYJ—Martin 1 run (Brien kick), 14:57.

NYJ—Martin 3 run (Brien kick), 7:44.

NYJ—Moss 32 pass from Pennington (Brien kick), 1:46.

Sea—Stevens 6 pass from Hasselbeck (J.Brown kick), :03.

Third Quarter

NYJ—Moss 7 pass from Pennington (kick failed), 9:22.

Fourth Quarter

NYJ—McCareins 5 pass from Pennington (Brien kick), 8:14.

A—77,894.

	Sea	NY
First downs	19	27
Total Net Yards	275	462
Rushes-yards	23-88	41-229
Passing	187	253
Punt Returns	0-0	1-8
Kickoff Returns	7-131	3-50
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	1-7
Comp-Att-Int	22-32-1	18-24-0
Sacked-Yards Lost	3-14	0-0
Punts	3-36.0	0-0.0
Fumbles-Lost	3-2	1-0
Penalties-Yards	2-20	2-15
Time of Possession	24:34	35:26

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Seattle, Alexander 19-77, Morris 1-6, Strong 2-5, Hasselbeck 1-0. **N.Y. Jets**, Martin 24-134, Jordan 15-84, Moss 1-12, Pennington 1-(minus 1).

Passing—Seattle, Hasselbeck 22-30-1-201, Dilfer 0-2-0-0. **N.Y. Jets**, Pennington 18-24-0-253.

Receiving—Seattle, Jackson 4-45, Mill 4-43, Engram 4-39, Alexander 4-19, Rice 3-25, Hannam 1-17, Strong 1-7, Stevens 1-6. **N.Y. Jets**, Sowell 5-83, Moss 5-79, McCareins 3-40, Jordan 2-18, Baker 1-17, Cotchery 1-15, Askew 1-1.

Missed field goal—N.Y. Jets, Brien 30 (WL).

Chiefs 45, Broncos 17

Denver	7	3	0	**—17**
Kansas City	14	14	7	**10—45**

First Quarter

KC—Hall 97 kickoff return (Tynes kick), 14:47.

KC—L.Johnson 5 run (Tynes kick), 4:49.

Den—Smith 22 pass from Plummer (Elam kick), :02.

Second Quarter

KC—Kennison 7 pass from Green (Tynes kick), 9:36.

KC—L.Johnson 32 run (Tynes kick), 4:06.

Den—FG Elam 27, :04.

Third Quarter

KC—Parker 48 pass from Green (Tynes kick), 8:11.

Fourth Quarter

KC—Kennison 18 pass from Green (Tynes kick), 14:13.

KC—FG Tynes 39, 5:31.

Den—Hearst 4 run (Elam kick), 4:13.

A—77,702.

	Den	KC
First downs	24	22
Total Net Yards	402	410
Rushes-yards	20-132	36-163
Passing	270	248
Punt Returns	1-0	2-30
Kickoff Returns	8-155	4-147
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	2-0
Comp-Att-Int	23-41-2	17-23-0
Sacked-Yards Lost	6-22	3-18
Punts	4-38.5	4-32.8
Fumbles-Lost	2-1	2-0
Penalties-Yards	10-100	6-58
Time of Possession	26:49	33:11

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Denver, Bell 9-50, Plummer 2-29, Droughns 4-27, Hearst 5-26. **Kansas City**, L.Johnson 30-151, Hall 1-6, Collins 1-4, Easy 4-1.

Passing—Denver, Plummer 23-41-2-292. **Kansas City**, Green 16-19-0-224, Collins 1-4-0-42.

Receiving—Denver, Smith 6-75, Luke 5-46, Leliie 3-37, Putzier 3-30, Droughns 2-14, Bell 1-58, Hearst 1-15, Watts 1-14, Carswell 1-9. **Kansas City**, Kennison 7-101, Parker 3-84, Gonzalez 3-44, Hall 2-17, Richardson 1-11, Dunn 1-9.

Missed field goals—None.

Bills 33, Bengals 17

Buffalo	14	13	0	**—33**
Cincinnati	7	3	7	**—17**

First Quarter

Cin—R.Johnson 1 run (Graham kick), 4:48.

Buf—Evans 5 pass from Bledsoe (Lindell kick), 4:07.

Buf—Peters blocked punt recovery in end zone (Lindell kick), 3:37.

Second Quarter

Buf—Spikes 62 interception return (Lindell kick), 12:36.

Cin—FG Graham 24, 6:63.

Buf—FG Lindell 23, 1:13.

Buf—FG Lindell 39, :00.

Fourth Quarter

Buf—FG Lindell 21, 12:58.

Buf—FG Lindell 33, 5:31.

Cin—Schobel 4 pass from Kitna (Graham kick), 3:06.

A—65,378.

	Buf	Cin
First downs	13	16
Total Net Yards	212	275
Rushes-yards	29-43	31-149
Passing	169	126
Punt Returns	4-4	4-21
Kickoff Returns	4-81	6-109
Interceptions Ret.	2-65	0-0
Comp-Att-Int	15-30-0	16-32-2
Sacked-Yards Lost	2-14	3-25
Punts	5-45.0	6-34.0
Fumbles-Lost	5-1	3-2
Penalties-Yards	4-37	7-62
Time of Possession	28:57	31:03

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Buffalo, Evans 5-101, Moulds 5-47, J.Reed 2-24, McGahee 2-1, S.Williams 1-10. **Cincinnati**, Washington 4-60, Houshmandzadeh 4-43, Schobel 3-20, Kelly 3-18, C.Johnson 2-10.

Missed field goals—None.

Raiders 40, Titans 35

Tennessee	7	14	0	**14—35**
Oakland	14	7	14	**5—40**

First Quarter

Oak—T.Johnson 18 pass from Collins (Janikowski kick), 9:12.

Ten—Bennett 17 pass from Volek (Anderson kick), 3:08.

Oak—Porter 32 pass from Collins (Janikowski kick), 1:04.

Second Quarter

Ten—Bennett 23 pass from Volek (Anderson kick), 8:42.

Oak—Porter 18 pass from Collins (Janikowski kick), 1:55.

Ten—Troupe 7 pass from Volek (Anderson kick), 1:29.

Third Quarter

Oak—Gabriel 45 pass from Collins (Janikowski kick), 7:28.

Oak—Porter 3 pass from Collins (Janikowski kick), 4:30.

Fourth Quarter

Ten—Mason 3 pass from Volek (Anderson kick), 11:53.

Oak—FG Janikowski 42, 3:39.

Ten—Volek run (Anderson kick), 1:21.

Oak—Safety, Volek intentional grounding penalty in end zone, :08.

A—44,200.

