

# VALENCIA VOICE

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## Suspect to claim ‘attack’ was staged

By Theresa Carli  
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Former Valencia contract worker Marcelo Alves, jailed on charges of sexual assault, pleaded not guilty last week, and a source close to the investigation told the Valencia Voice that Alves’ defense is likely to be that the entire incident was staged as an elaborate fantasy.

Alves was arrested March 17 for allegedly attacking a 20-year-old woman near a vacant lakefront mansion in the Dr. Phillips area and sexually assaulting her March 16.

The source, who requested anonymity, told

the Voice that Alves and the victim planned the alleged attack, because they both shared a “rape fetish.”

Alves’ attorney, Tim Berry, filed a plea of not guilty March 26. Messages to Berry with requests for comment were not returned.

Alves is confident four criminal charges — kidnapping, aggravated battery and two counts of sexual battery — will be dropped in court.

“I know I’ll get through this, because what she’s saying is not true,” Alves said to his wife, Anna, in a phone call from jail April 2. “Once we go to trial, all of the charges are going to be dropped.”

Alves claimed in the phone conversation that information on his computer will clear him. (He did not mention anything about the attack being staged in any phone calls reviewed by the Voice, provided by the Orange County Jail.)

According to the source, the online-chat conversations between the suspect and alleged victim planning a fantasy scenario could be found on both of their computers.

“The only thing that is going to complicate things is the knife,” Alves said during his phone call (spoken in Portuguese, and translated for the Voice). “The knife was for my self-protec-

tion. If they take out the knife thing, then the charges will be dropped.”

To compound Alves’ problems, he was served April 1 with divorce papers by his wife of 16 years.

Alves is a citizen of Brazil, but due to his wife’s United States citizenship, he is a permanent resident of the U.S. and has a green card. If he gets divorced and is convicted of these crimes, the U.S. has the right to deport him back to Brazil.

“In my heart, I know I’m not a bad person,” Alves told his wife in a phone call. “Unfortunately, this sex addiction thing is a sickness.”



US Army Spc. Kimberly Millett / MCT Campus

President Barack Obama shakes hands with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki after a joint press event at Camp Victory in Iraq, Tuesday, April 7.

## Obama visits troops, al-Maliki in Baghdad

By Leila Fadel and Steven Thomma  
McClatchy Newspapers

BAGHDAD — President Barack Obama made an unscheduled and unannounced visit to Iraq on Tuesday to meet commanders and troops and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

“They keep you going,” Obama said of the U.S. troops. “They’ll motivate you.”

He landed in Baghdad after flying secretly from Istanbul, a detour on his way home to Washington after a five-country, eight-day trip to the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Czech Republic and Turkey.

In a quickly organized visit that was kept secret for security reasons until Air Force One landed, Obama met Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, the top U.S. military commander in Iraq, and troops at Camp Victory, which is at the Baghdad International Airport.

He also planned to award 10 Medals of Valor.

Obama’s visit came as Iraq’s security outlook is fragile and some of the progress of recent months is unraveling. The airport was shut down for his arrival.

Obama told Odierno that he wanted to “say thanks to the troops. They are doing extraordinary work. ... They’re just putting their heart and soul into this.”

He later met about 600 service members, responding to one cheer of “we love you” with “I love you back.”

Commanders had hoped to have 1,500 troops there to meet the commander in chief, but were unable to gather them in time, according to Maj. Kathleen Turner, public affairs officer for multinational forces.

Weather prevented Obama from taking a helicopter to visit al-Maliki and President Jalal Talabani as he had hoped, aides said. Al-Maliki traveled to the camp instead.

“Commanders on the ground determined weather prevents helicopter travel,” White

House press secretary Robert Gibbs said.

Security concerns may have prevented a motorcade to see al-Maliki in Baghdad.

Obama’s visit came on the heels of a deadly string of explosions in Iraq’s capital this week, a further signal that the dramatic drop in violence over the past year may be eroding.

At least seven bombs detonated Monday in Baghdad, killing several dozen people and wounding more than 130.

Hours before Obama arrived, a suicide bomber killed at least eight people in the city’s Kadhemiyah district.

Early last month, a series of bombings claimed several dozen Iraqis in a matter of days in Baghdad.

U.S. troops are scheduled to pull out of Iraqi cities in less than two months, and Obama has pledged to withdraw most Americans from the country altogether by the end of summer 2010.

The upswing in violence may threaten those

plans, however.

Political instability in Iraq also may dampen Obama’s hope to shift the U.S. military focus to Afghanistan and Pakistan without paying a price in Iraq.

Arab and Kurdish tensions are rising in northern Iraq, with possibly violent repercussions.

Kurds want control of a 300-mile strip of land and the oil-rich city of Kirkuk for their semiautonomous region.

The late dictator Saddam Hussein drove Kurds from their ancestral lands and killed many others. Now the situation is reversed.

In the latest incident, a member of an Arab Nationalist party that recently took control of Nineveh province, where Kurds had dominated the provincial council, was assassinated on his doorstep.

A crucial U.S. military strategy to pay former Sunni Muslim insurgents to switch sides also

**Continued on Page 2**



# New York gunman was prepared for battle

By Bob Drogin  
Los Angeles Times

BINGHAMTON, N.Y. — The gunman who killed 13 people before shooting himself in Binghamton, N.Y., on Friday wore a bulletproof vest and spoke not a word of warning or explanation before opening fire on a class full of immigrants learning English, authorities said Saturday.

Police identified the killer as Jiverly A. Wong, 41, and said he lived with his mother, father and sister in nearby Union, a suburb of the blue-collar city in central New York state.

Officials said Wong emigrated from Vietnam in the early 1990s.

Officials said they found no note from Wong and could not say what inner demons drove him to the slayings inside the American Civic Association, a nonprofit service center for local immigrants.

But they said Wong had quit an English class at the center in early March, had fought

bitterly with his sister at home and recently lost his job at a local Shop-Vac facility.

Police Chief Joseph Zikuski said family members “were not surprised” that Wong had snapped because he appeared angry and depressed in recent months.

“People were making fun of him because of his inability to speak English,” Zikuski said at a news conference. “He was upset about that.”

He said Wong visited a local shooting range for target practice at least once a week.

Zikuski disclosed that Wong wore body armor during the attack, and carried extra magazines of ammunition for his two licensed pistols, a .45-caliber Beretta and a 9-millimeter Beretta.

He said that Wong might have planned to “take on the police” after killing everyone inside the downtown civic center.

Wong drove his father’s Toyota Camry to the center and parked the car against the back door, presumably to stop anyone from

escaping.

After entering through the front door about 10:30 a.m., he shot the two receptionists, killing one. The other woman, wounded and bleeding, played dead until Wong walked away. She then crawled under a desk and called 911 on her cell phone to alert police.

Wong didn’t say a word inside the classroom before he started shooting with both guns.

He fired more than 32 rounds and hit most of the adult students multiple times. Wong then shot himself as police raced to the scene.

“He was a coward,” Zikuski said. “We speculate that he decided to take his own life when he heard the sirens.”

He praised the unnamed receptionist as “a hero.” She and three others wounded in the classroom are expected to survive, officials said.

Thirty-seven others managed to hide in a boiler room, closets and other classrooms and were uninjured.

“The shooting was over by the time we got there,” Zikuski said. The FBI is trying to compile a psychological profile of Wong, and forensic experts will go through the hard drive of a computer seized from his home.

Wong had no local police record. But state police investigated him in 1999 after a confidential informant reported that Wong was using crack cocaine and planned to rob a bank.

No evidence was found.

Mayor Matthew T. Ryan said the city had fielded calls from families and foreign government officials in “nine countries and two consulates” seeking information about the victims.

Police identified only one of the victims, the 72-year-old substitute teacher in the class, Roberta King.

They said names of others will be released after autopsies are conducted and families are notified.

—LATWP News Service

# Classes continue for students of suspended teacher

By Brian Cronin  
bcronin@valenciavoices.com

Classes resume as scheduled for the students in Victor Thomas’ Student Success classes.

The mood in the classroom was upbeat but the students were worried about how their assignments were going to be graded.

Alva Vazquez, a student from Thomas’ Friday morning class on the Osceola campus, said, “The school did what it had to do for the safety of the students and faculty,”

referring to the suspension of Thomas after it became public that he once served a six-year prison sentence for drug trafficking and transporting counterfeit goods.

It is unclear at this time what Thomas has done wrong recently, if anything. Thomas has been unavailable for comment.

As of now, the story remains that Thomas was arrested and convicted for a felony offense before he was employed by the college.

Although he clearly marked this on his application, Valencia placed him on admin-

istrative leave stating that the background check turned up no hits on Thomas’ conviction.

The students of the Friday class are in agreement that Thomas was a good teacher and they are disappointed that Thomas will not be finishing up the semester.

A student who elected to remain unnamed said, “Thomas expected honesty and integrity from his students and if he was honest enough to put his conviction on his application the college should let him stay.”


Thomas’ classes will be taught by a sub-

stitute for the rest of the semester.

Many students say that they are frustrated because the actions that led to the suspension of their teacher were in no way related to any wrongdoing to his peers, students, nor faculty, or toward the college on the part of Thomas.

At the moment, Valencia has no policy in terms of hiring convicted individuals who have had their civil rights re-instated.

Sources at the college have said that that may soon change perhaps due to the recent media attention placed upon their hiring practices.



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# N.Y. Times threatens to close Boston Globe

By Howard Kurtz  
The Washington Post

In a striking example of corporate hardball, the New York Times Co. has threatened to shut down one of its journalistic jewels, the Boston Globe, unless the New England paper’s unions agree to sweeping concessions.

The Globe quoted union officials Friday night as saying that Times and Globe executives made the demands in a 90-minute meeting with union officials.

The unions were asked to quickly agree to \$20 million in cost-cutting moves to avoid the potential shutdown.

The executives told the union leaders that the Boston paper will lose \$85 million this year without serious cutbacks, the Globe report said.

An employee briefed on the discussions was quoted as saying the Globe lost \$50 million last year.

Such demands have become an increasingly common tactic in the struggling news-

paper business, and it is hard to imagine that the Times would actually abandon the paper it bought for \$1.1 billion in 1993.

Hearst recently used a threat to close the San Francisco Chronicle to win swift union concessions.

The Times newspaper said last week that it is laying off 100 employees and cutting the salaries of most of those who remain by as much as 5 percent this year.

The Times has generally granted the Globe editorial independence, but declining revenue has prompted cutbacks that have forced the Boston paper to limit its Washington and foreign coverage and to focus on regional news.

Representatives of both papers declined to comment for the Globe report.

Ralph Giallanella, secretary-treasurer of the Teamsters Local that represents Globe drivers, was quoted as saying: “The ad revenues have fallen off the cliff. Just based on everything that’s going on around the country, they’re serious.”

—LATWP News Service

# Obama tries to improve Iraq relations

**Continued from Page 1**

in recent months, but the government has been arresting their leaders on allegations of past crimes.

Many of the militia members blame the United States for abandoning them. If the pattern doesn’t reverse, higher levels of violence could return.

While political tensions run high in what is increasingly seen as the forgotten war, a

U.S. ambassador to Iraq has yet to be confirmed. When Gibbs was asked why Obama went to Iraq instead of Afghanistan, as had been rumored, he said the president chose Iraq for three reasons: its proximity to Turkey, the need to consult with Iraqi officials because efforts at progress there “lie in political solutions” and the fact that Obama values U.S. troops in any locale.

“Our men and women who are in harm’s way, either in Iraq or Afghanistan, deserve our upmost respect and appreciation,” Gibbs said.

Obama has been working to wind down U.S. involvement in Iraq, even as he sends more troops to nearby Afghanistan.

—MCT Campus



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# Google reportedly eyeing Twitter

By John Letzing and Benjamin Pimentel  
MarketWatch

SAN FRANCISCO — Conflicting reports emerged Friday about Google Inc.'s growing interest in acquiring or partnering with Twitter Inc., a wildly popular but relatively unformed Internet service that enables users to post brief, spontaneous messages.

The reports immediately raised questions about whether cash-rich Google intends to make another speculative purchase on par with its \$1.65 billion acquisition of another painfully young but popular service, YouTube, nearly three years ago.

Google continues to seek out ways to use YouTube to pull in a substantial amount of revenue, though it's indicated that it isn't satisfied with results so far.

The Silicon Valley Web site TechCrunch reported Friday morning that Google may be negotiating to acquire Twitter.

Twitter co-founder Biz Stone responded on his own Web site, writing only that, "It

should come as no surprise that Twitter engages in discussions with other companies regularly and on a variety of subjects."

A Google spokesman said the company does not "comment on rumor or speculation." However, the AllThingsD Web site pointed to a less dramatic, but perhaps more logical outcome: that Google and Twitter are pondering further business tie-ups.

AllThingsD pointed to a recent Advertising Age story describing a service Google is now offering that allows companies to stream their marketing via Twitter messages, called "tweets," across Google's advertising network. (AllThingsD, like MarketWatch, is owned by News Corp.)

Twitter limits users' tweets to 140 characters or less.

The service has been used for everything from breaking news to broadcasting idle thoughts. As it garners a wider base of users, and some high-profile adherents, Twitter's profile has risen dramatically.

Basketball star Shaquille O'Neal is a dedi-

cated user, for example, while another professional basketball player was recently chastised for making time to send a tweet during half-time of a closely contested game.

But Twitter only recently began testing a method of deriving revenue from the service. A new advertising system unveiled last month has Microsoft Corp. sponsoring a dedicated Twitter site featuring "tweets" posted by corporate executives.

Gartner Inc. analyst Jeff Mann said Twitter's content is now growing by 6 million tweets per day, and noted that "The culture and ambitions of Twitter and Google match."

"Other tie-ins short of an acquisition could make sense," Mann said, though he noted that if Twitter opts to remain independent, developing a thriving business model could be "a long, hard slog."

For Twitter co-founders Stone and Evan Williams, unloading Twitter would represent the second time they've sold a start-up to Google.

The pair sold their previous company, Pyra Labs (provider of the Blogger service), to the Mountain View, Calif.-based Internet giant in 2003. Google shares rose more than 1 percent Friday to \$368.35.

In a research note, analyst Mark May of Needham & Co. wrote that "Google may be uniquely qualified to monetize Twitter," and "would likely pay a significant price for Twitter relative to its current revenue/profits."

However, such "profits" are likely nonexistent at this point.

Twitter has raised at least \$55 million in funding from investors including Union Square Ventures, Benchmark Capital, Spark Capital and others. But the young company has been frank about the state of its business.

On its Web site, Twitter said it has many appealing opportunities for generating revenue, but also said, "While our business model is in a research phase, we spend more money than we make."

—MCT Campus

# Iowa joins in legalizing same-sex marriages

By Keith B. Richburg  
The Washington Post

Iowa became the third state in the country and the first from the rural heartland to legalize same-sex marriage when its Supreme Court Friday unanimously struck down the state's decade-long ban.

