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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2017

SPORTS

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Carolina Panthers' Cam Newton (1) runs for a long gain as Minnesota Vikings' Trae Waynes (26) pursues during the second half of an NFL football game in Charlotte, N.C., Sunday, Dec. 10, 2017.

(AP Photo/Bob Leverone)

Singer Gwen Stefani to wrap up Super Bowl week performances

PRIOR LAKE, Minn. (AP) — Pop singer Gwen Stefani will close out a star-studded Super Bowl week in Minnesota.

The three-time Grammy winner will headline at Club Nomadic at Mystic Lake Casino Hotel on Sunday, Feb. 4.

Stefani is the final headliner.

Other acts at Club Nomadic include The Chainsmokers on Thursday, Feb. 1; Ellie Goulding and Norwegian electronic dance music artist DJ Kygo on Friday, Feb. 2; and Florida Georgia Line on Saturday, Feb. 3. Stefani joins a growing list of performers who will be in Minne-

sota during Super Bowl week. Others include Jennifer Lopez, who will perform at Nomadic Live! on Super Saturday Night. Sheila E., the Revolution and Morris Day & the Time will perform a Prince tribute as part of a series of free concerts.

End of winning streak gives Vikings enough time to recover

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings returned home from Carolina as a defeated team for the first time in 10 weeks, carrying with them a long list of cringe-worthy and uncharacteristic blunders that contributed to the loss.

The outcome, though, could actually work in their favor.

With all that postseason capital built up over the eight-game winning streak, the Vikings had a margin for the error they exhibited Sunday while being beaten by the Panthers 31-24. Provided they can steer themselves back on track over the remaining three games on the schedule and maintain their grip on a first-round bye for the playoffs, they will have rid themselves of some sloppiness before it truly hurts them. They host the Cincinnati Bengals (5-8) this weekend.

"It could be way worse. We're in a good situation, and we've just got to keep it going that way," said defensive end Everson Griffen, one of several upbeat players in the locker room Monday at team headquarters. "We're a very composed team, and I don't think we're going to let this get to us at all. We're going to go back to work. We're going to have that sense of urgency."

Playing on the road against a confident and deep team, the Vikings (10-3) trailed by one point at halftime despite an opening-drive interception thrown by Case Keenum, a 60-yard touchdown run by Jonathan Stewart against a defense that has surrendered few long gains all season, and rare dropped passes by Kyle Rudolph and Adam Thielen.

A reception by Rudolph likely would've put the Vikings in field-goal range during a possession that ended in a punt. Thielen had two chances for a touchdown with the Vikings sniffing the end zone late in the second quarter, but after one throw hit him in the chest and bounced away, he bobbled another that was ruled incomplete by a replay review that angered head coach Mike Zimmer. Thielen sounded resigned to the controversial rule requiring receivers to fully control the ball without any movement when they hit the

ground.

"The ball moved a little bit," he said. "That's just how it is."

The second half included a fumble by Keenum that looked like an incomplete pass, leaving the Vikings unaware they needed to try to cover the ball, and a second interception off a bobble by Stefon Diggs.

"We don't want to have any mistakes, regardless, whether it's now or later on," running back Latavius Murray said. "But the fact that they're right now and we still have everything we want in front of us, I think that's a good thing. So it's a chance for us to learn from that."

The Vikings fell one game behind Philadelphia for the NFC lead, though the Eagles lost quarterback Carson Wentz to a season-ending knee injury.

With right tackle Mike Remmers missing for a fifth straight game, the last two because of lower back trouble, center Pat Elflein joined him on the sideline with a shoulder injury in his first career scratch. Then left tackle Riley Reiff hurt his ankle in the third quarter, prompting Remmers' replacement Rashod Hill to switch sides; Jeremiah Sirles to move from left guard to right tackle; and Danny Isidora to enter at left guard. Nick Easton had slid over from left guard to center to play for Elflein, which thrust Sirles into the starting lineup. "Even with how poorly we played up front, which we thought we played poorly watching the film, we still had a chance to win it there at the end," Sirles said. "Which just goes to show if we can be on our game up front, it doesn't really matter who's in there, we can do well." Elflein practiced last week on a limited basis, so his injury is not serious. Reiff's departure from the stadium in a walking boot raised a significant concern, but Zimmer said his ankle was "a lot better than he thought it was going to be" when he was treated Monday.

"When you have injuries, you're going to have backup players play in there," Zimmer said. "We're not going to make an excuse for this game or for players that come in or anything else. We'll take ownership of what we did Sunday, and we'll move forward."



FILE - In this April 26, 2017, file photo, Zenobia Dobson kisses a photograph of her son Zaezion Dobson that serves as the memorial marker for a new playground named and dedicated in his honor in Knoxville, Tenn. A prosecutor said Tuesday, Dec. 5, at start of the murder trial of three young men that at least 34 shots were fired in an attack that killed the Tennessee high school student who was posthumously lauded for courageously shielding two girls from the gunfire.

(Saul Young/Knoxville News Sentinel via AP, File)

Defendant in football player's death says he fired into air

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Jurors in a murder trial involving the 2015 death of a Tennessee high school football player who shielded friends from gunfire heard an interview Monday in which one defendant tells police he fired shots in the air without aiming at anyone that night.

Members of the jury saw Knoxville police violent crimes investigator A.J. Loeffler's interview with Christopher Drone Bassett on the night 15-year-old Zaezion Dobson died. Bassett, Kipling Deshawn Colbert and Richard Gregory Williams III face first-degree murder charges.

Bassett initially denied accompanying cousin Brandon Perry to the Lonsdale area of Knoxville where Dobson was shot but eventually said he saw Perry fire shots, got scared and later fired "maybe five" shots in the air.

Perry died in a separate shooting later that night. In his interview with Loeffler, Bassett said Perry had been angry because his mother — Bassett's aunt — had been shot earlier in the day.

According to the state's case, the handgun that fired the bullet that killed Dobson was found under Williams' seat during a January 2016 traffic stop, though Williams wasn't driving the car. Prosecutors have said at least 34 shots were fired by multiple people in the Dec. 17, 2015, attack that resulted in Dobson's death.

In his interview with Loeffler, Bassett said he started running when he realized what Perry was doing. Bassett later acknowledged firing shots up in

the air but added that "I didn't aim" at anyone and that "I was real-life scared."

Bassett also noted in the interview that he had a hand injury that prevented him from shooting much.

T. Scott Jones, the lawyer representing Bassett, cited the lack of references to any gang-related connection to the shootings in the interview. Prosecutors have said there was a series of gang-related shootings that occurred in Knoxville that night.