	Ten	Oak
First downs	31	20
Total Net Yards	527	415
Rushes-yards	19-61	22-57
Passing	466	358
Punt Returns	4-37	1-2
Kickoff Returns	5-152	5-70
Interceptions Ret.	1-0	1-46
Comp-Att-Int	40-61-1	21-37-1
Sacked-Yards Lost	3-26	2-13
Punts	4-41.3	6-50.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	0-0
Penalties-Yards	5-35	5-39
Time of Possession	35:03	24:57

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Tennessee, A.Smith 16-45, Fleming 2-15, Volek 1-1. **Oakland**, Crockett 8-27, Fargas 7-17, Collins 4-10, Zereoue 1-4, Redmond 2-(minus 1).

Passing—Tennessee, Volek 40-60-1-492, Hentrich 0-1-0-0. **Oakland**, Collins 21-37-1-371.

Receiving—Tennessee, Bennett 13-160, Mason 9-121, Troupe 6-75, A.Smith 4-38, Berlin 3-69, Fleming 2-21, Meier 2-2, Holcombe 1-6. **Oakland**, Porter 8-148, T.Johnson 3-49, Whitted 2-61, Gabriel 2-52, Zereoue 2-11, Fargas 1-21, Hetherington 1-14, Crockett 1-11, Jolley 1-4.

Missed field goal—Tennessee, Anderson 41 (WR).

Eagles 12, Cowboys 7

Dallas	0	7	0	**0— 7**
Philadelphia	0	6	0	**6—12**

Second Quarter

Phi—C.Lewis 2 pass from McNabb (kick failed), 10:07.

Dal—R.Johnson 7 pass from Testaverde (Lindell kick), 3:22.

Fourth Quarter

Phi—Levens 2 run (pass failed), 1:57.

A—67,723.

	Dal	Phi
First downs	14	24
Total Net Yards	237	328
Rushes-yards	26-80	28-120
Passing	157	208
Punt Returns	1-11	3-35
Kickoff Returns	3-55	2-46
Interceptions Ret.	2-33	2-12
Comp-Att-Int	16-28-2	20-35-2
Sacked-Yards Lost	3-19	2-15
Punts	6-39.0	5-38.4
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	1-0
Penalties-Yards	6-35	5-36
Time of Possession	26:26	30:32

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Dallas, J.Jones 25-80, Barnes 1-0. **Philadelphia**, Westbrook 12-48, Levens 12-45, McNabb 4-29.

Passing—Dallas, Testaverde 16-28-2-176. **Philadelphia**, McNabb 20-35-2-223.

Receiving—Dallas, Witten 6-66, K.Johnson 5-61, J.Jones 2-21, Morgan 2-19, Antwine 1-9. **Philadelphia**, Westbrook 8-78, L.Smith 4-41, Pinkston 2-34, Owens 2-24, C.Lewis 2-20, Levens 1-17, Parry 1-9.

Missed field goal—Dallas, Cundiff 46 (WL).

Chargers 21, Browns 0

San Diego	7	7	7	**0—21**
Cleveland	0	0	0	**0— 0**

First Quarter

SD—Tomlinson 1 run (Kaeding kick), 2:09.

Second Quarter

SD—Gates 72 pass from Brees (Kaeding kick), 2:11.

Third Quarter

SD—Tomlinson 1 run (Kaeding kick), 8:32.

A—72,486.

	SD	Cle
First downs	16	11
Total Net Yards	257	231
Rushes-yards	50-174	29-126
Passing	83	105
Punt Returns	1-0	2-45
Kickoff Returns	0-0	4-56
Interceptions Ret.	1-0	0-0
Comp-Att-Int	4-6-0	11-28-1
Sacked-Yards Lost	1-2	1-1
Punts	6-38.8	5-35.2
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	0-0
Penalties-Yards	1-8	7-55
Time of Possession	33:51	26:09

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—San Diego, Tomlinson 26-111, Chatman 14-46, Neal 4-16, Brees 6-(minus 1). **Cleveland**, Suggs 21-105, Green 5-17, McCown 1-4, Northcutt 2-0.

Passing—San Diego, Brees 4-6-0-85. **Cleveland**, McCown 11-27-1-108, Echemandu 0-1-0-0.

Receiving—San Diego, Parker 2-18, Gates 1-72, Tomlinson 1-(minus 5). **Cleveland**, Northcutt 4-61, Bryant 3-30, Shaw 1-6, P.Jackson 1-6, Heiden 1-5, Suggs 1-(minus 2).

Missed field goal—Cleveland, P.Dawson 39 (WR).

Cardinals 31, Rams 7

St. Louis	0	7	0	**0— 7**
Arizona	10	7	7	**7—31**

First Quarter

Ari—McCown 1 run (Rackers kick), 5:24.

Ari—FG Rackers 48, 1:44.

Second Quarter

Ari—Fitzgerald 8 pass from McCown (Rackers kick), 12:24.

StL—Little 61 fumble recovery (Wilkins kick), :07.

Third Quarter

Ari—Fitzgerald 4 pass from McCown (Rackers kick), 7:02.

Fourth Quarter

Ari—McCown 9 run (Rackers kick), 10:54.

A—40,203.

	StL	Ari
First downs	12	26
Total Net Yards	185	402
Rushes-yards	10-22	40-131
Passing	163	271
Punt Returns	5-28	5-21
Kickoff Returns	4-86	2-33
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	1-0
Comp-Att-Int	17-37-1	22-34-0
Sacked-Yards Lost	4-26	2-16
Punts	9-44.9	6-50.2
Fumbles-Lost	4-1	2-1
Penalties-Yards	9-74	7-67
Time of Possession	22:31	37:29

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—St. Louis, M.Faulk 10-22. **Arizona**, E.Smith 19-71, McCown 9-33, Scobey 9-23, D.Anderson 1-2, Ayanbadejo 2-2.

Passing—St. Louis, Martin 16-31-0-188, Chandler 1-6-1-75. **Arizona**, McCown 22-34-0-287.

Receiving—St. Louis, Holt 6-95, Bruce 4-37, Cleeland 2-16, McDonald 2-14, M.Faulk 1-13, Manumaleuna 1-10, Curtis 1-4. **Arizona**, Boldin 4-48, Ayanbadejo 4-45, Fitzgerald 4-37, B.Johnson 3-69, Scobey 3-52, E.Smith 2-24, Jones 2-12.

Missed field goals—None.

Saints 21, Buccaneers 17

New Orleans	7	0	0	**14—21**
Tampa Bay	7	0	7	**3—17**

First Quarter

NO—Stecker 98 kick return (Carney kick), 12:40.

TB—Galloway 3 pass from Griese (Taylor kick), 11:25.

Third Quarter

TB—Galloway 59 punt return (Taylor kick), 8:57.

Fourth Quarter

TB—FG Taylor 37, 11:17.

NO—Horn 4 pass from A.Brooks (Carney kick), 3:33.

