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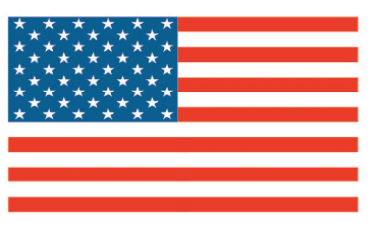
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VOLUME 115, NUMBER 87

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City Council meeting to be held at Municipal Auditorium, Jan. 14

No action taken during special meeting Tuesday evening

By **ERICA MORSE**

Herald Contributing Writer
 The Big Spring City Council held a special meeting yesterday - Jan. 7 - that opened at 5 p.m. and went immediately into Executive Session.
 The reason for the special meeting was to discuss personnel matters and applications for the position of City Attorney.
 According to Mayor Shannon Thomason, the Interim City Attorney Marianne Banks resigned in December, and her last day will be Jan. 31.
 The listing for the open position was posted on Indeed.com on Dec. 10; and will remain open through Jan. 11.
 No action was taken from the executive session meeting.
 Yesterday's special meeting comes in advance of next Tuesday's - Jan. 14 - City Council meeting, where the primary focus remains the City Council's much-anticipated vote on

whether to declare Big Spring a 'Sanctuary City for the Unborn'.
 In November 2019, the Council was asked to consider passing the resolution, which is slowly making its way across the state. From the request presented at that meeting, the issue was added to the December agenda drawing in a large crowd and causing the voice of the community to be heard.
 The issue was front and center at both the November and December City Council meetings, with the December meeting being filled to capacity.
 The City Council has also been considering whether to move next week's meeting to the Municipal Auditorium in order to accommodate more attendees, as the Council Chambers are limited to 86 occupants. Thus far, 198 people have

See **CITY**, Page 3

Upcoming Events

- Jan. 9
- Law Enforcement Appreciation Day
 - 8 a.m. SMMC Prayer/Breakfast
 - Noon - Parkview Skilled Nursing & Rehab
- Jan. 11
- 10 a.m. State Park Mountain Bike Race
 - Park will be closed during the race - gates will reopen after the race is completed

- Jan. 25
- Silver Wings Ball
 - Tickets now available

- Feb. 1
- Big Spring's Got Talent Applications being accepted.

- Feb. 7
- Chamber Extravaganza Howard Co. Fairgrounds Nominations for 5 under 55 being accepted.

Submit upcoming events, fundraisers and more with us for our Take Note section. Email editor@bigspringherald.com.

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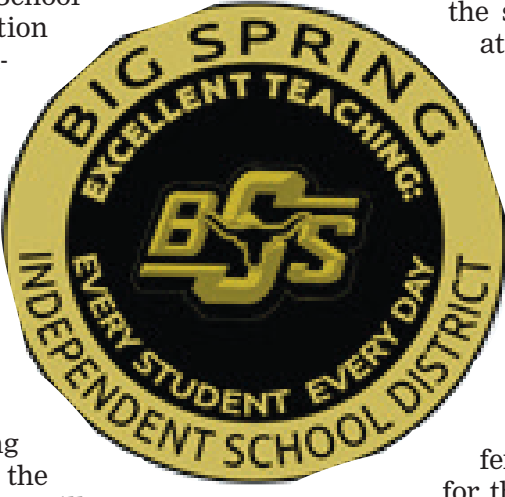
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BSISD moves new student registration back to campuses

Changes to go into affect 2020-21 school year

By **AMANDA DUFORAT**
 Managing Editor

Registration for the 2020-21 semester will look a little different, according to information released by Big Spring Independent School District administration earlier this week. Enrollment for the new school year will take place at the respective campuses instead of the centralized location from previous years.
 "We are in the service business at BSISD, and we firmly believe moving registration back to the individual campuses will help serve our community in a better and more efficient manner," BSISD Superintendent Jay McWilliams, said. "This will be faster, much more efficient, and also allow our front office people and principals the opportunity to meet new students and parents that are new to our district."



The change will spread the registration process across the campuses, according to McWilliams. Instead of one person handing the registration of nine separate campuses, there will now be one person at each of the nine district campuses assigned to register students at the specific school they will attend.
 "We feel like our new families to the district will now have the opportunity to actually register, visit, and have a tour of the campus that their child will be attending," McWilliams said. "For those parents of returning students, we will be offering online registration for them which will alleviate the problem of having to actually come to the campus to re-register their kids"
 According to McWilliams, the online information as well as information for those families new to the district will be posted on the upgraded BSISD website.

See **REGISTER**, Page 3

Jury trial for Jan. 13 & 15 cancelled



Special to the Herald
 The City of Big Spring issued the following announcement regarding upcoming jury trials, scheduled for Jan. 13 and Jan. 15. According to the information released, the jury trial set for Jan. 13, 2020 at 9 a.m. and the jury trial for Jan. 15, 2020 at 9 a.m., both presided over by Judge Fitzgibbons, Precinct 1 Place 2 have been cancelled as of Jan. 7, 2020.
 Those who had received a notice to serve on the jury can disregard the notice.

Support the kids at Nazarene Christian Academy

By **ANNA GUTIERREZ**
 Staff Writer

Nazarene Christian Academy (NCA) will be hosting a chili cook-off and silent auction on Saturday, Feb. 1, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. The cook-off will be held at NazFamily Church, located at 1400 S. Lancaster.
 "This will be our first chili cook-off and silent auction," states Kaleigh Sullivan, NCA Director. "All funds raised will be used for future scholarships to our school. We are hoping that some local businesses and individuals, who want to support the vision of NCA to build strong leaders and citizens of Big Spring, will support our event through monetary sponsorships. There are three levels of sponsorship, but all three levels will include recognition for your business or organization along with entry into the event. Everyone is invited to participate!"
 To enter the chili cook-off, there is a \$10 entry fee, and the rules are as follows:
 • Chili must be cooked entirely prior to entry. Contestants

must ensure no chili is under-cooked.
 • Chili must have been cooked within past 24 hours.
 • Chili must be turned in in a crock pot by 4:45 p.m. on Feb. 1, the day of the contest.
 • All chili should be turned in in a four-quart crock pot full.
 • All contestants must fill out a registration form.
 • All contestants are required to follow their own chili recipe.
 • Each contestant will be assigned a number and given three sampling cups. Check that each cup has your correct number on the bottom of the cup to turn into the judges.
 • Bowls, napkins and cutlery will be provided. Contestants only provide chili, crock pot and serving spoon.
 • Winner will receive a trophy
 For information on how to enter the cook-off or become a sponsor, contact Sullivan at ksullivan@ncabigspring.com, or stop by the office located at 118 Cedar Road.
 Contact Staff Writer Anna Gutierrez at 432-263-7331 ext. 232, or by email at citydesk@bigspringherald.com



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Obituaries

Noma Nell (Minze) (Higgins) Thomas



Noma Nell (Minze) (Higgins) Thomas was born Feb. 19, 1936, to Ava (Wilson) and Jake Minze in the Box Church Community of Limestone County, and on Dec. 21, 2019, went to Heaven in Mexia, Texas. These dates are only the bookends to the life that Noma Nell lived as a steward of the Lord through her relationships with family, students, and friends. Growing up as an only child in a hard-working farming/ranching family, Noma Nell was very close to her large extended family. She attended early schools in Groesbeck, Forest Glade, and Delia, and graduated with honors from Coolidge High School in 1954.