"If you thought this was gang activity, certainly as a seasoned investigator, you would have asked somebody those questions, wouldn't you?" Jones asked Loeffler. Jones had said in his opening statement that he believed the incidents weren't gang-related and instead stemmed from a dispute between Perry and the father of his girlfriend's child. Knox County Assistant District Attorney Phil Morton said in his opening statement last week that Dobson and his friends had gathered on a back porch after attending an evening high school basketball game when some people approached them and started shooting. Morton described Dobson as a "protector" and added that neither he nor his friends had any idea why people were shooting. The two girls Dobson shielded were unhurt. After his death, Dobson was praised by then-President Barack Obama for his bravery in shielding his two friends. Dobson, who had played football at Knoxville's Fulton High School, posthumously received the Arthur Ashe Courage Award at the 2016 ESPYs.

Celtics' Irving out for Bulls game because of bruised quad

CHICAGO (AP) — Boston Celtics star guard Kyrie Irving sat out Monday night's game against the Chicago Bulls because of a bruised left quadriceps.

Acquired for Isaiah Thomas in a huge offseason trade with Cleveland, Irving is averaging a team-leading 23.7 points. The four-time All-Star took a knee to the quad in Sunday's win at Detroit and finished with 16 points on just 4-for-12 shooting.

Irving missed his second game of the season. Coach Brad Stevens said doesn't expect him to be out long, though he added: "Who knows with muscular injuries."

Stevens also said doctors will re-evaluate forward Marcus Morris' ailing left knee

on Tuesday. Morris sat out for the second straight night and the third time in four games. He also missed the first eight games of the season.

Forward Al Horford said he was ready to play after banging his right knee with Detroit's Anthony Tolliver.

Bulls leading scorer Lauri Markkanen also missed Monday's game because of back spasms. He participated in the morning shootaround. Coach Fred Hoiberg said Markkanen got treatment afterward, but his back continued to tighten.

The promising rookie also had some back issues before the season.

"We're taking the cautious approach with it," Hoiberg said. "It has not been a big issue."



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Department of EDUCATION

TCU names Donati, Del Conte assistant, as athletic director



TCU announced Jeremiah Donati as its next athletic director at a press conference Monday, Dec. 11, 2017. Donati saved Chris Del Conte for last on the list of people he thanked after TCU named Del Conte, Aôs assistant as the new athletic director just two days after his former boss took the same job with the Texas Longhorns. (Joyce Marshall /Star-Telegram via AP)

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Jeremiah Donati was named TCU’s athletic director just two days after his former boss, Chris Del Conte, took the same job with the Texas Longhorns.

As Donati was introduced on Monday, he saved Del Conte for last on the list of people he thanked, and he left no doubt about his respect for his predecessor.

“Chris brought me here to TCU and made me a Horned Frog,” Donati said Monday, the same day Del Conte was introduced in Austin. “He believed in me, he challenged me, he trusted me, he made me better. He was and is an unbelievable friend to me. I personally look forward to seeing him down the road.”

That shouldn’t be a problem, since they’re both still in the Big 12 — the Power Five league the Horned Frogs joined during Del Conte’s tenure. Del Conte hired Donati to run the fundraising TCU Frog Club in 2011 before Donati was promoted twice, most recently to deputy athletic director last year.

The 40-year-old Donati inherits a program that has been a Big 12 championship contender under longtime football coach Gary Patterson and is coming off an NIT title in the first season under men’s basketball coach Jamie Dixon, Del Conte’s most significant hire.

The school’s two most successful high-profile coaches were already in place when Del Conte was hired in 2009 — Patterson and baseball coach Jim Schlossnagle, who has taken the Horned Frogs to four straight College World Series but is still

looking for his first national championship.

Del Conte made his biggest mark off the field, though, with facilities upgrades that helped make TCU more attractive to the Big 12 when it lost four schools and added West Virginia along with the Frogs going into the 2012 football season.

“I’m forever indebted to Chris,” Donati said. “He really opened the door for me to show me different sides within the athletic department even outside my own role to one day prepare me hopefully for something like that at TCU or another place.”

TCU has been through \$300 million in donor-funded construction projects, highlighted by a \$164 million makeover of Amon Carter Stadium and a \$72 million renovation.

High school student carries collapsed marathoner to victory

DALLAS (AP) — In just 24 hours, her face and name have become world famous for what’s seen as a supreme act of sportsmanship. Dallas-area high school student Ariana Luterman was finishing the anchor leg of a girls’ relay in Sunday’s Dallas Marathon when she saw the legs of the women’s marathon leader, Dr. Chandler Self, start to buckle from exhaustion yards from the finish line.

Acting apparently instinctively, Luterman helped Self to her feet and half-carried her to the finish line, giving the New York City psychiatrist the women’s championship. Self’s family later told her she’d been credited with the win



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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

RFP: Financial and Single Audit Services for 2017-2019
Approved to issuance by: Ruth Matagi-Fa’atili; DBAS President
Date of issuance: Dec 1, 2017
Date & Time Due: December 30, 2017
No later than 2:00 pm local time

DBAS requests proposals for financial audits and the related single audits for a period of three years, beginning with the audit of fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2019. Fiscal and calendar years are coincident at DBAS.

DOCUMENT

DBAS requests proposals for financial audits and the related single audits for a period of three years, beginning with the audit of fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2019. Fiscal and calendar years are coincident at DBAS.

Document: Requests for proposal packet outlining requirements will be available for pick up at DBAS on Friday Dec 1, 2017 or emailing charmaine@dbas.as for information regarding the RFP. It can also be accessed through the DBAS website: www.dbas.as (click public notice).

The Request for Proposals (RFP) describes the specifications for the services to be provided in sufficient details to permit competition and allow the interested party to properly respond to the RFP.

This RFP is issued under Title 28, Chapter 1, of the American Samoa Code Annotated.

DBAS invites the submission of proposals to include pricing and other details as indicated in the specifications. Attachments will be provided as an aid in presenting a comprehensive proposal consistent with the requirements of DBAS.

DBAS will select a contractor who best meets the needs of DBAS. The factors for selection will include, but not be limited to the following: understanding of the requirements of the financial and single auditors; verifiable ability to perform well; good reputation; flexibility, including ability to respond quickly to needs of a small client in a remote location and throughout the year; and reasonability of costs.

The proposals will be reviewed by a committee consisting of representatives from DBAS management and board. The committee may request interviews with potential contractors after reviewing the proposals before the final selection is made.

Submission: Proposals must be received by DBAS no later than 2:00pm local time on December 30, 2017. They may be mailed or hand delivered in a sealed envelope to:

Development Bank of American Samoa
 PO BOX 9
 Attention: Charmaine Faleaana
 Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799

They may also be emailed to charmaine@dbas.as, as an attachment in Word Format with a confirming email required to confirm receipt; or faxed to DBAS at (684) 633-1163 with a confirming fax to confirm receipt. The original is to follow by airmail first class.