NO—Galilaotoh 7 pass from A.Brooks (Carney kick), :32.

A—65,075.

	NO	TB
First downs	15	17
Total Net Yards	247	283
Rushes-yards	29-115	34-169
Passing	132	114
Punt Returns	1-53	2-59
Kickoff Returns	4-148	3-61
Interceptions Ret.	1-0	0-0
Comp-Att-Int	14-21-0	13-22-1
Sacked-Yards Lost	7-37	1-4
Punts	7-41.6	5-37.2
Fumbles-Lost	2-1	2-2
Penalties-Yards	8-69	5-45
Time of Possession	30:05	29:55

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—New Orleans, McAllister 25-89, Aa.Brooks 3-11, Stecker 1-9. **Tampa Bay**, Pittman 24-131, Galloway 2-19, Graham 3-16, Alstott 2-2, Smart 1-1, Griese 2-0.

Passing—New Orleans, A.Brooks 14-21-0-169. **Tampa Bay**, Griese 13-22-1-118.

Receiving—New Orleans, Horn 4-64, Stecker 3-26, Galilaotoh 2-29, Williams 2-22, Patton 1-15, Mallard 1-8, Kamey 1-4. **Tampa Bay**, Clayton 4-53, Galloway 2-18, Pittman 2-10, Thrower 1-17, Alstott 1-5, Dilger 1-5, Jurevicius 1-5, Moore 1-5.

Missed field goal—New Orleans, Carney 38 (WR).

Jaguars 28, Packers 25

Jacksonville	7	7	7	**7—28**
Green Bay	0	10	7	**8—25**

First Quarter

Jac—L.Smith 31 pass from Leftwich (Scobee kick), 12:56.

Second Quarter

GB—FG Longwell 39, 13:15.

GB—Sharper 15 fumble return (Longwell kick), 4:04.

Jac—L.Smith 16 pass from Leftwich (Scobee kick), 2:26.

Third Quarter

GB—Driver 32 pass from Favre (Longwell kick), 11:44.

Jac—Taylor 37 run (Scobee kick), 10:15.

Fourth Quarter

Jac—G.Jones 1 run (Scobee kick), 9:49.

GB—Chatman 7 pass from Favre (Driver pass from Favre), 1:08.

A—70,437.

	Jac	GB
First downs	19	26
Total Net Yards	312	444
Rushes-yards	36-197	25-94
Passing	115	350
Punt Returns	2-26	5-54
Kickoff Returns	5-69	5-94
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	3-3
Comp-Att-Int	9-20-0	30-44-3
Sacked-Yards Lost	1-6	2-17
Punts	7-36.6	3-38.0
Fumbles-Lost	3-2	4-2
Penalties-Yards	7-62	12-103
Time of Possession	30:42	29:18

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Jacksonville, Taylor 22-165, G.Jones 9-20, Leftwich 3-9, T.Edwards 1-2. **Green Bay**, Jones 19-77, Green 17-94, Davenport 2-1, Favre 2-(minus 1).

Passing—Jacksonville, Leftwich 9-20-0-121. **Green Bay**, Favre 30-44-3-368.

Receiving—Jacksonville, J.Smith 4-87, T.Edwards 3-11, R.Williams 1-11, Yoder 1-10, Brady 1-3. **Green Bay**, Walker 11-152, Driver 4-74, Chatman 4-48, Ferguson 2-43, Green 2-11, Franks 2-10, Shaw 2-10, Yoder 1-10, Luchey 1-9, Henderson 1-0.

Missed field goal—Green Bay, Longwell 31 (WR).

Colts 20, Ravens 10

Baltimore	0	3	0	**7—10**
Indianapolis	3	3	14	**0—20**

First Quarter

Ind—FG Vanderjagt 24, 11:17.

Second Quarter

Bal—FG Stover 42, 13:04.

Ind—FG Vanderjagt 33, :01.

Third Quarter

Ind—Harrison 29 pass from Manning (Vanderjagt kick), 5:54.

Bal—James 3 run (Vanderjagt kick), :28.

Fourth Quarter

Bal—Heap 13 pass from Boller (Stover kick), 12:50.

A—57,240.

	Bal	Ind
First downs	19	17
Total Net Yards	354	316
Rushes-yards	29-160	24-67
Passing	194	249
Punt Returns	3-27	1-14
Kickoff Returns	5-129	2-51
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	0-0
Comp-Att-Int	19-40-2	20-33-0
Sacked-Yards Lost	2-16	0-0
Punts	5-39.0	6-48.7
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	1-0
Penalties-Yards	7-35	5-28
Time of Possession	31:22	28:38

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Baltimore, J.Lewis 20-130, C.Taylor 7-22, White 1-6, Boller 1-2. **Indianapolis**, James 22-69, Manning 2-(minus 2).

Passing—Baltimore, Boller 19-40-2-210. **Indianapolis**, Manning 20-33-0-249.

Receiving—Baltimore, Heap 4-58, A.Johnson 4-33, T.Taylor 2-39, C.Taylor 2-26, J.Lewis 2-17, Moore 1-17, Dinkins 1-10, Jones 1-7, White 1-6, Ricard 1-3. **Indianapolis**, Wayne 8-88, Harrison 5-73, Stokley 3-18, Pollard 2-34, James 1-23, Clark 1-13.

Missed field goals—Baltimore, Stover 31 (BK). **Indianapolis**, Vanderjagt 33 (WR).

Play the

NFL Challenge

WIN CASH!

Mondays in Stars and Stripes and on Oconus.com

McCown keeps Cardinals' playoff hopes alive

BY BOB BAUM
The Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — Josh McCown might be the quarterback Dennis Green thought he was after all.

Two starts after returning from a three-game benching, McCown put together the best performance of his young career in the Arizona Cardinals' 31-7 rout of the St. Louis Rams on Sunday.

From virtually the day he was hired, Green called McCown his choice as quarterback, but set him down after nine games.

"Josh McCown played very well," Green said, perhaps the first time he has spoken those words this season.

McCown completed 22 of 34 passes for 287 yards with no interceptions. He threw two touchdown passes to Larry Fitzgerald, and ran for two scores.

McCown said that he learned from watching on the sideline after nine games as a starter.

"You're watching with a different pair of eyes," he said. "You're seeing things differently than when you are a rookie or a guy that hasn't played very much. Don't get me wrong, I didn't like it, but I tried to make it a positive experience."

That the Cardinals, at 5-9, are still in the NFC West race is a testament to just how bad the division is.

A victory would have moved the Rams into a tie with Seattle atop the division, since St. Louis holds the tiebreaker with two wins over the Seahawks. Instead, the Rams fell to 6-8, just one game ahead of the Cardinals.