Later that year, Noma Nell married R.S. Higgins Jr., and began her travel adventures moving to Eastland, Brackettville, Stanton, Tarzan, Coahoma, Nashville, Belton, Big Spring, Alice, Mexia, Farmers Branch, Deer Park, Baytown, Fairfield, Teague, and Springfield. Throughout her adult life, she continued her love of raising horses to be used in rodeo racing and cutting.

After attending Howard College, Texas A&M, and Stephen F. Austin Universities, she earned her Master's degree in English, History, and Education, specializing in teaching High School English and journalism. She retired in 2012 after teaching at Limestone Correctional Facility and Navarro College. During this time, she acquired another extended family, the coaching Mulletts, that moved and worked together and even still meet for reunions every summer.

In 1987, Noma Nell married Jimmy Thomas, continuing her adventures and stewardship, and added another special part of her family. Noma Nell especially enjoyed doing extended family genealogy and traveling to locations to research in person. She became a member and officer of the DAR and DRT, working with the local school's scholarship essay contests.

As a lifelong adult member of the Methodist

church, Noma Nell was an active member in the choir, study groups, and leadership. After retirement, Noma Nell enjoyed working out at the CLC in Mexia, singing in Wings of Joy, flower gardening, serving at the local food pantry and Meals on Wheels, sewing, painting, learned to play guitar, attending events of family and friends, and socializing with everyone she came across at the local cafes and shops.

She believed in promoting positivity through service, prayer, secret acts of kindness, and dressing for success. Noma Nell is affectionately remembered as a cowgirl fashionista with an infectious, friendly attitude.

Noma Nell is preceded in death by her parents; and sons, Bryan Neal Higgins and Scott Higgins; and many aunts, uncles, cousins and other extended family.

She is survived by her husband, Jimmy Thomas of Groesbeck; children, Dawn Higgins, Deb and Philip Howell, and Brad Thomas; daughter-in-law, Dale McMichael; grandchildren, Misty and Dennis Sprouse, Meredith and Ryan Jones, Wyatt Turk, Claire Higgins, Clayton Turk; great-grandchildren, Keegan and MaKenna Sprouse, Cooper and Bennett Jones; sisters-in-law, JoAnne Thomas and Glynda Underwood; and numerous extended family members.

Please continue to honor Noma Nell through making a contribution to the local Caritas or church, ALSA.org, CureALZ.org, Safe Haven Equine Rescue, "paying it backwards" at the cash register, or joining a local service organization; no flowers please.

A memorial service will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 11, 2020, at First Methodist Church in Groesbeck. Visitation will be held in the church prior to the memorial service beginning at 11 a.m. until 1:30. Honorary Pallbearers (Mullett sons) are Rusty Parker, Lenny Loyd, Rick Dykes, Kevin Crousen, Scotty Pugh, Clay Miller, Jay Pugh, Sonny Dykes, Monty Miller, and J.J. Griffin.

Condolences may be posted on the obituary guestbook at www.groesbeckfuneralhome.com.

Paid Obituary

Cynthia Francese Anderson Boadle



Cynthia Francese Anderson Boadle passed away at 6 p.m. Dec. 30, 2019, in Boonville, Missouri. Graveside services will be at 11 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 11, 2020, at Mt. Olive Memorial Park.

The family will receive friends from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., Friday, Jan. 10, 2020, at Nalley-Pickle & Welch funeral home.

She is survived by three daughters, Martha Ann Nichols and husband, Jerry, Mona Louise, and Marie Cynthia Sanders and husband, Walter; six grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; step-children, Danny and wife, Ramona, and Dana Tilley; several step-grandchildren and great-grandchildren; numerous nieces and nephews; sister, Sandra Smith of Queensbury, New York; brother Roland O. Anderson, of Brattleboro, Vermont; and one step-sister, Diane Woods.

Arrangements are under the direction of Nalley-Pickle & Welch Funeral Home and Crematory. Online condolences may be made at www.npwelch.com.

Police blotter

The Big Spring Police Department reported the following activity:

• **THOMAS DEL BOLTON**, 37, of 114 Colorado, was arrested on warrants for expired registration, driving with invalid license, and two counts of failure to appear.

• **ORALIA KIMBERLY RAY OCHOA**, 21, of 2008 N. Birdwell Ln., was arrested on a charge of possession of marijuana (less than two ounces).

• **MATTHEW LUIS ALMAZAN**, 33, of 302 N. E. 10th St., was

arrested on an outstanding warrant from another agency.

• **NATHAN HILARIO**, 18, of 1313 Colby Ave., was arrested on a warrant for robbery.

• **JACOB RYAN HILARIO**, 18, of 5010 Wasson Rd., was arrested on a warrant for robbery.

• **STOLEN VEHICLE** was reported in the 4500 block of E. FM 846.

• **FOUND PROPERTY** was reported in the 1400 block of S. Gregg St.

• **ACCIDENT MINOR** was reported at 11th and Birdwell, the

2000 block of Rickabaugh Dr., and at 3rd and Owens.

• **THEFT** was reported in the 100 block of S. Main St., 2500 block of S. Gregg st., 700 block of W. FM 700, and at CR 50 and Hwy 87.

• **ASSAULT** was reported in the 3600 block of W. Hwy 80.

• **RUNAWAY** was reported in the 1900 block of Martin Luther King Rd.

• **DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE** was reported in the 800 block of S. Runnels St., and in the 800 block of S. Owens St.

Fire/EMS

Big Spring Fire Department/EMS reported the following activity:

• **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 2500 block of Hunter. No transport was required.

• **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 2500 block of Hunter. One person was transported to Scenic Mountain Medical Center.

• **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 500 block of Donley. No transport was required.

• **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 4200 block of W. Hwy 80. One person was transported to Scenic Mountain Medical Center.

• **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 300 block of Veterans Blvd. One person was transported

to Scenic Mountain Medical Center.

• **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 1800 block of Hearn. One person was transported to Scenic Mountain Medical Center.

• **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 1700 block of Lancaster. No transport was required.

• **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 1800 block of N. Hwy 87. One person was transported to

Scenic Mountain Medical Center.

• **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 1300 block of Madison. One person was transported to Scenic Mountain Medical Center.

• **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 1500 block of Sycamore. One person was transported to Scenic Mountain Medical Center.



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Velda Hamilton

Velda Hamilton, 77, of Schertz, formerly of Big Spring, died Sunday, Jan. 5, 2020. The family will receive friends from 5:30 p.m. until 7 p.m. Friday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home. Funeral service will be at 1:30 p.m. Saturday at Myers & Smith Chapel.

Sheriff

The Howard County Sheriff's Department reported the following activity:

Note - Officials with the Howard County Jail reported having 84 inmates at the time of this report.

• **MICHAEL SHANE ALLEN**, 45, was arrested by DPS on a warrant for failure to appear-theft of a firearm.

• **MATTHEW LUIS ALMAZAN**, 33, was arrested by BSPD on a warrant for theft of property (\$100 to \$750).

• **THOMAS DEL BOLTON**, 37, was arrested by BSPD on warrants for expired registration, driving with invalid license, and two counts of violating promise to appear.

• **MARCUS DELEON**, 30, was arrested by HCSO on a warrant for motion to revoke-driving while intoxicated, second offense.

• **AGAPITO GUTIERREZ**, 56, was arrested by HCSO on a warrant for driving while intoxicated-third or more offense.

