

Picture perfect
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Preview the DT
editor's blogs
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THE DAILY TOREADOR

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Texas Tech University
LUBBOCK, TEXAS 79409

THURSDAY, JAN. 29, 2009
VOLUME 83 ■ ISSUE 85



(INSIDE)
MEN'S TENNIS
SEE PAGE 7

(INBRIEF)

STATE

Latino group sues over Texas licensing rule

DALLAS (AP) — Latino advocates sued the Texas Department of Public Safety on Wednesday over new rules affecting which non-U.S. citizens can obtain driver's licenses and identification cards.

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund filed the lawsuit in state district court in Austin. It's on behalf of three men with permission to work in the country and a Lewisville landscaping business that employs seasonal foreign workers through a federal program.

The men are landscaping workers in North Texas who need to drive as part of their job but could not obtain a Texas driver's license under the new DPS policies.

NATION

House defeats bill to delay TV transition

WASHINGTON (AP) — Bucking the Obama administration, House Republicans on Wednesday defeated a bill to postpone the upcoming transition from analog to digital television broadcasting to June 12 — leaving an estimated 6.5 million U.S. households unprepared for the currently scheduled Feb. 17 switchover.

But the battle over a delay may not be over, with some predicting the House will take up the measure again next week.

WORLD

US envoy urges stronger truce amid airstrikes

JERUSALEM (AP) — As Israeli-Hamas violence flared, President Barack Obama's new Mideast envoy promised on Wednesday a vigorous push for peace, saying Gaza militants must end their weapons smuggling and the blockaded borders must be pried open if a cease-fire is to take hold.

George Mitchell held his first round of talks with regional leaders to determine the next steps the Obama administration would take toward reviving peace negotiations following Israel's blistering military offensive against Gaza's Islamic Hamas rulers.

But continued violence in Gaza underscored the more immediate priority — shoring up the 10-day-old cease-fire.

DEATH TOLL

4236

U.S. military deaths in Iraq since fighting began

SOURCE: Associated Press, confirmed by the Department of Defense

INSIDE

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House passes economic stimulus

By DAVID ESPO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a swift victory for President Barack Obama, the Democratic-controlled House approved a historically huge \$819 billion stimulus bill Wednesday night with spending increases and tax cuts at the heart of the young administration's plan to revive a badly ailing economy.

The vote was 244-188, with Republicans unanimous in opposition despite Obama's pleas for bipartisan support.

"We don't have a moment

to spare," Obama declared at the White House as congressional allies hastened to do his bidding in the face of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

The vote sent the bill to the Senate, where debate could begin as early as Monday on a companion measure already taking shape. Democratic leaders have pledged to have legislation ready for Obama's signature by mid-February.

A mere eight days after Inauguration Day, Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Tuesday's events heralded a new era. "The ship of state is difficult to turn," said the California Democrat. "But

that is what we must do. That is what President Obama called us to do in his inaugural address."

With unemployment at its highest level in a quarter-century, the banking industry wobbling despite the infusion of staggering sums of bailout money and states struggling with budget crises, Democrats said the legislation was desperately needed.

"Another week that we delay is another 100,000 or more people unemployed. I don't think we want that on our consciences," said Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee

and one of the leading architects of the legislation.

Republicans said the bill was short on tax cuts and contained too much spending, much of it wasteful and unlikely to help laid-off Americans.

The party's leader, Rep. John Boehner of Ohio, said the measure "won't create many jobs, but it will create plenty of programs and projects through slow-moving government spending." A GOP alternative, comprised almost entirely of tax cuts, was defeated, 266-170, moments before the final vote.

On the final vote, the legislation

drew overwhelming support among Democrats while all but a few Republicans opposed it.

The White House-backed legislation includes an estimated \$544 billion in federal spending and \$275 billion in tax cuts for individuals and businesses.