"We didn't see this coming," Rams wide receiver Torry Holt said. "If there was any game on the schedule that we felt confident about coming in and winning, it would be Arizona."

If Arizona wins its last two, and both Seattle and St. Louis go 0-2, the Cardinals would take the division title at 7-9.

"I'm surprised that a 5-9 team is in it, but I'm not surprised that it's this team," McCown said. "We have it in us. We have the talent, we have the capability to do this, it's just a consistency thing."

With quarterback Marc Bulger out with a shoulder injury, 39-year-old Chris Chandler lasted just one quarter for the Rams before he was replaced by Jamie Martin, who saw his first regular-season action in two years. He was signed by the Rams earlier this month when Bulger was injured.

"It was almost surreal," Martin said, "being on the couch two weeks ago watching the game and now I'm playing in it. But as things went on, guys helped me calm down and I think we did some decent things."

St. Louis coach Mike Martz put much of the blame on Chandler, saying the veteran quarterback threw the ball on a run play on the first series and made other elementary mistakes.

The Rams had minus-20 yards of offense in the first quarter.

Chandler, who had six passes intercepted last week, was 1-for-6 for 1 yard with an interception. He was sacked twice.

"It's tragic for this football team, for that position to hold this whole football team hostage," Martz said, "but that's where we are."

The benching came after Chandler threw six interceptions a week earlier in a loss at Carolina. Why has Chandler played so poorly?

"Guys, I just can't answer that," Martz said. "I don't know. I'm just baffled by it."

Chandler left without speaking to reporters.

The Rams' touchdown came on Leonard Little's 61-yard fumble return with 7 seconds left in the first half.

"I thought, 'Well, this might spark the team and we might get things going,' but it never did happen," Little said. "I guess that was a useless play, really."

St. Louis' only serious offensive threat ended when Holt was hit by Ifeanyi Ohalete and fumbled as he was about to cross the goal line. Ohalete recovered in the end zone for a touchback.

AP

Arizona Cardinals' Josh McCown (12) scores a touchdown on a quarterback keeper during the first quarter Sunday.

As Fitzgerald put it, the Cardinals "kept our foot on the pedal" the whole game, never turning conservative.

Lions fumble away chance to knock off Vikings

The Associated Press

DETROIT — When Minnesota quarterback Daunte Culpepper watched Detroit line up for a tying extra point, he remembered that the snapper had struggled earlier.

"I was just hoping something like that would happen," Culpepper said.

It did.

Don Muhlbach's snap bounced to holder Nick Harris, leading to a botched extra point with 8 seconds left that allowed the Vikings to beat the Lions 28-27 on Sunday.

"It must have slipped out," Muhlbach said. "I let down 52 people who played their hearts out."

The Vikings (8-6) took a big step toward their first playoff berth in four years. Despite losing five of its previous seven games, Minnesota can win the NFC North with a victory Friday at home over Green Bay and a week later at Washington. In the awful NFC, Minnesota could even be a wild-card team without winning another game.

Culpepper, who was 25-for-35 for 404 yards, threw three TD passes and an interception. Moe Williams scored the go-ahead TD on an 11-yard run with 1:37 left.

The Lions then went 80 yards to pull within a point on Joey Harrington's second touchdown pass to Roy Williams. But after Detroit's costly miscue, Randy Moss recovered the onside kick to seal the win.

The Lions (5-9) likely fell out of the post-season race with their seventh loss in eight games.

"It is a pretty emotional locker room," Detroit coach Steve Mariucci said. "And in the big picture, that's a good thing."

Nate Burleson, who had five receptions for 134 yards, caught a career-high two TDs passes.

Moss and Culpepper hooked up for the longest play of their careers, an 82-yarder for a score, and Moss finished with four catches for 102 yards. He caught his 88th TD pass, tying Hall of Famer Don Maynard for eighth on the NFL's career list, and had his 41st 100-yard game, surpassing Cris Carter's team record.

AP

Minnesota's Terrance Shaw (25) tackles Detroit Lions holder Nick Harris as kicker Jason Hanson (4) looks on after a bad snap caused an aborted extra point attempt in the closing seconds of Detriot's loss to Minnesota on Sunday.

Moss declined comment after the game.

Kevin Jones was held to 79 yards and a TD after running for more than 150 yards the previous two games.

Both Harrington and Jones played with the flu, and the much-maligned quarterback felt even worse when Detroit blew a chance to force overtime.

"I wasn't even watching," Harrington said. "I was walking back to the bench, and I heard a groan and looked up at the Jumbotron."

Jets 37, Seahawks 14: At East Rutherford, N.J., the Jets vented their frustration all week about their scoring woes.

LaMont Jordan stewed over here, and Santana Moss over there.

Then Sunday, they took their anger out on the Seattle Seahawks, with Chad Pennington throwing three touchdown passes and Curtis Martin running for two scores.

The victory kept the Jets (10-4) ahead in the AFC wild-card race while giving them a much-needed confidence boost going into next week's game against division rival New England.

Bills 33, Bengals 17: At Cincinnati, Takeo Spikes returned an interception 62 yards for a pivotal touchdown against his former team, and Buffalo turned in another dominating defensive performance.

NFL roundup

Buffalo (8-6) bolstered its playoff chances with a solid all-around game. Jason Peters blocked a punt and recovered in the end zone for a score, and the defense turned Jon Kitna's latest comeback into a bad flashback.

Kitna, filling in for the injured Carson Palmer, threw two interceptions and fumbled a snap, dooming the Bengals (6-8) to their 14th consecutive season without a winning record — one of the longest streaks of futility in NFL history.

Spikes' second touchdown of the season put the Bills up 21-7 and on their way to a fifth straight victory. Since opening 0-4, Buffalo has won eight of 10 to climb into contention for a wild-card berth.

The Bills have scored at least 33 points while winning each of their last five games, their best such streak since 1998.

Texans 24, Bears 5: Houston allowed the fewest points in its three-year history and got four turnovers to beat the bumbling Bears.

With the temperature 9 degrees at kickoff and the wind chill 10 below zero, it was the Texans (6-8) who handled Soldier Field's frigid conditions better than the Bears.

David Carr threw a TD pass to Corey Bradford and also set up a field goal with a 69-yard toss to Jabar Gaffney. Domanick Davis scored on an 11-yard run in the fourth quarter and Charlie Anderson capped the victory by returning a fumble 60 yards for a TD with 2:37 left.

Carr was 13-for-28 for 220.

The Bears (5-9) failed to score a touchdown for the second straight game and their bundled-up fans booed at another inept performance by the NFL's worst offense.

Chad Hutchinson, under a heavy rush all day, finished 17-for-34 for 168 yards.

Victory overshadowed by Owens' ankle injury

First MRI inconclusive and more tests planned; Reid expects star receiver will sit next Monday

BY DAN GELSTON
The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Terrell Owens brought a lot of fun, big plays and controversy in his first season in Philadelphia.