IN THE COMMUNITY

(Photos: Leua)



Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Jameis Winston (3) fumbles when he is hit by Detroit Lions linebacker Jarrad Davis (40) during the second half of an NFL football game Sunday, Dec. 10, 2017, in Tampa, Fla. Detroit recovered the fumble. (AP Photo/Steve Nesius)

Winston, Koetter focus on helping Bucs finish strong

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Dirk Koetter says he and Jameis Winston have said all they need to say about the state of their relationship as coach and quarterback.

Both deny there's friction between them, though those proclamations aren't likely to end speculation about how much longer they'll remain together with the regressing Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

The Bucs (4-9) have lost eight of 10 games following a 2-1 start and are assured of missing the playoffs for the 10th consecutive season.

Koetter led the team to a 9-7 record a year ago, creating heightened expectations that he and Winston have been unable to meet this season.

NFL Network reported before Sunday's 24-21 loss to Detroit that the relationship between coach and quarterback is strained.

Koetter and Winston, in his third season since entering the NFL as the No. 1 overall pick in 2015, insist that's not the case.

"We both said what we had to say," Koetter reiterated Monday, when asked if he and Winston had met to discuss the subject since their postgame denials.

"He and I know the truth about it," the coach added, "so I don't know what else there is to talk about."

Winston threw for more than 4,000 yards in each of the past two seasons, helping Tampa Bay progress from a team with two wins the year before he was drafted to a club seemingly on the verge of competing for a division title.

But instead of preparing for a meaningful

stretch run of games against NFC South rivals Atlanta, Carolina and New Orleans, the Bucs find themselves answering questions about how disappointing it is to see the Falcons, Panthers and Saints chasing playoff berths while they're wallowing in the division cellar.

Injuries, including a shoulder sprain that sidelined Winston for three games and most of a fourth, have been a factor.

But so has inconsistency on both offense and defense, where the team ranks last in sacks and has had difficulty keeping opponents out of the end zone.

Winston said talk about his relationship with Koetter is directly the result of Tampa Bay's poor record.

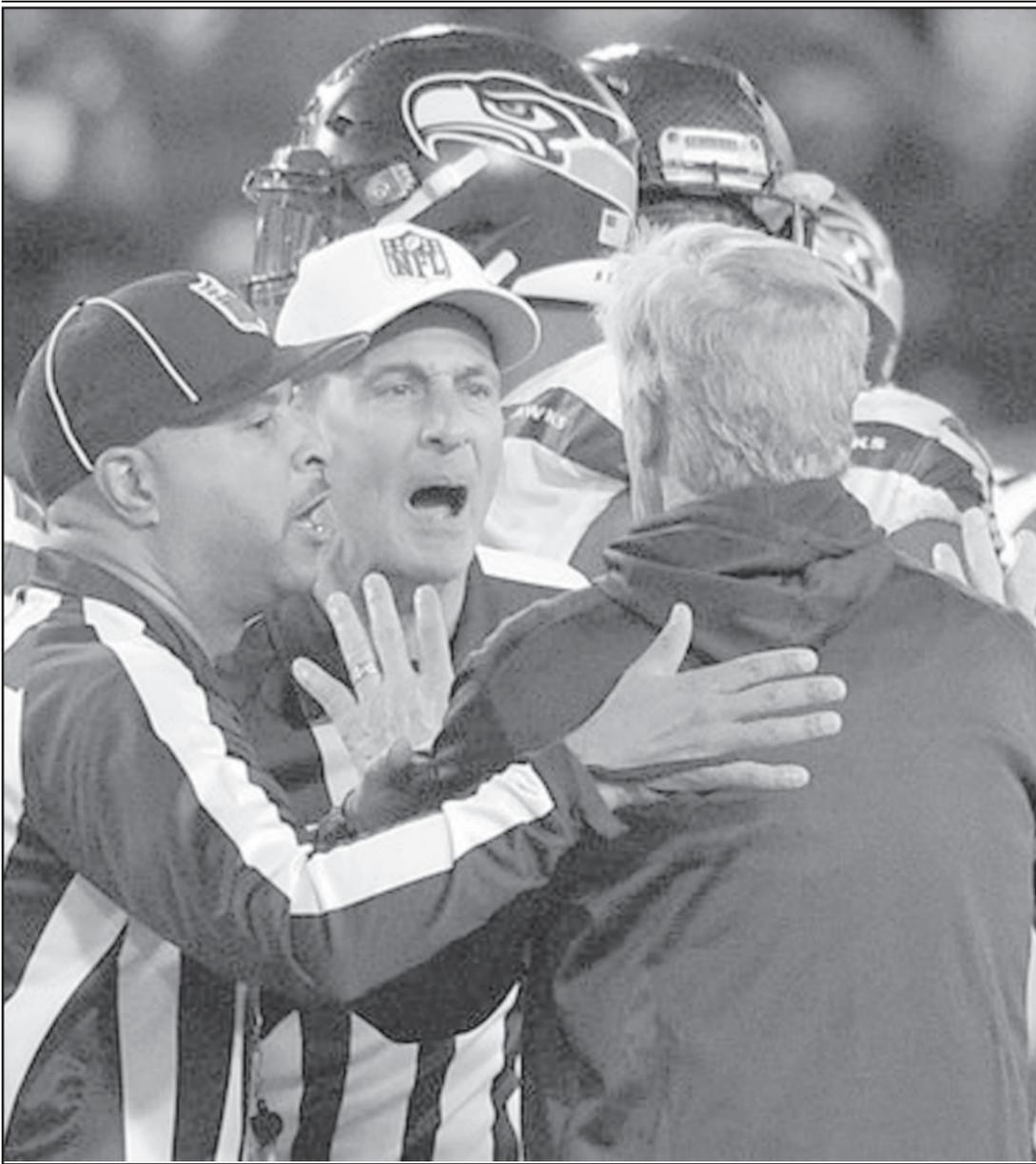
"A lot of distractions come up when we don't perform like we need to perform," the 23-year-old quarterback said after throwing two interceptions and losing a fumble in the loss to the Lions, who forced five turnovers.

"I've been with Coach Koetter since I've got in this league and he has not wronged me since I've stepped foot in those doors. I believe in what we have as an organization. We've got the talent," Winston added.

"Some unfortunate things happened. That's life. That's football. Some people can blame it on this. Some people can blame it on that," he continued, emotion building in his voice.

"At the end of the day, we've got to win. As long as we're winning, no one is talking to me, asking me questions about me and my head coach. No one."