Gay advocacy groups hailed the decision as another example of same-sex marriage gaining traction in an increasing number of states, despite a ballot initiative in California last year that banned it there. They also said the emphatic ruling probably will sway other courts, including California's Supreme Court, which must decide by early June whether the November referendum is constitutional.

"Justices look at opinions from other states," said Jennifer Pizer, the national marriage project director for Lambda Legal, which brought the Iowa case. "There's a significant likelihood that (the decision) will influence other states, like California."

Efforts to legalize same-sex marriage are also gaining political support. On Thursday,

the state House in Vermont overwhelmingly approved a bill legalizing such unions, following a similarly lopsided vote earlier in the state Senate. Vermont Gov. Jim Douglas (R) has said he would veto the measure, but gay advocacy groups noted that the House vote was just four short of the number needed to override a veto.

On March 26, the state House in New Hampshire voted narrowly to allow same-sex marriage in that state, sending the bill to the Senate. Before Friday's ruling, only Massachusetts and Connecticut allowed same-sex marriage. New York has said it would recognize such unions performed in other states. California allowed same-sex marriage for about five months last year before the ballot initiative banned it.

The strongly worded decision by all seven justices of Iowa's Supreme Court moves the issue away from more liberal coastal states, where most of the legal and legislative action aimed at overturning bans on same-sex marriage has taken place. While Iowa is home to many conservative Christians and evan-

gelicals, the decision adds to a strong liberal streak that has spawned politically progressive movements.

"Iowa really does have a very impressive visionary history when it comes to civil rights, from desegregation to public accommodation to the rights of women," said Ben Stone, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa.

The Iowa Supreme Court decision upholds a lower court's ruling that a 1998 state law defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman violates the equal protection clause of the Iowa Constitution.

"We are firmly convinced the exclusion of gay and lesbian people from the institution of civil marriage does not substantially further any important governmental objective," the justices wrote. The decision will take effect in 21 days unless a rehearing is requested. Attorneys for Polk County, which challenged the earlier ruling, indicated that the county will not request a review, meaning that same-sex couples will be able to apply for marriage licenses in Iowa in three weeks.

The only other recourse for overturning the decision is a state constitutional amendment, which would take at least two years to be adopted. At least one group opposed to same-sex marriage, the Liberty Counsel, said it plans to advance a referendum to amend Iowa's Constitution to prohibit same-sex unions. "The Iowa Supreme Court has become a proselytizing engine of radical social change," said Mathew Staver, the group's founder. "Untying the knot that holds together traditional marriage will unravel the family, destabilize the culture and harm children."

Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, blasted the decision and vowed to effectively overturn it. "This is an unconstitutional ruling and another example of activist judges molding the Constitution to achieve their personal political ends," he said in a statement. Richburg reported from New York. Staff writers William Branigin in Washington and Kari Lydersen in Chicago contributed to this report.

—LATWP News Service

# Disney slashes 1,900 jobs at domestic parks

By Dawn C. Chmielewski  
Los Angeles Times

BURBANK, Calif. — In a sign that the recession is cutting into the Walt Disney Co.'s park business even deeper than originally thought, Disney on Friday said it eliminated about 1,900 jobs at its domestic theme parks through job cuts and attrition.

The entertainment giant in February announced a reorganization of its parks and resorts operation, which it acknowledged

would set the stage for job cuts. But it didn't say at the time how many positions would be eliminated.

The changes were announced amid falling attendance and expectations that the recession has many more months to run its course.

But Friday's announcement signals that Disney is bracing for an extended downturn in its business as consumers continue to keep their wallets closed.

Disney said it would lay off about 1,200

people and leave about 700 positions unfilled. The bulk of the cuts will happen at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla., where about 1,400 jobs will be eliminated.

About 300 jobs will be cut from the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, Calif., with the remaining reductions coming from corporate headquarters in Burbank.


In January, the company offered buyout packages to 600 executives at its domestic parks division, which in addition to the theme parks includes Disney cruise ships,

and resorts and vacation spots. Disney employs about 80,000 people in its parks and resorts unit.

"These decisions were not made lightly but are essential to maintaining our leadership in family tourism and reflect today's economic realities," the company said in a statement.

"We continue to work through our reorganization and manage our business based on demand."

—LATWP News Service



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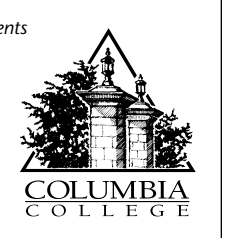
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# Va. Tech shooter fan faces trial

By Allison Klein  
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — As the second anniversary of the Virginia Tech massacre approaches, federal prosecutors are preparing a criminal case against a Nevada man who police say idolized shooter Seung-Hui Cho, owned the same type of guns Cho used and sent threatening e-mails to two Tech students who had run-ins with Cho before the rampage.

In the e-mails, Johnmarlo Balasta Napa, 27, included a picture of Cho holding paper dolls with photos of the faces of the two students and the people he killed, according to court records.

Napa is accused of sending the e-mails from the address seunghuichorevenge@yahoo.com hours before the first anniversary of the April 16, 2007, shooting.

When Napa was arrested last year, police found 13 guns and three bulletproof vests in his house in Henderson, Nev., police said.

Napa, who has been held without bail since April, is charged with two counts of sending e-mail threats. His trial is scheduled for April 28 in U.S. District Court in Roanoke, Va. He could face up to 10 years in prison.

His public defender, Fay Spence, said that Napa did not intend to harm anyone and that the e-mails did not contain a specific threat. "He was initiating a discussion on causes of school violence," she said, adding that Napa formerly worked in Air Force intelligence.

Bart McEntire, who worked on the case as a supervisory special agent in Roanoke for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), said he thinks Napa posed a legitimate danger to public safety.

"The patterns of behavior are very much



Courtesy of Henderson, Nev., Police Department / MCT Campus  
**Napa, 27, stands accused of threatening two Virginia Tech students via email, awaits trial.**

similar to persons who have committed violent school shootings in the past," McEntire said. "It is apparent they research each other's actions, document how they carry out those actions and start developing plans based on those past actions."

Included in the e-mails were excerpts of the manifesto Cho sent to a TV network before his shooting spree, as well as photographs of Cho with guns and a link to a "ballad glorifying Cho's horrific acts," according to court records.

Police said Napa sent the e-mails to two women who had troubling interactions with Cho about a year before Cho killed two students at a dormitory and 30 people and himself in Norris Hall.

The two women had reported Cho to a resident adviser after Cho sent them unwanted e-mails and repeatedly called one of them.

One had known Cho from Westfield High School in Chantilly, which both attended. The other lived near Cho's home in Centreville. Police said they think Napa learned the names of the women when they were quoted in a newspaper article about the shooting, according to court records.

After receiving the 2008 e-mails, the two students immediately contacted authorities, who traced the communications to a public computer at Nevada State College, said Sandy Seda, police chief at the two-year school.

Police narrowed in on Napa in part because he had gotten into a loud argument with some students two days before the e-mails were sent and shouted at them, "Now you see how things like this could happen at Virginia Tech," Seda said.

Police in Virginia and Nevada worked with FBI and ATF agents and a few days later searched Napa's home in Henderson, where he lived with his parents.

"He's a pretty intense individual," said Seda, who participated in the search of Napa's house.

He said people who knew Napa described him as a loner who idolized Cho and cheered for Cho when he watched TV news reports about the Virginia Tech shooting.

Seda said that Napa's intensity, small frame and close-cropped hair caused him to "resemble the Virginia Tech shooter."

Spence, Napa's attorney, argued in court that the case should be dismissed because there was no direct threat in the e-mails, but Judge James Turk disagreed.

Spence said that some of Napa's guns, including a Glock 19 and a Walther PPK, a type of pistol, might have been the same

as those used by Cho but that they are common firearms. Napa obtained the guns legally, authorities said.

Virginia Tech spokesman Larry Hincker said that such threats are emotionally harrowing for the university community.

"Anything that is a bona fide threat or is even the least bit offensive is hard for the healing process," he said. "We're still a healing campus."

A Harrisburg, Pa., man, Steven Voneida, was convicted in February 2008 of transmitting a communication threat and sentenced to 33 months in prison.

In the days after the Virginia Tech rampage, Voneida put on his MySpace page the same "ballad of Cho Seung-hui" that Napa had sent in his e-mails. Voneida's MySpace page included the headline "Virginia Tech Massacre: They got what they deserved" and the line "Someday I will make the Virginia Tech incident look like a trip to an amusement park."

Since the massacre, Virginia Tech officials say, more students have sought counseling services, up from 8,000 in 2005-06 to 11,000 in 2007-08.

"Our antennae are really, really up for students who are in distress," Hincker said.

To mark the anniversary of the shooting this year, the university plans to cancel classes, light a ceremonial candle and have student cadets stand guard throughout the day.

There will be a commemoration on the Drillfield, wreaths will be placed at the site of a memorial and a 5K run will be held.

The Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention, formed after the shooting, will host an open house at its location in the renovated Norris Hall, in the classrooms where most of the students and faculty members were killed.

—LATWP News Service

# Texans fight for concealed carry law

By Anna M. Tinsley  
McClatchy Newspapers

FORT WORTH, Texas — Jason Bowman would feel safer walking to his night classes at Tarrant County College if he had his concealed handgun.

But he leaves it behind because state law doesn't let him carry it on campus.

The 23-year-old Benbrook man is among those hoping that will change soon, as state lawmakers consider the issue.

"I applaud campus police, but there is absolutely no way they can be all places at all times," said Bowman, a paramedic and firefighter.

"Please don't make me prove that I will stand up and fight an armed man without my weapon if (there is) danger. At least give me my gun, too."

The expansion of the concealed-carry law is just one of several firearm proposals ricocheting around the Texas Capitol, drawing fire from gun safety advocates.

Among the bills this year are efforts to let Texans buy rifles and shotguns in non-contiguous states; allow counties to regulate noise, which could affect shooting ranges; and let employees with concealed-handgun permits leave their guns in their locked cars at work.

Even as some proposals seem to be gaining support, one hot gun topic — letting Texans openly carry handguns — seems to be losing steam, as supporters fear they won't find a lawmaker to carry the bill.

"It's not over yet," said Mike Stollenwerk, a co-founder of the OpenCarry.org nationwide effort.

Other measures could let Texas hunters be charged with animal cruelty and have to defend their actions in court, and even allow "physically disabled people" to use lasers to

help them hunt, expanding on the 2007 law that allowed blind hunters to use lasers.

"It's just like they are trying to fix a problem that doesn't exist," said Marsha McCartney, president of the North Texas Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. "That's the usual case with gun laws."

Carrying on campus

In March, Sen. Jeff Wentworth, R-San Antonio, and Rep. Joe Driver, R-Garland, filed bills to let students licensed to carry concealed handguns take their weapons on campus.

Jason Woods, a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, opposes the bill and wrote a resolution — passed by UT's student government — that supports the current handgun ban at Texas colleges.

Two years ago, Woods was a Virginia Tech student who lost his girlfriend in the mass shooting that killed 32 people.

He thinks allowing guns on campus will create more danger, even boost suicide rates.

"A campus is a really safe place right now," said Woods, 24, who is studying molecular biology.

"School shootings in general are low-probability events. Any change that would allow more guns on campus would create more potential for things to go wrong."

Wentworth said he wants to make Texas schools safe.

"I have no desire to wake up one morning and read in the newspaper that 32 Texas college students were gunned down like sitting ducks by some deranged gunman, as happened at Virginia Tech, due to a state law in Texas that makes college kids defenseless," Wentworth said.

Tom McEnroe, a University of Texas at Arlington senior and member of Students for Concealed Carry on Campus, believes

that Wentworth is doing the right thing.

"With a college campus that is a gun-free zone, the only people that will have a firearm are criminals," said McEnroe, 22.

"A person with a (concealed-handgun license) can carry in a movie theater, mall, shopping, but there is an imaginary boundary at a school."

Open carry

More than 58,000 Texans signed a petition asking Gov. Rick Perry and lawmakers to let residents openly carry their handguns,



Joyce Marshall, Fort Worth Star-Telegram / MCT Campus  
**Jason Bowman, 23, a firefighter and paramedic of Benbrook, Texas, is among those supporting a bill to allow concealed handguns to be carried on the many college campuses across the state.**

according to the Web site OpenCarry.org.

Opponents say it's not needed.

"It's boggling that anyone would think this was a good idea," McCartney said.

Open-carry organizers have been optimistic about Texas embracing the change, but the House sponsor they hoped would carry the bill, Rep. Debbie Riddle, R-Tomball, may not file a bill.

Stollenwerk said he hasn't gotten an official rejection from her office, but the word around the Capitol is that she won't be involved.

"We're not giving up," he said. "But if there's no progress this year, we definitely will be back in the future."

Bill watch: guns

Description: Letting concealed-handgun permit holders, who must be at least 21, carry loaded guns on campus, Senate Bill 1164 and House Bill 1893; a proposal to let Texans to carry their guns openly, which Rep. Debbie Riddle, R-Tomball, has considered filing.

Other bills to watch include: House Bill 267, which lets Texans buy rifles and shotguns in noncontiguous states; HB 736, which lets counties regulate noise and could affect shooting ranges.

HB 1301, which would give employers immunity for damages in most cases for any damage as a result of employees storing personal firearms in their vehicles parked at work.

HB 1395, which would let Texas hunters be charged with animal cruelty and made to defend their actions in court.

HB 1805, which would let physically disabled people use lasers to help them hunt; and SB 730, which would let employees store their handguns and ammunition in their locked vehicles at work.

—MCT Campus



# Earthquake devastates Italy

## Rescue effort continues as death toll rises

By Maria de Cristofaro and Henry Chu  
Los Angeles Times

ROME — Past glories and future hopes came crashing down in central Italy amid a powerful earthquake on Monday that crumbled centuries-old churches and claimed the lives of at least 283 people - as reported on April 9, leaving hundreds more injured and thousands homeless.

Rescue workers in the mountainous region of Abruzzo toiled through the night searching for survivors buried in the rubble of buildings that, in some cases, had stood since medieval times.

The city of L'Aquila, near the quake's epicenter, was transformed from a historic town built of warm honey-colored stone into a disaster scene cloaked in choking gray dust.

Residents who had been sleeping peacefully were jolted awake by the 6.3 temblor, which ripped through the area about 3:30 a.m. after weeks of tremors and subterranean rumbles that hinted at the possibility of worse to come. The violent shaking of a few seconds leveled homes and dislodged masonry that smashed to pieces on the pavement or crushed cars like paper.

Survivors wandered around, dazed, for hours, some of them still in their pajamas, others clutching mementos and random belongings grabbed before the rush outside into predawn blackness.