With an ankle injury, he also has added some uncertainty.

The star receiver could miss at least one game after spraining his right ankle in the Eagles' 12-7 victory over the Dallas Cowboys on Sunday that gave Philadelphia home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

"There's a pretty good chance he won't be out there," coach Andy Reid said. "The positive is, it's not broken. The negative is, it did swell up. There's a pretty good chance he won't be there for sure this week. We'll see about the following week."

Owens was hurt early in the third quarter when he was dragged down from behind by Roy Williams on a 20-yard reception. Owens immediately grabbed the back of his leg, but left the field on his own power.

Owens, who has 77 catches for 1,196 yards and a team-record 14 touchdowns, hobbled around on the sideline, then needed help to make it into the locker room. X-rays on the ankle were negative, and an MRI on Monday was inconclusive. More tests were scheduled.

The Eagles play next Monday night at St. Louis and finish the season on Jan. 2 at home against Cincinnati. Philadelphia will open the playoffs Jan. 15 or 16.

"No doubt in my mind. He will be back," quarterback Donovan McNabb said.

Other than the injury, it was business as usual for the Eagles.

The Eagles (13-1) set a franchise record for regular-season victories. They've finished first in the conference three straight years, but couldn't take advantage of playing at home in the last two NFC championship games, losing to Tampa Bay and Carolina. The Eagles also lost in the NFC title game in 2002, at St. Louis.

The Eagles also won all six games this year against NFC East teams, sweeping New York, Washington and Dallas for the first time in team history.

"I'm a little bit of a historian about the league and any time you can sweep the division — especially the NFC East — I think it speaks highly of the way the ballclub is put together," linebacker Ike Reese said.

McNabb threw for 223 yards and one TD with two interceptions and used his legs to help the Eagles score on their winning drive.

After Dallas' Billy Cundiff missed a 46-yard field goal with 6:03 left, the Eagles got the ball at their 36 and McNabb took over. He completed a 13-yard pass to L.J. Smith and ran for 12 and 19 yards — his first carries of the game.

On third-and-9 from the Cowboys 19, McNabb threw 11 yards to Brian Westbrook. Dorsey Levens ran 6 yards on the next play, setting up his 2-yard touchdown run for a 12-7 lead.

"I just took it upon myself to pick up yards when I can," McNabb said. "A lot of guys came up to me during that drive and said, 'Do what you do.' "

Dallas' Vinny Testaverde also had two passes intercepted, one by Lito Sheppard on the Cowboys' final possession. Keyshawn Johnson had a TD catch for Dallas (5-9).

"We'll see if we can't come back and try to finish a little stronger," Cowboys coach Bill Parcells said.

AP

Dallas' Terrence Newman (41) breaks up a pass intended for Philadelphia's Terrell Owens (81) during the first quarter of Sunday's game.

The Eagles beat the Cowboys 49-21 in a Monday night game last month. But Dallas kept this one close.

The Cowboys started their only scoring drive at Philadelphia's 23 in the second quarter and Testaverde finished it, connecting with Johnson for a 7-yard TD for a 7-6 lead.

McNabb found Chad Lewis in the corner of the end zone for a 2-yard TD pass that made it 6-0 in the second quarter. David Akers' extra point was blocked by Kurt Vollers, ending Akers' club-record string of 153 successful conversions.

Hungry QBs Collins and Volek carve up records

BY GREG BEACHAM
The Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Both defensive secondaries were riddled with injuries. Both quarterbacks were hungry to prove they're as good as the recent MVPs they backed up earlier in the year.

So, not too surprisingly, the Oakland Raiders' 40-35 victory over the Tennessee Titans on Sunday was a showcase for Kerry Collins and Billy Volek, with records falling nearly as frequently as the befuddled defensive backs.

Collins passed for a season-high 371 yards and threw a career-best five touchdown passes, three to Jerry Porter. Volek merely had the second-best day in franchise history, going 40-for-60 for 492 yards and four touchdowns and rushing for a TD.

When the scoring drives finally abated and Oakland hung on with a late safety, Tennessee linebacker Keith Bulluck voiced the shame and frustration also felt by the Raiders' defense after two former backup quarterbacks carved them up.

"A lot of my teammates are out," Bulluck said. "The guys that are in there are playing, but the game is just moving too fast for them. Our offense is scoring 30-plus (points), and we can't even stop the sink from running. It's very frustrating."

Drew Bennett, Volek's close friend, was the biggest beneficiary of Volek's prolific day with a franchise-record 13 receptions for 160 yards and two TDs. Porter was no less impressive, with career highs of eight catches and 148 yards.

Tennessee's Derrick Mason caught the game's ninth touchdown pass on the first play of the fourth quarter. The clubs combined for 942 yards and countless big plays, including six scoring passes of at least 17 yards.

"It was rough out there for a while," Oakland cornerback Nnamdi Asomugha said. "It wasn't sure we were going to win until we started shaking hands after the game."

Oakland's special teams and defense finally came through.

Trailing 35-28, the Titans faked a field goal with 5:53 left, but holder Craig Hentrich's pass to Shad Meier was incomplete between two defenders at the goal line.

After Oakland added a field goal and Volek scored on a 1-yard dive in the waning minutes, Volek was called for intentional grounding in the end zone with 8 seconds left, resulting in a safety.

"We're moving the ball down the field," Volek said. "The wide receivers are doing a great job. The offensive line was doing a great job. We just didn't score enough points."

Oakland (5-9) snapped a four-game home losing streak with a resurgent effort by a once-stagnant offense, while the Titans (4-10) lost their fourth straight.

Go-for-broke Saints stay in playoff hunt

BY FRED GOODALL
The Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — With their hopes of staying in playoff contention on the line, the New Orleans Saints wanted no part of overtime.

"It was all touchdown, no field goal," Donte' Stallworth said after catching a last-minute, 7-yard TD pass from Aaron Brooks to beat the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 21-17 on Sunday and keep alive the Saints' postseason prospects.

"We've got a ways to go," coach Jim Haslett said. "But it was a great team effort from the standpoint we hung in there."

Brooks threw two touchdown passes in the last 4 minutes, including the decisive one with 32 seconds left, as the Saints (6-8) came from behind to win on the road for the second straight week.

The victory lifted them into a tie with Carolina and St. Louis for the last wild-card spot in the weak NFC with two games to go.

The Saints face NFC South champion Atlanta at home next Sunday before finishing the regular season at Carolina.

Two weeks ago, New Orleans was on a three-game losing streak that fueled speculation about Haslett's job security. After overcoming 10-point deficits to beat Dallas and the Bucs, there's suddenly hope for what mostly has been a disappointing year.