Seattle Seahawks head coach Pete Carroll is held back by officials after he ran on the field during the final moments of an NFL football game Sunday, Dec. 10, 2017, in Jacksonville, Fla. Jacksonville won 30-24. Carroll got flagged for coming onto the field. (AP Photo/Phelan M. Ebenhack)

No suspensions for Seahawks after Jacksonville meltdown

RENTON, Wash. (AP) — The Seattle Seahawks will not face any suspensions for the melee that broke out at the conclusion of Sunday's loss to Jacksonville.

It's the only upside for Seattle to come from the ugly, unflattering conclusion to the loss which will certainly result in hefty fines and another tarnished moment where the Seahawks showed they don't handle losing very well.

"Everybody is remorseful," Seattle coach Pete Carroll said Monday. "We don't want to play like that. We don't want to look like that ever."

The league is still reviewing the fracas that broke out in the closing moments of Jacksonville's 30-24 victory for potential discipline, but no suspensions will be coming.

Michael Bennett, Sheldon Richardson and Quinton Jefferson were all flagged for personal fouls. Jefferson and Richardson were both ejected, and all three will be expecting letters from the league for their involvement in the ugly conclusion.

Jefferson's reaction was the most egregious as the defensive tackle attempted to climb into the stands after fans threw what appeared to be bottles at him as he was leaving the field. He was pulled back by team staff.

"That was wrong. He was wrong. I've talked to him about it," Carroll said. "Professional

athletes, people can say whatever they want to say and that's kind of what comes along with it. You have to be able to deal with it professionally. He lost it. He feels terrible about it. It's not the kind of kid he is. He emotionally got overrun and he lost it. Fortunately people restrained him and all that."

The Jaguars issued a statement Monday they were reviewing video and were conducting interviews with spectators and security staff in the area to identify those involved. The Jaguars said they had identified four individuals throwing five objects and those involved may lose the right to purchase future tickets or have their season tickets revoked.

But that doesn't excuse Seattle's behavior in the closing moments and a continued pattern over several seasons where the Seahawks have turned end-of-game or end-of-half situations into skirmishes.

The most famous came in Seattle's Super Bowl loss to New England when Bennett was involved in a scuffle in the closing seconds after Malcolm Butler's goal-line interception secured the victory for the Patriots.

But there have been others in games against Green Bay, Atlanta and Tennessee in the past couple of seasons.

What exasperated Sunday's situation was Bennett continuing to hold the leg of center

Brandon Linder after the initial swipe and setting off the first series of fights that ended in Richardson being ejected. Carroll said Bennett has been told to stop trying to swipe the ball from the center going forward.

"That's something he's tried before. That's why he's way down on the ground like that. He's trying to time it up and hit it, trying to get the ball back," Carroll said.

"So he winds up underneath the pile and stuff, and the stuff that happened after that was wrong. He was trying to get the ball. But after that, that got messy."

The fallout from Sunday went beyond the impression the Seahawks left. Starting linebackers Bobby Wagner (hamstring) and K.J. Wright (concussion) both left the game in the second half and did not return.

Wagner could be the more serious as Carroll said they won't know the status of the potential defensive player of the year candidate until Saturday or Sunday. Wagner has been playing through a hamstring strain for weeks but aggravated the injury against the Jaguars.

Wright is in the concussion protocol, but Carroll said he was feeling better on Monday and was hopeful he'd be cleared.

"His impact couldn't be any more obvious and we're going to have to shore it up if he can't go," Carroll said of Wagner.

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McCarthy: Packers' doctor evaluating tests on Rodgers

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Packers coach Mike McCarthy was cautious. His players seemed hopeful.

Green Bay might be getting quarterback Aaron Rodgers back soon from a collarbone injury.

But the final decision rests with the team doctor, with the help of other experts, on whether the two-time NFL MVP is healthy enough to return for the Packers' game this weekend against Carolina.

McCarthy said there was no timeline for when medical staff will decide on potentially clearing Rodgers after the quarterback had tests and scans on his surgically repaired collarbone on Monday.

"It's in the evaluation process ... I'd like to know as soon as possible," McCarthy said. "Frankly it's best for Aaron to know as soon as possible. He's the one that has to get ready,

and obviously in his mind he's ready to go if you watch him practice and the conversations with him."

But the franchise quarterback was still waiting for medical clearance.

McCarthy said "this is a medical decision and team doctor (Pat) McKenzie is obviously in touch with a number of different medical experts and they're evaluating the information." Rodgers could be eligible to be activated for Sunday, which would be eight weeks after going on injured reserve following his injury on Oct. 15 at Minnesota. The two-time NFL MVP returned to practice Dec. 2 on what McCarthy called a "trial return." Rodgers ran the scout team last week.

"It's going to be fun having him back," left tackle David Bakhtiari said after the 27-21 win over the Cleveland Browns on Sunday.

Who's on deck for baseball's next big deal? Red Sox, Cubs?

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — No matter how much their fans imagined Giancarlo Stanton bashing balls over the Green Monster, the Boston Red Sox never came close to getting the NL MVP. But does anyone really expect the Red Sox or the Cubs and other top contenders to stand still after seeing the slugger join the dreaded New York Yankees?

"We're looking for a middle of the order bat," Dave Dombrowski, Boston's president of baseball operations, said Monday at the winter meetings. "That hasn't changed. First base or DH."

A couple of big hitters just happen to be available, too.

J.D. Martinez, who launched

four home runs in a game for Arizona last season, is a free agent. So is Eric Hosmer, coming off a career year in Kansas City.

Who knows, maybe the Cubs think bopper Kyle Schwarber might fit better somewhere else. Chicago already seems to have a target at this swap-and-sign gathering: pitcher Alex Cobb, who could possibly take Jake Arrieta's spot in the rotation for the NL Central champs.

Remember, Dombrowski pulled off a lightning strike at these meetings last year, getting ace Chris Sale from the White Sox. And certainly the Red Sox could use power — they won the AL East despite hitting a major league-low 168 homers.



New York Yankees general manager Brian Cashman, left, and manager Aaron Boone watch as new player Giancarlo Stanton, center, talks as Hal Steinbrenner, middle right, and Jean Afterman, left watch during the Major League Baseball winter meetings in Orlando, Fla., Monday, Dec. 11, 2017.

(AP Photo/Willie J. Allen Jr.)

Stanton joins Judge as Yankees' Towers of Power

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — Giancarlo Stanton eased his 6-foot-6 frame into a pinstriped No. 27 jersey, ready to join 6-foot-7 Aaron Judge as the Towers of Power on the resurgent New York Yankees.

