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Truman State University's campus at night. TRUMAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Truman professor, students working to flip switch on light pollution

Austin Miller
Daily Express

Light can have that many effects? That was the reaction of Owen Smith, currently a sophomore at Truman State, when he took the freshman symposium, “Illuminate,” last year. The class was started last year by Vayujeet Gokhale, an assistant professor of physics and astronomy, to raise awareness on light pollution in Kirksville and on Truman's campus.

Though just a class that occurs once a week for one hour, it shined a light on what is a growing and understated problem.

“If you look around the fixtures both around downtown Kirksville on Franklin Street and on the Truman campus, most of our lights are very badly designed to meet that purpose of street lights, which is to illuminate the street,” Gokhale said. “Most of the light goes either sideways or up into the sky. It really doesn't serve any purpose in not doing what it's supposed to do. In fact, it's counterproductive because it's glaring into your eye.”

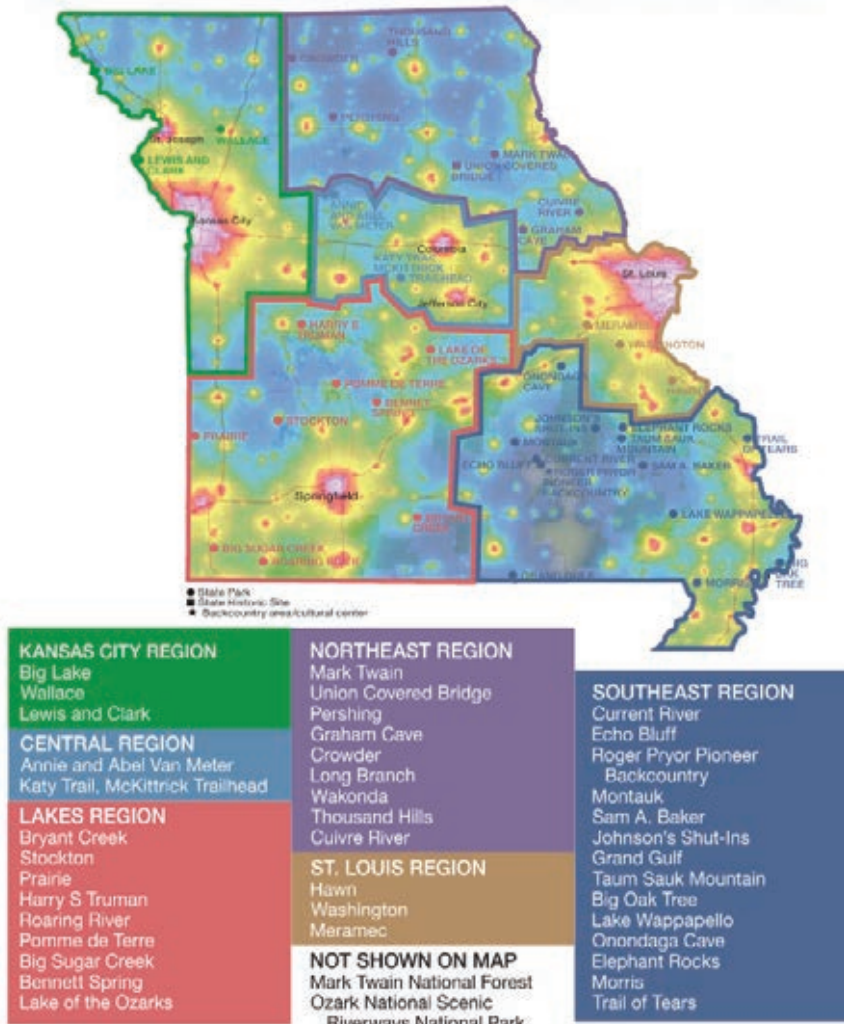
Causes and effects

There are several factors that cause light pollution and many other issues that come from it.

One of the causes is how outdoor light fixtures are designed. Most

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MISSOURI STATE PARKS AND DARK SKY DESTINATIONS



A map of good stargazing sites in Missouri and light pollution across the state. INTERNATIONAL DARK-SKY ASSOCIATION, MISSOURI CHAPTER.

Lawmakers eye expansion of Missouri school choice program. But can it get the votes?

Tessa Weinberg
Missouri Independent

Coming off of last year's success passing a tax credit to fund scholarships to pay for private school tuition, school choice advocates hope lawmakers will expand the program before it's even gotten off the ground.

But even with support from key legislative leaders, the idea faces long odds.

Senate Bill 841, sponsored by Sen. Rick Brattin, R-Harrisonville, would remove many of the limits imposed on the iteration of the program passed last year. That includes striking geographic boundaries that kept the program out of rural areas and lifting a \$25 million funding cap lawmakers put in place.

“It's basically the voucher system is what it would be,” Brattin said, “administered by the the (state) Treasurer, and the monies that would be associated with your kid going to your local school would then go to you as the parent, or to that account, and you could deem to where those kids go.”

Any push to expand the program's reach would have two key allies who said they support the idea: House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee Chairman Chuck Basye and Senate Education Committee Chairwoman Cindy O'Laughlin.

But that might not be enough.

The bill establishing the tax credit program barely eked out of the House last year without any votes to spare. In the months since it passed, some of those votes in support are no longer in the legislature, likely leaving any school choice bill short of the support it needs to pass.

“I fully support expanding the ESA program to make it fully functional as far as an alternative to the traditional public school,” said Sen. Andrew Koenig, a Manchester Republican who was the Senate handler of the bill that founded the ESA program last year. “However, I do think it's not something that's likely to pass.”

Basye, R-Rochepoint, agreed that the shrinking GOP majority in the House puts the idea in danger.

“We might not have the votes necessary to get those passed,” he said, “unless we can persuade some members to change their vote in order to export an initiative.”

Expanding ESA

Brattin's bill would not delete the language lawmakers passed last year that established the “Missouri Empowerment Scholarship Accounts Program,” but he said the expanded program his bill would create would be the “the whole kit and caboodle” — and likely be more widely used.

It would dramatically expand the current ESA program's reach by removing major concessions that had been added in order to secure enough support for its passage last year.

Among the requirements to participate in the current ESA program, students must live in a county with a charter form of government or a city with at least 30,000 residents — limiting the bill to the state's major metros, like St. Louis, Kansas City, Columbia, Cape Girardeau, Jefferson City, Springfield and Joplin.

That stipulation, along with a provision that caps the amount of tax

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Results from Kirksville's annual Christmas Bird Count

Submitted by Peter Goldman

Kirksville's 2021-22 Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) occurred on January 3, 2022. Sarah Kendrick, Missouri Department of Conservation's state ornithologist, organized the count, as she has in the last several years. Sarah grew up in Kirksville and so knew she was in for a bitterly cold Monday. (Supposedly Kirksville is always 10 degrees colder than Columbia, and it was only 20 when I headed out for the day.)

As in previous years, the count occurred in a circle with a radius of 7.5 miles centered in

downtown Kirksville. Sixteen volunteers participated, five of whom are local residents, the remainder from the Columbia area. (Two of the non-residents are former students of mine at Truman State University. It would have been nice to visit, but COVID has eliminated the traditional group get together at lunchtime.)

Collectively we spotted 66 species, a new high for our local counts. Additionally, we encountered more total birds than ever before. Slightly over 10,000. Canada Geese made up just over 50% of the total. Other waterfowl included 76 Trumpeter Swans,

several Gadwalls (a species of duck) and Ring-necked Ducks, two species not encountered here during a previous CBC.

Another highlight of the day was sizeable numbers of Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs, the latter new to our CBC. Participants spotted 417 Horned Larks, breaking the previous record of 234, and 63 Lapland Longspurs, breaking the previous record of 0. Both species are open country birds, and both have enormous distributions in the northern hemisphere. Lapland Longspurs breed in both the North American and Eurasian arctic tundra, as do

Horned Larks. The larks also breed in open habitats with short vegetation throughout the lower 48 states. Both species forage and nest on the ground, and though not particularly closely related, they share several special features. As the name “longspur” implies, these have elongated claws on their rear toes. The same for Horned Larks. Presumably this makes them more effective at walking and running on the ground.

The Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts provide valuable data about how birds are faring throughout North America and beyond. About

2000 counts occur in about 20 countries, mostly in the US and Canada. Unfortunately, the data indicate overall decreases in abundance, a reflection of broad scale habitat loss, subtle and not so subtle effects of climate change, pervasive contamination by environmental toxins, and other threats. For example, the rapid warming of the high arctic encourages tree growth in tundra habitats, and this may make things more difficult for ground nesting birds like larks and longspurs.

Whether we respond effectively to the message the CBCs deliver remains to be seen.

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OBITUARIES INSIDE

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In Your Own Backyard: Kirksville events for Jan. 13-19

Submitted by Debi Boughton

Debi Boughton, Kirksville Tourism Director, has some suggestions for enjoying time “In Your Own Backyard.” For any activities, be sure to follow the CDC guidelines for health and safety. If you have ideas or suggestions email: debi.boughton@visit-kirksville.com.

Friday, January 14

The Adair County Library offers Facebook Story Time with Mr. L. at 10:00 a.m. Go to: <https://www.facebook.com/adaircountypubliclibrary/>. For more information call 660-665-6038.

Saturday, January 15

Black Belt, Josh Littleton, is coming to Old School Jiu Jitsu, 16455 Dove Rd. for a seminar from 2:00-5:00 p.m. Old School Jiu Jitsu is a martial arts gym. They focus on Brazilian Jiu Jitsu techniques with a heavy wrestling influence. The gym is owned and operated by Kirksville native Jake Sevits. For more information call 660-216-7041.