With an unknown number of victims still believed trapped under debris, authorities said up to 50,000 residents were made homeless by the temblor.

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi declared a state of emergency and canceled a trip to Moscow even as critics complained of official failure to strengthen buildings in an area prone to seismic activity.

Repeated tremors had been reported over the past few months in Abruzzo, which led one local scientist to warn of an impending large quake before authorities blamed him for causing public panic with allegedly unfounded predictions.

As dusk fell and temperatures dropped, relief workers pitched tents for displaced people. Officials said 4,000 hotel rooms would be set aside for refugees.

Strong aftershocks rattled nerves, complicated the rescue effort and caused weakened buildings in L'Aquila to shed tiles in sprays



Photo by Marco Di Lauro / Getty Images

Rescue workers with search and rescue dogs are at work on April 7 in Onna; a village near L'Aquila, Italy after an earthquake left the city in ruins.

that forced bystanders to scurry for cover.

"The damage is incalculable. Entire buildings have collapsed, innumerable homes destroyed or rendered unsafe. Many public buildings have been damaged," said Stefania Pezzopane, the president of the province, to an Italian news agency.

Among the fallen structures were churches and other buildings of inestimable historical value, according to Italy's Ministry of Culture.

The apse of L'Aquila's Basilica di Santa Maria di Collemaggio, a pink-and-white architectural gem that witnessed a papal coronation in A.D. 1294, collapsed. The temblor also razed an archway built in the 16th century to honor the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.

The tower of the city's Renaissance-era Church of St. Bernardino came tumbling down, as did part of a castle from the same period, which now houses a national museum.

Old churches and castles dot the scenic Abruzzo countryside, making it a popular tourist destination. But authorities appealed to visitors to refrain from visiting so as not to hamper relief efforts.

Outlying villages were hard hit, with one

hamlet, Onna, completely flattened, local media reported.

In some places, volunteers and rescue workers scrabbled at debris with their bare hands, afraid that heavy equipment might cause further damage. They shushed onlookers in order to catch the possible cries or scratchings of survivors beneath the rubble. As darkness fell, rain made the work even more difficult.

Earlier in the day, a man in L'Aquila clad only in his underwear and coated in dust sobbed in his rescuer's arms after being pulled out. But others were not so lucky, their broken bodies covered with sheets out on the streets before the coffins began arriving to take the dead.

Local hospitals, some of them too compromised structurally to receive patients, were stretched to the limit. Only one or two operating rooms were available, forcing ambulances to ferry some of the injured to Rome, local media reported.

Other countries have offered assistance, but the head of Italy's civil defense agency said none was needed immediately.

Condolences poured in from around the world, including from U.S. President Barack Obama, who is in Turkey.

In a telegram issued by an aide, Pope Benedict XVI said he offered "fervent prayers for the victims, especially the children."

The Abruzzo region has long been an earthquake hot spot. A devastating temblor in January 1915 killed 33,000 people.

Last week, the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper published a prediction by Giaochino Giuliani, a scientist at the National Institute of Astrophysics, that a major quake was imminent based on concentrations of radon gas found in the area.

Giuliani, who lives in L'Aquila, raised a public alarm about an impending earthquake in March. But scientists do not agree on the effectiveness of radon gas as an indicator of future seismic activity, and officials accused Giuliani of sowing panic, denouncing him and others as "imbeciles who amuse themselves putting about false warnings," according to Italian press reports.

"Now there are people who have to apologize to me and who will have on their conscience the weight of what has happened," Giuliani was quoted as saying Monday on the Web site of the newspaper *La Repubblica*.

Berlusconi brushed aside questions about whether the government had adequately prepared for an earthquake. "In the last six months, seismic activity has been noted, and people say we have not taken precautions," Berlusconi said. "This is not the time to discuss. Now is the time to act."

Critics also accused officials of dragging their feet on upgrading buildings for seismic safety despite the history of quakes not just in central Italy but other parts of the country.

"We don't construct buildings to withstand quakes, nor do we revamp old buildings to make them safe from collapse," said Enzo Boschi, chairman of Italy's National Institute for Geophysics and Volcanology, to ANSA news service. "We have detailed maps which indicate the areas that are most at risk of earthquakes, and we have also indicated what actions are needed to make buildings safe. But little or nothing has been done."

Many of the stone farmhouses and other crumbling structures in the Abruzzo countryside probably stood little chance of emerging unscathed from a powerful temblor. On Monday, survivors concentrated on looking for missing loved ones and finding shelter for the coming days after being warned by authorities not to return to their homes.



Photo by Marco Di Lauro / Getty Images

A building is left in ruins on April 7 in Onna a village near L'Aquila, Italy. On April 6 a 6.3 magnitude earthquake tore through Italy, killing at least 283.

—LATWP News Service





Pamela Constable, The Washington Post / LATWP News Service

Farah, 27, glues shoes together at a workshop in Kabul. "You have to be strong to do this kind of work," he says. The shop owner, Zabiullah, worries that deepening insecurity will shut down the economy.

# Cobblers struggle to make ends meet

By Pamela Constable  
The Washington Post

KABUL, Afghanistan — For a moment, it sounds like Santa's elves are at work in the little cobbler's shop in a dingy part of the capital. Hammers tap out a rhythm on leather soles, heavy shears snip and snap, and a foot-powered sewing machine whirrs in the corner.

The conditions are far from festive, though. There is a faint stench of glue, which gets stronger in hot weather. A single bulb burns in the ceiling as the owner, Zabiullah, and his crew of four young men bend over their tasks, surrounded by piles of rubber heels, leather straps and wooden molds of ladies' feet.

"My father made beautiful shoes, with Afghan leather, that lasted five years. He was so proud of them. Now, I have to use these cheap materials from Pakistan and the shoes don't last a year," Zabiullah said ruefully. "But at least I am back in my country, using my skills and feeding my family."

Like thousands of other craftsmen and small business owners here, Zabiullah, 42, is just beginning to make ends meet after a 20-year ordeal that included a flight from civil war, a decade in exile, and a post-war homecoming to a flood of cheap foreign imports that nearly drove him into bankruptcy.

Now, as the fight between Taliban insurgents and Afghan and international forces enters its eighth year, he worries that deepening insecurity will shut down the economy, bring investment to a halt and permanently destroy his dream of producing sturdy Afghan shoes once again.

Statistically, Afghanistan is on a slow but steady economic upswing. Since the overthrow of Taliban rule and the establishment of a Western-backed government in 2002, the growth rate has averaged 9 percent a year. Inflation has fallen from 24 percent to 7 percent, the currency is stable and the annual per capita income has risen from \$186 to \$400.

But according to studies by the United Nations, the World Bank and others, much of that growth is deceptive. It includes substantial income from foreign aid, opium poppy cultivation, a construction boom in a few cities and cottage services such as restaurants that cater to international workers and a small, local business elite.

In contrast, there has been very little private investment, especially in industries that were modernized under Soviet-backed rule in the 1980s but then destroyed during years of fighting. Today, the country depends heavily on imports, mostly from Pakistan. In 2006, it imported \$3.6 billion in goods — from wheat to tires — but exported only

\$274 million.

When Zabiullah, who uses one name, started working with his father 30 years ago, they purchased rubber and leather made in local factories and used nails instead of glue. The quality of the material was good and the national brands they supplied, such as Ahu and Sahar shoes, were highly regarded.

Then in 1992, civil war erupted in the capital, and the family's house was destroyed by rockets. They fled in a truck to Pakistan, carrying only their sewing machine and a few tools.

For 10 years, Zabiullah earned a living making shoes there, but once the Taliban regime was overthrown, he felt less welcome in Pakistan and was eager to return home.

"My father always told me, if you know a business, stay with it," Zabiullah said. So in 2002, he rented a shop in Kabul and began making shoes. The new government, influenced by Western donors and international lenders, decided to enact macroeconomic reforms, lower trade barriers and make the economy more competitive.

The policies were a boon to new businesses such as cellphone stores and technology schools. But for traditional craftsmen, they were a disaster. Containers of cheaply made shoes from China poured into Afghanistan, undercutting local prices by two-thirds. Most Kabul cobblers went out of business. Zabi-

ullah's family lived off their savings, hoping things would change — and they did.

"People began to realize that the Chinese shoes were no good," Zabiullah said with a smile of satisfaction. "They were made of plastic, which gave off a bad smell in the summer, and people had to throw them away after a few months. So they started coming back to us."

Now, three years later, Zabiullah and his crew of three have all the orders they can handle. He said he spends about \$140 for each 100 pairs, and sells them for \$200. Sitting behind stone benches in the tiny shop, the men glue and hammer and snip and sew all day, while the rows of newly finished ladies' pumps gradually cover the floor.

Nobody in the room has finished high school, and no one expects to do so except Zabiullah's son Samin, 15, who would like to become a doctor.

The other three are young men from poor families with no chance to learn a profession. They earn \$2 for each dozen pairs of shoes.

"You have to be strong to do this kind of work, and the glue gives you a terrible headache," said Abdul Farah, 27, who spends 11-hour days hammering leather uppers to soles after heating them over a gas burner to soften the glue. "I don't really like it, but I don't have any choice."

—LATWP News Service

# Somali pirates seize U.S. operated ship

By Stephanie McCrummen  
The Washington Post

NAIROBI, Kenya — Somali pirates seized a U.S.-operated container ship Wednesday with 20 American crew on board, the latest in a spate of pirate attacks that have drawn an international flotilla of naval vessels to the waters off Somalia's coast.

A U.S. Navy spokeswoman, Cmdr. Jane Campbell, confirmed the attack on the 17,000-ton Maersk Alabama, which was carrying food aid. She said it was the first seizure in recent memory of a U.S.-operated ship.

Campbell also noted that the pirates, who have been operating a multimillion-dollar shakedown business mostly in the crowded shipping lanes in the Gulf of Aden, seem to be moving south to the less-controlled, open sea off Somalia's vast coast — a shoreline roughly the length of the East Coast of the United States.

The Maersk Alabama was seized 500 miles south of the Gulf of Aden transit routes where most of the 20 or so naval vessels are patrolling, Campbell said. The nearest navy ship was about 300 miles away.

"It's an incredibly vast area, and basically we're seeing pirates in more than a million-square-mile operating area," said Campbell, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, based in Bahrain.

"So while the presence of naval vessels has had an effect, we continue to say that naval presence alone will never be a total solution. It starts ashore."

The Maersk Alabama is owned and operated by Maersk Line Ltd. in the United States, part of the Copenhagen-headquartered A.P. Moller Maersk Group, according to a statement on the company's Web site.

It is the sixth ship to be seized in the past week, said Andrew Mwangura, coordinator for the East African Seafarer's

Assistance Program based in Mombassa, Kenya, where the Maersk Alabama was headed. Mwangura said the attack marks a rise in a piracy problem that cost companies \$150 million in ransom last year.

The attacks had been stemmed in recent months by patrolling navy ships sent from the United States, Russia, China, Turkey and Pakistan, among other nations.

There are now 18 ships being held by Somali pirates, a wily bunch who deploy a high- and low-tech arsenal of satellite phones, rocket-propelled grenades and wooden ladders to take over the massive container ships.

Although there is no word yet on the fate of the Maersk Alabama crew, the pirates usually take sailors onto shore and begin negotiating hefty ransoms that fund lavish lifestyles centered in Somalia's pirate capital of Eyl, along the coast.

Campbell said that despite the deployment of heavily armed ships to combat piracy, at least three shipping companies

have managed to fend off pirates recently using relatively low-tech methods.

One simply zigzagged, outmaneuvering the pirates, who typically attack in 15-foot skiffs. Another used flares and a water hose. The third one: old-fashioned barbed wire.

"These boats are usually armed to the teeth with RPGs and automatic weapons, but the method of boarding is literally tilting a ladder and climbing," she said.

"In this case, when they got to the top of the ladder, the barbed wire was there."

Maritime officials reported that the pirate attack on the Maersk Alabama began late at night and lasted about five hours.

Up to three pirate skiffs were said to be involved. The container ship's crew tried to take evasive action before the pirates eventually were able to board it.

Piracy experts attribute the recent surge in successful hijackings largely to an improvement in the weather in recent weeks.

—LATWP News Service



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Our Voice

Legalized drugs stop drug cartels

What’s more senseless than an innocent person being murdered? Answer: an innocent person who’s killed in the cross-fire of a drug war.

What’s happening in Mexico right now, and has been going on for far too long, is just that—a drug war between feuding cartels.

Some facts about this on going battle are that drug-related killings in Mexico jumped last year to an unprecedented 6,300 despite an army crackdown ordered by President Felipe Calderon, according to a CNN report. Rival hit-men fighting for control of smuggling routes have murdered police and beheaded rivals.

A bright spot? Mexico’s Attorney General Medina Mora told reporters, after meeting U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Attorney General Eric Holder in the city of Cuernavaca, that drug violence killed 1,600 people from January to March.

The figure was still almost double the 850 deaths associated with drug trafficking reported in the first three months of 2008 but seemed to reflect a drop in killings in the violent border city of Ciudad Juarez since the army sent 5,000 troops there last month.

The drug war has blown into a huge challenge for Calderon and is starting to frighten away investors and worry foreign tourists whose dollars are increasingly needed as the economic crisis bites.

U.S. President Barack Obama will visit Mexico later this month, following a trip in March by Clinton, as Washington frets that spiraling drug violence could spill over the border.

The solution for this is as simple as it is effective, decriminalize drugs. On a large scale, there are plenty of reasons to decriminalize all or some drug use, production and trafficking.

For starters, it’s hypocritical to incarcerate someone for smoking a joint, for example, when it is legal

to buy and use other drugs, such as alcohol and tobacco (with weed not being nearly as destructive to your health as the aforementioned legal products).

The war on drugs has also made for a crooked dynamic in U.S. foreign relations; our government supports governments—primarily in Latin America—solely because of their efforts to eradicate drug production, without taking account of their often dismal records on human rights.

Then there’s the fiscal lack of accountability as billions are spent trying to catch drug users and peddlers, and billions more to incarcerate them, yet it has done nothing to curb drug use. Instead, it’s only raised the stakes, enticing organized crime rackets to get into the drug business and making it more prone to brutal violence.

Not to mention that billions could be made off taxing drugs, hence alleviating a portion of the trillions of debt we’re accumulated in the last eight years.

In the case of Mexico and the border region, decriminalizing drugs would at the very least allow law enforcement to shift their priorities. Rather than chasing drug-runners through the desert, they could focus their attention on the people at the top—the ones who order the mass murders and dismemberment of future victims. Because they wouldn’t have to worry about being locked up for simply conducting their business, drug traffickers would have less incentive to bribe and corrupt—let alone murder—local police officers. (After all, a drug known as ‘tequila’ moves legally from Mexico to the U.S., but who’s ever heard of ‘tequila’ wars?)

Decriminalization is far from a perfect solution; chances are it would facilitate the flow of drugs across the border, which could increase drug use over here.