“They’re winners,” Stanton said after his trade from the Miami Marlins to New York was finalized Monday. “They’re young, and they’re in a good position to win for a long time, and I lost for a long time. So I want to change that dynamic and be a winner.”

New York sent second baseman Starlin Castro and a pair of minor leaguers to the Marlins for the NL MVP, also giving up right-hander Jorge Guzman and infielder Jose Devers. The Yankees became just the fourth team in big league history with the reigning home run champions in each league, joining Hank Greenberg and Ralph Kiner of the 1947 Pirates, Joe DiMaggio and Johnny Mize of the 1949 Yankees, and Mike

Schmidt and Dick Allen of the 1975 Phillies. Stanton joined a team that reached Game 7 of the AL Championship Series against Houston led by Judge and fellow young sluggers Gary Sanchez and Greg Bird. The Yankees expect top infield prospect Gleyber Torres to join the big league team next season.

“New York’s a marquee town, and I think it’s important to have some marquee players,” Yankees owner Hal Steinbrenner said. “But more important than that, I think it’s important to have veteran players that could be mentors for the young kids.” Stanton, a 28-year-old who like Judge plays right field, is owed \$295 million over the final decade of his record \$325 million, 13-year contract. The payroll-slashing Marlins, with new CEO and former Yankees star Derek Jeter presiding over the team’s fourth roster purge in two decades, will send \$30 million to the Yankees if Stanton doesn’t exercise his right to opt out of the deal after the 2020 season: \$5 million each on July 1 and Oct. 1 in 2026, 2027 and 2028. Under a change in baseball’s new labor contract, that money will be prorated for the luxury tax and Stanton will count as \$22 million annually.

“It’s a win-win for both sides,” Marlins president of baseball operations Michael Hill said. “Opportunity for him to start fresh, and an opportunity for us to gain needed flexibility.” Stanton led the majors with 59 home runs and 132 RBIs last season, and Judge was second in the majors with 52 homers. The daunting duo figures to create must-see BP, and new Yankees manager Aaron Boone isn’t sure yet who will play right or left, figuring they also will see time at designated hitter. “A 10-year commitment to any player, any position, should be a concern for the owner, without a doubt,” Steinbrenner maintained, “but having say that, he’s 28 and in great shape, and I think there’s going to be many, many years.”

Stanton’s contract includes a no-trade provision, and last week he turned down prospective deals to St. Louis and San Francisco. He told the Marlins he was willing to accept trades only to the Yankees, his hometown Los Angeles Dodgers, the Astros and Chicago Cubs.

“I would have been putting it over the hump rather than jumping into a team already prepared to be there,” he said.

He wore a light blue suit, white-and-blue herringbone-pattern dress shirt and black monk shoes, ready to talk business and baseball. Having grown up in Southern California, going to the Giants was a challenging concept. “I wouldn’t base a decision off that, but also I wouldn’t want to go to a team that they disliked the most — and wasn’t sure if they were going to beat that team, either,” Stanton said.



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At 36, Philip Rivers is on a roll with surging LA Chargers

COSTA MESA, Calif. (AP) — Deep in his 12th season as the Chargers' starting quarterback, Philip Rivers is playing some of his best football.

In his first game since turning 36 years old, Rivers carved up the Washington Redskins' secondary on the way to 319 yards and two touchdowns in Los Angeles' 30-13 victory Sunday.

That blowout win was just the latest big game in Rivers' string of savvy performances for the Chargers (7-6), who have won four straight heading into Saturday's showdown with Kansas City (7-6) for first place in the AFC West.

While the Chargers have an increasingly impressive defense and several offensive playmakers, the quarterback with the three-hour daily commute from San Diego is the engine driving them toward the postseason.

"We've been on a good little run the last few weeks," Chargers offensive coordinator Ken Whisenhunt said Monday. "A lot of it has to do with Philip and the way he's playing."

During the Chargers' winning streak, Rivers has 1,348 yards passing with eight touchdowns and four straight passer ratings over 100. He also hasn't committed a turnover during that four-game stretch, the longest turnover-free streak of his entire career.

"He's unstoppable," said receiver Tyrell Williams, who caught a beautiful 75-yard TD pass from Rivers on Sunday. "I don't even have a word for him. He's just playing great. I know he's going to keep doing what he's doing, and if he keeps playing like that, we're going to be a hard team to beat."

Not bad for a quarterback who threw a career-worst 21 interceptions last season and then wondered if the end of his Chargers career was near when they started 0-4 in their relocation season.

"(There were) a lot of different emotions," Rivers recalled Sunday. "A little bit of, 'You've got to be kidding me! Could it be any worse right now? We moved up the road. We've lost four in a row. Is this my last 12 games here?' You have all of those thoughts."

Instead, the Chargers have won four straight home games while moving above .500 for the first time since September 2015.

The Chargers have given themselves the chance to be the first NFL team since the 1992 San Diego Chargers to make the playoffs after starting 0-4. A win in Kansas City would put the Chargers on an inside track to their first division title since 2009, the last of four straight AFC West champions led by LaDainian Tomlinson, Antonio Gates and Rivers.

"While it's been real exciting, we've been right here before on the cusp, and we lose the last two or three, and you

end up a game out," Rivers said. "While everybody is excited and feeling pretty good about what we've done to get back in it, we've got to make sure nobody relaxes. ... You hear all this positive stuff about the Chargers now, but we have to make sure we continue to move forward like we have been."

In some previous seasons in San Diego, Rivers and the Chargers got off to outstanding starts before fading down the stretch, either due to nagging injuries or slumping performances by a team that has made the playoffs once since 2009.

This season has been something different: Rivers completed just 63.3 percent of his passes and made five turnovers during the 0-4 start, only to improve steadily as the season progressed.

Rivers has moved up to fourth in the NFL with 3,611 yards passing, behind only Ben Roethlisberger, Tom Brady and Matthew Stafford.



Los Angeles Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers scrambles during the first half of an NFL football game against the Washington Redskins, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2017, in Carson, Calif.