• **JACOB RYAN HILARIO**, 18, was arrested by BSPD on a warrant for robbery.

• **NATHAN HILARIO**, 18, was arrested by BSPD on a warrant for robbery.

• **ORALIA KIMBERLY RAY OCHOA**, 21, was arrested by BSPD on a charge of possession of marijuana (less than two ounces).

Support Groups

WEDNESDAY

• **RSD (Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy)** a chronic pain disease, a support and informative group, meets at 213 Circle. Call Lucy at 432-517-9207 for more information.

• Celebrate Recovery meets at First United Methodist Church Youth Hall, 400 Scurry, from 6-8 p.m. Hurts, habits and hang-ups. Leave message for Joyce Webb at 325-212-860

THURSDAY

• Alcoholics Anonymous, 615 Settles, open discussion noon to 1 p.m.; women's meeting 6:30 until 7:30 p.m. Newcomers' meeting 8 p.m. until 9 p.m.

• Weight Watchers meets at 6 p.m. at St. Paul Lutheran Church. Weigh-in is at 5:30 p.m. Weigh-in is confidential and you don't have to talk if you don't want to. Flexible payment options.

• Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder support group meeting is at 6:30 p.m. at the VA Medical Center Veteran's Healing Center.

• Bring Everyone Into The Zone, or BEITZ Support Group, is a veteran-based peer group. The purpose of the group is to provide peer-to-peer support to service members, veterans and families, especially those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), military sexual trauma (MST) and other traumatic events in their lives. BEITZ meets every Thursday at 6 p.m. at 501 Birdwell Lane. For more information, email francisco.garza@wtcmhmr.org, or call 432-268-3003.

• GriefShare is a biblical support group that focuses on helping people who are dealing with a loved one's death. Each DVD session features nationally respected grief experts and real-life stories, followed by small group discussion about the topics presented (with workbook support); there is no charge for attendance. 13-week seminars are held three times per year on Thursday evenings, 6 to 8 p.m., at Trinity Baptist Church in Big Spring. Visit the GriefShare Ministry of TBC Facebook page. You can also call Vivian Gordon at 432-466-3583 for information on seminar dates and how you can register to attend.

FRIDAY

• AA open discussion meeting from noon until 1 p.m. at 605 Settles. Open Big Book study meeting, 8 p.m. until 9 p.m.

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Weather



Today: Sunny, with a high near 64. South wind 15 to 25 mph, with gusts as high as 35 mph.

Tonight: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 49. South wind 20 to 25 mph, with gusts as high as 35 mph.

Thursday: Mostly cloudy, then gradually becoming sunny, with a high near 72. Southwest wind 10 to 15 mph.

Thursday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 47. South wind around 10 mph.

Friday: Sunny, with a high near 65. West wind 10 to 15 mph increasing to 20 to 25 mph in the morning. Winds could gust as high as 35 mph.

Friday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 32.

Saturday: Sunny, with a high near 55.

Saturday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 37.

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 66.

Sunday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 38.

Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 69.

Monday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 40.

(Weather courtesy National Weather Service via forecast.weather.gov)

US sends more firefighters to help battle Australia blazes

By KEITH RIDLER

Associated Press
BOISE, Idaho (AP) — U.S. officials said Tuesday they're planning to send at least another 100 firefighters to Australia to join 159 already in the country battling wildfires that have killed 25 people and destroyed 2,000 homes.

The National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, said that 90 firefighters including on-the-ground hand crews left in recent days to fight fires that have scorched an area twice the size of the U.S. state of Maryland.

Another 100 American firefighters are expected to fly to Australia next week, said center spokeswoman Carrie Bilbao. It's the largest ever deployment of U.S. firefighters abroad, she said.

The Australian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council requested the firefighters as part of a reciprocal deal that sent 138 Australians to fight U.S. wildfires in 2018. The U.S. has similar agreements with Canada, Mexico and New Zealand.

Officials are working to send the additional firefighters to Australia quickly so they can assume wildfire management and aviation management roles. The most recent contingent of firefighters dispatched to Australia included crews that fight fires on the ground, based in the U.S. Forest Service's Angeles National Forest in California.

Bilbao said the next group will also include more ground crews and that they are receiving training about poisonous snakes and insects they might encounter while fighting wildfires in Australia.

"They're there to work with Australia in any capacity needed," Bilbao said.

The National Interagency Fire Center directs the U.S.'s wildland firefighting forces, which include thousands of firefighters who work for the Forest Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior and hundreds of aircraft. Their ranks can be stretched thin during the summer wildfire season, but officials

can free them up during the winter to fight fires elsewhere.

It is summer in Australia, where the wildfires have been raging since September, fueled by drought and the country's hottest and driest year on record. Australia's fires started months earlier than normal.

"We are proud to provide personnel from the United States and will continue to support Australia with the resources needed during this unprecedented fire situation," said U.S. Forest Service Fire Director Shawna Legarza.

The U.S., Australia and New Zealand have been exchanging firefighters for more than 15 years. The last time the U.S. sent firefighters to Australia was in 2010.

"As the extreme fire danger continues across Australia, the Department of the Interior will continue to do all that we can to support requests for assistance," said Craig Leff, the Interior Department's Wildland Fire deputy director.

Take Note

• VFW Post 2013 meets the first Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. New members are being sought. The Post is located at 500 Driver Rd. Qualified veterans, those who have served in a foreign war, who are interested in joining the VFW are encouraged to attend a meeting to find out more information.

• DivorceCare is a biblical support group for those facing divorce or separation. Each DVD session features nationally respected experts, such as Christian Counselors and Pastors. Small group discussions and workbook exercises help participants apply the information to their own situations. We cover pertinent issues like:

• Will I survive? • How to get out of debt. • How do you know when you are ready for a new relationship? • How to lessen the impact of divorce on your children. • Is reconciliation possible? There is no charge for attendance. 13-week seminars are held two times per year on Tuesday evenings from 6 to 8 p.m. at Trinity Baptist Church in Big Spring. Visit

the DivorceCare Ministry of TBC Facebook page for information. You can also call Donna Burcham at 267-6344 for information on seminar dates and how you can register to attend.

• O'Neal-Kunkle, Chapter #47 of the Disabled American Vets (D.A.V.), meets the third Monday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at 2204 Runnels Street.

For more information, please contact Norman Witcher at 432-413-6663.

• Senior and/or mature adults are invited to come to a dance every first and third Friday each month at the Dora Roberts Community Center, located at 100 Whipkey Drive.

Come two-step the evening away, or just mingle with old friends and make new friends. Dances are from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. with live entertainment.

No alcohol or smoking permitted. Cost is \$5 per person.

CITY

Continued from Page 1

responded to the poll that was posted, with 52 percent saying they will be attendance.

Mayor Shannon Thomason confirmed this morning that the meeting will be moved to the Municipal Auditorium.

No other agenda items

have been presented at press time, but more information will be reported on as it is released for next week's meeting.

To contact the Big

Spring Herald, call 432-263-7331 or email editor@bigspringherald.com.

REGISTER

Continued from Page 1

"We are excited about this change so our parents and students can begin a relationship with staff and administrators on the first day they arrive," he said.

For more information and updates

visit the school website at bsisd.esc18.net or follow the Facebook pages for the respective campuses.

Amanda Duforat is the managing editor at the Big Spring Herald. To contact her, email editor@bigspringherald.com or call 432-263-7331.

MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL

24th & Johnson 267-8288

Robert "Wawe" Hilario, 63, died Saturday. Funeral service will be at 10 AM Wednesday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Burial will be at Mount Olive Memorial Park.

Velda Hamilton, 77, died Sunday. The family will receive friends from 5:30 PM until 7:00 PM Friday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home. Funeral service will be at 1:30 PM Saturday at Myers & Smith Chapel.

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6.4 quake strikes Puerto Rico amid heavy seismic activity

PONCE, Puerto Rico (AP) — A 6.4-magnitude earthquake struck Puerto Rico before dawn on Tuesday, killing one man, injuring at least eight other people and collapsing buildings.

The quake was followed by a series of strong aftershocks, part of a 10-day series of temblors spawned by the grinding of tectonic plates along three faults beneath southern Puerto Rico. Seismologists say it's impossible to predict when the quakes will stop or whether they will get stronger.

The 6.4-magnitude quake cut power to the island as power plants shut down to protect themselves. Authorities said two plants suffered light damage and they expected power to be restored later Tuesday. Puerto Rico's main airport was operating normally, using generator power.

"I've never been so scared in my life," said Nelson Rivera, a 70-year-old resident who fled his home in the city of Ponce, near the epicenter of the quake. "I didn't think we would get out. I said: 'We'll be buried here.'"

Teacher Rey González told The Associated Press that his uncle was killed when a wall collapsed on him at the home they shared in Ponce. He said 73-year-old Nelson Martínez was disabled and that he and his father cared for him.

Eight people were injured in Ponce, Mayor Mayra Meléndez told WAPA television. Hundreds of people sat in the streets of the city, some cooking food on barbecue grills, afraid to return home for fear of structural damage and aftershocks.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake hit at 4:24 a.m. just south of the island at a shallow

depth of six miles (10 kilometers). It initially gave the magnitude as 6.6 but later adjusted it. At 7:18 a.m., a magnitude-6.0 aftershock hit the same area. People reported strong shaking and staff at a local radio station said live on air that they were leaving their building.

A tsunami alert was issued for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands after the initial quake, but was later canceled.

In the historic district of Ponce, authorities evacuated more than 150 people from two buildings they said are in danger of collapsing.

Among them were more than two dozen elderly patients from a nursing home who sat in their wheelchairs in silence as the earth continued to tremble.

Amir Señeriz leaned against the cracked wall of his Freemason Lodge in Ponce and wailed.

The roof of the 1915 building was partially collapsed and dust and debris lay around him.

Outside, he had already carefully placed 10 large historic paintings. The earth continued trembling as he went back into the building to recover more artifacts.

Helping him was artist Nelson Figueroa, 44, who said he slept in his street clothes.

"It was chaos," he said, adding that there was a traffic jam in his coastal neighborhood as terrified people fled.

Albert Rodríguez, who is from the southwest town of Guánica, said the tsunami sirens went off before officials canceled the alert. He said there is widespread damage in his neighborhood.

"The road is cracked in the middle and it lifted up," he said.

The mayor in the southwest town of Guayanilla, Nelson Torres, told NotiUno radio station that the church in the public plaza of his town collapsed.

Puerto Rico's governor, Wanda Vasquez, ordered government offices closed for the day and urged citizens to remain calm and not check damage to their homes until daylight.

A 5.8-magnitude quake that struck early Monday morning collapsed five homes in Guánica and heavily damaged dozens of others. It also caused small landslides and power outages. The quake was followed by a string of smaller temblors.

The shake collapsed a coastal rock formation that had formed a sort of rounded window, Punta Ventana, that was a popular tourist draw in Guayanilla.

Residents in the south of the island have been terrified to go into their homes for fear that another quake will bring buildings down.

The flurry of quakes in Puerto Rico's southern region began the night of Dec. 28. Seismologists say that shallow quakes were occurring along three faults in Puerto Rico's southwest region: Lajas Valley, Montalva Point and the Guayanilla Canyon, as the North American plate and the Caribbean plate squeeze Puerto Rico.

One of the largest and most damaging earthquakes to hit Puerto Rico occurred in October 1918, when a magnitude 7.3 quake struck near the island's northwest coast, unleashing a tsunami and killing 116 people.

US prepares for possible Iranian reprisal after drone strike

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. officials braced for Iran to respond to the killing of its most powerful general, noting heightened military readiness in the country and preparing for a possible "tit-for-tat" attempt on the life of an American military commander. They warned ships across Mideast waterways crucial to global energy supplies about the "possibility of Iranian action" against U.S. maritime interests in the region.

President Donald Trump ordered the Jan. 2 strike against Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, after the death of an American contractor in Iraq. Now, amid massive demonstrations of Iran's public mourning period for Soleimani and a state TV report of a deadly stampede at his funeral, officials believe the next steps by America's longtime foe will determine the ultimate course of the latest crisis.

While officials say American intelligence isn't clear on whether Iran's latest military moves are designed to bolster Tehran's defenses or prepare for an offensive strike, the U.S. is continuing to reinforce its own positions in the region, including repositioning some forces. One official said the U.S. anticipated a "major" attack of some type within the next day or two.

On Monday, Defense Secretary Mark Esper said no decision had been made about withdrawing troops from Iraq. Pro-Iranian factions in the Iraqi Parliament have pushed to oust American troops following Soleimani's killing on Iraqi soil. Esper spoke to reporters after a letter from a U.S. Marine general circulated that seemed to suggest a withdrawal had been ordered in response to a vote by the Iraqi Parliament over the weekend. "There's been no decision whatsoever to leave Iraq," Esper said.

On Tuesday, the U.S. Maritime Administration put out the warning for ships, citing the rising threats after Soleimani's killing. Oil tankers were targeted last year in mine attacks the

U.S. blamed on Iran. Tehran denied being responsible though it did seize oil tankers around the crucial Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of the world's crude oil travels.

Soleimani's death, which has sparked major protests, further nuclear development and new threats of violence, has raised the prospect of a wide and unpredictable conflict in the Middle East and escalated tensions between Iran and the U.S.

Meanwhile, the U.S. said it would not issue a visa to Iranian foreign minister Mohammed Javad Zarif to attend a U.N. meeting this week. The U.S., which has severely restricted the movements of Iranian diplomats in New York in the past, contends there was not enough time to process the visa request.

The two nations have careened from one flare-up to another since Trump began his "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran shortly after taking office. He abrogated the 2015 nuclear deal and reimposed crushing economic sanctions, both steps aimed at preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon and deterring the sort of regional aggression spearheaded by Soleimani.

Two U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal discussions, said targeting Soleimani was not representative of a wholesale shift in American policy toward Iran, despite Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's comments on Sunday that the U.S. was targeting Iran's "actual decision-makers" rather than its network of proxy allies. Trump has repeatedly contended that he is not seeking "regime change" in Iran, as has been pushed by some of his more hawkish advisers.

Still, Trump's strike against Soleimani, a revered figure in Iran whose death sparked large displays of anger and grief, was a risky decision his Republican and Democratic predecessors opted not to take out of concern

it would draw the U.S. and Iran closer to conflict.

U.S. officials are also aware that Iran could try to strike a high-level American leader in a "tit-for-tat" move, potentially a military commander.

One official said some Iranian ships have spread out, and while the intent isn't immediately clear, they could move rapidly to attack.