Still, wouldn’t you rather see a few more heads cloudy from smoking dope than showing



Nate Beeler / MCT Campus

Your Voice

Reduce Afghan spending

By Trudy Rubin  
The Philadelphia Inquirer

One of the pitfalls President Obama wants to avoid in Afghanistan is the gross waste of reconstruction aid that went on in Iraq.

Obama’s new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan shies away from the kind of grandiose nation-building tried in Iraq. But he still wants to offer U.S. expertise to build up Afghanistan’s economy and government. This is necessary to undercut the poppy economy and dissuade unemployed youths from joining the Taliban.

Stuart Bowen argues that unless we drastically overhaul the way we deliver aid to Afghanistan, we’ll make the same kind of mistakes as we did in Iraq.

Bowen tells a depressing tale of overly grandiose projects with little oversight in violence-ridden Iraq. They lacked clear goals and often failed to consult with Iraqis. Until the arrival of Gen. David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker, there was little coordination between U.S. civilian and military officials.

“It would be crazy to continue funding contingencies the way we have,” Bowen said at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington last week.

Congress has shifted responsibility for post-conflict rebuilding back to the State Department.. Yet it’s still unclear how civilian and military officials will coordi-

Obama’s new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan shies away from the kind of grandiose nation-building tried in Iraq

nate aid projects.

In Afghanistan, there also must be a rethinking of strategy for designing aid projects, Bowen warns. Projects should be coordinated with local people, not funneled through layers of contractors or Western bureaucrats.

In Iraq, he says, U.S. officials tried to transform the society with massive projects that Iraqis often didn’t want and couldn’t absorb. Example: a \$277 million water-treatment plant in Nasiriya that local people lacked the skills to staff. Iraqis have rejected hundreds of projects that U.S. officials tried to hand over to them, such as a half-finished prison in north Baghdad on which \$40 million was wasted. “The process isn’t working, because they don’t want what we’ve built,” Bowen said.

The need to revamp that broken process is vital to U.S. security. Development aid has become a crucial tool in fighting insurgencies in failed states, which can’t be defeated by military means alone.

Afghanistan looms as the big test. President Obama has pledged that “the days of unaccountable spending, no-bid contracts, and wasteful reconstruction must end.” And Congress has appointed retired Marine Gen. Arnold Fields as Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. “I’m working to ensure no replication (of the Iraq story) in Afghanistan,” Fields said. Wish him luck.

—MCT Campus

Your Voice

Six-party talks ring hollow

By Kenny Wagner  
kwagner@valenciavoice.com

Although North Korea is years away from adequately assembling a nuclear missile, the fact that they are actively trying is disturbing. While most western countries are gearing up campaigns to rid the world of nuclear weapons, some Asian countries have active nuclear research taskforces and China already has the bomb.

The reasoning behind this is clear, some would say even logical. Being a country with nuclear capabilities means you are one of the most powerful countries in the world. If anything has made the world take North Korea seriously it’s Pyongyang’s interest in starting a nuclear program.

This need to be taken seriously on the world stage has been echoed by Iran and the facilitators in this mess, Russia and China and the United States is too worried about other interests to actually look at this issue as a serious problem

While the United States vehemently rejects how China funds and allows Kim Long-Il to govern his people with reckless abandon, the government has done little to stop it. When six- party talks began in 2003 to negotiate the disassembly of North Korea’s

Six-party talks are not enough, Washington needs to show that they are serious about disarming the world.

fledgling nuclear program, signs were pointing in a positive direction.

By 2007 North Korea had dropped out and was no longer interested in having the United States hold sway over their global ambitions.

We did nothing, we could have strong-armed the Chinese government into getting North Korea back into the fray by threatening trade relations, but we didn’t.

Six-party talks are not enough, Washington needs to show that they are serious about disarming the world.

We need to beef up the PR campaign, demonize corrupt Asian governments while pointing out how uninspiring their status among the world has been. Furthermore, they need to hold these facilitating countries accountable. We cannot be looking to allow the Chinese government to promote their dangerous relationship with North Korea.

While we have been crippled over the past decade by aggressive military campaigns, terrible economic times that have affected globe, and condescending leaders, the United States is still a super power, and we should be dead focused on keeping that status.

VALENCIA VOICE

Opinion:

CORRECTIONS

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# How is Obama doing on the world stage?

## Global affairs hit close to home in U.S.

By Frida Ghitis  
McClatchy Newspapers

In the days after 9/11, Americans rediscovered the world. The need to understand an act that seemed incomprehensible became visceral even among people who had never given much thought to what goes on beyond the U.S. borders.

That's a reality that finds much resistance in the United States. In his news conference recently, Obama faced almost no questions on international affairs. The drought of interest was so complete that, with no questions about Iran, the president had to sneak his careful words on the subject at the end of the event.

In the first of only two questions even mentioning another country, during a presidential news conference, a Univision reporter asked whether Washington would send troops to the U.S./Mexico border as a drug war escalates. And, as Mexican officials complain that Mexicans are killed with weapons bought in the United States with money gained selling drugs to Americans, the problem in Mexico will influence U.S. discussions on gun control and illegal drugs.

Interest in Iran's nuclear program may take a backseat to pressing economic problems, but what happens in Iran can affect all of us. If Iran successfully produces nuclear weapons, the impact will be felt here. Iran's Arab neighbors are already looking at jump-starting their own nuclear programs, kicking off a dangerous arms race.

In the case of China, what happens in China impacts this country enormously. Without strong growth there, the Chinese will not have the cash to finance Washington's budget deficit, just when that deficit is morphing into a monster. The traditional, realist view of U.S. foreign policy dictates that America should pay only limited attention to foreign problems unless they have a direct impact on U.S. interests. In today's world, however, nothing happens in isolation.

It is, after all, a small world. We don't need a 9/11 catastrophe or a G-20 summit to remind us how what happens overseas can come crashing into our lives.

—MCT Campus



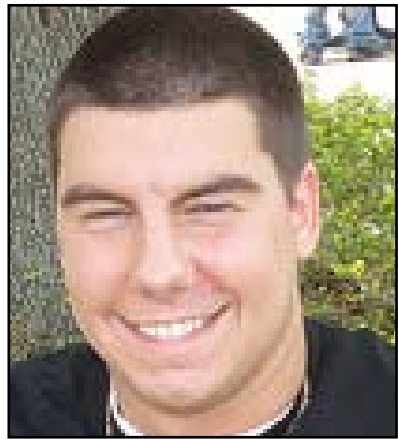
"I don't think he has had enough time to accomplish everything that he needs to accomplish."

— Carol Scott



"I think he's trying to do too much. He has a lot to accomplish in a short amount of time."

—Danny Milo



"Obama hasn't done much. I feel like he's just there. Personally, I don't think he'll get much done at the G-20."

— Zach Garrand



"I don't know much about his policy, I don't know that I care."

— Roxanne Johnson



"He's inherited a mess. Right now, it's been too short of time to get anything accomplished."

— Claudie Kinlow



"I'm not exactly sure what his foreign policy is. I feel like I'm ill-informed."

—Nick Santiago



"The president is trying to make peace. In order to do so he must keep his friends close and his enemies closer."

— Edwin Brown



"I personally disagree with the president's foreign policy. America is the leader of the free world; other countries look to us as an example. I think Obama should go with the flow and not overflow his plate."

— Ruth Keller

Kenny Wagner, Adam Fishman/ Valencia Voice

## Letters to the Editor

# April Fool's poll 'irresponsible,' 'obnoxious'

I think it's irresponsible and of poor taste to print some of the April Fools' pranks you did (April 1 issue).

How humorous is it really to read about: "In high school we flipped a trash can on a kid. He smelled like trash all day," or "Someone pulled the chair out from under this guy when he was about to sit down and he cracked his skull."

Now he has issues and he can't function properly," or "I've heard of someone having their pregnant friend pee on a pregnancy test and telling their boyfriend they're pregnant," or "We put bleach on a teacher's seat and she came and sat in it?"

Is your goal to promote obnoxious and

sophomoric behavior and ideas?

The paper dedicates how much space to telling about this?

One page of silly and dangerous antics at an institution of higher learning. Go figure!

**Wendy Wish-Bogue**  
Professor, English for Academic Purposes

### Response to Prof. Wish- Bogue

Our goal for having the April Fool's day poll was simply for entertainment purposes, as it was posted in our Entertainment section, and to get the voices of Valencia's students heard.

We in no way encourage such acts, neither did we tell anyone to go out and perform the

acts.

This was simply a light-hearted poll for an equally light-hearted day and was never meant to be offensive in any way, shape, or form.

The poll was simply added to the publication as a light contrast to the dark, hard news that we have been reporting as of lately.

We are sorry that you did not appreciate the quality of the poll and hope that the way in which you feel about this one poll will not deter you from reading future publications of the Valencia Voice.

We thank you for reading and for your comment.

**Shaneece Dixon, Emiliana White**  
Editors in Chief

### Reader offers encouragement

I just wanted to write and let you know that I have been consistently reading the paper this semester and I am very impressed with the increased quality since last semester.

The countless pieces on Valencia issues being produced by Valencia writers have really been a pleasure to read.

The quality has more than doubled since last semester and I just wanted to pass on a note of encouragement and congratulations from a former student and a humble reader.

Tell everyone to keep up the good work! It is much appreciated by the rest of us.

**Rachel Masri**



# Indoor climbing reaches new heights

By Alfa Garcia  
The Record (Hackensack N.J.)

HACKENSACK, N.J. — “You’re at the crux now!” I heard a voice in the distance. Pressed against the rock wall, I gripped a small hold below an overhang. One big toe balanced my weight, ready to slip with any misstep. Forty feet below was the blue crash pad and James Harpster, my instructor, passing on words of encouragement. The “crux,” I recalled, is what they call the most difficult point in a climb.

All I had to do was maneuver past the overhang to get to the top, that is, if I could get the strength back in my arms. Though I was supposed to use my legs to climb this far, like most beginners I had exhausted my arms instead. I hesitated, doubt standing between myself and the precipice.

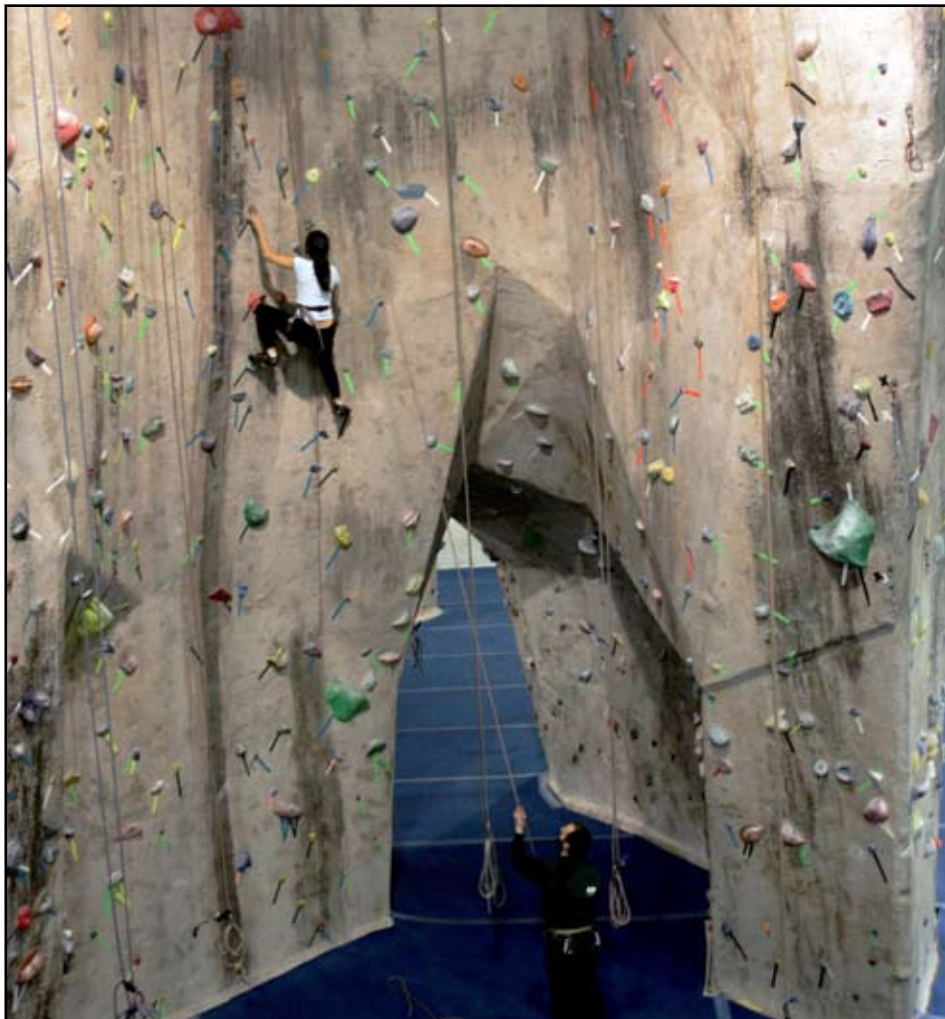
“One, two, three,” I prompted myself. Without thinking I reached, anchoring my foot farther up for leverage, seizing the hold with fingertips. I held my breath, waiting to lose control. Instead, I had somehow managed to hang on.

“[Rock climbing] can be really mental,” Harpster explained after my grueling final climb, which left me exhilarated at having scaled one of the more difficult rock walls. “There’s a lot of internal monologue and talking to yourself.”

That doesn’t stop thousands of North Jerseyans every year from trying the walls at the Gravity Vault, Bergen County’s only indoor rock climbing gym and, according to co-founder Tim Walsh, one of the largest in the Northeast. Since July 2005, the mission of the gym has been simple: introduce rock climbing as an activity that anyone, including out-of-shape reporters, can do.

“We’re trying to bring climbing into the everyday life of people,” said Lucas Kovalcik, the other founder of the gym.

In contrast to the intimidating sport



Alfa Garcia climbs an indoor rock-climbing wall at the Gravity Vault in Upper Saddle River, N.J.

of rock climbing, the Gravity Vault feels welcoming and laid-back. The facility’s casual atmosphere is perfect for social events, parties and first-timers, who make up about 50 percent of visitors.

According to Walsh and Kovalcik, even chil-

dren can feel at ease thanks to the safety equipment (climbers are harnessed securely and connected by rope to a belayer who controls the rope) and the range of classes offered.

“If you want to walk in the door and [you have] no experience and you want to do a

couple of climbs, within 10 minutes you’ll be climbing,” said Harpster, who is manager at the gym.

For many, the Gravity Vault is an alternative to regular gyms. Climbing provides full-body aerobic and anaerobic exercise that beats repetitive workouts, Harpster said: “It’s a lot of core exercise, and you’re using and strengthening muscles without really having to think about what you’re doing.” He also said that membership rates are more affordable than at some standard gyms.