(AP Photo/Alex Gallardo)

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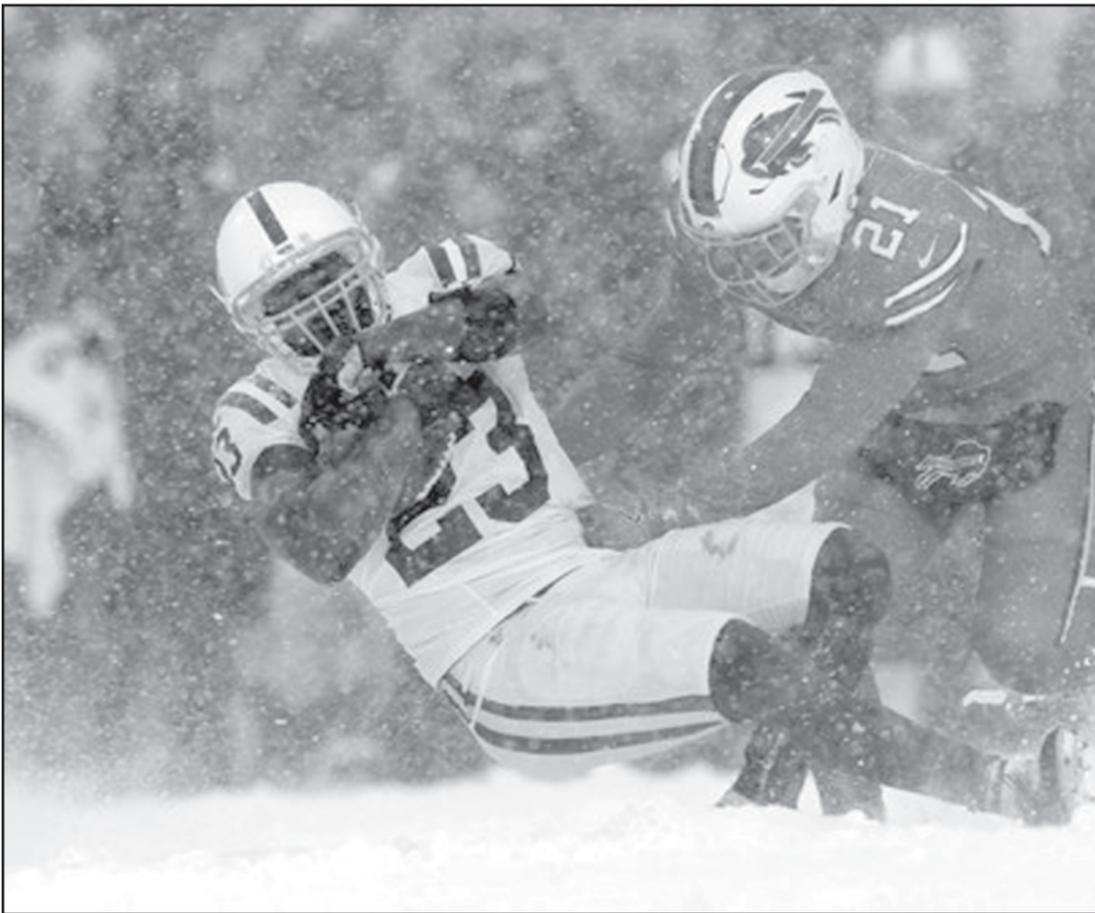
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Buffalo Bills free safety Jordan Poyer, right, tackles Indianapolis Colts running back Frank Gore during the second half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2017, in Orchard Park, N.Y. (AP Photo/Adrian Kraus)

Indianapolis continues to struggle with spate of close calls

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Frank Gore watched as the referees huddled in the snow.

All Indianapolis Colts coach Chuck Pagano wanted was an explanation.

Now, there's no time to fret.

One day after a go-ahead 2-point conversion was negated by an offensive pass interference call, thawed out players and coaches returned to work and tried to turn the page on yet another befuddling loss.

"Really, really hard for me to get over there. I've seen some coaches try that of late and it didn't bode so well. And that's with no weather," Pagano said, again using humor to combat the mounting frustration. "It was a long ways away. I couldn't get anybody's attention."

For the Colts (3-10), it's been tough.

Andrew Luck hasn't played a snap since undergoing surgery on his throwing shoulder.

On Monday, Pagano confirmed the star quarterback continues to rehab in Europe

as team doctors stay in contact with Luck through emails and text messages.

Center Ryan Kelly, Indy's first-round pick in 2016, missed the first four games this season with a broken foot and the past two with a concussion. Safety Malik Hooker, this season's first-round pick, sustained a season-ending knee injury in Week 7.

Only two defenses have allowed more yards than the Colts and only one has allowed more points.

With those numbers, Indy has predictably blown six leads — four in which it had double-digit leads in the second half.

But the latest blow really stung.

After Jacoby Brissett's successful conversion pass to Jack Doyle appeared to give the Colts an 8-7 lead with 1:16 left in regulation, Indy thought it finally succeeded in turning the corner.

Instead a late flag was thrown, the play was negated

and Adam Vinatieri had to make a 43-yard extra point in blizzard conditions just to tie the score. Then they lost 13-7 in overtime. The impact was still being felt 24 hours later.

"I'm still trying to thaw out a little bit," rookie running back and Florida native Marlon Mack said. "I'm still a little cold."

The biggest issue might be recovery time. Pagano said the weather conditions probably took more out of his players than normal and that some had "dead legs," hardly an ideal situation for a team facing a Thursday night home game against Denver (4-9). Even Gore, who had a career-high 36 carries, acknowledged he'd play it safe this week.

"I'll try to give my legs some rest this week," the 34-year-old running back said. "I'll get some massages at the hotel or whatever I need."

Of course the best remedy for all of this would be a win.

Still, it would only provide solace in an already lost season.

Cowboys improving without Elliott, but playoff picture isn't

FRISCO, Texas (AP) — The Cowboys are a win away from breaking even in six games without suspended star running back Ezekiel Elliott.

While Dallas has improved in two straight wins following three consecutive losses without last year's NFL rushing leader as a rookie, the playoff outlook hasn't changed much.

The Cowboys (7-6) will need help even if they finish on a five-game winning streak.

The last game without Elliott, suspended six games over alleged domestic violence, is at Oakland (6-7) on Sunday night.

"We know where we are, we know what we've got to do," quarterback Dak Prescott said after a career-high 332 yards passing in a 30-10 win over the last-place New York Giants that was tied going into the fourth quarter.

"We're excited for it and we're going to get back to work. We're hungry and motivated to keep going."

The most interesting decision the Cowboys will have once Elliott returns is how to use his replacements — Alfred Morris and Rod Smith.

Morris has been the starter — and steady, averaging 74 yards per game and 3.6 per carry. But Smith was the first one to show the explosiveness the Cowboys have missed without Elliott, taking a short pass 81 yards for a touchdown against the Giants.

The older brother of second-year Dallas linebacker Jaylon Smith had his first two-touchdown game with a 15-yard run to finish the scoring. Rod Smith has four TDs, three more than Morris.

"Rod's someone we've tried to put in in the third series of each of the halves," coach Jason Garrett said. "And also he plays a lot in situational football.

You're always trying to look for ways to get him some more opportunities. It was kind of a situational-type opportunity for him that he was able to make a play for us in."