"We've still got life," punt returner Michael Lewis said. "Just like coach said, it was going to come down to the fourth quarter. We just had to stand there and keep plugging away."

The Bucs (5-9) also entered the weekend as one of many teams in playoff contention, despite being three games under .500. Losing made them the first team to follow a Super Bowl victory with losing records the next two seasons.

"The fact is, we're just not good enough to get it done," Bucs cornerback Ronde Barber said.

"The guys played hard. That's not the issue. We played bad, that's the issue, and we do it every week. We're about as undeserving a team as there is. You can put smoke and mirrors around it all you want. This team just finds ways to lose, man."

Lewis returned a punt 53 yards to the Tampa Bay 4 to set up Brooks' 4-yard TD pass to Joe Horn that trimmed a 10-point deficit to 17-14 with 3:33 to go. After John Carney's kickoff sailed out of bounds, giving the Bucs the ball at their 40, defensive end Will Smith forced Michael Pittman's fumble on first down and the Saints' Fakhir Brown recovered at the 41.

Eight plays later, Brooks threw to Stallworth, who squeezed between Barber and Dexter Jackson to just get into the end zone.

"It was a great throw, a perfect throw. I just had to catch it," Stallworth said.

The quick turnaround ruined an outstanding performance by Tampa Bay's Joey Galloway, who scored on a 3-yard reception and 59-yard punt return to build a 14-7 lead. Jay Taylor's field goal made it 17-7 with just over 11 minutes to go.

Penalties, turnovers and mental mistakes have undermined the Saints all season, and nearly did them in again.

Carney missed a 38-yard field goal, and another scoring opportunity was wasted when Jerome Pathon fumbled after a 15-yard reception to the Bucs 3.

Brooks, who scrambled for 13 yards on fourth-and-12 from the Tampa Bay 43 to keep the winning drive alive, finished 14-of-21 for 169 yards. He threw no interceptions, but was sacked seven times, with Simeon Rice getting 3½ of the takedowns.

"It was just a situation where we make that play or we go home with a loss," Brooks said of the fourth-down run.

On the opening kickoff, the Saints' Aaron Stecker slipped and let the ball roll through his legs — but then picked it up and ran 98 yards for a touchdown.

Brian Griese completed 13 of 22 passes for 118 yards for Tampa Bay, which lost two fumbles in addition to an end-zone interception.

The Saints were limited to 64 yards in the opening half, yet went into the locker room tied 7-7 thanks to Stecker, who played four seasons in Tampa before signing with New Orleans as a free agent last winter.

"I looked up and all I could see was a sea of red. My instincts took over," said Stecker, who was taken to the locker room after his TD.

"They said I hyperventilated," he explained. "I had never been so excited before the game. It all got to me."

Packers lose to Jags but aren't left out in the cold

BY ARNIE STAPLETON
The Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — As expected, the icy weather was a breeze for one team and a 3½-hour ordeal for the other.

Only, it was the warm-weather Jacksonville Jaguars who looked right at home Sunday in their 28-25 victory over the stunned Green Bay Packers at Lambeau Field, where the temperature was in the single digits and the wind chill well below zero.

Jimmy Smith caught two touchdown passes from Byron Leftwich, Fred Taylor rushed for 165 yards and a score, and Rashean Mathis picked off Brett Favre twice, helping the Jaguars (8-6) stay in the thick of the AFC playoff race.

Jaguars coach Jack Del Rio said there was no way to prepare his team physically for the chill, but "we were ready for the cold mentally, and we did not let the elements dictate how we played."

The Packers did, turning the ball over four times inside the Jacksonville 23 and missing a field goal after reaching the 13.

Nevertheless, the Packers (8-6) became the ninth team in NFL history to reach the playoffs after a 1-4 start. They clinched before kickoff because Chicago, Dallas, Carolina and New York all lost in the run-of-the-mill NFC.

"I'll take your word for it," Packers tackle Mark Tauscher said.

The Packers fell into a tie with Minnesota atop the NFC North after the Vikings edged Detroit 28-27 Sunday. They travel to Minneapolis for a Christmas Eve matinee that will decide the division.

"We want to earn it," Packers guard Mike Wahle said. "We don't feel like we earned it right now. So we're going to go out there and try to earn it next week."

But what was mostly on the Packers' minds was their fallen teammate, wide receiver Robert Ferguson, who spent the night at Bellin Hospital after losing feeling in his legs temporarily when Jaguars safety Donovin Darius clotheslined him in the closing minutes.

Ferguson suffered a sprained neck, and team trainer Pepper Burruss said Ferguson had movement and sensation in his arms and legs Sunday night.

AP

Jaguars receiver Jimmy Smith, left, gets behind Packers cornerback Al Harris for a 31-yard touchdown pass in the first quarter.

In a scene right out of the leather helmet days of the NFL more than a half-century ago, Darius swept in after Ferguson's 31-yard grab of Favre's pass at midfield and put a vicious, helmet-stripping hit that knocked him unconscious. Darius was ejected.

"My main concern from that point on, really up until the game was over, I wanted to win but I was concerned for Fergie," Favre said.

Darius defended his hit.

"I wasn't in the position to make an interception and there wasn't a way for me to get my hand in there to disrupt the pass. My natural tendency was to swing in an upward motion and try to dislodge the ball," he said.

Darius said he would appeal any fine the league hands down.

Favre turned over the ball four times and fell to 31-4 at home after Dec. 1, losing for just the second time in 40 cold-weather games at home.

Still, the Packers had a shot at a comeback when Favre hit Antonio Chatman with a 6-yard touchdown throw and found Donald Driver for the 2-point conversion to pull Green Bay to 28-25 with 1:08 left.

But Jacksonville safety Nick Sorensen recovered the onside kick, wresting the ball from Packers tight end Ben Steele.

Smith had TD catches of 31 and 16 yards with Al Harris in coverage.

"As a kid, I always saw the highlights from the Ice Bowl and always dreamed of coming up to the frozen tundra and playing under conditions like this," Smith said. "It was tough. I'm still thawing out."

AP

Colts wide receiver Marvin Harrison (88) celebrates his 29-yard touchdown catch with Rick DeMulling (64), Jim Saturday and Tarik Glenn (78).

Record: Ravens stifled Colts offense, still lost

RECORD, FROM BACK PAGE

The Ravens (8-6) were busy dealing with other matters — like their playoff hopes. The loss dropped them into a tie with Buffalo, Jacksonville and Denver, and they managed to hold the Colts to their lowest scoring total of the season.

But the Ravens also wanted to prevent Manning from making history against their defense.

"All we've seen on TV this week was Peyton Manning this and Peyton Manning that," cornerback Gary Baxter said. "We weren't going to let him set the record against us."

The Ravens stymied Manning by using extra defensive backs and constant shifts, then controlled the clock by running the ball as long as it could.