Monday, January 17

Today is Martin Luther King Day. Honor Dr. King with the MLK Day of Service! Participate in a virtual event hosted by the University of Pennsylvania starting the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Commemorative Symposium

on Social Change. Philadelphia Councilmember Jamie Gauthier speaks! UPenn Grad student, Lindsay Ejoh sings. ZOOM LINK: <https://upenn.zoom.us/j/91686350149>

Wednesday, January 19

The Garden Hour with MU Extension, (formerly called Horticulture Town Hall), is an online workshop from 12:00-1:00 p.m. Ask your gardening questions and learn from the horticulture specialists. Register at: <https://ipm.missouri.edu/TownHalls/>. For more information call 660-665-9866.

Wednesday, January 19

Enjoy a Faculty Recital at 7:30 p.m. in the Ophelia Parrish Performance Hall on the Truman campus. Eric Dickson performs works from across the past five decades, including pieces by Neruda, Mahler, and Turrin. Dickson will be joined on stage by Taylor Hutchinson, piano, and Brian Kubin, cello. For more information call 660-785-4417.

Wednesday, January 19

Is quilting one of your New Year's Resolutions? The Hands of Friendship Quilt Guild meets from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall, 300 E. Washington. They meet the third Wednesday of each month. For more information call 660-665-8214.

Anti-abortion group urges pro-GOP Missouri congressional map

By DAVID A. LIEB
Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — The leader of Missouri's largest anti-abortion group on Monday urged state lawmakers to adopt an aggressively Republican congressional map that could leave Democrats holding just one of the state's eight U.S. House seats after the next election.

Republican lawmakers in charge of redrawing the state's congressional districts have put forth a plan that would essentially maintain the status quo, with Republicans likely to win six districts and Democrats two.

At a public hearing Monday, Missouri Right to Life urged a Republican-led House panel to instead draw a map that gives the GOP a shot at winning seven districts. To do so, map-makers would have to split up the Kansas City-based district of Democratic U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver by

attaching parts of it to multiple Republican-leaning rural areas.

“We’ve seen Missouri grow more conservative, and I believe that right now is the time to fight for a 7-1 map,” said Susan Klein, executive director of Missouri Right to Life.

Klein’s testimony brought to the forefront an internal division among Republicans, who are wrestling with how much they should try to gerrymander voting districts to aid their quest of winning control of the U.S. House. Democrats currently hold a slim congressional majority. Districts across the U.S. must be redrawn for the 2022 elections to account for population shifts noted in the 2020 census.

Political parties that control redistricting can gain an advantage either by packing voters from the opposing party into a few districts or splitting them among multiple districts to dilute their influence. Republican-led state

legislatures have passed aggressive redistricting plans in states such as North Carolina, while Democratic-led legislatures have done likewise in states such as Illinois.

But aggressive gerrymanders also can backfire in at least a couple of ways. They are more apt to be legally challenged and potentially replaced by a judicially drawn map. And to maximize their chances of winning, parties often have to settle for smaller victory margins in districts, making it more likely that districts could flip to the opposing party if political winds change.

“We as representatives have to do a risk assessment. Is it worth the risk for the reward?” said House Redistricting Committee Chairman Rep. Dan Shaul, who is sponsoring the proposed map likely to maintain a 6-2 Republican edge.

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LIGHT

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just project light out in every direction instead of sending it down to the ground. That's what causes some lights to glare right into your eyes or up into the sky.

Sending all of that unnecessary light into the sky not only reduces the visibility of the night sky, but also creates a number of issues with animals. The bright white or blue lights that are popular on fixtures and vehicles, which have a light temperature of about 4,000 or 5,000 kelvin, mimic sunlight or moonlight. Animals, including humans, have a natural drive to stay awake when the sun is out. So circadian rhythms are disrupted when all this extra light at night makes the body feel like the sun is still out.

That extra light disrupts birds that migrate at night based on the moon, sending them off course and into peril. It affects bugs and insects that navigate based on light and are key parts of the food chain, whether that's to be food for other animals or because they pollinate plants. One example Gokhale uses is how many bugs get killed in a porch light because they mistakenly fly to their death.

“Your porch light is just one light, but if you start counting across the entire city, start counting over the entire state, then you start to see it's affecting

our pollinators. And that's bad for us because our food chain relies on those pollinators,” Gokhale said.

There aren't mustache-twirling villains plotting out light pollution schemes. The issue, Gokhale said, is that intrusive lights are so commonplace that no one considers the adverse effects.

“There aren't people sitting around town in administrative buildings or residences saying, ‘Let's see what I can do to ruin the night sky,’” Gokhale said. “Nobody does that. But the problem is even worse: No one even thinks about it. It's just instinctive. ‘This bulb costs \$10 and consumes this much electricity. But this bulb costs \$15 and consumes 100 times less energy.’ You buy the same wattage because it's more efficient without thinking if it's the right fit for the kind of fixture you have. That's the problem.”

And even though modern LEDs are more efficient than the light bulbs of old, having too many lights on still wastes energy.

How to address it

Gokhale has been studying light pollution in the area for a few years now. While last year's “Illuminate” symposium is mainly an introductory class to help integrate freshman students with community topics, as all of Truman's freshman symposiums are, a few of last year's students have joined Gokhale's research group.

Those students have been proactive in reaching out to Truman and city leaders about how to address the problem.

“This just seemed — like Vayu always says, it's the world's easiest problem to solve,” Smith said. “It's super easy to see light is going where it's not supposed to. Someone didn't think about what they were doing and the consequences of what would happen if you put a light in a different place.”

One solution is to replace light fixtures or put shields onto current fixtures so the light is aimed toward the ground. Another fix is to change the color of lights. A more yellow or cream-colored light, around 3,000 kelvin, is less intrusive.

“The thing that we are trying to impress on people, the administration and the general public is we are all in favor of good outdoor lighting,” Gokhale said. “How we define good outdoor lighting is what we are trying to make people understand. Just adding more lights doesn't solve the problem. We can make fewer lights work if all that light is going where it needs to go. It's not casting dark shadows or glaring into your eyes, it's going toward the ground where it needs to go. We'll all feel safer and get dark skies. It's not a zero-sum game.”

Students in the “Illuminate” class mapped out lights on Truman's campus. They counted about 350 lights and roughly two-thirds of them are globe lights. Those are circular fixtures that send light out in every direction.

Sam Guth, Truman's physical plant director/safety coordinator, said the university has been adding shields to those globe lights over the last few years. He said roughly 150 shields have been added and there are about 50 or 60 shields that will go up as his department is available to do so.

Guth said he has had talks with Gokhale about how the university can fix light pollution. The globe lights are slowly being ad-

dressed and Guth thinks color changes are likely in the future. Right now, he said the yellow-ish lights aren't as commercially available or as cheap as current LEDs for the university to make a big switch.

“Nobody's opposed to this,” Guth said. “We're supportive of it as long as it's within our realm to do it at the same cost as our normal replacement program.”

“When they do become (more commercially) available, which I think they will, we'd be more than happy to jump on that boat.”

With better and more adequate light, Gokhale thinks the number of total lights can be reduced. He thinks the university could get by with much fewer than 350 lights around campus. And he doesn't see that as reducing safety on campus. Glares and bright lights going right into someone's eyes reduces visibility and decreases safety.

He compares it to new cars with the bright blue headlights. If you're driving down the interstate and a vehicle with those lights is going the opposite direction, shining right into your eyes, your vision is drastically hampered.

“You're hoping and praying that there's no deer in front of you,” Gokhale said. “There's more light around you, you should feel more safe. Do you feel safe when that happens? Of course not. It's the same with static lights on the street. If there's too many lights going into your eye, your eye naturally contracts, then your (pupil) becomes smaller and it's harder to see fainter and smaller objects.”

Thousand Hills State Park

Another project for Gokhale and his students is getting an Urban Night Sky Place designation for Thousand Hills State Park. To get that designation, some changes will have to happen at the park.

Ryan Persinger, the superintendent at Thousand Hills, said lights around

the park will have to get shields and switch to the warmer color bulbs. He said that should be a relatively easy change to make. The park would also set a precedent for sticking with those kinds of lights for any future buildings that are built. Persinger said there aren't many lights around the park, estimating more than 50. There are lights on the outside of all cabins and park buildings. He said Ameren controls the lights in parking lots, so that's something those entities will have to work together on. Ameren also manages most of the city's lights.

Only five parks in the United States have received Urban Night Sky Place designations from the International Dark-Sky Association. The most recent is also in Missouri. Stacy Park, a municipal park in Olivette, received that designation in October.

If Thousand Hills could join those ranks, which Persinger thinks will happen, that would be another selling point for the park.

“It's good to let the general public know that even Missouri is a great place to see the night sky,” Persinger said. “You don't have to go out west to the Grand Canyon or places like that to see the night sky. You can do that here in Missouri.”

The park is trying to add more stargazing programming because Persinger knows that audience is out there. But when he's out at the park at night, he sees Kirksville's glow into the park. Persinger said he knew about light pollution before meeting Gokhale but was unaware of the many other tertiary impacts.

“You don't think about it, but once you know about it, you notice it. And when you think about it, you realize Kirksville is going to continue to grow and we're going to continue having residential areas growing toward the park,” Persinger said. “Light pollution's going to get worse if we don't do anything about it now. If we don't do anything about it, you're not going to be

able to see the night sky when you're here.”

Moving forward

Gokhale isn't sounding the alarm just yet. Right now, he said he's just trying to start having conversations that haven't been had. He feels as more people become aware of what is happening, the temperature on the topic rises, then changes will come.

As Guth said, Truman appears interested in addressing the issue on campus. After students have sent letters to Mayor Zac Burden and a member of the Lakes, Parks and Recreation Commission, the topic is getting to city leaders.

Pittsburgh recently passed a dark sky ordinance, announcing it will replace bulbs and fixtures with warmer lights. There are 35 International Dark Sky Communities, none in Missouri.

As an astronomer, of course Gokhale wants to be able to see stars and constellations from his backyard. Not seeing them is one symptom, and he's more concerned about the effects on animals and wasted energy. But stargazing is a longstanding activity that ties humans together across centuries.