But mental exercise is what really separates rock climbing from other workouts. As I saw firsthand, difficult rock walls begin to resemble tricky puzzles as the terrain changes and holds become scarce. The hardest climb? A 26-foot arch that requires the climber to hang nearly upside down while managing his or her own anchors. This one is only for experts.

“[Rock climbing] takes a sharp mind,” Kovalcik said. “How do I move my body? How do I position myself to unlock this? There is a way to make it happen, to make it work.”

With 20 years of combined climbing experience, Kovalcik and Walsh are eager to lessen the stigma of rock climbing as risky. “It’s a sport that we both love to do and enjoy being a part of,” Kovalcik said. “A lot of people think that rock climbing is dangerous; a big part of what we do is try to demystify the sport.”

And while he adds that rock climbing has “gotten safer in the last 20 years” thanks to the improvement of equipment, the part that attracts and frightens most people about challenging a 40-foot wall is knowing that their fate lies in their own hands.

“It’s a great feeling to look down at everything else [and know that] you’re able to keep your cool and work things out yourself,” Walsh said. “You have people that are there to help you and coach you, but they can’t do it for you.”

—MCT Campus

## ‘Compliment Guys’ raise spirits during tough times

By Jodi S. Cohen  
Chicago Tribune

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Along a central walkway on Purdue University’s campus, two students are on a crusade to make people happy.

To a passing guy dressed in Purdue sweats they say, “Love your school spirit.” To the woman carrying the trendy black bag: “Very nice purse.” “It’s very large.”

And for the student who ran past them in knee-high leather boots: “I like your hustle.” “I like your boots, too.”

Tired of people being so down in the dumps amid the worst economy in decades, sophomores Cameron Brown and Brett Westcott, better known as “The Compliment Guys”, have taken it upon themselves to cheer up the campus. From 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. every Wednesday, they stand outside the chemistry building in the shadow of the university’s Bell Tower with their “Free Compliments” sign.

They’re there in the rain. In the snow. And last week when the wind chill made it feel like 10 degrees.

They come across as fashion commentators, stand-up comedians and guys you’d invite to your keg party. “People ask us if we are part of a frat or if it’s a psychology experiment,” Brown said. “We are here for no other reason than we like to give compliments.”

At a time when students are struggling to afford tuition, graduating seniors can’t get jobs, and organic chemistry exams are as unpleasant as ever, it seems almost unbelievable that Brown and Westcott could be genuinely upbeat. They’ve been asked, skeptically, over and over, why they’re doing it.

One professor thinks they’re there to get dates. They insist that they’re not, and that they both have girlfriends. “She has the most

beautiful curly hair I have ever seen,” Brown said about his girlfriend. “Seriously. I love her curly hair.”

Westcott, who was voted “Most Outgoing” in his high school senior class, had the idea in September and gave out compliments on his own for a week.

He then asked Brown to join him. Brown has no history of congeniality awards but says he’s influenced by his gregarious mother.

“I honestly can’t tell you what drove me to give people free compliments,” said Westcott, 19, a civil engineering student from southwest suburban Plainfield, Ill.

“Just overall, making people’s day is really satisfying... Not enough people do nice things anymore.”

The duo fire off the compliments so quickly that an attempt to count a minute’s worth was unsuccessful. There were at least 40. They liked headphones. Bikes. Gloves, earmuffs and scarves. A floral backpack. And even a lanyard.

If a tour group walks by, they try to comment on everyone in the crowd.

On Wednesday, they told a professor to enjoy his coffee, thanked the groundskeepers for their hard work and prodded someone eating an apple to “stay nutritious.”

They personalize the comments as much as possible.

Instead of saying someone has a nice coat, for example, they’ll point out the color or the way it matches with pants.

“I like your red coat,” Westcott said to a woman listening to her iPod. She turned and laughed, which only gave the guys more fodder. “Very nice smile,” said Brown, who’s from Toledo, Ohio. Three women leaving biology lab purposely took a path past the guys.

“I like your curly hair. Great smile. I like your glasses,” the guys said, pointing to each of



Tom Van Dyke, Chicago Tribune / MCT Campus

Purdue university undergrads Brad Westcott, left, and Cam Brown give out free compliments on campus.

the women. “These guys are great. Everybody knows them,” said freshman Maureen Campion, who has the curly hair. “People talk about them all the time. It’s like, ‘Have you met the compliment guys?’”

“It’s the highlight of my Wednesday,” said Emma Marr, the student with the nice smile. “Last week, they told me I looked very businesslike,” said Meghan Costello, who this week got props for her glasses.

Freshman Josiah Maas got two compliments, on his work boots and a straggly goatee that Brown commented was “coming in nicely.” “I’m working on it,” Maas shouted back.

“I wanted to come by here today because I wasn’t wearing anything I thought was so cool. I was wondering what they would come up with,” Maas said. Provost Randy Woodson, on his way from one meeting to another, got a thumbs-up on his blue and gold tie.

“It’s always ‘your jacket looks good,’ ‘your

tie looks good,’ ‘nice smile,’” Woodson said.

“I don’t think they know who I am when they compliment me.” (They didn’t.)

In return for their remarks, the guys get waves, thumbs-ups, high-fives, thank-yous and nice comments about their hoodies.

They’ve also gotten the finger and nasty looks.

“Are you twins?” an older woman asked Wednesday. They laughed and shouted back that they weren’t.

“Well, you’re sure nice looking,” she said.

Toward the end of the two hours, a copy center employee brought the students hot chocolate with marshmallows.

“They are doing a great job of lifting people’s spirits,” said Kendra Crace.

The guys, of course, responded with a compliment.

“This is the best hot cocoa I have ever had.”

—MCT Campus



# Miami Ink designs for toothless

By Kathryn Wexler  
McClatchy Newspapers

MIAMI — Meet the latest targeted consumers of tattoo art: the pacifier set. Four artists from the Love Hate Tattoo studio who came to fame through TLC's "Miami Ink" reality series have launched Ruthless & Toothless, a fashion line for tots.

The Love Hate guys have put fire-breathing dragons and peevisish samurais on pint-size garments. But that's where they draw the line: Busty babes have no place on a onesie, they've decided. "We're kind of making it baby-ish," said tattoo master and Ruthless & Toothless co-owner Chris Garver.

It's not the most opportune time to start a clothing company, what with retail sales at a, well, crawl. But if you've ever seen "Miami Ink," you know this crew isn't exactly cautious. "We're launching in the middle of the biggest financial crisis," said Creative Director Casey Cordes, "and we feel good about it."

Tattoo art was once the purview of sailors, criminals and rebels. Today it's the stuff of suburban American teenagers' wardrobes, thanks to business mastermind Christian Audigier, who brought the classic designs of San Francisco tattoo artist Ed Hardy — heavy black outlines, Japanese themes, morbid details, bright colors and lack of shading — to the un-tattooed masses.

But some of the creators of Ruthless & Toothless whom you'll recognize from the show — Garver, Darren Brass, Yoji Harada and James Hamilton — say their designs are fresh enough and their name recognition strong enough that the company will flourish. The foursome teamed up with several friends for the endeavor, pooling \$100,000 and renting offices in downtown Miami several months ago.

So far, the clothes are available only online, at ruthless-toothless.com. Prices range from a \$26 onesie to a \$41 hoodie. Among the designs are doe-eyed cartoonish figures, Japanese characters, peacocks, tigers and a snaggletoothed skull.

The artists hatched the idea for the line several years ago when Harada's wife was pregnant (part of her labor aired on the show). But they didn't act on it. Then more of the Love Hate guys had babies. And that's when it hit them: The onesies out there stink. "There's nothing I want to put on my baby," said Brass, the father of a 1-year-old boy, Casius. "I wanted something fresh, something



Photos by Marice Cohn Band, Miami Herald / MCT Campus  
**Artists from the Love Hate Tattoo studio, best known from their star turn on "Miami Ink," have designed onesies for babies. The artists are, from the front clockwise are Yoji Harada (left), Darren Brass, Miguel Paredes aka Mike Walls, James Hamilton (below), and Chris Garver, behind Yogi on right.**



new, for a new generation."

"We have so many friends that are having kids and can't find anything that's not mainstream," Garver said. The company is in talks with retailers stateside, but the plan is to focus on distribution abroad, especially in countries like England, Australia and Germany, where "Miami Ink" episodes live on in reruns and the show has diehard fans. Ruthless CEO Joey Hernandez said he got a taste of the cultish enthusiasm for the Love Hate artists several weeks ago at the Bread & But-

ter Barcelona apparel trade show.

"I thought I was with the Beatles," he said. Ruthless & Toothless garments are aimed at parents enamored of everything that Love Hate Tattoo studio represents, Brass said.

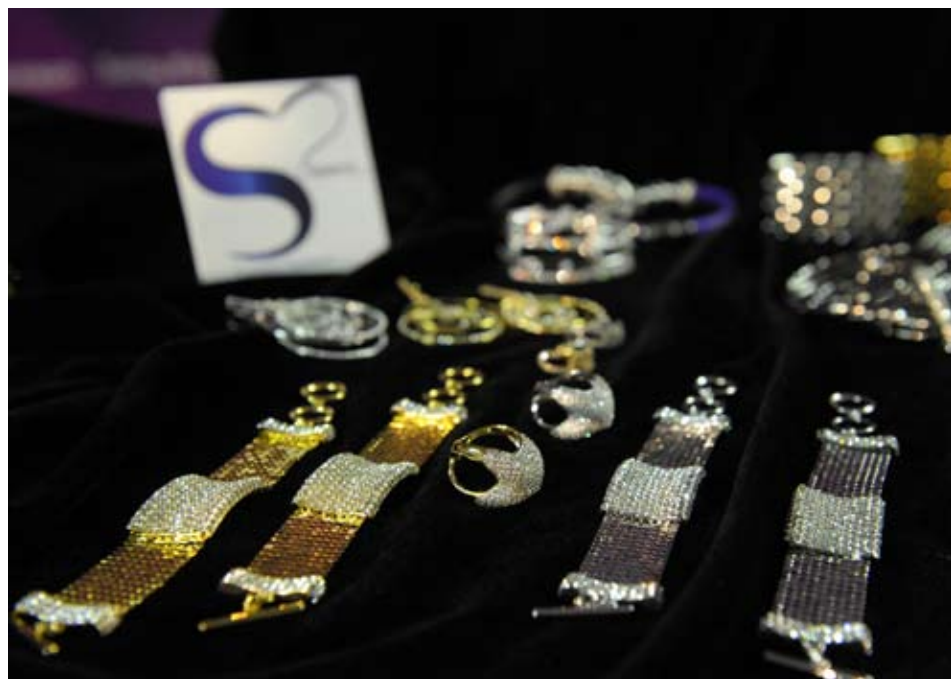
"It's America," he said. "It's Miami. The sun and the glamour. And we give it a little bit of grit." The garments are made in Los Angeles something the founders hope is another selling point. "We don't want to sound like the most patriotic people," Hernandez said, "but we are."

Go to Love Hate Tattoo studio, now at 1360 Washington Ave. in Miami Beach, and you probably won't get poked by any of the guys you saw on TLC. They're too busy sketching Ruthless & Toothless designs.

"It's been a lot of blood, sweat and tears," Cordes said. Even though tattoo art has gone mainstream, insist the "Miami Ink" stars, tattoo culture is as hot as ever. And that, they hope, will help drive sales. Said Brass, "Everybody wants to take a walk on the wild side."

—MCT Campus

# Tennis champion launches accessory line



Corinne Dubreuil, Abaca Press/ MCT Campus  
**Serena Williams launched her Signature Statement collection of handbags and casual jewelry.**

By Madeleine Marr  
McClatchy Newspapers

MIAMI — Serena Williams doesn't have to worry about life after tennis. The 27-year-old Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., resident, who was just voted the WTA Tour player of the year, has a lot going on.

On Wednesday, the court superstar/fashion designer launched her Signature Statement accessories collection of handbags and casual jewelry at Crandon Park in Key Biscayne, Fla. Her ultra-ripped body wrapped in a tight purple satin dress, Serena beamed about her babies — e.g., smart totes with gobs of hardware, silver-plated bangles and chunky rings similar to the good-luck charm she always wears while playing. In order to make the line accessible to us regular folk, Serena had to put aside her love of diamonds (anyone recall that \$2.5 million necklace she wore to a recent news conference in Australia?).

"It's important for me to have the best price point so everyone can wear it," said Williams, who also has a flashy apparel line called An-

eres, her name spelled backward. "No matter who they are or where they are." Say, shopping on Worth Avenue, partying in South Beach, or working a racquet at the Sony Ericsson.

"I'm going to be wearing it while playing and sweating," said the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale grad. "It's really comfortable and the quality is second to none." Since turning pro in 1995, the Michigan native has shown women don't have to wear the standard polo and skort (case in point: a certain pleather-esque cat suit).

"When I walk out there, everyone is always wondering what I'm wearing," Williams said. "Just because you're an athlete doesn't mean you have to act like a male athlete. I think 20 years ago, women had to look rougher and act rougher. But you can still be a lady on and off the court." OK, Serena: What's harder — designing a fashion label or taking on a match with your biggest competitor, older sister Venus?

"Tennis is way easier!" she said, laughing. "If I fail it's because of me — my forehand or my backhand — but with this, I put so much heart into it and so much desire, it's all about me."

—MCT Campus





Jim Gensheimer, San Jose Mercury News / MCT Campus

Teresa Nesmith tries an electronic cigarette sold at a kiosk in a mall in San Jose, California, on March 7.

# E-cigarette sparks attention

By Ken McLaughlin  
San Jose Mercury News

The young man in the tall swivel chair at the mall seems lost in nicotine nirvana as he takes a deep drag on a cigarette and blows smoke rings to the surprise of passing shoppers. Sarah Kruberg, a 21-year-old college student from Portola Valley, Calif., does a double take but keeps walking.

"I knew it couldn't be someone smoking a cigarette," she said with a laugh. "But I didn't know what it was." What Kruberg saw at Westfield Valley Fair mall in Santa Clara, Calif., was a kiosk salesman puffing away on an electronic cigarette, a new product that Jose Canseco, the steroid-tainted baseball slugger turned e-cigarette pitchman, predicts will "revolutionize the industry of smoking."

Health officials worldwide, however, are casting a wary eye. Last summer a Florida company began aggressively marketing e-cigarettes which emit a nicotine vapor with the help of a computer chip but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration now seems poised to pull e-cigs from the market because the agency considers them "new drugs." That means they need approval from the FDA, which requires companies to back up their

claims with scientific data. "It is illegal to sell or market them, and the FDA is looking into this," said Rita Chappelle, an agency spokeswoman.