The U.S. military has increased protection of its forces, particularly in Iraq. Officials said a number of the recently deployed soldiers from the 1st Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division had moved into Iraq from Kuwait in order to increase security for Americans there. The U.S. military has stopped all training of Iraqi forces to focus on force protection, officials said.

As of Monday, officials said, there had not been a broadly distributed order or recommendation to increase security at military installations worldwide. Instead, decisions were being left up to the commanders.

The U.S. military's concern about its vulnerability to Iranian attack in the Persian Gulf region has been at a heightened state since about May, when the administration reported it was getting intelligence indications that Iran was planning attacks on U.S. interests in Iraq and elsewhere in the region. The Pentagon sent additional forces to the Gulf at that point, and in July it worked out an arrangement with the government of Saudi Arabia to send U.S. forces to a large base deep in the Saudi desert, in less obvious range of Iranian missiles.

The main hub for American military air operations throughout the Middle East is located at al-Udeid air base in Qatar — within easy range of Iranian mis-

siles. American forces also are stationed in the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. The Navy's 5th Fleet, which operates throughout the region, is based at Bahrain.

Meanwhile on Capitol Hill in the U.S., Democrats prepared largely symbolic resolutions under the War Powers Act to limit the president's military actions regarding Iran. In a letter to House Democrats, Speaker Nancy Pelosi called the airstrike on Soleimani "provocative and disproportionate" and said it had "endangered our servicemembers, diplomats and others by risking a serious escalation of tensions with Iran."

Congress, which has the sole power to declare war, has complained that Trump did not provide advance notice of his airstrike in Baghdad. Trump did meet the 48-hour deadline required by the War Powers Act to notify Congress after the deadly drone strike. The document was classified, and no public version was released.

Senators will receive a briefing Wednesday on the situation, according to a person familiar with the meeting. Pompeo, Esper, CIA Director Gina Haspel and Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, are expected to speak. The House is also expected to be briefed this week.

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Seymore scores 1,000th career point as Steers fall 46-44 to the Levelland Lobos



HERALD Photos/Shawn Moran

Pictured above left: Steers guard Zephaniah Nelson shoots a free throw Tuesday night's road loss to Levelland. Pictured above right: Head Coach Kris Hise speaks to his team in the huddle during a fourth quarter timeout.

By SHAWN MORAN

Herald Sportswriter

LEVELLAND — The Showtime Steers (15-7) lost in heartbreaking fashion to the Levelland Lobos on Tuesday night by a score of 46-44. On the night that Big Spring junior guard Kyle Seymore scored his 1,000th career varsity point, a defensive breakdown allowed Lobos guard #3 to drive the lane for a layup in the final second of the game.

"It was a tough loss," Steers Head Coach Kris Hise said. "We played great. I was proud of our guys. Just couldn't really ever get going offensively but we did a good job tonight and I was proud of them. Tough way to lose at the end like that."

The game started out slowly, with both teams combining for 30 points in the first half. Both teams were playing great defense and pressuring the other into bad shots as the game went into halftime tied at 15.

In that first half, with a little more than five minutes played in the game, Seymore scored his first basket of the night. The shot put Seymore at 1,000 points for his career but the high-scoring junior seemed more interested in his team winning than his own personal achievements.

"It's a big accomplishment," Seymore said. "It's something I never really thought about. Got to move past it, though... I just need to continue to get in the lab and work on my shots. I know district is going to be tough so I just need to focus on adding new things to my game and find new opportunities to score."

Seymore led the Steers with 11 points in the game. While most of the offensive production came from the five starters, guard Gavin Greathouse came off the bench to give Big Spring a spark with four clutch shots that got his team back in the game.

"He was good off of the bench," Hise said. "He's starting to put the ball in the net a little bit and that helps us."

In the third quarter, both teams scored more than they had in the entire first half as the Steers took a minuscule 33-32 lead into the fourth. Throughout the second half, the Lobos were able to drive the lane and that is ultimately how they won the game.

After several lead changes in the final quarter, the game was tied at 44 with under one minute to play and Levelland had the ball. After a quick timeout to discuss their strategy, the Lobos #3 was able to drive past a group of Steers defenders and laid the winning shot off the glass with only one second remaining in the game. With one last chance to win the game, Seymore put up a prayer from half-court that came up empty.

After losing to the Lobos at the Denver City Tournament last month, the Steers once again came up just short in an intense battle between two very evenly-matched squads.

The Steers have still won five of their last seven games and look to be coming together as a force to be reckoned with. As the district games begin, the Steers will look to keep yo their hot start to the season and find a way to win close, competitive games like they played on Tuesday night.

"We're playing good and we get a major piece back on Friday," Hise said. "I'm proud of them. They're playing good basketball and we're rolling into district the right way right now."

UP NEXT: The Steers will host Monahans on Friday night at home. The game will start at 8:00 p.m.

Shawn Moran is the sports editor at the Big Spring Herald. To contact him, email sports@bigspringherald.com or call 432-263-7331.

B.A.S.S. Officially Announces 2020 Bassmaster Elite Series Field

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — After a 2019 Bassmaster Elite Series season that was widely regarded as one of the best ever, the entire field has decided to come back for an encore.

B.A.S.S. announced the field for the 2020 Elite Series today, and all 75 anglers from the 2019 roster are returning, along with 10 qualifiers from the Basspro.com Bassmaster Opens, two veteran anglers, who returned to the trail through Legends Exemptions, and the TNT Fireworks B.A.S.S. Nation champion.

"To have all 75 guys back from last year — plus 100% of the anglers who were invited — says a lot about the positive momentum we have with the Bassmaster Elite Series," said B.A.S.S. CEO Bruce Akin. "The reaction to last season was overwhelmingly positive from sponsors and fans, and it's great that everyone wants to continue with us on what will be another exciting journey in 2020."

The list of returnees will include Scott Canterbury who fished a brilliant season to secure his first Bassmaster Angler of the Year title. Longtime Elite Series veterans like Drew Benton, Hank Cherry, John Crews, Micah Frazier, Matt Herren, Bill Lowen and Chris Zaldain will also be back.

A talented 2019 rookie field of anglers that included Rookie of the Year Drew Cook, Lee Livesay and Patrick Walters will now enter their sophomore campaigns with the Elites.

They will be joined by a new talented crop of rookies that includes Eastern Opens qualifiers Bryan Schmitt of Deale, Md., Destin DeMarion of Grove City, Pa., Buddy Gross of Chickamauga, Ga., Aus-

tin Felix of Eden Prairie, Minn., and Kyle Welcher of Opelika, Ala. The anglers who qualified through the Central Opens are Wes Logan of Springville, Ala., Caleb Kuphall of Mukwonago, Wis., Taku Ito of Chiba, Japan and Bob Downey of Hudson, Wis.

Cody Hollen of Beaverton, Ore., will also join the rookie class after winning the TNT Fireworks B.A.S.S. Nation Championship on Lake Hartwell in November.

"Last year's class of newcomers was obviously the biggest we've had since the start of the Elite Series," said B.A.S.S. Tournament Director Trip Weldon. "That was one of things that made the season so exciting — watching all of those young guys grow into pro fishing stars."

"They put on a great show, and I know the guys who are joining us this year will do the same. I imagine that is why every one of the anglers who were invited to join the Elite Series accepted their invitation."