Included is money for traditional job-creating programs such as highway construction and mass transit projects. But the measure tickets far more for unemployment benefits, health care and food stamp increases designed to aid victims of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Meaningful mentor

College student finds lasting friendship with Tech librarian through Mentor Tech program

By HANNAH BOEN
STAFF WRITER

When Jenny Sarabia needs a helping hand with classes or college life, she turns to a Texas Tech librarian.

Sarabia, a transfer student from El Paso, participates in the Mentor Tech program that Tech piloted in 2002 to enhance the quality of the educational experiences of students.

The mentor program pairs students in underrepresented populations with faculty, staff members or graduate students based on academic, professional, cultural and social interests.

Almost 1,000 students have participated in the program, including Sarabia, who knew nothing about Tech or Lubbock when she enrolled last fall.

"I didn't even know what Red Raiders were," she said.

Sarabia's mentor, Arlene Paschel, also was new to Tech at the time she entered the program and wondered how helpful she would be to a new student.

"I wondered about being new because I had only been at Tech nine months," said Paschel, who works as a librarian at Tech. "But I'm in the information business, so I knew I could handle it."

Sarabia, a civil engineering and archi-

tecture major, was hesitant to join the program because of her busy schedule, she said. However, since being matched with her mentor in August, she has had a helping hand in all her Tech endeavors.

Paschel said she has had the opportunity to give her time and energy to a student who knew nothing about Tech upon moving to Lubbock and has made a friend who has enriched her own life.

"Being her mentor has helped me realize what life is like from a student's perspective," she said, "and being new to this campus, Jenny made me get out and learn everything about the school."

Mentor Tech hosts several activities each semester to connect students with each other and make them aware of resources available to them at Tech. The mentor program has provided a network of friends, Sarabia said, and her librarian mentor led her to a part-time job at the library.

Besides being socially beneficial, Mentor Tech has been financially beneficial to Sarabia, who won a textbook scholarship through the program, she said. Through her experience with Mentor Tech, she has realized that a mentor can be helpful with school and every other area of her life.

"She helps me with everything," Sara-



PHOTO BY KARL ANDERSON/The Daily Toreador

ARLENE PASCHEL, RIGHT, a mentor with Mentor Tech and her mentee Jenny Sarabia, a junior architecture and civil engineering major from El Paso, are shown at the Starbucks inside the Student Union Building where the pair sometimes meets for their weekly sessions.

bia said. "She is like my mother away from home."

The pair said they share their everyday problems with each other, from roommate issues to hospitalized family members.

"Just whatever I can do to be a resource

to her," Paschel said. "I even watched her bike for her when she went home for Christmas."

Both Paschel and Sarabia agreed that their lives have been enriched by their relationship,

MENTOR continued on page 3 >>

Tech officials justify afternoon class cancellation

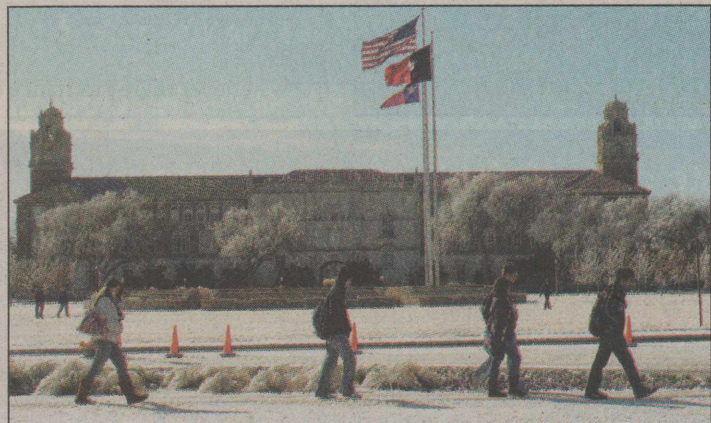


PHOTO BY BETH MCELHANNON/THE DAILY TOREADOR

TEXAS TECH ADMINISTRATORS canceled class at 3 p.m. Tuesday, and later announced the campus would be closed for classes until 10 a.m. Wednesday.