“What is something humans do today that they also did 100 years ago? Two hundred years ago? Five hundred years ago? One thousand years ago? Ten thousand years ago? Our lifestyles have changed so much, and no one knew anything about computers 100 years ago. No one knew about phones and how you could just sit here and call someone in China or in India without thinking twice.

“That common thing that we've done for eons, one of those is sitting outside with a crystal clear night sky, look up in the sky and wonder. Who are we? Why are we here? What is our place in the universe? What is out there? Imagine your grandchildren or great grandchildren not having access to that sense of wonder. ... You can't put a dollar amount on it.”

Attention local landlords

A.T. Still University (ATSU) Student Life will assist local rental property owners with listing their properties for incoming students from mid-January through June 30, 2022. If you are interested in listing a rental property, please contact ATSU Student Life at 660.626.2693 between the hours of 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, or by email at studentlife@atsu.edu.



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OBITUARIES

Donald Wayman

Sunday, January 9, 2022

Donald T. Wayman, 84, of Novinger, Missouri, passed away Sunday, January 9, 2022.

Donald was born December 7, 1937, the son of Talbert Wayman and Wanda (Fountain) Wayman. On June 16, 1959, near Novinger, Donald was united in marriage to Lois Ann Brawner.

Donald is survived by two sons and one daughter-in-law: Roger Wayman from Kirksville Missouri, Rusty (Kim) Wayman of Novinger, Missouri; two daughters and sons-in-law: Susan (Paul) Hazen of Kirksville, Missouri, and Nancy (Tim) Findling of Novinger, Missouri; his longtime girlfriend Betty Wood of LaPlata, Missouri; and his brother Bill (Annell) Wayman of Buena Vista, Colorado. Donald is also survived by 7 grandchildren: Jason (Katie) Wayman, Emily (Justin) Bushnell, Thomas Hazen, Liam Hazen, Colin Hazen, Holly Findling, and Wesley Findling; and 3 great-grandchildren: Raylee Bushnell, Alivia Wayman, and Westin Wayman. Donald was preceded in death by his mother, when he was an infant, his father and stepmother, and one brother, Gary Wayman.

Donald was a lifelong resident of the area. After graduating from Greentop High School, Donald moved to the rural Novinger area where he began farming with his maternal grandparents. He was a successful farmer in row cropping, beef cattle and operated a major hog operation. Donald's Grandad Fountain started Donald with nine head of cows and Donald turned that into 350 head by retaining heifers, never purchasing. Donald was a member



of the Kirksville Moose Lodge and the Masonic Lodge No. 105, A.F. & A.M. He served as president of the Novinger R-I School Board when his children were in school. Donald took great pride in his kids' activities, rarely missing a sporting or other event.

Donald was generous to the community by supporting the Novinger Labor Day Celebration with the donation of hogs, the baseball/softball association with a scoreboard, etc. Donald and Betty enjoyed gardening and canning and sharing his numerous garden items. He planted and worked a large garden for as long as he was physically able to do so. Donald was known for his hard work, long hours, and wanting things done the right way... which was "his" way. Donald greatly enjoyed seeing his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as well members of Betty's family. He could also be quite the prankster and loved playing jokes on others with his medicated rock, mouse in a box, fake poop, etc.

Funeral services will be held at 1:30 Wednesday, January 12, 2022, at Travis-Noe Funeral Home in Kirksville, Missouri with Reverend Alan Coonfield officiating. Masonic services will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday. Family will receive friends from 11:00 to 1:30 on Wednesday, January 12. Interment will follow the service at Jewell Cemetery, rural Kirksville, Missouri.

Pallbearers will be Jason Wayman, Emily Bushnell, Thomas Hazen, Liam Hazen, Colin Hazen, and Wesley Findling.

Expressions of sympathy in memory of Donald may be made to the Jewell Church Cemetery Fund and left at/mailed to Travis-Noe Funeral Home, P.O. Box 306, Kirksville, Missouri.

Lucille Virginia York

January 5, 2022

Lucille Virginia (Starbuck) York, 94, of Kirksville, Missouri died January 5, 2022 at The Pines in Kirksville, Missouri.

The daughter of Perley Floyd and Bes-sie (Johnson) Starbuck, she was born November 13, 1927 in Queen City, Missouri.

In December of 1949, in Kirksville, Missouri she was united in marriage to Ola Nelson York. Lucille graduated from Northeast Missouri State University earning both a Bachelor's and Master's degree. Lucille taught elementary education for over thirty years starting her career in a one room schoolhouse. Lucille had many creative interests. She was an avid reader, gardener, artist, musician, quilter and had several cats she loved dearly throughout the years. Lucille was a member of the Full Gospel Church. Lucille's faith was strong and she spent her final days with family, calm with the knowledge that she was going to her true home with the Lord.

Lucille is survived by one son, Ola Dean York of Greentop, Missouri; two daughters, Judy L. York of Kirksville, Missouri and Gloria 1. (Michael) Eppley of Springfield, Illinois; granddaughter, Claire E. Eppley of Springfield, Illinois and brother Floyd (Peggy) Starbuck of Kirksville, Missouri.

Lucille was preceded in death by her parents, her brother Gerald and two sisters Buelah "Kathy" Kelly and Wilma, who passed as a child.

A private family service will be held.

Memorial contributions may be made to Myers Cemetery, Queen City, Missouri and may be entrusted with Davis-Playle-Hudson-Rimer Funeral Home 2100 E. Shepherd Kirksville, MO 63501



Missouri man who killed, buried wife sentenced to 28 years

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — A judge on Friday sentenced a Missouri man to 28 years in prison — the maximum he could impose — for the 2019 killing of his wife, whose body he buried in a state park and whose death he misled the authorities about for more than a year.

The sentence Judge Brouck Jacobs gave to 26-year-old Joseph Elledge was the one jurors recommended in November when they convicted Elledge of second-degree murder in the killing of his wife, Mengqi Ji, 28. Ji met Elledge after she moved to the U.S. from China to study engineering at the University of Missouri.

Before Jacobs handed down his sentence, which couldn't have exceeded the jury's recommended one, Boone County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Knight called for him to put Elledge behind bars for as long as he could, KOMU-TV reported.

"The defendant deserves no break because he displayed no remorse," Knight said.

Knight also called Elledge the "biggest complainer in the history of the Boone County Jail," noting that he filed 28 grievances about its temperature and the noise made by its heating system, plumbing, faucets, toilets and TV. Elledge called the noises "cruel and unusual punishment."

Elledge's second-degree murder conviction will require him to serve at least 85% of his sentence before being eligible for parole.

Elledge reported Ji miss-

ing in October 2019, prompting months of extensive searches. Her remains were found last March in a park near Columbia, where the couple lived.

During the trial, Knight described Elledge as a "stone cold killer" and argued that he was guilty of first-degree murder because he intentionally killed Ji. Prosecutors used social media posts, audiotapes and a journal Elledge kept to document the couple's volatile relationship.

But Elledge said Ji's death was accidental. He said Ji fell and hit her head on Oct. 8, 2019, after he pushed her during an argument, and that he found her dead in bed the next morning. He said he panicked, put her body in the trunk of her car and didn't report what happened while he tried to decide what to do.

On Oct. 10, 2019, with the couple's then-year-old daughter in the car, Elledge drove to Rock Bridge State Park, about 5 miles (8 kilometers) south of Columbia. There, he dug a grave and buried Ji not far from where he had proposed to her. He then returned home and reported her missing.

Elledge's attorney Scott Rosenblum argued that his client was awkward and made "unbelievably dumb" decisions after Ji died, but that he never intended to kill his wife and should not have been charged with murder. Rosenblum filed a motion for a new trial, but Jacobs denied it.

Elledge said he discovered in the days before Ji's death that she had been exchanging sexually suggestive mes-

sages on social media with a man from China. He also testified that the couple's relationship suffered because of tension caused by her parents, who moved from China to live with them after their daughter was born in October 2018.

But Knight said in an interview with The Associated Press on Friday night that the defense "fabricated" the story that Ji's death was accidental. Knight said Rosenblum said in a 2020 bond hearing that Ji "took off."

He said he wasn't able to question Elledge or Rosenblum about the discrepancy because of attorney-client privilege.

"I wish I would have been successful in convicting him of murder in the first degree," Knight said. "It didn't happen. The defense asked for an outright acquittal. We were a lot closer in getting what we wanted than the defense."

The couple met in 2015 at Nanova, a company that makes dental products, where Ji was Elledge's supervisor. They began dating the following year and eventually traveled to China, where Elledge asked Ji's parents for permission to marry her. The couple married in 2017.

Ji earned a master's degree in mechanical and aerospace engineering from the University of Missouri in December 2014. Elledge was a student at the university when his wife died.

The family's attorney, Amy Salladay, said in a statement that Ji's parents, Ke Ren and Xiaolin Ji, are grateful that Jacobs upheld the jurors' recommended sentence.

being a swing district.

The proposed map also would slightly boost the Democratic vote share in Cleaver's 5th District by dropping rural areas and focusing the district more tightly on the Kansas City area.

Shaul said his proposed map splits fewer counties and voting districts that the current map and is designed to withstand a potential court challenge. Several leaders from the Ray County community of Richmond — population 6,000 — opposed the map Monday because it would split their city between two congressional districts. Some committee members expressed an openness to changing that before an expected vote on Wednesday.

SCHOOLS

Continued from Page A1

credits that can be issued in the program's first year at \$25 million and a requirement tying the program to state transportation aid being funded at 40%, were changes added over the course of last year's session to gain support.

Brattin's bill doesn't include geographic limits — which have long been a feature that's been centered around the debate on expanding charter schools in Missouri — and would open the program to students across the state. It also does not include a transportation funding trigger.

"Why, because of your ZIP code or where you're located, should you be stymied from being able to have access to go somewhere that's going to educate your kids?" Brattin said.