John Cox of DeBary, Fla., actually earned an Elite Series invitation through both Opens divisions, finishing second in the Central Opens and fourth in the Eastern Opens points. This will be his first season on the Elite Series, but he will not be eligible for the 2020 Rookie of the Year race due to career earnings with B.A.S.S. and FLW.

Any angler who has a combined earnings of at least \$500,000 with B.A.S.S. and FLW is not considered a rookie. Schmitt will also be ineligible for Rookie of the Year honors.

Instead, Cox and Schmitt will join Brandon Palaniuk and Gerald Swindle as established anglers

competing on the Elite Series. Palaniuk and Swindle, who left briefly to fish another pro circuit in 2019, are returning on Legends Exemptions that are sometimes offered to anglers who have accumulated points through winning Bassmaster Classic and Angler of the Year titles.

"My reason for wanting to return to the Elites Series was simple — it's home," Swindle said when he made the announcement he had accepted the Legends Exemption. "It's all I know, it's what I'm comfortable with, the format, the weigh-ins, the tournament schedule, etc."

Other industry giants like Rick Clunn, David Fritts and Jay Yelas — three former Classic champions with 26 wins between them — will also be back, along with Brandon Cobb and Jamie Hartman — a pair of two-time winners last season.

The 2020 Elite Series schedule will begin Feb. 6-9 with the AFTCO Bassmaster Elite at St. Johns River in Palatka, Fla. From there, it will wind through eight states for nine events as anglers compete for cash and prizes and attempt to qualify for the 2021 Academy Sports + Outdoors Bassmaster Classic presented by Huk.

Each tournament will begin with 88 anglers on Days 1 and 2 before the field is cut to 40 for the semi-final round on Day 3. Only the Top 10 remaining anglers will fish the final day of each event with a \$100,000 first-place prize on the line.

"Momentum is a powerful thing in any business or sport," Akin said. "We built a lot of momentum last season, and we have a field of anglers who will help us keep it going this year."

Baylor's Matt Rhule agrees to become Panthers' next coach

By STEVE REED

AP Sports Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — David Pepper is entrusting Baylor's Matt Rhule to lead the Carolina Panthers out of what he views as a cycle of "long-term mediocrity."

The Panthers owner hired the 44-year-old Rhule on Tuesday to become the team's next head coach. He replaces Ron Rivera, who was fired with four games remaining in the 2019 season.

The deal is worth \$62 million over seven seasons, with incentives to make even more for winning, said a person familiar with the situation. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the team

has not released contract details. The NFL Network was first to report the contract terms.

The deal makes Rhule the sixth-highest-paid coach in the NFL, according to Forbes. The five coaches ahead of him — New England's Bill Belichick, Seattle's Pete Carroll, Oakland's Jon Gruden, New Orleans' Sean Payton and Baltimore's John Harbaugh — have all won Super Bowls.

The Panthers met with Rhule at his home in Waco, Texas, on Monday, and Pepper liked what he heard and moved swiftly to make a hire. Rhule, who is from New York City, had been scheduled to visit with his hometown New York Giants later in the week and Pepper didn't want to lose him.

See RHULE, Page 10

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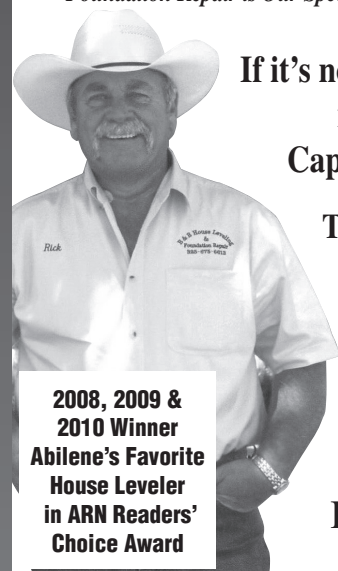
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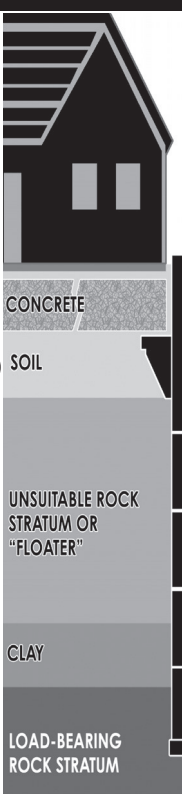
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Annie's Mailbox

New Year's Resolutions Redux

Dear Annie: New Year's Day is approaching, and it's time for new resolutions. I'm ashamed to say that mine will be the same it is every year. My goal is to get into shape. Each year, I start with a few workouts but quickly fall back into my old lazy routine and let my diet slip. I've tried joining a gym, fitness classes, running and walking. Nothing will stick. I really want to keep it up this year, but I'm already afraid I'll fail. How do people stick with it? -- Out of Shape

Dear Shape: First of all, don't wait for New Year's Day. Start today, especially because it seems that you are motivated. Procrastinating makes it more difficult to begin and to stick to a routine. Second, my favorite wellness advice is that the best workout is the one you'll do. That can vary from person to person. For some, it may be group fitness classes. For others, it may be outdoor running. And still others may find a stationary fitness machine is their workout of choice. All of these are great options. Set clear and achievable objectives. Perhaps it's around a number of workouts per week or a duration. Keep yourself accountable. Find a friend with the same goals. Also try hiring a personal trainer who can tailor a workout to your needs or what you like best. For tighter budgets, consider using a fitness app, many

of which have accountability and progress programs built in. Watching your progress will keep you motivated and on track. Good luck!

Dear Annie: My sister-in-law hosted Thanksgiving for our large family one year, even accommodating out-of-town family members. After cooking and prepping and setting the table, she said that we could sit wherever we'd like. The kids had their own separate table. The meal was delicious, and we enjoyed each other's company. After everyone ate, my sister-in-law announced for all of us to reach under our chairs. Earlier that day, she had put sticky notes under each chair with a task written on the note. They included "clear the table," "dry the dishes" and "box up leftovers" -- you get the picture. One of them (hers) read, "play with the grand-kids," which we considered a well-deserved break for her after all that meal prep!

There was no arguing or pouting or trading of tasks. Everyone did his or her job, and the cleanup was very fast. In a short time, we were all able to go for a walk and watch football without worrying about how the seemingly arduous task of clearing and cleaning was going to be shared. Now, whenever I have a large sit-down dinner for ANY occasion that involves oblivious (read: lazy) family members, I implement my very wise sister-in-law's

idea. -- Everyone Chips In

Dear Everyone Chips In: What a clever idea. I love it! Thank you for sharing.

Dear Annie: I just read the letter from a reader who was put off by businesses such as Starbucks that have a habit of asking for a name with each order. Please allow me to share a trick I've been using for years. Because I have a name that is often mispronounced, I give a fake name when asked. And to make it easier for me to remember, I always use the same one -- one of my favorite tennis players from yesteryear. So when I hear "Connors" called, I know that my coffee or my table is ready.

This both protects my privacy and spares the server or hostess the difficulty of trying to figure out how to say my name. -- Old Whatshisname

Dear Old Whatshisname: I'm printing your letter because I received a lot of letter with the same suggestion -- to use a fake name. Your tip about repeating the same fake name is a good one, though I'm not sure Jimmy Connors, one of the greatest tennis players of all time, would be crazy about it.

Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.