It worked — for a while.

When Manning returned after a sluggish first half, it didn't take him long to get the Colts going.

He opened the third period with a 77-yard scoring drive that ended with a 29-yard TD pass to a wide-open Marvin Harrison, who burned Chris McAlister with a nifty outside fake before turning inside. That gave the Colts a 13-3 lead.

Manning also got some help from his teammates.

Mike Vanderjagt kicked two first-half field goals to give Indianapolis a 6-3 lead in its second-lowest scoring opening half of the season. Larry Tripplett blocked a field goal that set up the Colts' second touchdown drive — a 10-point swing that changed the game.

Baltimore never recovered after Von Hutchins returned the blocked kick to the Baltimore 31. Five plays later, Edgerrin James scored on a 3-yard run to make it 20-3 as fans urged Manning to throw the ball.

"Their safeties were eyeing Reggie (Wayne) and (Brandon) Stokley on the outside," Manning said. "It was a no-brainer."

The Ravens responded on their next series. A 64-yard kickoff return by B.J. Sams set up a 36-yard field goal. When the Colts were called for offside, the Ravens accepted the penalty and Kyle Boller threw a 13-yard TD pass to Todd Heap. Boller was 19 of 40 for 210 yards with one touchdown and two interceptions.

"Those are things you wouldn't do at home," Baltimore coach Brian Billick said. "But that's an explosive offense to keep suppressed."

Indianapolis sealed the win when Cato June picked off Boller's pass and ran it 71 yards to the Baltimore 4, giving Manning one more chance to tie the record. Fans gave Manning a standing ovation when he came back onto the field, hoping he would throw.

Instead he knelt down and didn't give the record a second thought.

"If it happens during the course of the game, that's the way it's meant to be," he said. "It was just good to get the win."

Sunday's NFL stars:

AP photos

Quarterbacks

■ Drew Bledsoe, Bills, moved ahead of Joe Montana into seventh place on the career completions list with 3,412. He went 15-for-30 for 183 yards in a win over Cincinnati.

■ Billy Volek, Titans, had the second-best passing day in franchise history with 492 yards and threw for four touchdowns against Oakland.

■ Daunte Culpepper, Vikings, went 25-for-35 for 404 yards and threw three TD passes against Detroit.

■ Joey Harrington, Lions, was 25-for-44 for a career-high 361 yards with two TDs and two interceptions against Minnesota.

◄ Kerry Collins, Raiders, threw for 371 yards against Tennessee and matched his career high with five TD passes.

■ Trent Green, Chiefs, completed 16 of 19 passes for 224 yards and three touchdowns in a win over the Broncos.

Receivers

■ Antonio Gates, Chargers, tied an NFL record for tight ends with his 12th TD of the season.

■ Drew Bennett, Titans, established a career high with 13 receptions, tying the franchise record for catches. He had 160 yards in receptions against the Raiders.

◄ Jerry Porter, Raiders, caught scoring passes of 32, 18 and 3 yards, and had eight catches for 148 yards in a win against the Titans.

■ Randy Moss, Vikings, caught an 84-yard TD pass against Detroit. He had four receptions for 102 yards.

■ Nate Burleson, Vikings, who had five receptions for 134 yards, caught a career-high two TDs.

■ Larry Fitzgerald, Cardinals, had TD receptions of 8 and 4 yards against the Rams.

■ Michael Clayton, Bucs, had four receptions for 53 yards against New Orleans, becoming the first Tampa Bay rookie with a 1,000-yard season.

Running Backs

■ LaDainian Tomlinson, Chargers, rushed for 111 yards and two touchdowns against Cleveland. He has scored a TD in 11 straight games, two shy of the NFL record shared by John Riggins and George Rogers.

■ Larry Johnson, Chiefs, had 151 yards on 30 carries, including touchdown runs of 5 and 32 yards against Denver.

■ Curtis Martin, Jets, had two first-half scoring runs and established a single-season team record with 12 TDs rushing. He also set the team mark for career TDs rushing with 53, passing Emerson Boozer.

■ Rudi Johnson, Bengals, had 130 yards rushing, his fifth 100-yard game, tying the club record for a season.

■ Fred Taylor, Jaguars , rushed for 165 yards and a touchdown against the Packers.

Chargers win in snow, bask in division title

BY TOM WITHERS
The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Seconds after ducking out of the wind-whipped snow and escaping the brutal cold, the San Diego Chargers felt a warmth missing for nearly 10 years.

The Chargers had that NFL playoff glow again.

San Diego won its first AFC West title since 1994, with LaDainian Tomlinson running for 111 yards and two touchdowns and Antonio Gates catching his record-tying 12th TD pass this season in a 21-0 victory over the Cleveland Browns on Sunday.

One year after sinking to a 4-12 mark, the Chargers (11-3) are back among the league's elite and will make their first postseason appearance since 1995 next month. San Diego also is on top of its division for the first time since 1994.

"I'm overjoyed," Tomlinson said. "Unbelievable."

Like the jagged lightning-streaked decals running across the top of their helmets, the Chargers shocked the league — and maybe themselves — with their improbable turnaround.

"It feels great," said quarterback Drew Brees, who attempted just six passes. "It's been a long road for San Diego fans and us. We weren't expected to do too much this year. Instead of 11-3, a lot of people thought we'd be 3-11."

Tomlinson had two 1-yard scoring runs and Gates slid through the snow on a 72-yarder for the Chargers, whose winning streak is the club's longest since 1987.

The victory, coupled with second-place Denver's 45-17 loss in Kansas City, gave San Diego the division crown and its first postseason berth since 1995.

"I've only been here for four years, but in some ways it feels like eight," Tomlinson said. "To go from where we were to this is awesome. I've dreamed of the playoffs for a long time, but it's only been a dream."

Reality set in quickly. As the Chargers walked off the frozen field, each player was handed an "AFC West 2004 Champions" baseball cap.

With a mistake-free offense built around the run and a hard-nosed defense designed to stop team's from running, coach Marty Schottenheimer has led the Chargers to their longest win streak since 1987 and turned them into the league's most unlikely success story.

"We're riding the wave," fullback Lorenzo Neal said.

San Diego, which hasn't lost since Oct. 17, also showed it can be a factor in the postseason — regardless of climate. The Chargers ignored a game-time temperature of 18 and a wind chill that dipped to minus-25 to post their first shutout since 1993 and easily handle the Browns (3-11), who lost their eighth straight.

The shutout was the Chargers' first since Nov. 29, 1993, 31-0 over Indianapolis.

The Browns and their heartiest fans shivered through a home finale that was a microcosm of Cleveland's dismal season. The Browns did little on offense and gave up big plays on defense. Even when they caught a break, they couldn't capitalize.