Rather than being funded through donations to nonprofits that donors could receive tax credits for, the expanded program under Brattin's bill would be funded by an appropriation state lawmakers would allocate.

In order to receive the funds, which would equal the amount of state aid students' resident districts would have normally received, parents would also have to agree they would not enroll their student in a public or charter school — limiting options to private school, home schooling or virtual education.

The bill would also change the order in which eligible students had been prioritized to receive funds, and remove the prioritization of special needs students with an approved individualized education plan, or IEP.

Instead, the bill would first prioritize students who had previously received grants. Next would be students whose families' income is at or below the income standard to qualify for free or reduced price lunch — a little over \$49,000 for a family of four — and lastly to students whose families' income is two times that amount — a little over \$98,000 for a family of four.

If the number of eligible students exceeds the amount of funding, then a lottery would be held

to select students for remaining grants. Once a student receives a grant, they would remain eligible regardless of income changes.

The funds would also be managed by "private financial management firms" rather than nonprofits, but still be overseen by the state Treasurer's office.

Koenig, who had not yet reviewed Brattin's bill, said he would be in favor of expanding the ESA program, but noted he personally did not file a bill to do so, "because there's going to be a lot of opposition until we see it up and running."

Work has been underway in the Treasurer's Office to implement the program. Emails obtained through a records request under Missouri's open records law show Treasurer's Office staff have weighed questions on how the program will function, like when tax credits can be authorized under the bill, and have looked at how states with similar programs operate, like Florida.

Mary Compton, a spokeswoman for Treasurer Scott Fitzpatrick, said Friday that Fitzpatrick is supportive of eliminating the geographic limitations in the ESA program and increasing funding to provide more students access to it.

It remains to be seen if lawmakers will attempt to make less sweeping changes to the current ESA program.

At the end of the session last year, concerns were raised about a transportation trigger that kicks off the program being tied to transportation funding allocated in fiscal year 2021, rather than each subsequent year.

Rep. Phil Christofaneli, R-St. Peters and the sponsor of the bill that founded the ESA program, previously said the trigger was written as intended. Koenig said last week he didn't feel the trigger needed to be changed.

Meanwhile, opponents of the program say they're still not satisfied with its current parameters and would like to see it implemented before expansions are made.

"We should be investing in programs where we're seeing great outcomes. And before we even have any data to expand a program that

hasn't currently been implemented, I don't think that that's the right approach," said Sen. Lauren Arthur, a Kansas City Democrat who voted against the ESA's passage last year.

Arthur, a former teacher who's taught in a charter school, said she hopes to see the ESA program amended, including to more strongly target aiding the students it was intended to prioritize, like low-income students.

Other education issues on deck

Lawmakers have also refiled school choice bills to tackle discrepancies in charter school funding, access to virtual education and to expand charter schools.

One proposal that, like the ESA bill, narrowly passed out of the House last year was a bill that would create a voluntary open enrollment system within public schools. This year, a version of the program is also being sponsored by O'Laughlin, R-Shelbina and the chair of the Senate Education Committee, who said she hopes it would help schools be more responsive to parents.

"Schools need to understand and accept that parents are the primary factor in kids' lives," O'Laughlin said. "They're not all perfect and all that, but this kind of thing makes them accept that fact."

A bipartisan group of senators have also identified improving literacy as an issue they hope to collaborate on through legislation this session.

"I'm hoping we can find some consensus and that we all again focus on the common sense areas where there's agreement as opposed to what are polarizing, and in my mind, unproductive topics," Arthur said.

But Republican lawmakers' have signaled their intent this session to push legislation born out of backlash to school boards and discussion on how issues of race and history are taught in the classroom.

The first bills on deck to be heard in the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee Tuesday include legislation that would establish versions of a "Parents' Bill of Rights" and to allow for school board members to be recalled.

MAP

Continued from Page A2

Other Republican committee members, though expressing opposition to abortion, also raised concerns about pressing for a map with an expected 7-1 advantage.

"I think in just about every scenario that I've tried to play out in my mind of a 7-1 map, it seems to me that we lose, and we could be in a worse situation for the cause of pro-life," said Republican state Rep. Ben Baker, of Neosho.

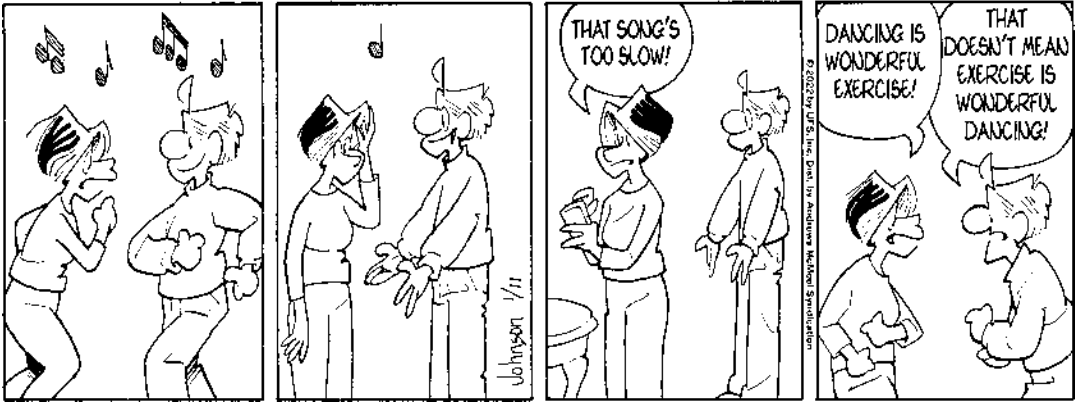
Other Republican committee members also expressed concerns about trying to maximize Republican gains. They said the Senate,

where bills can be filibustered, was unlikely to pass a 7-1 map. They also noted that House Republicans would need at least some Democratic support to pass an emergency clause on a bill, which is necessary for a redistricting map to take effect in time for Missouri's August primary elections.

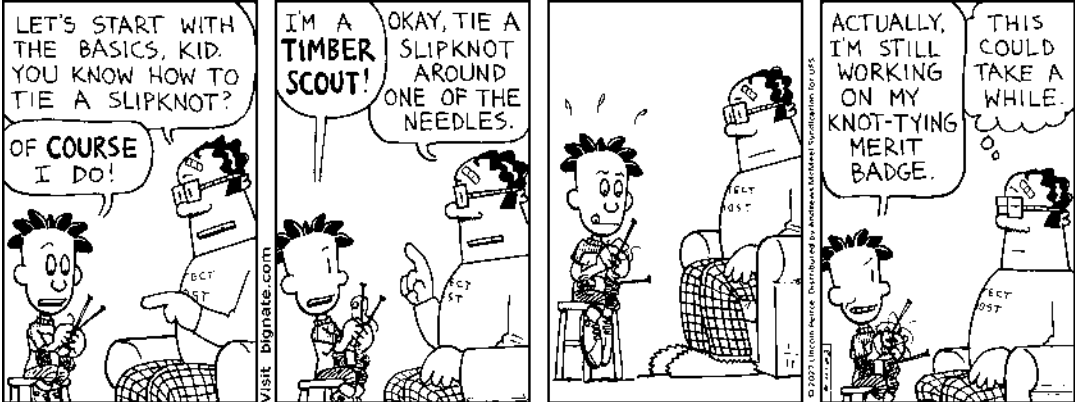
Shaul described his proposed map as a good starting point.

It would slightly boost the Republican vote share in the 2nd District in suburban St. Louis, according to political data from Missouri's 2018 and 2020 elections provided by state House redistricting staff. The 2nd District, held by Republican Rep. Ann Wagner, is the closest thing Missouri currently has to

ARLO AND JANIS



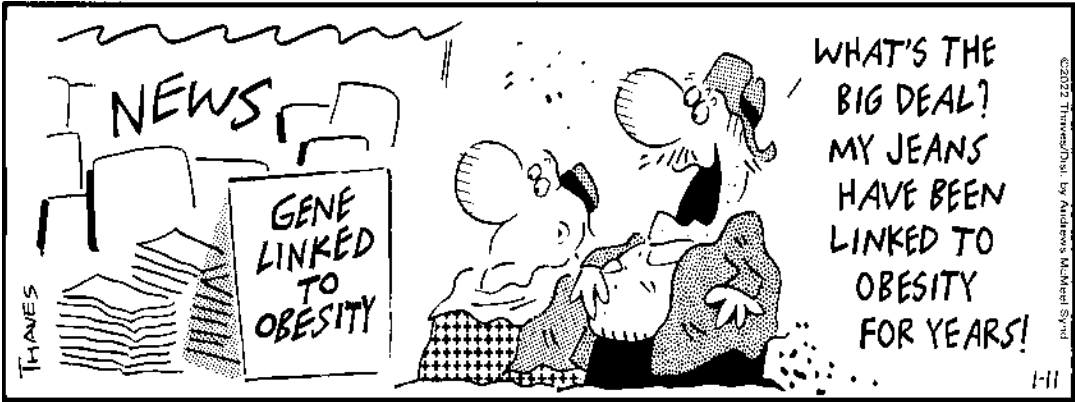
BIG NATE



THE BORN LOSER



FRANK AND ERNEST



MONTY



THAT A BABY



SUDOKU

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

PREVIOUS ANSWER

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

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

CROSSWORD

- ACROSS
- 1 DJs' gear
- 5 Extinct bird
- 9 Be very frugal
- 12 In good order
- 13 Jug
- 14 Half a score
- 15 Roulette color
- 16 Foot soldiers
- 18 Shade providers
- 20 Jeweled ornament
- 21 Scam
- 22 Dr. Casey of 1960s TV
- 23 Temple city of Japan
- 26 Full of passion
- 29 Don the feedbag
- 30 Goddess of victory
- 32 Took legal action
- 34 Sculpture and dance
- 36 Go on horseback
- 38 Jay's successor
- 39 Kingdom
- 41 Honking birds
- 43 Magazine execs
- 44 Hit sharply
- 45 Pond scum
- 48 Alaskan brown bears
- 52 Just treatment (2 wds.)
- 54 Border
- 55 Barbecue tidbit
- 56 Prefix for "trillion"
- 57 Bouquet
- 58 Tribute in verse
- 59 Deal in
- 60 Garden access
- DOWN
- 1 Writer — Sewell
- 2 Kitty's greeting
- 3 Ache
- 4 Inflexible
- 5 See fit
- 6 Buys
- 7 Phone trio