By JON VANDERLAAN
NEWS EDITOR

Despite several on-campus accidents and more than 40 accidents in Lubbock, Texas Tech officials said they believe the decision to hold the cancellation of classes until 3 p.m. was justified.

Chief Ron Seacrist of the Tech Police Department said the department makes a recommendation to the president's office of the university about when to cancel classes.

"Our ultimate goal is for people to get here and get home safely," he said.

The department monitors and

talks with the National Weather Service about the weather for the next day to find out what kind of conditions will be present, Seacrist said. Based on this, the department makes its recommendation.

Christopher Nuñez, a sophomore civil engineering major from El Paso, said the roads were "terrible" when he had to come to school at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Nuñez said he rode to campus with a friend, and although they did not see any accidents, the vehicle his friend drove was sliding.

Meagan Kabobel, a sophomore advertising major from Temple, said the roads still were in poor condition when she went to class at noon Tuesday.

"It wasn't very fun driving, and it wasn't very safe," she said.

Because not much ice comes through Lubbock, Kabobel said, the administration should take the lack of students' winter-driving experience into consideration when debating the cancellation of classes.

Nuñez said he thought class should have been canceled Tuesday morning, and he was not sure how students living far from campus — such as those in The Grove apartment complexes, which are about three miles away — would make it to campus.

Seacrist said the department received information Tuesday that reported ice would not be a problem on campus, but it received further information at about 1 p.m. that reported temperatures were dropping and precipitation was rising.

While on-campus issues are a major reason for any decisions, he said, the department also takes into consideration the routes to and from campus students take.

Grace Hernandez, President Guy Bailey's chief of staff, said the process for canceling school requires that the president's office take the recommendation from the police department and make their decision based on the recommendation.

With 28,000 students the campus

plus faculty and staff, she said, it is unwise to make a decision not based on recommendations from credible sources.

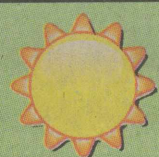
"The students' and employees' safety is first on our minds," Hernandez said.

The office was in communication with the police department Tuesday morning, she said, but it was not until later the department officials felt classes should be canceled based on new information from the Department of Public Safety.

Hernandez said she would be willing to talk with the police department to discuss if the current system of determining whether classes should be canceled is up-to-date and effective.

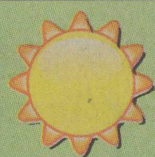
Charles Leatherwood, the senior superintendent for the grounds maintenance department, said the department already was salting and sanding the roads Tuesday at 12:30 a.m. in preparation for the upcoming

CLASS continued on page 2 >>



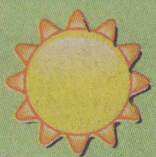
TODAY
Sunny

High 49 Low 22



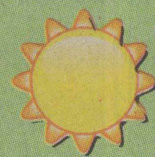
Friday
Sunny

High 61 Low 26



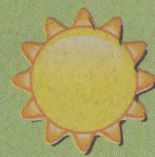
Saturday
Sunny

High 64 Low 29



Sunday
Sunny

High 57 Low 23



Monday
Sunny

High 55 Low 26

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City approves \$20k contract for Buddy Holly naming rights

By **MIKE GRAHAM**
STAFF WRITER

The Lubbock City Council approved a contract Monday with Maria Elena Holly, rock 'n' roll legend Buddy Holly's widow, for continued use of the Buddy Holly name in Lubbock.

Todd Klein, District 6 councilman, said the city agreed to pay Maria Holly, the inheritor of Buddy Holly's estate, \$20,000 for the next 20 years to maintain the name of the Buddy Holly Center. In addition, a plot of land near the center will be named the Buddy and Maria Holly Plaza.

"I think we have a very workable deal," Klein said. "This is a wonderful deal for Lubbock."

A spokeswoman for the Lubbock City Council said the city will pay Maria Holly \$83.33 per month. If Maria Holly dies in the next 20 years, the contract will be transferred to the heir of the Buddy Holly estate.