After recovering a fumbled punt, the Browns had first-and-goal at the San Diego 5, but rookie quarterback Luke McCown's pass was intercepted in the end zone on the next play.

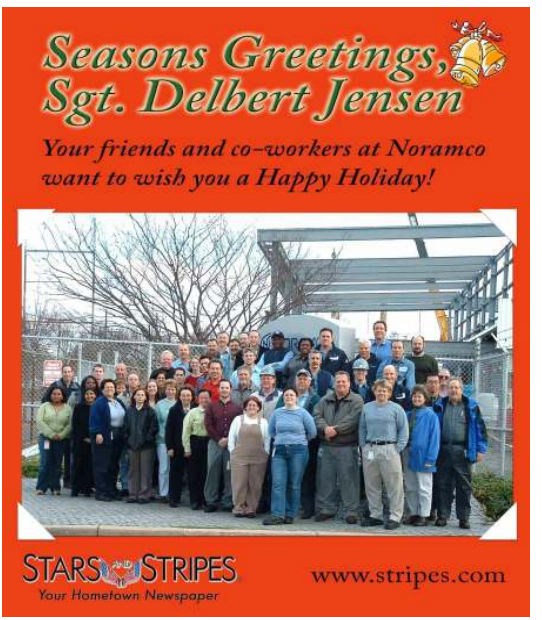
"To Browns fans around the world, I want to say I'm sorry," said interim coach Terry Robiskie, who took over when Butch Davis resigned. "I'm sorry not just about today, but about the season. The season turned out ugly. I've been here, so I've been a part of that."

Gates, the former basketball star at nearby Kent State, made it 14-0 late in the first half. Left uncovered on first down, Gates caught a pass near the 50 and tiptoed down the sideline untouched to the end zone.

"We worked on that play all week," said Gates, who tied Mike Ditka (1961), Jerry Smith (1967), Todd Christensen (1983) and Wesley Walls (1999) for the most TDs by a tight end in a season.

AP

Chargers running back LaDanian Tomlinson prepares for a hit from Browns defender Lewis Sanders, left. Tomlinson rushed for 111 yards and two touchdowns.



Improving Chiefs deal fading Broncos a blow

BY DOUG TUCKER
The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Jaded Kansas City fans just hate what's happening. The Chiefs have started winning.

After pushing around the mistake-prone Denver Broncos 45-17 on Sunday, Dick Vermeil's squad has won three in a row to improve to 6-8.

Victories over Oakland and San Diego in the final two games will make the Chiefs .500, but at what price? Some fans are saying it would be better to finish on a low note and draft third or fourth in April and get a great player.

"That's fine if they say that," fullback Tony Richardson said. "But they don't play in this locker room. We play to win games. We're not going out there to lose."

A 1-3 start and a four-game losing skid in November destroyed the Chiefs' chances of contending for a postseason berth. But now with the emergence of running back Larry Johnson — who started the season on the third team — the Chiefs are finally looking something like they were supposed to.

"We're not frustrated because we're winning now and we weren't winning then," guard Brian Waters said. "It doesn't matter when you get them, you just want wins. Any time you win, especially late in the season, it can set the stage for your next season."

The Broncos (8-6) are desperately hoping to extend this season. But they looked nothing like contenders against the Chiefs.

Jake Plummer was sacked six times and threw two interceptions to Dexter McCleon, both of which were converted into touchdowns.

The Broncos were penalized 10 times for 100 yards. Tatum Bell was about 5 yards from scoring after going 58 yards with a screen pass but had the ball knocked out of his hands. It rolled through the end zone for a touchback, giving the Chiefs the ball.

"This game was not a fun game," Plummer said. "It was a bad day."

Johnson and Eddie Kennison each scored two touchdowns, and Dante Hall returned the opening kickoff 97 yards for another score for the Chiefs.

"It was just one of those games where you fall behind and don't feel right even a little bit," Plummer said.

The Broncos have lost three of their past four.

"They really beat us in all areas," Denver coach Mike Shanahan said. "I thought we came out ready to play. We had a lot to play for."

The Chiefs scored on four of their first five possessions en route to their biggest victory margin over the Broncos since a 31-point romp in 1983.

"It was a Kansas City Chief day," Vermeil said. "We had a lot of things go our way."

SPORTS

Carter's not around to see old team beat new one
Page 26

AP

Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning walks off the field following their 20-10 win over the Baltimore Ravens in Indianapolis. Manning finished with 249 yards passing and one touchdown.

No record, just a Colts victory

Manning still one short of Marino's mark

BY MICHAEL MAROT
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Peyton Manning tried to focus on winning while the home crowd seemed unwilling to accept anything less than a record-setting night.

Manning threw his 47th touchdown pass of the season to move within one of Dan Marino's long-standing record and finished with 249 yards to lead the Colts to a 20-10 victory over the Baltimore Ravens on Sunday night.

But after kneeling twice in the final minute to run out the clock and passing up a chance at tying Marino's record, the Colts' franchise player drew an unexpected reaction from the crowd — boos.

"I can't get over the crowd booing like that," said Manning, last season's league co-MVP. "I hope those were Baltimore fans, because that's what you're supposed to do."

His record pursuit aside, Manning did have another good game. He completed 20 of 33 passes for 249 yards and threw for one touchdown against Baltimore's stingy defense while extending his NFL record of consecutive 4,000-yard seasons to six. Manning is now one TD pass short of Marino's record 20-year-old record of 48 in a season.

The Colts (11-3) won their seventh straight and set up a showdown with San Diego next week for the No. 3 seed in the AFC.

But it wasn't nearly enough to satisfy a festive crowd that expected to see history.

Before the game, city officials agreed to build a new retractable roof stadium that would keep the team in Indianapolis for 30 more years.

Then fans waved signs and held banners that counted down to the touchdown mark. They roared after Manning hooked up with Marvin Harrison on a TD pass in the third quarter and every time after that when it appeared Manning had a chance to tie the record.

Instead, the Colts settled for two second-half touchdown drives and a win.

"We're not really focused on that," coach Tony Dungy said of the record. "We'd like to get it, but we're focused on winning."

SEE RECORD ON PAGE 30

Jaguars stun Pack; Green Bay still seals playoffs

Green Bay Packers receiver Robert Ferguson loses his helmet as he is hit by Jacksonville Jaguars safety Donovin Darius (20) in the fourth quarter on Sunday in Green Bay, Wis. Darius was ejected from the game after the hit. Ferguson left the field on a stretcher and was taken to a local hospital. The Jaguars won 28-25, but Green Bay had clinched a playoff berth before the game even started when other teams in the NFC lost earlier in the day. See story on Page 30.

AP photo

Washington gets a tip, upsets N.C. State
Page 26

Owens injured in Eagles' victory
Page 29

A lot of bowl games and a lot of points before New Year's Page 25