Answer to Previous Puzzle

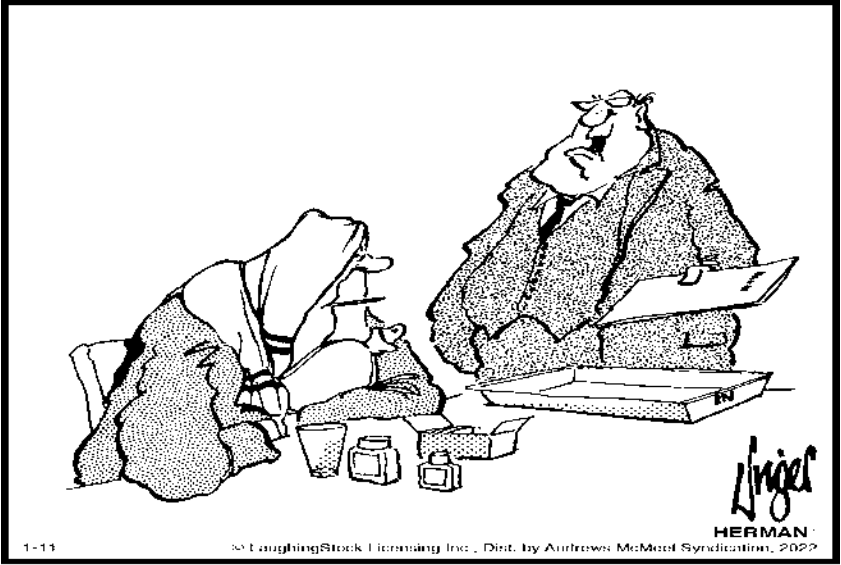
DUG		MAC		LAUD
ORO		SAFE		ULNA
TAB		PYRE		LOID
	LIBRA		ALEX	
		IAN	ESE	
ELBOW		TOP	DOG	
LOU	LAWN		AID	
FOR	VISA		FLU	
	PRIVET		TASTE	
		ROC	FOB	
	GROW		ENSUE	
ALAN	NUDE		FAQ	
GIVE	UTES		OCT	
ABED	TAX		SHY	

- 8 Spouted rhetoric
- 9 James or Kett
- 10 Actress Deborah —
- 11 New Age singer
- 17 Playing cards
- 19 Whistle time
- 22 Propagated
- 23 Green parrot
- 24 Gridiron gain
- 25 Director — Preminger
- 26 Comparable
- 27 Microwave, slangily
- 28 Herbal concoctions
- 31 Late spring flower
- 33 Tint
- 35 Discredit
- 37 "By Jove!"
- 40 Masters
- 42 Afterword (Var.)
- 44 Palace dweller
- 45 Big coif
- 46 Placed
- 47 Sarcastic remark
- 48 NBA great — Malone
- 49 Slave girl of opera
- 50 Put on a tie
- 51 Dried-up
- 53 Singer Peggy —

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
12					13					14		
15					16					17		
18				19				20				
			21				22					
23	24	25				26				27	28	
29				30	31				32			33
34			35		36			37		38		
	39			40				41	42			
			43				44					
45	46	47				48				49	50	51
52					53				54			
55					56				57			
58					59				60			

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HERMAN



ASTROGRAPH BY EUGENIA LAST

Embrace change and turn your ideas into opportunities. Take the plunge and live up to your expectations. Step outside your comfort zone. Trust yourself, not someone else. You'll gain insight into who you are and what you can do. Let your imagination lead the way and your intuition keep you on track.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) -- Consider your options and do your homework. Carving out a path that will make your every move count will build confidence. Verify and process information before you act on it or pass it along.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) -- Sit tight and listen carefully. Don't pass along information if you can't verify the facts. Consider what you can do to make a difference. Volunteer to help a cause you believe in.

PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20) -- Less talk and more action will help you gain momentum. The way you handle others will display your nerve. Stop worrying about what others think; do what you know is the right thing to do.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) -- Monitor the changes going on around you. Don't make a move until you feel comfortable. Focus on getting things right the first time. Take better care of your health and well-being.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) -- You'll have trouble making up your mind. Don't expect others to agree with you or offer help without getting something in return. Put more effort into how you present yourself. Romance is featured.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) -- You'll have the right idea, but getting others on board won't be so easy.

Don't waste time trying to convince others to see things your way. Move forward alone and let your achievements speak for you.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) -- The changes you bring about will encourage you to expand your knowledge and skills to keep up with trends. Time spent with a loved one will enhance your relationship. Team up with a valuable partner.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) -- Concentrate on what you want to achieve. Physical action will be rewarding and ensure that you get things done to your specification. Refuse to let someone take charge or disrupt your plans.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) -- Go where the action is, then listen and observe. The information you receive will help you decide on your next move. Go about your business and let others do as they please.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) -- Resolve financial and domestic matters. Think outside the box, and you'll come up with a plan that will save you money and encourage a positive change. Do what's best for you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) -- Do what you need to do. If you are wishy-washy, you'll confuse others, making it more difficult to finish what you start. Be open to suggestions and do the necessary legwork. Romance is favored.

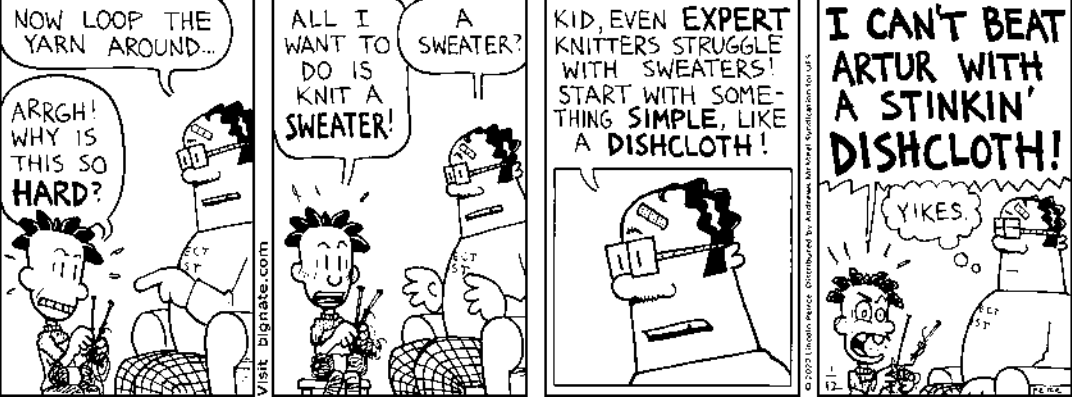
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) -- Don't mess around when it comes to the facts. Spell out precisely what you want to say, and when someone gives you a hazy response, ask direct questions. Find out where you stand.

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ARLO AND JANIS



BIG NATE



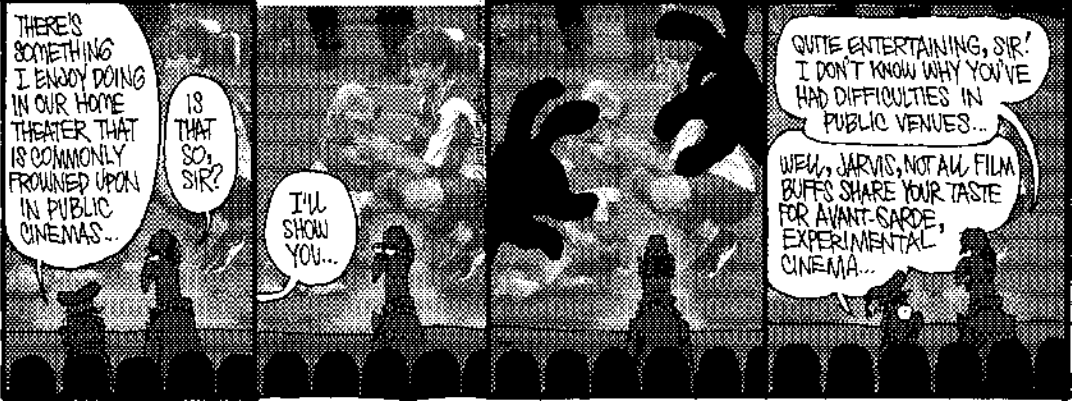
THE BORN LOSER



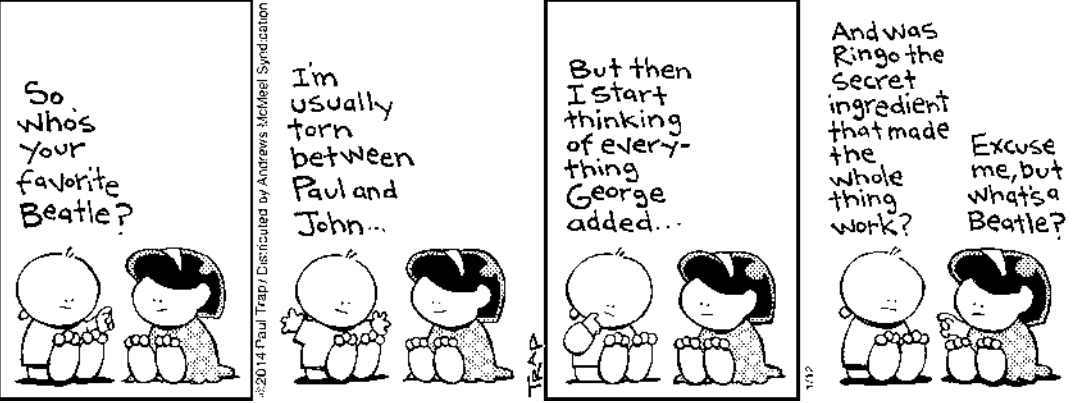
FRANK AND ERNEST



MONTY



THAT A BABY



SUDOKU

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PREVIOUS ANSWER

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

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

CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- 1 — choy
4 Triumphant cry
7 A Ponderosa son
11 That, to Jaime
12 Popcorn add-on
14 Exhaust
15 Under-handed
16 Fodder storage
17 Caesar's garment
18 More quickly
20 Belgian sleuth Hercule
22 Hesitant sounds
23 Damage the finish
24 Attic item
27 Packing a wallop
30 Sweet wine
31 Claptrap
32 Ooola's guy
34 Floor covering
35 Maine, from Oregon
- DOWN**
- 1 Porgy's love
2 King Harald's capital
3 Floor for good
4 Say confidently
5 Salon sweepings
- 36 Siskel or Kelly
37 Traffic circle
39 Violinist's aid
40 Ozarks st.
41 Not decaf.
42 Garlicky dish
45 Like some battles
49 Opera box
50 Billionth, in combos
52 — Paulo
53 Difficult duty
54 Wins at rummy
55 Curve
56 Insect pest
57 Caustic substance
58 Talk, talk, talk