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Tomorrow's Horoscope

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

tricky and yet doable.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Love is not blind. It is actually love's de-



ceiving doppelganger, infatuation, that chemically alters the mind, affecting perception in numerous ways. Account for this phenomenon with today's fixations.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You will ponder what you are and what you might be. The insights available to you await in a quiet space outside of the day's events and responsibilities.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You've tried things that worked and things that didn't. As you experiment, watch out for a rebound situation. Opposite energies can be equally harmful.

Often the best route out of harm's way is a side step.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). If you feel an overwhelming urge toward the energies of pity or rescue, this is a red flag to heed. It points to a tendency to take responsibility for more than you should in the deal.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You are a role model to people. You forget this but will be reminded of it today with the flattery of copycats. It really is the biggest compliment, though it also makes you think twice about what you're modeling.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Multitasking isn't usually the best way to get things done, but today you have a knack for working

on 10 things at once. As long as two of the 10 things aren't driving and texting, the day will be a winner.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You'll meet someone in a position to accept your gifts and help you go places -- that is if you know where you want to go. If you can't show it on a map, then try and relay as vivid a picture of it as possible.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). What do you think would happen if you were to raise your expectations of love? You might be disappointed or delighted by the way people rise to the occasion. It's a risk that could be worth it.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 8). People depend on you, and this puts the fire in your belly to make something happen. You'll learn tips and tricks that turn into money and relationships. You'll experience closeness, fun and a great sense of safety inside of love. Libra and Virgo adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 5, 20, 44, 18 and 9.

Write Holiday Mathis at HolidayMathis.com.

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Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker
A singular double improbability

North dealer.
Neither side vulnerable.

NORTH
♠ Q J 9 7 6
♥ A K 9 8 7 2
♦ K 10
♣ —

WEST
♠ 5 2
♥ 6 4
♦ A 7 6 2
♣ Q 10 9 5 3

EAST
♠ A
♥ J 10 3
♦ J 9 4 3
♣ K J 8 7 2

SOUTH
♠ K 10 8 4 3
♥ Q 5
♦ Q 8 5
♣ A 6 4

The bidding:
North East South West
1♥ Pass 1♠ Pass
3♦ Pass 3♥ Pass
5♠ Pass 6♣ Pass
6♣

Opening lead — two of diamonds.
Some deals you hear about sound much more like fiction than fact. For example, here's one that may strain your credulity. It occurred, believe it or not, in a head-to-head match between two of the contending teams in a national team championship.
At the first table, the bidding went as shown. North clearly overestimated the value of his hand. Granting that South's one-spade response was music to North's ears, North surely overstated his high-card strength

when he jump-shifted in diamonds and then leaped to five spades over three hearts. After this, South certainly could do no less than cuebid his ace of clubs in an attempt to get to a grand slam.
Of course, the slam should have gone down one since the defenders held two cashing aces. But it did not occur to West that his partner could hold the ace of trump, and he decided that desperate measures would be needed to defeat the slam the opponents had so confidently bid.
Accordingly, he led the deuce of diamonds! West was hoping to find dummy with the K-J and East with the queen, in which case declarer would almost surely play the jack from dummy.

However, this proved not to be the right time or place to underlead an ace against a slam. South won the diamond with the queen and cashed the ace of clubs, discarding the king of diamonds from dummy. He then conceded a trump to East's ace to make the slam.
At the second table, the bidding went differently, but the final contract was the same! Again South got to six spades, again West underled the ace of diamonds, and again South made the slam — so the deal was a washout!

Now wouldn't you agree that truth is stranger than fiction?

Tomorrow: A tragedy of errors.
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Cosmic Self-Appreciation Day

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Every time you act from your inner authority, you grow in confidence and charisma. Check in with yourself to make sure you're making decisions that are not just right for the eyes of society but are right for you.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). With children or those who can't care for themselves, it's appropriate to participate unselfishly. But in relationships with capable adults, if only one person is doing the caring and compromising, it's a problem.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You have a fully formed identity beyond the time you spend with loved ones, and this is part of what makes it so exciting to spend time together. Everyone brings unique attributes to the table.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). People change when they want to and are ready to and know how to. You may want to change, or you may want someone else to. Staying out of one another's process and still being supportive will be

SUDOKU

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 7 | | | 9 | 1 | | 8 |
| | 1 | | | 7 | 5 | | |
| 2 | | | 5 | 6 | | | 3 |
| | 4 | | | | | | |
| | | 9 | | | | 5 | |
| | | 1 | 4 | | 8 | | |
| 6 | 2 | | 8 | | | | |
| 9 | | | 7 | | | | |

Fun By The Numbers
Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Level: Intermediate

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 6 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 2 |
| 5 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 7 |
| 4 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 9 |
| 9 | 8 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| 3 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 6 |
| 7 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| 2 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 4 |
| 8 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| 8 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 3 | 7 |

ANSWER:

RHULE

Continued from Page 5

"You have a new owner who is committed to doing things the best way. He's a very much a process-oriented person," Rhule told ESPN Central Texas radio on Tuesday. "That is really all I wanted. I wanted to go to a place that isn't going to flail in the wind, that is going to be rooted and has a process they believe in. As we talked last night it was clear their process and my process could be one and the same."

Rhule said it was difficult to leave Baylor, but that "I felt like my work was done and it was time to try and turn around another program."

Rhule has a history of rebuilding college teams.

He was named Baylor's coach on Dec. 6, 2016, after an investigation found the private Baptist university had not responded adequately to allegations of sexual assault by players, resulting in the firing of Art Briles. The Bears went 1-11 in their first season under Rhule in 2017 with a depleted roster, but the team improved to 7-6 in 2018 and won a bowl game. Baylor went 11-1 in the regular season in 2019 before losing to Oklahoma in the Big 12 championship game and Georgia in the Sugar Bowl.

Prior to Baylor, Rhule also helped rebuild Temple's program, leading the Owls to back-to-back 10-win seasons in 2015 and 2016 after going 2-10 in his first season.

The Panthers are also in need of a major rebuild.

Carolina suffered seven-game losing streaks in the second half of the 2018 and 2019 seasons, and failed to reach the playoffs. The Panthers haven't won a playoff game since 2015, when they went 15-1 in the regular season and lost to the Denver Broncos in the Super Bowl.

This marks the first time the Panthers have dipped into the collegiate ranks to hire a head coach. Previous coaches were Dom Capers, George Seifert, John

Fox and Rivera. Perry Fewell was the interim coach after Rivera was fired, going 0-4.

The decision represents a bit of gamble for Tepper considering Rhule has only spent one season working in the NFL, that coming as an assistant offensive line coach for the Giants in 2012.

Shortly after Tepper fired Rivera, he seemed to downplay the possibility of hiring a college coach, saying, "I do understand the difficulty of the transition (from college) though. ... Anybody who's been around football understands the difficulty of that transition."

Tepper also said at the time he wanted a coach with an offensive background who would bring a "modern and innovative approach" to the game.

The team interviewed former Packers coach Mike McCarthy and Chiefs offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy, and had planned to talk with Patriots offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels and Vikings offensive coordinator Kevin Stefanski later in the week.

But Tepper made the decision that Rhule was his guy.

Rhule was a walk-on linebacker at Penn State, winning three bowl games.

The son of a preacher, he has coached on both offense and defense during his coaching career, which began in 1998 at Albright College.

Tepper stressed in December it will take time to build the Panthers into a consistent winner — but he's willing to be patient.