Linebacker Sean Lee returned after missing three straight games with a hamstring injury, making it five overall that he has missed. He had one of two late interceptions to help the Cowboys win the turnover battle for the second straight week after going minus-7 in the three straight losses.

With Oakland coming after the Giants, the Cowboys get a second straight opponent having a disappointing season that started with Super Bowl aspirations. Even though they had the prospect of Elliott's suspension hanging over them until it finally hit eight games in, the Cowboys had the same hopes. Dallas is the only one of the three with a realistic chance to do something about it, and even those hopes are up for debate. "For us, it is playoff time because of the situation that we're in," said receiver Cole Beasley, who had a 54-yard catch to set up Jason Witten's 20-yard TD grab against the Giants. "Guys are going to keep pushing to get victories because that's the type of guys that we have in this room."

If the Cowboys beat the Raiders, they are guaranteed a chance to match Seattle's record and hold the tiebreaker on the Seahawks by beating them at home in Elliott's return. At the moment, though, Seattle is the first team outside the playoff picture in the NFC.

"Margin of error is still small, and there's still a lot of good teams in the NFC that are playing well," Lee said. "We know we have to really continue to win if we want to put ourselves in good position."

Astros' Gene Dias wins Fishel award for MLB public relations

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — Gene Dias of the World Series champion Houston Astros has won the Robert O. Fishel Award for public relations excellence in the major leagues.

The honor was presented Monday at the winter meetings.

Dias has been with the Astros for nine seasons after nearly 20 years with Philadelphia that included time in the

media relations department followed by a stint as director of community relations.

The award was named for the longtime executive with the Indians, St. Louis Browns, the Yankees and the American League. Fishel won the first award in 1981, and the voting is conducted annually among active past winners and Major League Baseball staff.

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REPUBLICAN PARTY OF AMERICAN SAMOA GENERAL MEETING on Monday, December 18th at 5:30pm at the KS Mart Conference Room. Pls contact John Raynar at 258-0693 or Sailitafa Samoa 252-8129. [12/18]

FONOTAGA A LE PATI RIPAPILIKANA A AMERIKA SAMOA i le Aso Gafua, Tesema 18 i le 5:30 i le afiafi o le potu fono a le KS Mart i Iliili. Faamolemole faafeso'ota'i Sailitafa Samoa 258-8129 po o John Raynar 258-0693. [12/18]

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MANA COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICE is now holding support groups for people who suffer from mental illness or any form of disability. Join me every Friday @ 12Noon @ the Alliance office in Nu'uuli. For more info call Liz Mailo @ 272-3257 or 699-0272.

FEELING ALONE? Come to SURVIVORS TAKING ACTION THROUGH SHARING, a support group for victims of violence (physical or sexual). Join me every Thursday at 12:00 noon @ the Alliance office in Nu'uuli. You don't have to do it alone. For more info, call Liz Mailo @ 272-3257 or 699-0272.

PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS NETWORK. A parent to parent support group for families with children with disabilities. Contat Sandy 731-3959 (English), Ivorie 770-6678 (Samoan).

SAMOAN SAINTS ORGANIZATION Roadside Clean Up on the 21st and 29th of this month until the end of the year. All are welcomed. Meet in front of Lupelele Elementary School, 5:30pm, rain or shine. Do it for our beautiful island. Contact Jay @ 254-0651 for more info.

URGENT HOMES NEEDED FOR ADULT DOGS being trapped at Lyons Park!! Majority of adult dogs trapped are healthy & very friendly but will be humanly euthanized if no one claims them after 48 hours of being held. PLEASE HELP! Call Mona at 258-4116 or 699-9445.

ASOA General Meetings. Will be held each month on the 3rd Friday at 10am at ASOA Center in Tafuna on Tasi St. All seniors welcome. Questions, call 699-1131

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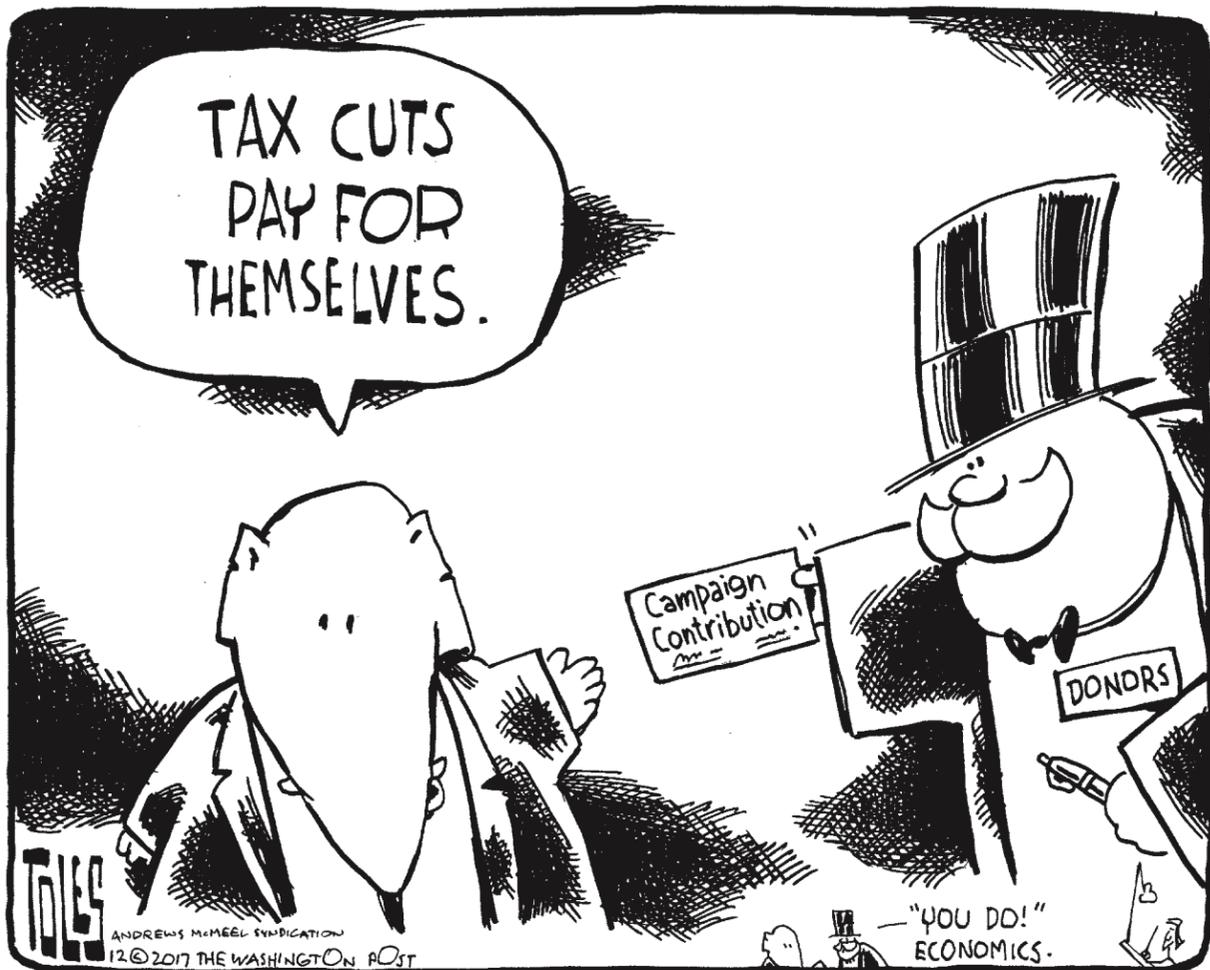
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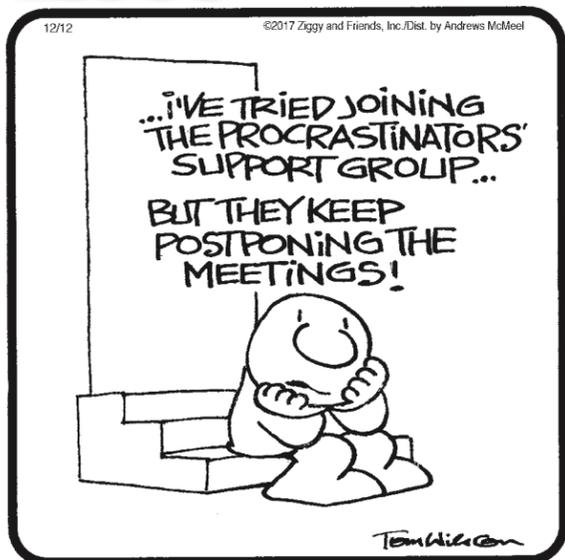