Answer to Previous Puzzle

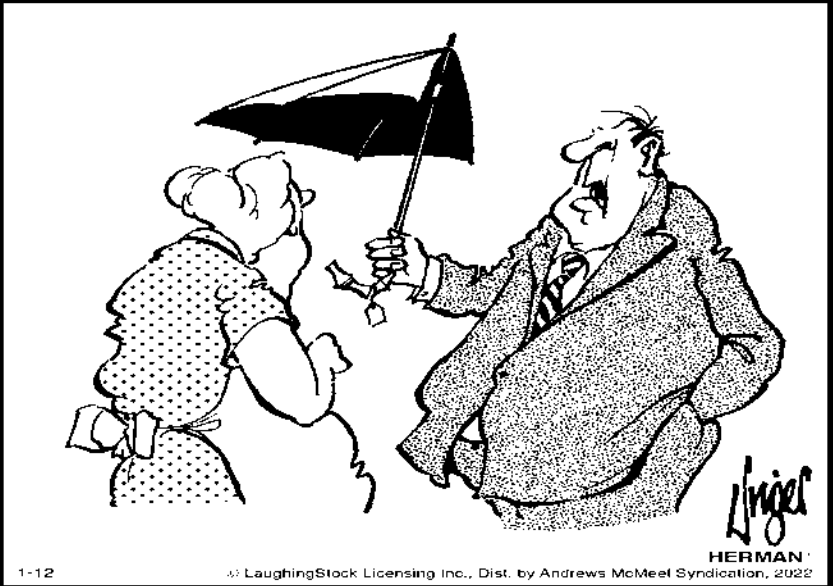
AMPS	DODO	EKE
NEAT	EWER	TEN
NOIR	INFANTRY	
AWNINGS	TIARA	
	CON	BEN
KYOTO	ARDENT	
EAT	NIKE	SUED
ARTS	RIDE	KAY
	DOMAIN	GEESE
	EDS	RAP
ALGAE	KODIAKS	
FAIRPLAY	LINE	
RIB	TERA	ODOR
ODE	SELL	GATE

- 6 Each and every
7 Threads
8 Name in fashion
9 Ship of myth
10 Steaks
13 Highest
19 Bluebird's residence
21 Court ritual
24 Paramedic's skill
25 College credit
26 Syllogism word
27 Small bunch of flowers
28 Thumbs-down votes
- 29 Writer Morrison
31 Yapping
33 Not a pencil
35 Marshal Wyatt —
36 Vincent van —
38 Least exciting
39 Rest
41 Watery
42 Plow through
43 NE state
44 Water, to Pedro
46 "Do as —!"
47 Angelina Jolie role
48 Deadbolt
51 Catch a bug

1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9	10
11				12			13		14		
15				16					17		
18			19				20	21			
			22				23				
24	25	26				27			28	29	
30					31				32		33
34					35				36		
	37		38					39			
			40				41				
42	43	44					45		46	47	48
49					50	51			52		
53					54				55		
56						57			58		

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HERMAN



"D'you believe this?! It said, 'Umbrellas 50% Off.'"

ASTROGRAPH BY EUGENIA LAST

Evaluate your living arrangements and do whatever it takes to add to your comfort. A healthy state of mind will ensure that you do your best in every aspect of life. Gravitate toward the people, activities and events that will encourage you to follow a satisfying path and support the lifestyle you want to live.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) -- Take the time to assess your priorities, and make sure you do something that puts a smile on your face. Surround yourself with people who are uplifting and eager to join the fun.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) -- Take a creative approach to the way you handle a friend, relative or colleague. Offer to do your fair share; you'll be surprised how quickly things progress.

PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20) -- You'll receive sound advice or an opportunity from someone who knows your capabilities. A change in direction will boost your confidence. Set up meetings or interviews, or send out resumes.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) -- Keep your wits about you and your finger on the pulse. Update information and carry on with confidence. Refuse to let what others do distract you. Channel your energy into preparation.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) -- Don't overthink what you must do. Trust in your ability to do what's right, and you'll avoid mistakes and deter someone from trying to take control. Stand tall and give your all.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) -- Put your energy where it counts. Learn all you can, and you'll be prepared to take on anyone and anything. Trust in

your intelligence and instincts, and you will best a competitor.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) -- A positive shift is heading your way. Be open to suggestions and offer friendly advice. What you want will fall into place. A partnership looks promising. Use your imagination.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) -- Revisit your long-term goals. Make adjustments that will encourage support from those you need on your team. A change of attitude is encouraged.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) -- Tidy up loose ends. Time is of the essence, and living up to your promises will be necessary to avoid criticism. Put your heart on the line, and be open with your affections.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) -- You're heading in the right direction. The information you gather will help you recognize the changes required to reach your goal. Embrace an adventure, but don't push others to get involved.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) -- Explore what life has to offer and how others fit into your plans. Expand your workspace if it will help you get ahead. Attend a meeting or event that offers valuable information.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) -- If you mix business with pleasure, you'll discover something interesting that will encourage you to use your skills differently. Don't feel compelled to act in haste due to outside pressure.

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Truman women’s basketball building momentum through adversity

Austin Miller
Daily Express

It’s tough for the Truman women’s basketball team to recognize itself as the team that started back in November.

The Bulldogs (8-5) lost four non-conference games at tournaments, the first time since 2016-17 that the program lost four games in the November-December portion of the schedule. And with a three-point loss to Missouri-St. Louis on Dec. 2 to start conference play, the Bulldogs lost their fifth game — matching the total number of games they lost in a condensed 2020-21 season.

Now winners of five straight since the UMSL loss, Truman feels like it finally has some positive momentum.

“I really think we started off so rocky,” said forward Ellie Weltha said. “When we looked at the season, we were like, ‘We’re missing some pieces, we’re going to be moving some pieces around a lot more, and we’re not yet sure who’s going to get where.’ The start of the season was really rough and really slow, honestly. But I think we’ve really honed in on developing and doing the little things right. Those games we lost, we lost because we didn’t do the little things right. We’ve put an emphasis on that in practices. Not turning the ball over, smarter passes, utilizing mismatches and really exploiting other teams. I don’t think we did a good job of that at the beginning of the year, now we’re progressing and doing a lot better.”

Only one of Truman’s losses was by double digits, so those were all games the team was in. Replacing two starters,



Truman's Hannah Belanger looks for a driving lane during a game against Lewis. AUSTIN MILLER/DAILY EXPRESS

building up a bench with several young players — those are facets that stuck out in the team’s first games. The younger players have a better sense of what is expected of them, what their roles are, and how they mesh with the veterans.

“I think anything comes with playing. You can’t just step in and be like, ‘This is what I’m going to do, everyone,’” said point guard Hannah Belanger, who surpassed 1,000 career points in last Thursday’s win over Lewis. “They have to figure out (how everyone) plays and then learn how to play off of them. It was the same thing when I was a freshman. ... It comes with experience, it comes with playing, and that’s what practice is for.”

“It’s so much different. Even as a unit, if you watched us play back

then to now, we don’t even look like the same team,” Weltha said. “The things we’re doing, the reads we have — girls have really matured and figured out reads and certain plays. At the same time, we’re playing together and is really nice to see.”

In that 83-75 win at home over Lewis last week, Belanger converted eight straight free throw attempts to secure the win. The Bulldogs also had a number of key defensive stops to stay ahead.

The Bulldogs missed out on some of those chances in early games that they lost.

“Watching us early on, especially in non-conference, we had games like (the Lewis win) that we lost,” said coach Theo Dean. “We had them where we didn’t hit the free throws or we didn’t get the stop, we didn’t

get the rebound. Whether some of these young kids were in those moments or not, they saw the talks and they saw the film that happened afterwards to show them.

“It’s all about, ‘I’m in this moment, we’ve been in this moment before, let’s not make the same mistake we had before and we’re going to have a different result.’ I think we’ve done a great job of that.”

And now the Bulldogs deal with a different form of adversity. In the beginning, there were some injuries mixed in with the youth movement, but the Bulldogs avoided COVID issues. That hasn’t been the case recently.

Truman beat McKendree 79-55 on Saturday with eight players. They had nine against Lewis and 10 in a Jan. 4 win over Quincy.

Starters Belanger, Weltha and Katey Klucking — and freshman Emma Bulman — are the only Bulldogs who have played in all 13 games this season. Dean expects to start getting players back this week, but in the meantime, the players who are dressed have made it work.