Asked if that meant the FDA would crack down on the dozens of mall kiosks nationwide where the product is being sold like perfume and cellphone covers, Chappelle said: "This is an open case. Beyond that I cannot comment." Informed of the FDA's position, David Burke, general manager at Westfield Valley Fair, said Monday that the shopping center is looking into the legality of the product. "All our retailers are required to comply with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations," he said.

Invented in China several years ago, the e-cig not only "smokes" like a cigarette. It also looks like a cigarette, feels like a cigarette, glows like a cigarette and contains nicotine like a cigarette. But it's not a cigarette. It's a slender stainless-steel tube.

When someone puffs on an e-cigarette, a computer-aided sensor activates a heating element that vaporizes a solution usually containing nicotine in the mouthpiece. The resulting mist which comes in flavors such as chocolate and cherry can be inhaled. A light-emitting diode on the tip of

the e-cigarette simulates the glow of burning tobacco. The device is powered by a rechargeable lithium battery. Its boosters say it's the perfect way to quit smoking because the nicotine mist contains no tar or any of the host of cancer-causing agents of tobacco smoke yet has the touch and feel of smoking. That, they say, makes the e-cigarette superior to other nicotine-delivery systems such as patches, chewing gum, aerosol sprays and inhalers. The levels of nicotine can be adjusted, from "high" to no nicotine at all. That, e-cig supporters say, allows smokers to wean themselves from nicotine, which most doctors say is highly addictive but not, as far as they know, a carcinogen.

The product's aficionados say that because it contains no tobacco, it can be used in bars, nightclubs, restaurants and other public places where states and localities have banned tobacco use. But anti-smoking groups say that's exactly the problem.

They fear that it will reintroduce a "smoking culture" into places where people no longer are used to seeing wisps of smoke and cigarettes hanging from people's mouths. "I understand why people use the nicotine replacement aids," said Serena Chen, regional tobacco policy director of the American

Lung Association in California.

"But I don't understand why people want to pretend that they're smoking," Chen believes that many ex-smokers will conclude that the e-cigarette is harmless and be lured back into the smoking trap. "If you had a serial killer who liked to stab people, would you give him a rubber knife?" asked Chen. "This just boggles the mind."

Executives at Smoking Everywhere, the Sunrise, Fla., firm that is marketing the product on the Internet and in mall kiosks, say criticism of the e-cigarette is irrational. "The mist is mostly water. It has to be better for you than smoking," said Eitan Peer, vice president of the company. "It's been approved by doctors. We've been on Fox News. We've been on the 'Howard Stern Show.' Our spokesmen are Jose Canseco and Danny Bonaduce."

Company officials say the other main ingredient in the e-cig is propylene glycol, which is used in everything from Hollywood smoke machines to food colorings to hydraulic fluids. Peer said the suggested retail price of the Chinese-made e-cig is \$149, but because the kiosk operators are independent vendors, the price varies.

—MCT Campus

## Digital-teaching builds classroom experience

By Hannah Sampson  
McClatchy Newspapers

In some school classrooms, paper is becoming more of a relic than an educational staple. The result: homework done online. Paperless term papers. Math problems completed on an interactive whiteboard. An entire course of physics problems contained on a single compact disc. And, schools hope, savings in an ever-tightening budget crunch. "It's budget, it's green, it's best educational practices," said Mark Strauss, principal of Virginia Shuman Young Elementary in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Educators are trying to trim the reams of paper they use to save money, spare trees and keep kids engaged in ways that old-fashioned writing just doesn't allow. While schools would be hard-pressed to eliminate paper altogether, technologies like interactive whiteboards and document projectors have proven to be popular substitutes.

Strauss keeps track of how many copies teachers are making and sends a note (e-mail, of course) to those who have fewer than 500 per month with "a thank you for thinking green and helping the budget," he said. Those who exceed 2,000 copies in a month get a note urging them to reconsider their paper-dependent ways.

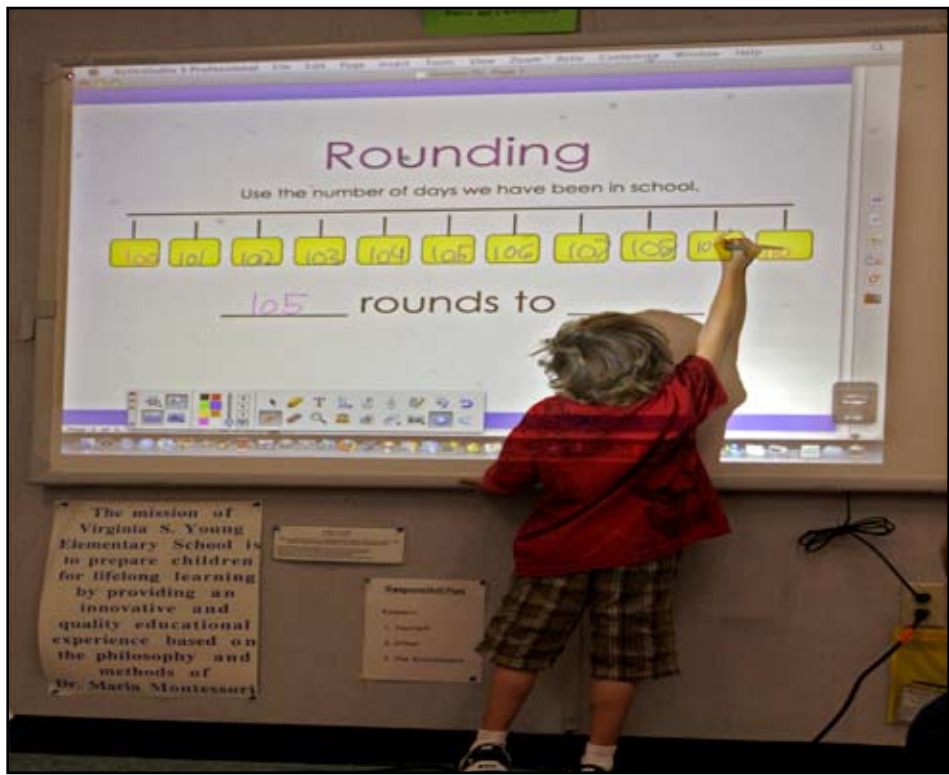
Kids can write book reports on a book-themed Web site and submit them to the teacher there. "The interest level for anything that's

technology-related is much higher," Stella said. Some parents ask: "Where's the paper?" said Dawn Huckestein, who assigns homework online and has her second- and third-graders at Virginia Shuman Young use the interactive whiteboard. "It's what they're used to."

She explains to them that her method is "not just being friendly to the earth, but being friendly to the budget." MAST Academy in Key Biscayne, Fla., a school known for its focus on green innovation, tries to conserve paper and recycles what gets used. One way they cut down on paper: "E-mail, e-mail, e-mail, e-mail," said principal Thomas Fisher. "Everyone's favorite communication initiative." Teachers get one case of paper, which contains 5,000 sheets, each semester, Fisher said.

Erica Kane, a fifth-grade teacher at North Lauderdale Elementary, said she tries to be as frugal as possible in her classes because paper is not easy to get. "We would use the fronts and backs and wouldn't miss any spaces," she said. Kane said she's also printed reports on the backs of fliers, used paper brought in by students and even used old pin-feed printer paper, the kind with sides that need to be ripped off. Some administrators and teachers say students are allowed to print materials at school but are urged to print out only what is needed.

Many Broward teachers say they use a document camera and projector and have students copy from the board in their own composition



Al Diaz, Miami Herald / MCT Campus

Brandon Baum, 7, works on an interactive computer white board as opposed to using the dry erase version at Virginia Shuman Young Elementary in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

books instead of giving handouts. Some post their materials online. Others simply buy their own paper if it is scarce at school.

Robert Rosen, who teaches Advanced Placement physics at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High in Parkland, Fla., grew weary of wondering if his paper supply was going to be cut off from year to year. So, about six years ago, he scanned all of the information he hands out which would amount to something like 200,000

copies for all of his classes - and put it on compact discs.

If there's something Rosen wants to distribute to students during the school year that wasn't included in the initial disc, he puts it on his Web site as a PDF. Rosen has been trying to spread the paperless word among fellow teachers. He thinks it might be an easier sell as schools continue to cut spending.

—MCT Campus



# 'Fast & Furious'

## Thrillingly better than the last

By Frank Tobin  
ftobin@valenciavoice.com

A gas-tanker barrels down on you, set aflame. You sit in your 1987 Buick Grand National, rev the engine, feel the torque, your girlfriend in the passenger seat screaming for you to move, waiting till the absolute last second to gun it and gun it you do, right underneath the exploding tanker.

The adrenaline makes your pulse quicken to the point where you think your heart will explode.

This is the part where you realize you are not Vin Diesel (probably FAR from it), and you are not in the newest cinematic rendition of the, now long-running, Universal film franchise.

"Fast & Furious," or "4 Fast 4 Furious" if you're keeping count (clever, right?), is a movie you can basically sum up in one sentence; muscle guys, muscle cars, hot chicks, and incredible action sequences.

Not much has changed in the four films other than who the muscle guys wind up being played by.

Of course the other thing to look at here is the resurrection of Vin Diesel's action star persona, and considering he's been doing movies like "Babylon AD" and "The Pacifier" for the past couple years, you can solidly say this is one of his better performances in a real long time.

And if he would've played his cards right, this could have been his 'Die Hard' series. Alas, what could have been?

The plot is pretty thin, but for fans of the first movie it'll be nostalgic to see the two leads again.

Diesel reprises wanted felon Dom Toretto, who after escaping at the end of the first movie has started a new life in the Dominican Republic knocking over tanker-trucks full of precious gasoline (worth their weight in gold, in the DR).

What brings him back to Los Angeles is revenge for the death of his girlfriend at the hands of brutal drug dealers led by Braga (John Ortiz).

This brings him face-to-face with the man who infiltrated his gang in the first flick, Brian O'Connor (Paul Walker), now an FBI agent going after the same drug dealers. And wouldn't you know it, (and if this comes as a surprise to you, then you need brain surgery) driving plays a big part in Braga's whole smuggling operation.

So, as a way to get closer to the object of both their aggressive affections, Brian and Dom team up, amidst some trust issues, to bring down the drug cartel.

Hopefully, director Justin Lin ("Tokyo Drift") gets the credit he deserves this time around.

The movie starts out brilliantly with the aforementioned propane truck hijacking, and continues to go full throttle, staging a race on a crowded Los Angeles street, and then a couple of spectacularly choreographed chase scenes in an underground tunnel shaft.

Once these characters get in their cars you won't be bored for a moment. Outside the car is a slightly different matter though. Both actors do what they can with the cliched script.

Diesel is adrenaline personified. With his gravelly voice, bulging biceps, and cool, playful way around a line of dialogue, he's a lot of fun to watch.



Paul Rodriguez, Orange County Register / MCT Campus

Actor Paul Walker reprises his character, Brian O'Connor, in the fourth installment of "Fast & Furious."

And while still pretty wooden, admittedly Walker has a pretty-boy face and an athletic physicality that makes him a good hero. This pairing worked well in the first movie, sort of like an amateur, yet entertaining version of the adrenaline-seeking-cop and criminal formula a la "Point Break."

After four movies, however, it's all gotten stale and it's easy to see that the cars are the real stars here.

The Dom-Brian conflict and Dom's vendetta against the cartel is mostly overshadowed by the tremendous action sequences, and there isn't much for either character to do when they're away from their vehicles.

Diesel and Walker try but they always seem to be a couple wheels short of competing with the four-wheel drive.

That's not to say that the story is a wash either.

There are times where your nostalgia kicks in, and you honestly care about the conflicts these characters face together. Their chemistry is there, it's just that the script limps its way to the finish line except for the last action scene, and the scene before the credits close so you will not be disappointed.

"Fast & Furious" deserves credit for doing the key things well.

If you're expecting much from anything other than the cars then it's a decent flick, but thanks to Justin Lin this has all the trappings of a really thrilling action movie, making this fourth iteration in the series a little better than the first movie, and leagues better than its two previous predecessors.



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# Classic ‘Mario Brothers’ still fans’ fave

By Frank Tobin  
ftobin@valenciavoice.com

Eating mushrooms in order to make yourself larger, ingesting red flowers that grant you flame-throwing abilities, stomping on the heads of Goombas, and rescuing little toad men who have a propensity to say one thing, and one thing only; “Our Princess is in another castle.”

If you weren’t born before the year of 1987, or if you’ve been living under a rock since the day of your birth, then you may not know of the game that is being presented.

If the latter is the case, then stop reading, slap yourself in the face, pick up an NES (Nintendo Entertainment System) controller, and learn your roots. Go ahead, this review can wait.

Are you back? Did that game change your life? Isn’t Mario one little sadistic Italian plumber? Welcome to the retro gaming revolution that is Super Mario Bros. You are now saved.

It feels like Mario has been around since before the invention of the light-bulb and those who played it back in the day feel even older still. But this game stands as a true test of gaming perfection, and to this day remains blisteringly challenging, and rewarding upon completion.

Beginning as the brain child of Shigeru Miyamoto, the inventor of the greatest game ever seen by the eyes of man (God’s game), Super Mario was the compilation of many of the conventions in gaming that had been perfected since the early days of Atari (Google it if you don’t know what it is).



Courtesy of Mario.nintendo.com

The legacy of the “Super Mario Brothers” lives on the the Nintendo DS remake of the popular game.

Jumping from platform to platform, running to beat a time limit, gathering green “1-up” mushrooms, and collecting gold coins in order to increase your high score; all of these regulars of the gaming lexicon were present, but unpolished, before the advent of the red-clad plumber with the porn-star mustache (and what a magnificent mustache it was).

Mario went on to garner critical, and commercial, acclaim, selling more than 200 million copies worldwide.

Read that again if you need to; 200 million copies sold, worldwide. Mario was the Hannah Montana of it’s day, only not as annoying and jail-bait worthy.

Onto the actual product review starting with the graphics: fresh, vibrant, colorful, and detailed, Super Mario Brothers stunned the world with its charming and dazzling 8-bit presentation.

Mario is clearly detailed, enemies are colorful and stand out very well, power-ups flicker and glow and it’s sure a sight to behold grabbing the Invincibility Star

for the first time (you sparkle like you’re a superstar in a Hollywood movie).

However, this game does not utilize the full powers of the NES, as you can see by comparing it to its sequels, Super Mario Brothers 2 and 3. The most evident “offense” to this claim is Mario himself, and some of the ground tiling.

Mario looks rather blocky and square-ish, as does the ground, which is just a single block repeated endlessly.

Granted, this was a launch title with the NES, so of course it’s not going to look as good as later games, but don’t let that fool you. Super Mario Brothers is a very richly detailed world and quite a sight to behold.

Any classic, true, gamer worth his/her salt will tell you that graphics pale in comparison to the true test of a game’s longevity: gameplay. Fear not, true believers, for Mario has this area on lockdown.