"If you don't think it takes time to build something great, if you think something great gets built in one second, then that's wrong," he said. "You shouldn't expect it, fans shouldn't expect it. I'm not talking about one year, I'm talking of a standard that will be built and sustained, OK?"

Rhule now must hire a coaching staff.

He is close with Detroit Lions quarterbacks coach Sean Ryan, who could be a potential candidate as offensive coordinator. Baylor defensive coordinator Phil Snow could be a candidate to fill that same role with Carolina.

AP source: Giants nearing deal with Pats' Judge to be coach

By TOM CANAVAN

AP Sports Writer

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — New England Patriots assistant Joe Judge probably is going to have to wait another day before finalizing a contract to become the somewhat surprising choice as head coach of the four-time champion New York Giants.

The team and representatives for Judge worked most of Tuesday on a deal to bring the 38-year-old to the Meadowlands in New Jersey to revive a franchise that tumbled to the bottom of the NFL in recent years, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity Tuesday because the deal is not done. The person did not expect the contract to be finalized until Wednesday at the earliest.

Mentored by Bill Belichick and Nick Saban in a 15-year career, Judge would become a head coach for the first time. He would be one of the youngest NFL coaches, but still five years older than Sean McVay of the Los Angeles Rams, who at 33 is the league's youngest.

Judge has won three Super Bowls with New England in eight years as an assistant on Belichick's staff. He was the fifth candidate the Giants interviewed since firing Pat Shurmur on Dec. 30, but he was not considered among the front-runners until having an impressive interview on Monday.

The early leading candidates were Baylor coach Matt Rhule and former Packers coach Mike McCarthy.

McCarthy was interviewed on Friday, but he agreed Monday to become the Dallas Cowboys' new coach. Rhule, who was supposed to interview with

New York on Tuesday, signed a seven-year, \$62 million contract with the Carolina Panthers on Tuesday, a person familiar with that deal told AP.

The third new coach tabbed for the NFC East in a week — Ron Rivera was hired by the Washington Redskins on Wednesday — Judge would take over a team that went 4-12 and 5-11 in Shurmur's two seasons and has been to the playoffs just once since winning the Super Bowl after the 2011 season. He would be the Giants' fourth head coach since Tom Coughlin was let go after the 2015 season. Ben McAdoo, hired in 2016, didn't last two seasons. Steve Spagnuolo, currently Kansas City's defensive coordinator, served as interim coach after McAdoo was fired in '17.

Judge, the Patriots' special teams coordinator and wide receivers coach, would inherit a team with a talented young quarterback in Daniel Jones and former rookie of the year running back Saquon Barkley. The Giants have the fourth pick in this year's draft and approximately \$85 million in salary-cap money to spend.

The Patriots lost to the Tennessee Titans on Saturday night in the wild-card round.

Judge joined the Patriots as a special teams assistant in 2012 and helped guide them to Super Bowl titles in the 2014, '16 and '18 seasons.

Before joining New England, he spent three years in the same role under Saban at Alabama. He won titles with the Crimson Tide in 2009 and '11. He also coached at Mississippi State and Birmingham-Southern.

With Judge as special teams coordinator since 2015, New England consistently ranked as one of the NFL's top units. He added receivers to his responsibilities in 2019. He coached kicker Stephen Gostkowski to the All-Pro team in 2015 and special

teams captain Matt Slater to the same honors in 2016 and this season.

Belichick called Judge "an excellent coach" and said he excelled in his added duties this season.

"Joe's done a great job. He's done a great job with the kicking game," Belichick said. "He's expanded the role a little bit and that's kind of had a little bit of a ripple effect in the way we've organized the kicking game, but that's all worked out pretty efficiently. Joe's done a good job of organizing that, as well as taking care on some other things with the offense and particularly receivers."

Judge met with Giants co-owner John Mara, general manager Dave Gettleman and vice president of football operations Kevin Abrams at the team's New Jersey headquarters on Monday.

The Giants had been expected to interview Patriots offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels this week along with Baylor's Rhule. But Rhule did not interview with them, the person familiar with the coaching situation said.

New York also had been given permission by Dallas to speak with former Cowboys coach Jason Garrett about the head coaching job. An interview was planned later this week, the person said.

Garrett's contract with the Cowboys does not expire until next week.

There have been reports the Giants are considering Garrett for a job as a coordinator or quarterbacks coach, but the person said the new coach will determine his staff.

Others interviewed were Kris Richard, the Dallas defensive assistant coach and former Seattle defensive coordinator; Chiefs offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy; and Ravens defensive coordinator Don Martindale.

Texans up for challenge of facing Chiefs in divisional round

By KRISTIE RIEKEN

AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — The Houston Texans overcame a 16-point deficit to get a 22-19 overtime win against the Buffalo Bills in the first round of the playoffs.

Now they move on to face Kansas City, where they'll look for a win to reach the AFC championship game for the first time in franchise history. Sunday will be Houston's fourth trip to the divisional round and second under coach Bill O'Brien.

They last reached this round in the 2016 season when they were eliminated by the New England Patriots in a 34-16 loss. The Texans were also defeated by the Patriots in the second round in the 2012 season and lost to the Ravens in their first trip to that round in the 2011 season.

"These guys understand the opportunity in front of them and they understand what it's going to take in Arrowhead Stadium against a great football team," O'Brien said. "They're very appreciative of the opportunity and they're going to do everything they can to try to take advantage of it."

Houston trailed 16-0 in the third quarter before scoring 19 straight points to take the lead in the fourth quarter on Saturday. The Bills tied it with a late field goal to force overtime.

Deshaun Watson avoided two sacks to make a remarkable play that resulted in a 34-yard completion that set up the winning field goal in overtime.

That Houdini-like escape was just the latest in a career where Watson has shown a knack for making highlight-reel plays. But as good as that one was, O'Brien believes a play Watson made against Oakland earlier this season when he took a cleat to the face before throwing a touchdown pass was

better.

"I'm very lucky," O'Brien said. "I've seen some incredible plays and that was an incredible play. But I think that when you get kicked in the eye and you still are able to complete a touchdown pass, I'm not sure that you can surpass that."

WHAT'S WORKING

Watson's play on Saturday was the catalyst in Houston's comeback. The third-year quarterback threw for 247 yards and a touchdown and ran for 55 yards and another score in the win. Most importantly, Watson didn't turn the ball over after throwing five interceptions combined in his previous three games.

WHAT NEEDS HELP

Houston must improve its pass protection after Watson was sacked seven times and hit 12 other times against Buffalo.

"We've got to do a better job at that," O'Brien said.

But O'Brien was quick to point out that the problems are not just the fault of the offensive line.

"There's a lot of keys to that," O'Brien said. "At the end of the day it comes down to communication, everybody being on the same page, how they see the defense ... everybody's involved, Deshaun's involved, the line's involved, the receivers, the tight ends, the backs."

STOCK UP

Outside linebacker Jacob Martin had his best game of the season on Saturday. Martin, who was part of the trade that sent 2014 top overall pick Jadeveon Clowney to Seattle, had a sack, two quarterback hits and recovered a fumble against the Bills.

STOCK DOWN

WR Keke Coutee was active on Saturday but was the only player aside from backup quarterback A.J. McCarron who didn't play. Coutee, who had


110 yards receiving with a touchdown in Houston's playoff game last season, has fallen out of favor this season and his playing time has diminished despite receiver Will Fuller dealing with injuries.

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