Sophomore Claire Rake got her first career start in the Lewis game. She then set an early career-high in the McKendree game, scoring 21 points and going 6-for-14 from behind the arc. Freshman forward Maddie Niemeier is averaging nine minutes a game and is showing like the program’s next great rebounder. Freshman Gracie Stugart has stepped in as a backup point guard right away. And players like Nicole Dorn and Gabby Nielsen, who haven’t gotten much

time in the past, are getting more minutes.

Deciding on starters and rotations recently might have been like musical chairs for Dean the last few weeks, but he thinks that can pay off in February and March. He’s had players step up when he needed them to. Then he can count on them to perform when they have to.

“We haven’t played one game this season with our whole 15,” Dean said. “Our depth is amazing. I knew the longer the season went on and people continued to develop, we could go 12, 13 or 15 deep. It’s just unfortunate we haven’t been able to do it. But they’re not waiting to see if they’re getting in, they know they’re getting in. It’s definitely caused them to do what I expect them to do: focus on that gameplan, get extra shots up, and know all of those things. Because you don’t know if we need you to play 20 minutes ... or if you need to fill your 8 to 10 minutes.”

And that’s a great trend to look ahead to after how last season ended. Truman’s starting five carried the bulk of the load at the end of last year and in the postseason, so depth was a big area of focus for this season. With players getting thrust into different or larger positions early on, Dean feels there has been a quicker turnaround to building that bench.

“That helps you, as a coach, not be in the position we were in last year where we were in March and we were dead,” Dean said. “That’s definitely the plan. Hopefully COVID doesn’t keep moving around, but if it does, people are going to be thrown into positions they might not have been if we were fully healthy.”

From north to east, NFL firings begin on day after finales

By BARRY WILNER
AP Pro Football Writer

From the NFC North to the AFC East, the firings began almost immediately after the NFL’s first 17-game season concluded.

The Vikings fired coach Mike Zimmer and general manager Rick Spielman on Monday following an 8-9 season. Division rival Chicago parted with coach Matt Nagy and GM Ryan Pace after going 6-11.

And in a relative surprise, Miami dismissed coach Brian Flores, whose Dolphins went 9-8, including a sweep of archrival New England.

Indeed, the career coaching records for each total 130-112-1.

Yet, while in South Florida the Dolphins seemed to be overachievers with a modest roster, both the Vikings and Bears were major disappointments this season.

As were the New York Giants (4-13), and general manager Dave Gettleman retired Monday, though he likely would have been fired otherwise.

One major problem for Minnesota and Chicago resides in neighboring Wisconsin: the Packers. While Green Bay is an NFL power and perennial championship contender, the Vikings and Bears have been more teasing than triumphant.



Miami Dolphins head coach Brian Flores directs his team during the second half of an NFL football game against the New England Patriots, Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022, in Miami Gardens, Fla. WILFREDO LEE - STAFF, AP



Chicago Bears head coach Matt Nagy, left, talks with Minnesota Vikings head coach Mike Zimmer, right, before an NFL football game, Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022, in Minneapolis. The Chicago Bears decided to make sweeping changes and fired general manager Ryan Pace and coach Matt Nagy on Monday. The Minnesota Vikings fired general manager Rick Spielman and head coach Mike Zimmer, also on Monday. BRUCE KLUCKHOHN - FREELANCER, FR170893 AP

“We are determined to have sustained success and bring Vikings fans the Super Bowl championships they expect and deserve,” owners Zygi and Mark Wilf said in their statement after letting go of Zim-

mer and Spielman.

Zimmer was 7-8-1 against the Packers, which isn’t bad considering how Green Bay has performed in recent years. It was simply not

See **NFL**, Page A8



Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes (15) waves after the Chiefs defeated the Denver Broncos in an NFL football game Saturday, Jan. 8, 2022, in Denver. JACK DEMPSEY - FREELANCER, FR42408 AP

Kansas City sluggishly enters playoffs with Pittsburgh up first

By DAVE SKRETTA
AP Sports Writer

The Kansas City Chiefs did what they had to Saturday, beating the Broncos on the road to finish up the regular season.

Too bad the Titans did what they had to Sunday, too.

So rather than have the No. 1 seed and a first-round bye, the Chiefs will face seventh-seeded Pittsburgh on Sunday night in the wild-card round at Arrowhead Stadium. It will be a rematch of a game from just a few weeks ago, when the Chiefs led 23-0 by halftime and rolled through the second half in a 36-10 romp.

“When you get a first-round bye, it’s more of a

win because you’re getting past a round in the playoffs, which are never easy,” Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes said. “But we’re ready to go wherever against whoever. We just go in with the mindset of we’re going to have to play each-and-every week to get back to that Super Bowl.”

The Chiefs didn’t exactly cruise into the playoffs, though. The hot streak they were on when they played Pittsburgh ended the next week, when the Bengals not only ended their eight-game win streak but also knocked them from first place in the conference.

And they weren’t exactly great against the Broncos on Saturday, either.

The Chiefs struggled to contain the Denver ground game, gave up too many long runs to fill-in Broncos quarterback Drew Lock and trailed on the scoreboard until the fourth quarter. That’s when linebacker Nick Bolton bailed them out by taking a fumble 86 yards for a score that finally gave Kansas City the lead for good in a 28-24 win.

“That was a big play. That was a big-time play by a big-time player,” Mahomes said. “That’s why we brought Melvin (Ingram III) over here: to make plays like that. He made a big play for us, Nick picked it up and got to the end zone.”

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LOCAL ROUNDUP

Jan. 8

High school boys basketball

- North Shelby 88, Novinger 47**
Novinger - No stats by deadline.
- Knox Co. 50, Clark Co. 36**
Knox - No stats by deadline.
High school girls basketball
- North Shelby 67, Novinger 36**
Novinger - Abbi Fountain, 21 points.
- Palmyra 54, Scotland Co. 37**
Scotland - Hannah Feeney, 17 points.

High school wrestling

- Kirksville @ Ottumwa Invite**
Kirksville - 4th place team finish; Bryce Kertz, 1st at 285 pounds; Chance McKim, 2nd at 113 pounds; Hunter Tarr, 2nd at 126 pounds; Jaden Ballinger, 2nd at 170 pounds; Lane Patterson, 3rd at 138 pounds.

Men’s college basketball

- McKendree 74, No. 16 Truman 73**
Truman - Masen Miller, 15 points; Dylan Peeters, 13 points, 11 rebounds; Elijah Hazekamp, 11 points, 9 rebounds.

Women’s college basketball

- Truman 79, McKendree 55**
Truman - Katey Klucking, career-high 28 points; Claire Rake, career-high 21 points; Ellie Weltha, 10 points, 14 rebounds.

Jan. 7

High school boys basketball

- Kirksville 48, Palmyra 28**
Kirksville - Keaton Anderson, 16 points; Ike Danielson, 15 points.
- Macon 53, Highland 45**
Macon - MyKel Linear, 16 points; Maurice Magruder, 12 points; Boston Douglas, 10 points.
- Putnam Co. 59, Milan 53**
Putnam - Landon Wood, 23 points; Gage Pearson, 12 points; Owen Ream, 12 points.
Milan - Chekh Niasse, 12 points; Jeremy Bennett, 12 points.
- La Plata 61, Linn Co. 56**
La Plata - Cutter St. Clair, 25 points; Kaden Safley, 16 points.
- Green City 77, North Shelby 64**
Green City - Asher Buggs-Tipton, 23 points; Grant O’Haver, 16 points; Brody Lunsford, 15 points; Aaron Peavler, 10 points.
- Novinger 60, Marion Co. 40**
Novinger - Wes Findling, 23 points; Jace Brownell, 20 points; Adrian Peterson, 11 points.
- Brashear 63, Bevier 35**
Brashear - Brandon Jochimsen, 39 points, 7 steals.
- Knox Co. 47, Canton 44**
Knox - No stats by deadline.
- Scotland Co., Clark Co.**
Not finished by deadline.

High school girls basketball

- Brashear 48, Bevier 25**
Brashear - No stats by deadline.
- Milan 57, Putnam Co. 24**
Milan - Cady Pauley, 39 points, 7 rebounds.
Putnam - No stats by deadline.
- North Shelby 38, Green City 32**
Green City - No stats by deadline.
- La Plata 72, Linn Co. 37**
La Plata - Paige Carvajal, 28 points; Claire Coy, 18 points; Brooklyn Carvajal, 11 points.
- Marion Co. 70, Novinger 20**
Novinger - Abbi Fountain, 13 points.

Tomlin’s leadership guides Steelers to unlikely playoff spot

By WILL GRAVES
AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — It sounded like wishful thinking at best. A throwaway line at worst for a coach bracing himself for imminent disappointment.

“I’m capable of talking myself in(to) anything,” Mike Tomlin said last week when asked about the seemingly unlikely series of events the Pittsburgh Steelers needed to unfold if they wanted to navigate their way to the playoffs.

Yet what could have come off as naive or trite instead provided a glimpse into Tomlin’s relentless tunnel vision, the kind that’s helped him guide the Steelers (9-7-1) to their 10th — and by far most unlikely — postseason appearance during his 15 years on the sideline.

Over the past four months, through injuries, uncharacteristically lopsided losses and a series of wins whose only saving grace was the final score — oh and that comical tie with Detroit — Tomlin’s message has not changed.

Down 29 at the half to Minnesota? Keep going. Steamrolled by Cincinnati ... twice? Keep going. Destroyed in Kansas City the day after Christmas? Keep going.