Going 20 years into the future could we have foreseen this game etching out its place among the more technologically ad-

vanced games of the current timeframe? Of course we could, because hindsight is a beautiful thing.

If this isn’t perfection, then this review might as well be cataloged in the recesses of journalistic ineptitude.

This is one fun game: 32 levels of non-stop Goomba and Koopa smashing action. Mario’s actions are limited to running, ducking, jumping, shooting fireballs, and swimming in the water levels, but that’s all he needs to kick serious turtle and Goomba tail.

You will have to clear various obstacles such as large gaps by leaping over them, or clearing out a row of enemies with a Koopa shell, or just blasting them with a fireball.

There are even hidden bonus stages filled to the brim with coins underground and up in the sky, so search high and low. Only after clearing through all 8 worlds will you find the true head-honcho.

Yes, Mario may be “old,” but an increase in age has only solidified his standing as the greatest gaming character, and hero of the greatest game, of all time.

Do yourself a favor, stop reading this (again) and buy yourself a Nintendo Wii console, and download this game for five measly dollars (yeah, most of us actually paid \$50 dollars for this game... and would gladly do it again).

You will not be disappointed. Unless of course you can’t cut it as a Mario master, in which case you shall receive no sympathy, and you will be laughed at as a mere mortal who understands not the zenith of gaming’s lore. In other words, for you, “our princess is in another castle.” Classic.

## ‘Assault on Dark Athena’ hits big with gamer world

By Frank Tobin  
ftobin@valenciavoice.com

Apparently, it’s Vin Diesel Day here at the Valencia Voice, what with the “Fast & Furious” movie review, and now “The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena” (of which Diesel reprises his role as the bad-to-the-bone anti-hero Richard B. Riddick). Who’s complaining? No one, that’s who.

“The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay” was one of the unsung heroes of the original XBOX, back in 2004.

While a critical smash and a commercial success, it never really attained the same level of lavish praise as games like “Half-Life 2” or “Halo,” even though it managed to be just as groundbreaking within the FPS genre in terms of storytelling, action, and ambiance, and was a prime example of how a licensed game can be done right.

However, developer Starbreeze is looking to try their hand at getting gamers to check out that same great game within this remake, “The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena.” And have succeeded beyond expectations.

“The Escape from Butcher Bay” element of “Assault on Dark Athena” has been left largely untouched, save for an HD graphical boost.

For those who don’t know, the original campaign is a prequel to the events that transpire in “The Chronicles of Riddick” film, which involves the “hero” (or villain as some would say) being incarcerated at Butcher Bay, a reputed prison colony not known for escapees. Therefore, it’s up to the player to employ some pretty crafty dealings and take advantage of Riddick’s special abilities to bust out.

The original title emphasized more cerebral pursuits as opposed to simply blasting your way from one point to another. You’d often have to take out enemies using stealth and impromptu weapons like shivs, and of-

ten times avoid combat altogether.

Along your journey, you’d have to meet and gain the assistance of other prisoners or guards on the colony, be it to get into certain areas or gain access to new items.

The story added some new elements to the Riddick franchise, and offered up some truly compelling gameplay.

However, as a straight remake of the original game probably wouldn’t fly as a \$60 dollar investment (regardless of how great the original was), “Assault on Dark Athena” features a brand new single-player campaign called, well, just that.

“Assault on Dark Athena” follows the events of the “Escape from Butcher Bay” story arc, with Riddick and his captor Johns being brought aboard a ship of renegade mercenaries led by a person straight from Riddick’s past.

Therefore, escape is the name of the game once again, as the stowaway Riddick must fight his way to get off of the ship, but not before settling a few scores.

“Assault on Dark Athena” is a fun addition to the original game, offering up more story elements and new gameplay for fans of the original who couldn’t get enough.

And while some will criticize the new game for its linear and restrictive nature, it’s actually pretty refreshing compared to the slower, more stealthy component of the original.

These two compliment each other very well, almost in the way the movies “Pitch Black” and “The Chronicles of Riddick” were the antitheses of one another, both offering different methods in which to expand upon the mythology of the central character.

In other words, it works really well here, and makes the \$60 price-tag completely justified; you essentially get two games for the price of one. This is a good week to be a fan of impossible muscles, and fantastic acting (AKA a fan of Vin Diesel). Get this game.

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# Phillies' championship ceremony ruined by Braves

By Phil Sheridan  
The Philadelphia Inquirer

PHILADELPHIA — The Phillies began defense of their 2008 World Series title at 8:10 DT on Sunday night, when Brett Myers' 91 miles-per-hour fastball disappeared into the mitt of catcher Carlos Ruiz.

The sellout crowd at Citizens Bank Park delivered the first true chorus of boos of the 2009 season at 8:30, when Myers' offering to Atlanta rookie Jordan Schafer disappeared into the seats in centerfield. "That's part of it," manager Charlie Manuel said after the 4-1 loss. "We can handle that." Duration of World Series grace period: 20 minutes.

With that, the third home run allowed by Myers in just two innings, it was business as usual at the Bank. The new season was on. The championship season, celebrated with an elaborate pregame ceremony, had officially slipped into the burnished and cherished past.

An hour earlier, the Phillies had filed down the steps just a few feet from where Schafer's homer landed. They walked into the ballpark from beyond left-center, greeted by Mayor Nutter and Manuel, then through the bleachers and down a staircase onto the field.

With the Phillie Phanatic in front, veteran pitcher Jamie Moyer led the team through a gauntlet of fans along a red carpet that reached to second base. The team's two former National League MVPs, Ryan Howard and Jimmy Rollins, brought up the rear. When the players reached the infield dirt, they turned and faced the outfield again.

There, they saw the championship banner -white 2008 on a red field - slide and jerk up a flagpole. Manuel was at the bottom, visible only on the big TV screen in left field, pulling the rope hand over hand.

Howard admitted looking forward to the



David Maialetti/Philadelphia Daily News/MCT

**Brett Myers wipes his eyes after serving Jordan Scafer his first career MLB homer.**

ceremony, as well as to Wednesday's presentation of the team's championship rings, but stressed how important it was for the players to move on mentally and emotionally from 2008.

"Last year was last year," Howard said in the clubhouse before the game. "It's not going to help us in 2009. Everybody has kind of turned the page and is looking forward to getting started this year, trying to get on track

to see if we can do the same thing again. It's a good feeling. We've been to the mountaintop. It's one of those things where you want to try to stay there."

The players have already moved on, some permanently. Pat Burrell and Geoff Jenkins are gone from the team that rushed the mound to celebrate Brad Lidge's strikeout of Tampa Bay's Eric Hinske. Even the ones who remain, though, have been in Clearwater since

early February, preparing for another season.

The other day, in town with his new team, the Rays, Burrell sat in the visitors' dugout and talked about his decade with the Phillies. So often, he and his teammates politely watched as crowds at the Vet and the Bank cheered on the heroes of 1950, 1980, 1983 and 1993. As public address announcer Dan Baker called their names and the players sprinted from the dugout, the decibel level in the stadium told the story.

There were polite cheers for the training staff and the coaches, for newcomers Raul Ibanez and Chan Ho Park. There were surges for stars like Howard and Rollins. But the loudest roars were reserved for the stars of October: for Lidge, who got the last out, and Cole Hamels, the Series MVP; for Matt Stairs, who hit an unforgettable home run against the Dodgers in the NLCS; and for Shane Victorino, whose postseason was sprinkled with gold dust.

There was, again, a special affection in the cheers for Manuel, and in the "Charlie, Charlie" chant that might well have been echoing in the park since October. In all, it was a well-designed and effective ceremony. Miss America, Katie Stam, sang the national anthem (and her crown looked oddly like the World Series trophy). Presumably, the first runner-up will sing at the Rays' home opener. The only quibble — the absence of suspended reliever J.C. Romero — will be rectified at Wednesday's ring ceremony. Romero is expected to be there, as is Burrell.

After that, there will be no more celebrations of 2008 — just 160 baseball games against opponents like the Braves, who have no interest in honoring the champs. "We've still got to go out there and play, whether we're the hunter or the hunttee," Howard said.

—MCT Campus



David Maialetti/Philadelphia Daily News/MCT

**Derek Lowe pitched a gem Sunday night, allowing no runs in eight innings of work.**

## Same faces, new places

By Alex Barrett  
abarrett@valenciavoice.edu

Derek Lowe is just one of many of the much sought-after players in this year's free agency pool.

He showed why on Sunday. Lowe pitched an almost flawless game, surrendering only two hits in eight full innings against the world champion Philadelphia Phillies on Opening Night for the MLB. What may be most impressive is that he managed to do so with only a little over 90 pitches, forcing over 12 infield ground outs, a stat many say is far superior to strikeouts, as they are almost sure outs, and they save the pitchers arm so they may pitch later into the game.

In a time where farm systems are incredibly valuable for up-and-coming players, free agency has hit somewhat of a stand still. Managers and GM's believe that they can raise better players than if they shell out what can be much more money to players looking for a deal who may be a bit older. The Tampa Bay Rays are a perfect example. Their entire team

salary is still less expensive than the top three Yankees players, no one needs a reminder on who won that division last year.

But for Lowe, this was a statement game. many counted the Braves out this season until their activity in free agency brought light to their cause. The Braves brought in not only Lowe, but Japanese kwirk-baller Kenshin Kawakami, an all star in his overseas league, and Javier Vazquez, who showed great upside with the White Sox last year. Bolstering their lineup, and with the possible return of ace Tim Hudson, the Braves have suddenly catapulted their way to the upper echelon of starting rotations. One shouldn't forget that Atlanta has one of the league's best farm teams either, as can be seen in Jordan Schafer's first performance, and players like Chipper Jones and Jeff Francoeur. While many still think free agency is a joke, maybe they should look at the Braves.

Maybe the way to go is a balance between the two extremes, raising homegrown talent and striking when you need to at valuable players to fill your gaps.



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# Legends save opening day

By Bernie Miklasz  
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ST. LOUIS — Opening day at Busch Stadium, top o’ the ninth inning.

Sea of red. Happy, smiling people, warmed by a cameo appearance earlier in the day by the legendary Stan Musial.

The Cardinals had a 4-2 lead over the Pirates. It was shaping up to be a perfect day, even with the blustery weather and the blankets and hoodies and winter coats. Even with the chattering teeth.

And just like that, gone with the wind Pirates win 6-4.

Other than hiring Henry Heimlich - the guy with the maneuver - as bullpen coach, I don’t know what to suggest.

This was going to be the year where the Cardinals took the ninth inning back, after blowing a major-league leading 31 saves in 2008. After all, creaky closer Jason Isringhausen was moved out to make room for the human space heater, Jason Motte.

He throws 98. He has smoke billowing from his nostrils. Motte even has the Bruce Sutter beard going. Motte fit right in. He performed the ceremonial duties Monday at Busch Stadium by blowing the first victory of the season.

It was another scary movie. On a day in which the Cardinals saluted Hall of Famers Musial, Bob Gibson, Lou Brock, Red Schoendienst, Ozzie Smith and Sutter, the Cardinals also paid tribute to horror-film legends Alfred Hitchcock, Lon Chaney Sr., Boris Karloff, Stephen King, Vincent Price and Wes Craven.

The Cardinals assigned Motte to Isringhausen’s old locker in the hometeach club house.

Bad karma, anyone?

As one Cardinals fan suggested in a “tweet” after the game, Izzy’s locker should have been boarded up and condemned a long time ago.

As one Cardinals fan suggested in a “tweet” after the game, Izzy’s locker should have been boarded up and condemned a long time ago. There’s no reason to taunt



the closer gods by sliding the innocent rookie into The Izzinator’s jinxed space. Aren’t baseball people supposed to be superstitious?

By 6:30 p.m. Monday, the STLtoday.com message boards and sports-talk shows were popping with anger.

There’s no reason to taunt the closer gods by sliding the innocent rookie into The Izzinator’s jinxed space. Aren’t baseball people supposed to be superstitious?

You don’t back off Motte after one game.

After such a sensational spring training, Motte didn’t become a can of Mott’s tomatoes in one inning.

Cry in your beer, yes. Curse the outcome, yes. But don’t get all panicky or crazy.

Don’t jump off a bridge, because those rivers are awfully cold.

Not yet, anyway. At least wait until Motte blows two games before completely losing your minds. (I’m just kidding.)

Motte’s next test is proving that he can recover from that first, failed test.

Resilience is a crucial component of a closer’s DNA. “We’re going to be able to see what he’s made of, real quick,” Cardinals starting

Photos by Zia Nizami, Belleville News-Democrat / MCT Campus

**The Pittsburgh Pirates and St. Louis Cardinals line up (above) for the playing of the National Anthem before the start of the Cardinals’ home opener at Busch Stadium in St. Louis, Missouri, Monday, April 6. The Pittsburgh Pirates’ Eric Hinske (right) is congratulated by teammates after scoring against the St. Louis Cardinals. The Pirates defeated the Cardinals, 6-4.**

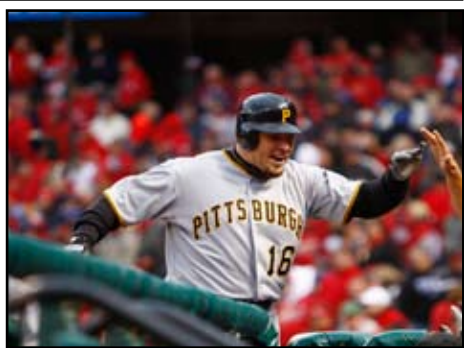
pitcher Adam Wainwright said.

“It’s not the best thing obviously that can happen to him. But you can use it as a positive. You can use it as a good thing. And if he’s able to come back strong from this, and really prove to himself that he’s better than that; hey, we know he’s better than that. He’s just going to have to believe it. And if he can do that he’s going to be fine.”

The Cardinals couldn’t put this one away, but opening day wasn’t a waste.

Baseball is back, and that’s a glorious holiday in St. Louis. Moreover, any day that features a visit from Stan Musial is an extraordinary gift.

“When he first got here, they had him in the golf cart, sheltered from the wind,” La Russa said.



“Our guys got word that Stan was there. They all went over to see him. And I saw guys really affected. Choked up, just from meeting him. It was a magical moment.

“You don’t see Stan as much as we’d like to, but it’s very special to have him here. And our guys were emotional. Just seeing how the fans responded to him added to it, too. Very emotional.”

If you were looking for something exceptional to take home from this day, something to cherish, then Stan the Man got it done for you.

Musial got the save.

—MCT Campus



Florida Marlins’ Cameron Maybin lifts teammate Emilio Bonifacio after his inside-the-park home run. Joe Rimkus Jr., Miami Herald / MCT Campus

## Rookie leads Marlins’ big win over Nationals

By Juan C. Rodriguez  
Sun Sentinel

MIAMI — In a 12-6 win over the Nationals, the Marlins demonstrated they not only will have more speed, but they might just feature the same power of recent seasons.