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Sudoku Pacific

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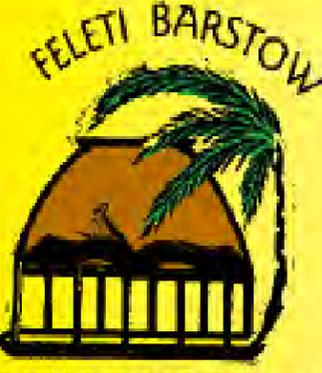
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Monday's Puzzle Answer

12/11

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

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TELL ME A STORY: NOWHERE TO REST

(A NIGERIAN TALE)

*adapted by Amy Friedman and
illustrated by Meredith Johnson*

Once upon a time, a man named Akunna lived in a village named after his family. They had been the richest family in the whole land, and Akunna inherited all the wealth.

Akunna was hard-working, but he was selfish and unkind. He lived alone because no one loved him or wanted to be with someone so greedy.

One day, after he had eaten breakfast, Akunna was sitting on his front porch when he saw a man dressed in rags walking by. He looked so strange that Akunna decided he must be mad. He tried hard to ignore him, but the man stopped right in front of Akunna and looked him directly in the eye.

"Please, give me some food," he begged in the saddest voice Akunna had ever heard.

But Akunna never gave anything away, and rather than feeling generous, he was angry that someone would be so bold. He grabbed a handful of rice from his plate and threw it at the beggar, who picked it up and ate it fast. He sighed with pleasure and licked his fingers.

And then, before Akunna's eyes, the man transformed from a poor beggar into a beautiful angel of heaven.

Akunna fell to his knees to beg for mercy, but the angel only smiled and said, "Do not be afraid. You were kind enough to share your rice, so I will grant you three wishes."

As the angel's words sank in, Akunna grew excited at the prospect of three wishes. With barely a moment's hesitation, he pointed at his big armchair. "That is the only chair I own," Akunna told the angel. "I bought it so I could sit comfortably after a hard day's work. But sometimes people come to visit me, and they take my chair. I wish that if anyone but me sits in that chair, it shall toss the occupant high into the air and let him fall to the ground."

The angel found this request odd, but he said, "So it will be."

Akunna was filled with joy, so then he pointed to a tree outside his door. "I planted that tree many years ago to make my house look nice, but my neighbors steal the leaves and say it cures children of every illness. I do not like people stealing my leaves. Please put a spell on the tree, and if anyone plucks a leaf, he will get stuck to the tree."

"So it will be," the angel said. "And your third request?"

Akunna led the angel to his shed, and he pointed at his shovels, hoes and rakes. "See these tools? I bought these for a great deal of money, but my neighbors are forever borrowing them, taking advantage of my good nature. Please make these tools so heavy that no one but me can lift them, and if they do, the

tools will drop at once on their toes."

"So it will be," the angel sighed, and he disappeared.

A few days later, as Akunna was preparing supper, Satan appeared at his door. Naturally, Akunna didn't recognize him, so when Satan asked to sit in his chair, Akunna smiled and said, "Of course."

Satan sat, and the chair tossed him up in the air. He fell to the ground and hurt his leg. He began to swear and limped away while Akunna laughed.

The next day, as Akunna was preparing to go to work, he heard a commotion in his yard. When he looked outside, he saw his neighbors limping away from his shovels, hoes and rakes. "That will teach you to borrow my tools!" he laughed. He laughed so hard that he could barely catch his breath.

Later that very afternoon, as he was

walking back from work, he saw a woman carrying a child on her back. She walked up to his tree and reached up to pluck a leaf. As she did, the tree pulled her close. She was stuck to the trunk. Akunna burst out laughing.

That evening, as Akunna was eating supper, still laughing at the plight of his visitors, he suddenly collapsed from a heart attack. As he fell to the floor, the woman was released from the tree, and all the other curses Akunna had wished for vanished.

A few days later, Akunna's workers wondered why he had not come to work. They went to his house and found him dead.

When Akunna reached the gates of heaven, the angel who had visited his home and granted his wishes greeted him. Akunna didn't recognize the angel, who now had heaven's glow in his eyes

and was bathed in light.

"Hello," the angel said as he produced a large book and invited Akunna to read what had been written about him.

As Akunna read, he realized that the only good he had ever done in life was offering a little rice to the angel of heaven. Everything else he had done was greedy, selfish or cruel.

"I'm sorry," the angel said, "but I cannot invite you into heaven. You will have to go to hell."

When Akunna reached the gates of hell, Satan was waiting. But when Satan recognized the man who had cruelly launched him out of the chair, he refused to let him enter hell.

Because of his lifetime of bad behavior, Akunna had nowhere to go. And forever after, he was left to wander eternity alone, with nowhere to rest.

Nowhere to Rest