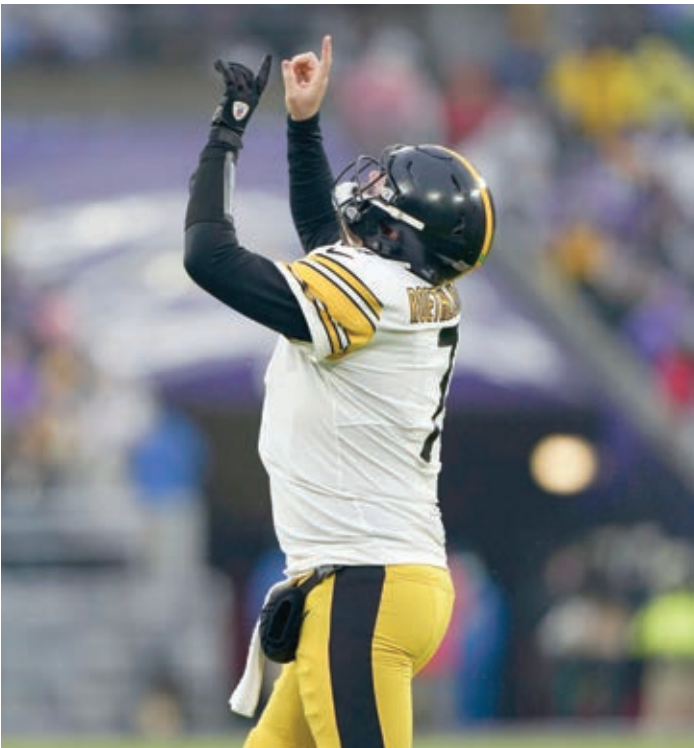
By comparison, needing a win in Baltimore in the regular-season finale, a loss by Indianapolis to a team so bad fans came dressed up as clowns and the game between the Chargers and Raiders to not end in a tie — which it nearly did — seemed doable.

“Whether we were winning or losing, whether we were up or down, it was always the same attitude, and that’s hard to find,” said wide receiver Ray-Ray McCLOUD, who has stunningly morphed from a punt return specialist to one of quarterback Ben Roethlisberger’s favorite options. “You never change your ways. You know you’ve just got to win.”

Something the Steelers somehow managed to do nine times this season — the 15th straight non-losing season under Tomlin’s watch, the longest by a coach to start a career in NFL history — despite finishing in the bottom third of the league in every major statistical category. Well, except for the most important one.

“I do think it shows something about this team, that you can continue to fight and never give up,” Roethlisberger said.

It’s a mindset that’s served as the backbone of Tomlin’s philosophy since the day he



Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger gestures after throwing a touchdown pass to wide receiver Chase Claypool during the second half of an NFL football game against the Baltimore Ravens, Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022, in Baltimore. EVAN VUCCI - STAFF, AP

replaced Bill Cowher in January 2007. He was 34 at the time and largely anonymous. Going on two decades later, Tomlin’s steadfastness keeps his team calm and tends to rattle opposing coaches.

How else to explain Cleveland and Tennessee — two of the best running teams in the NFL — turning to their quarterbacks instead when facing the worst rush defense in the league?

The Titans turned it over four times and lost despite allowing just 168 yards. The Browns seemed to forget they had Nick Chubb and tried to let Baker Mayfield beat the Steelers instead. It didn’t work either time.

If any of those three games go the other way, Pittsburgh’s season is over. If the Detroit Lions have their regular kicker instead of the backup punter attempting an overtime field goal during that strange tie in November, Pittsburgh’s season is over. If Baltimore coach John Harbaugh opts for overtime instead of going for 2 and the win during the rivals’ first meeting in December, Pittsburgh’s season is (maybe) over.

It’s not. The Steelers, with their minus-55 point differential, an offense that sputters far more often than it shines, a defense that has T.J. Watt, Cam Heyward, Minkah Fitzpatrick and seemingly not much else, play on.

Their reward is a trip to visit the Chiefs (12-5) on Sunday, the same place where Kansas City crushed Pittsburgh 36-10 three weeks

ago, a victory that seemed to highlight the chasm between the two clubs.

Despite being listed as 13-point underdogs the Steelers — stunningly — have a chance to bridge that gap thanks in large part to a coach who seems to have a mystical ability to speak things into existence.

“We’ve got a lot of warts,” Tomlin said. “But we’re here.”

WHAT’S WORKING

More like who’s working. Watt tied Michael Strahan’s single-season sack record when he pushed his total to 22 1/2 by taking down Baltimore’s Tyler Huntley on Sunday. When the possible NFL Defensive Player of the Year is close to healthy, he can make up for Pittsburgh’s glaring shortcomings, though he’ll need to make more of an impact against the Chiefs than he did the first time around, when he was limited to one tackle.



Pittsburgh Steelers outside linebacker T.J. Watt rushes in on the Baltimore Ravens during the first half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022, in Baltimore. EVAN VUCCI - STAFF, AP

WHAT’S NOT

The offense can be difficult to watch. Roethlisberger’s 6.2 yards per attempt is the lowest of his 18-year career because of a combination of things. The Steelers aren’t equipped to win a shootout. Any chance they have to upset Kansas City relies heavily on the defense forcing Patrick Mahomes into mistakes.

STOCK UP

McCloud began the season with 28 targets during his three-year career. Roethlisberger has looked his way 66 times this season and McCLOUD’s 39th and final reception came on a 10-yard gain on fourth-and-8 in overtime that set up Chris Boswell’s winning kick.

STOCK DOWN

The Steelers signed tackle Zach Banner to a two-year deal in the offseason believing he’d be fully recovered from a torn ACL in his right knee. Banner appears to be healthy after a setback during training camp but remains on the sideline.

It’s telling the team opted to start Joe Haeg at left tackle against the Ravens with rookie Dan Moore Jr. unable to go instead of moving Chukwuma Okorafor from the right side to the left side to create an opportunity for Banner.

INJURIES

Rookie running back Najee Harris played most of the game with a sleeve on his right elbow after getting injured in the first quarter.

KEY NUMBER

0 — the number of losing seasons the Steelers have had since selecting Roethlisberger with the 11th overall pick in the 2004 draft.

NEXT STEPS

Head to Arrowhead to pick up their first playoff victory since an 18-16 win in the same stadium in the divisional round of the 2016 playoffs.

NFL

Continued from Page A7

close to good enough in that division.

The Bears under Nagy were 1-7 against the Pack in the longest running rivalry in pro football. Nagy, the 2018 Coach of the Year, simply was following the path of his predecessors: Chicago’s past six head coaches have had a losing record against Green Bay.

There also has been no evident progress at quarterback in Chicago, and the defense has taken a step backward. The 2018 Khalil Mack trade, Pace’s biggest move with the Bears, began well and now looks unproductive.

Minnesota’s talent pool seems deeper than Chicago’s, from a high-paid quarterback, Kirk Cousins, with some success to standout runners and receivers. The payroll has been high, but the results in 2021, and the lack of progress in the standings, doomed both Zimmer and Spielman.

Flores, however, didn’t appear to be in danger of losing his job. One of three Black head coaches in the NFL, Flores brought Miami back from an awful first half of

the schedule, turning around from 1-7 to 9-8 — including victories in the opener and finale against his former boss in New England.

Dolphins owner Stephen Ross, who kept GM Chris Grier, hinted at communication issues.

“I’ve been looking at this over three years now and watching the organization grow,” Ross said. “I think an organization can only function if it’s collaborative and it works well together, and I don’t think we were really working well as an organization ... to win consistently at the NFL level.”

Gettleman, 70, saw the Giants go 19-46 during his tenure and were rarely in playoff contention in that period. New York’s offense was virtually invisible in 2021 even though the team spent in free agency for No. 1 receiver Kenny Golladay and tight end Kyle Rudolph, then spent a first-round draft choice on wideout Kadarius Toney.

“It was a privilege to serve as the general manager of the New York Giants the last four years and to have spent so many years of my career with this franchise,” Gettleman said. “We obviously have not had the on-the-field success I expected, and that is disappointing.”

CHIEFS

Continued from Page A7

The Chiefs certainly would have preferred to have this weekend off as the No. 1 seed. But the fact that their game against Denver was flexed to Saturday at least gave them an extra day to rest up and get ready for a playoff run.

“We’ll be ready,” Chiefs coach Andy Reid said. “We’re going to utilize whatever time we have to make sure we get ourselves right for the next game.”

WHAT’S WORKING

While the Broncos followed the tried-and-true game plan of doubling Travis Kelce, and Tyreek Hill who was hobbled by a nagging injury, the rest of the receiving group took a step forward. Mecole Hardman caught eight passes for 103 yards, Byron Pringle caught five balls for 56 yards and Demarcus Robinson had three catches for 19 yards.

WHAT NEEDS HELP

Pregame warmups. Two

weeks ago in Cincinnati, left tackle Orlando Brown Jr. hurt his calf muscle and was unable to play, an injury compounded by replacement Lucas Niang hurting his knee after five offensive plays. This week, Hill aggravated a heel injury— though he did play a bit— while jumping up to catch a pass in warmups.

STOCK UP

Bolton got off to a slow start during his rookie season, but he’s finishing it in a hurry. As in, hurrying to the end zone for that touchdown return against the Broncos. The young linebacker also led the Chiefs in tackles on Saturday, though that has become the norm during the second half of the season.

STOCK DOWN

Frank Clark’s mercurial season continued in Denver, where one of the highest-priced players in the NFL had a single tackle without putting any pressure on the quarterback. Clark has 4 1/2 sacks this season while carrying a salary cap hit of \$28.5 million, which

means Kansas City is paying about \$6.3 million per sack. That’s bad business.

INJURIES

Hill is expected to be fine going forward. Darrel Williams is dealing with a toe injury, further thinning the running back group. RB Clyde Edwards-Helaire still hasn’t practiced since hurting his collarbone against Pittsburgh a few weeks ago.

KEY NUMBER

3 — The Chiefs turn their attention to the playoffs with the goal of reaching a third straight Super Bowl. They also could host a fourth consecutive AFC championship game if things fall the right way for them.

WHAT’S NEXT

The Chiefs and Steelers meet again in the playoffs. They’ve won the past two against Pittsburgh, but it was Mike Tomlin’s bunch that won their previous playoff matchup in January 2017. That also was a wild-card game played in Kansas City.