Bonifacio went 4 for 5 with three stolen bases and riveted the crowd with an inside-the-park homer. Ramirez crushed his first career grand slam as part of a two-hit, five-RBI day that helped the Marlins improve to 9-8 all-time on Opening Day.

The Marlins, who set a new club record for Opening Day runs, throttled Nationals pitching for eight extra-base hits in support of winner Ricky Nolasco (1-0).

In his first Opening Day start he allowed five runs (four earned) on six hits with no walks and six strikeouts over six innings.

Three relievers combined to allow a run on two hits and strike out three over the final three innings as the Marlins defeated the Nationals for the 17th time in 20 meetings dating back to Sept. 14, 2007.

“We have a tremendous team,” first baseman Jorge Cantu said. “The lineup is incredible. The defense played very well. The pitching will always be there, God willing.” Cantu was one of four Marlins to homer along with Ramirez, Jeremy Hermida and Bonifacio, but only three left the park.

With one on and one out in the fourth, Bonifacio who at this point already was 2 for 2 with two steals and two runs scored drove a Julian Tavarez pitch over center fielder Lastings Milledge’s head. The ball rolled to

the wall, sending Bonifacio into a sprint the likes of which rarely is seen on the bases.

Third-base coach Bo Porter waived him home and Bonifacio slid in safely for his first career home run. “In reality, I was just thinking about getting to third,” said Bonifacio, the fourth Marlin to have a four-hit Opening Day along with Jeff Conine (1993), Carlos Delgado (2005) and Ramirez (2006).

“When I was halfway to second and saw (Milledge) dove headfirst I thought I had a chance.”

—MCT Campus



Joe Rimkus Jr., Miami Herald / MCT Campus

**Bonifacio heads to home on an inside-the-park home run against the Washington Nationals.**



# Huskies end perfect season with NCAA win

By Tom Timmermann  
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ST. LOUIS — Connecticut guard Renee Montgomery wasn't quite sure how long the celebration lasted Tuesday night after the Huskies finished their perfect season by trouncing Louisville in the NCAA final at Scottrade Center.

"I must have fallen asleep," she said Wednesday morning, "because I woke up." It's all a blur for the Huskies, who completed the fifth perfect season in NCAA Division I women's basketball history and won their sixth national title.

On Wednesday morning before flying back home for another celebration, the Huskies sported new Nike-issued sweats that said "39-0" and "Undefeated champions" as they picked up a second version of the championship trophy.

As a senior, this was the end for Montgomery, who will be a high pick in the WNBA draft on Thursday. And while she's sad about leaving her friends at UConn, she's happy about another thing: She won't have to listen to questions about whether UConn repeats. If the possibility of going unbeaten hung over this year's UConn team from the start of the season, the possibility of back-to-back titles will hang over next year's. UConn won three straight titles from 2001-02 to 2003-04, a stretch dominated by Diana Taurasi, who was national player of the year the final two seasons. UConn may have another player like that now in Maya Moore, who just finished her sophomore season and won her first national player of the year honor.

For some in the UConn world, visions of multiple championships are dancing in their heads. "I do not want to burden these guys with what Diana did," UConn coach Geno Auriemma said. "That's just too much. I think they're capable of doing anything next year. But to sit here and think, we've got what it takes to win



Zia Nizami, Belleville News-Democrat / MCT Campus

**Connecticut's basketball team celebrate their 76-54 win over Louisville in the 2009 NCAA Women's Final Four championship game at the Scottrade Center in St. Louis, Missouri, Tuesday, April 7.**

three in a row? Man, come see me like in the middle of November. By the middle of November I'll have a pretty good idea."

Moore also didn't want to think about the possibility of back-to-back titles, or of being considered the best team in UConn history, which is another topic that surrounds these Huskies. "What Diana and her teammates were able to accomplish was something special," Moore said. "Each team is special in its own right and I don't think there's anything we could do that would take away from their accomplishments."

"To get this first one is so sweet. Right now,

I'm thinking about this one and enjoying it with my teammates." UConn will almost certainly be the preseason No. 1 next season. Montgomery is the only starter the team loses. Moore will be back, along with Tina Charles, the 6-foot-4 center who was the most outstanding player of the Final Four and who finally may be reaching her potential.

Stanford, which was ranked No. 2 in the final regular-season poll and lost to UConn in the national semifinal, also will figure prominently, losing only one starter and returning its top player, center Jayne Appel. After that, the field may be

wide open. When the best women's programs come back to St. Louis is another question. The NCAA has chosen Final Four sites for the men's and women's tournaments through 2016, and St. Louis isn't hosting in that period. St. Louis will host a men's regional next year and another probably in 2012 or 2013. Frank Viverito of the St. Louis Sports Commission said the city probably would bid to host a women's regional — those haven't been assigned past next season — and would pursue another women's Final Four.

—MCT Campus

## NCAA player loses bet Paris won't be writing any checks to OU

By Bernie Miklasz  
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ST. LOUIS — Oklahoma's all-everything Courtney Paris made news for proclaiming that she'd refund her scholarship money to OU if the Sooners failed to win the national championship.

The cost of such a giveback was estimated at \$64,000. It was a commendable sentiment by a proud and accomplished competitor. If the barons on Wall Street had Courtney's conscience, the nation would have fewer problems.

I can't believe that so many people took her pledge so literally. It was the thought that counted, a way for Paris to put pressure on herself to deliver. All the great ones do that, put the responsibility on their shoulders. Paris won't really be writing checks to OU.

But she may owe Oklahoma \$64,000 for the cost of Kleenex tissues, because she needed a truckload Sunday night to absorb the tears as they rolled down her face. Paris and the Sooners were stunned in a 61-59 loss to Louisville in the national semifinal played Sunday night at Scottrade Center. And this sting will last a while.

"I don't have a choice for it to be complete at this point," Paris said.

"I feel like I still have so much more to give. And I'll love these girls forever. We'll grow our relationships, and one day they'll meet my kids, and I'll meet their kids. And so in a way it never ends. I loved playing basketball with them. It's just a hard thing to know that it's over and that you don't get to be a part of this process anymore."

Courtney Paris has been an immense pres-

ence and talent at OU. She is perhaps the most prolific producer in college basketball history, because no D-1 player, woman or man, has matched her combination of amassing at least 2,500 points and 2,000 rebounds in a career.

And Paris was ready to extend it all, at least for one more game, even if it meant taking another smackdown from an invincible UConn squad in Tuesday's national championship game. Paris and teammates nearly made it happen, but Nyeshia Stevenson's last-second shot rimmed out, a 3-pointer that would have won the game. And then it hit Courtney Paris: It was over now. All of it.

"You've got to understand that it isn't all about basketball," she said.

"It's about the people and the experience. It's about growing up and gaining family. But at the same time, it's those reasons that make you want to do something like win a championship and share something so special. And help a program out. It's just frustrating to know that you couldn't help them do that."

Paris has racked up the bulk of her career points on a quick catch-and-release from under the basket, but she didn't get enough touches in this game. She was able to attempt only 10 shots, with the Sooners crazily launching 3s instead of going to their high-percentage money player.

Louisville fronted Paris, and doubled down on her when she caught the ball on the low block. But she had seen this many times before. For some reason, OU coach Sherri Coale and the Sooners didn't counter the strategy. Paris kept calling for the ball, and it didn't come to her. Well, not nearly enough, anyway.

And that's how it ended for Courtney Paris on this sad Sunday night for Oklahoma. She was calling for the ball, begging for the opportunity to pull her team up.

She wanted the ball, and she wanted more time. She wanted one more chance, one more game, to do the thing that she loved so much.

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# North Carolina takes title

By Dick Jerardi  
Philadelphia Daily News

DETROIT — Tom Izzo said on Sunday that if “we play good and they play good, we’re losing.” What the Michigan State coach did not envision, but maybe should have, was a scenario where North Carolina played great and his team played far less than good.

Almost the entire Ford Field crowd of 72,922 was screaming for the Spartans at tipoff. They were still screaming when the ball was tied up in the first three seconds. They stopped screaming quickly.

The Tar Heels were brilliant from the start. The moment got to the Spartans, who committed turnovers on five of their first 12 possessions.

After six minutes, North Carolina led by 16 points and was on a 150-point pace. The Tar Heels eventually slowed down, but the damage was done. The Spartans played to the finish line, but it was just a mirage in the distance. When all the accounting was done, North Carolina had won the national championship, 89-72.

It was 55-34 at halftime. The 55 points were the most in the first half of a championship game. So was the 21-point margin.

By halftime, the Spartans (31-7) had more turnovers (14) than field goals (12). UNC (34-4) was 18-for-34 (52.9 percent) and scoring at will inside, outside and off all those TOs while also living at the foul line because it was so aggressive in taking the ball to the basket.

Episcopal Academy’s Wayne Ellington, brilliant all tournament, had 17 points after 20 minutes on the way to 19. In the six NCAA games, he shot 44-for-80 overall, 17-for-32 from the arc and scored 115 points. He was named the Final Four’s Most Outstanding Player.

“This just shows that hard work pays off,” Ellington said. “You can’t give up on yourself.”

This was North Carolina’s fifth national title. Only Kentucky (seven) and UCLA (11) have won more. Only Indiana has won as many.

Even more impressive, it was North Carolina’s second championship in Roy Williams’ six seasons back at his alma mater.

And this one came after Williams had to completely remake his roster, following the 2005 title when every player of consequence left for the NBA.

This championship makes up for 40-12. That was the score during the first half of last year’s Final Four loss to Kansas. All these North Carolina players came back for one reason to get past that and win the last game.

That North Carolina never had to play an-



Chuck Liddy, Raleigh News & Observer / MCT Campus

**The Tar Heels hold up the National Championship trophy after defeating Michigan State, 89-72, in the NCAA men’s basketball championship.**

other No. 1 seed in this tournament was not its fault. The Tar Heels just played the teams lined up in front of them. And crushed every one of them. None of the six NCAA wins was decided by fewer than 12 points, a 64-team tournament record for dominance. They won the six games by a combined 121 points.

Whatever magic Michigan State had in the upset wins over No. 1 seeds Louisville and Connecticut was nowhere in evidence against North Carolina.

Apparently, that 98-63 Carolina win over Michigan State four months ago really did mean exactly what it seemed to mean. The Spartans had 21 turnovers to just seven for the Tar Heels.

Tyler Hansbrough (18 points) finished his brilliant career with 2,872 points. Now, he has a national championship to go with all his awards. “I’m just part of something special here,” said Hansbrough, who wore a net around his neck. “It’s the best feeling in the world.”

Point guard Ty Lawson (21 points, six assists, championship-game record eight steals) was like a blur. He had seven of his steals by half-time. He went behind his back in traffic. He saw things nobody else considered. He was too fast, too strong, too good. In the two games against the Spartans, he had 38 points, 14 assists, 15 steals and one turnover. They will be celebrating in East Lansing the night of the NBA draft.

“I was standing out on the court in 2005 when we won the thing,” Williams said.

“And I left on Wednesday morning to go recruiting at 6 a.m.” He understood that his team was “anointed.” They played like it was too much of a burden for a time. They lost their first two ACC games. Then, they just started to play.

In the end, it was about performance and about what Ol’ Roy learned from his mentor.

“Roy Williams and Dean Smith don’t fit in the same sentence,” Williams said.

Maybe not, but they do each have two championships now. Judging by NCAA Tournament

results, the ACC was down this season. North Carolina was not down. The Tar Heels were up, way up.

A total of 708,296 fans saw the 64 games. Eventually, 64 teams lost. And one team won every time.

That would be North Carolina — again. Since the 1957 Tar Heels beat Wilt and Kansas in that triple-overtime classic, North Carolina has been synonymous with college basketball greatness — from Dean Smith to Roy Williams, from Michael Jordan and James Worthy through Sean May and Raymond Felton to Hansbrough, Ellington and Lawson.

Since the UCLA reign ended in 1975, North Carolina has stood above the rest.

Only North Carolina has won four championships since college basketball went from a regional sport to a national sport. And if Williams could do it this quickly with an entirely new cast, you have to think he can do it again.

—MCT Campus

## Tar Heels fulfill quest to finals

By Caulton Tudor  
McClatchy Newspapers

DETROIT — At the end of North Carolina’s dash past Michigan State and everyone else to the national basketball championship, the Tar Heels’ superiority was best described by Brad Greenberg way back on March 18.

A day before Carolina began its six-game NCAA Tournament blitz, the Radford coach sat on a small stage in Greensboro Coliseum and fished for precisely the correct way to explain his team’s first-round challenge.

“Carolina’s not just a great program with great talent,” Greenberg said. “They’re more than that. They’re what? Oh, what’s the word?”

They’re a firm sort of like that Tom Cruise movie from a few years back. Once they get you inside (the arena), there’s no getting away from ‘em. You’ve just had it then.”

Greenberg’s team got sauteed the next day, 101-58. But in retrospect, the High-



Chuck Liddy, Raleigh News & Observer / MCT Campus

**North Carolina run onto the court after the defeating Michigan State Monday, April 6.**

landers dealt with Carolina like five other tournament hopefuls.

The last team in the Heels’ way, Michigan State with its thousands of fans at Ford Field tried its best.

But the eventual outcome, 89-72, essentially was settled before many of the green shirts could so much as locate their seats on Monday night.

With juniors Deon Thompson and Wayne Ellington apparently hot the mo-

ment they stepped off the team bus, the Tar Heels (34-4) had a 10-point lead inside five minutes and pushed it to 23 with 9:40 left in the first half.

Michigan State (31-7) tried its best and had some reason for hope after an 82-73 win over Connecticut on Saturday.

But a hope and a prayer was about it. The defense and rebounding that Spartans coach Tom Izzo thought might contribute to an upset never became factors.

Carolina coach Roy Williams might even have sensed what was coming. In pregame remarks to the CBS television network, he praised the Spartans freely but ended by saying, “They’re playing better than anyone in the country except for maybe one team.”

It’s an issue that can be debated all spring and summer if need be, but the 2009 Heels won their national title with such ease that the school’s 2005, 1993, 1982 and 1957 winners, Duke’s three champions of the 1990s and even the mighty 1974 N.C. State squad, among others, have to give ground. Williams’ 2005 team whipped Michigan State 87-71 in the semifinals at St. Louis, but that game was closer than the score suggests.

The valid argument is always there to be made that college basketball isn’t as talented and deep these days as years ago, when the top players routinely stayed in school for three or four seasons.

There’s no question that Carolina in large part won this title last summer when Tyler Hansbrough, Ellington, Danny Green and Ty Lawson decided to return even though a place in the NBA Draft was probably there for the taking.

That’s not so much the point. More important to the discussion is the fact that all four did return and made the most of their chance to win what they could not at the 2008 Final Four in San Antonio.

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