Klein said the current contract was nearing expiration. If the city had not negotiated with Maria Holly, the

Buddy Holly Center would have to be renamed.

"We want to be able to continue to have the name 'Buddy Holly Center,'" Klein said. "He's Lubbock's favorite son to the community at large. I think he inspired the community. The more we can do to promote Buddy Holly, the better."

As part of the deal, a plot of land at the intersection of 19th Street and Crickets Avenue — near the Buddy Holly Center — now will be known as the Buddy and Maria Holly Plaza, he said. It will be the new home for the West Texas Walk of Fame and a statue of Buddy Holly.

The Walk of Fame pays tribute to performing artists from the area, according to the Lubbock Memorial Civic Center's Web site.

Both monuments currently are located near the Lubbock Civic Center.

Klein said moving the monuments will improve their accessibility and visibility from an area that is difficult for pedestrians to get to.

"This will accentuate the Buddy

Holly Center," he said.

Klein said the City of Lubbock's relationship with Maria Holly historically has been "bumpy" so the council appointed Councilman Paul Beane, District 4 representative, to be the primary liaison between the council and Maria Holly.

Beane was unavailable for comment because he was out of town.

"Paul Beane is the only one who could have achieved this," Klein said. "Paul is someone Maria Holly knew and trusted. He knew Holly in a way no one else on the city council does."

Buddy Holly was born in Lubbock in 1936, according to BBC's biography Web site on him. He is considered one of the most influential founders of rock 'n' roll. The Beatles and Rolling Stones claimed they were influenced by Buddy Holly's style. His performing career lasted only 18 months because in 1959, he was killed in a plane crash in Iowa while on tour.

► michael.graham@ttu.edu

Official: 250-300 civilians dead in Sri Lanka war

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — A government health official said Wednesday that witnesses reported 250 to 300 civilians were killed in fighting over the past week in northern Sri Lanka and said hospital records showed that more than 1,100 were wounded.

The report came as the government pledged to refrain from launching attacks inside a civilian refuge area set up in the war zone. Military spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara said no civilians had been killed in the fighting, though some forced to build fortifications by the rebels — known formally as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam — might have been wounded in the crossfire.

"There were no civilians killed," he said. "We are targeting the LTTE. We are not targeting any civilians so there can't be any civilians killed."

Concerns have grown over the safety of civilians trapped inside rebel-held territory amid a government offensive aimed at crushing the Tamil Tigers. The Red Cross estimates 250,000 civilians have fled to the jungle where fighting is taking place.

Dr. Thurairajah Varatharajah, the top government health official in Mul-

lattivu district, told The Associated Press by telephone at least 1,140 civilians — 248 younger than 15 — were wounded in the fighting and brought to three hospitals in the district.

The number killed was difficult to count because many civilians had stopped bringing dead relatives to the hospital amid the heavy fighting, he said.

"In my opinion, there are a lot of deaths. More than 250 to 300," he said, adding his estimate was based on reports from residents who came to the hospitals from the war zone.

Earlier, a letter in Varatharajah's name with similar estimates was sent to The Associated Press by another government health official, who provided accurate information in the past. Varatharajah said he had not written the earlier letter.

The United Nations said dozens of its workers and their relatives came under artillery fire they believed was from government troops as they sought refuge inside the government declared "safe zone" for ethnic Tamil civilians over the weekend.

The military denied firing into the area during its offensive to root the rebels from the northeast. "If they

came under fire, then definitely it has been done by the LTTE," Nanayakkara said.

Amid reports of rising casualties, Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee rushed to Sri Lanka on Tuesday night to meet with top officials, including President Mahinda Rajapaksa. The conflict is of special concern to India, home to some 56 million Tamils.

During the late-night meeting, Rajapaksa gave assurances Sri Lankan forces would respect the safe zone to "minimize the effects of conflict on Tamil civilians," according to nearly identical statements released by India and Sri Lanka on Wednesday.

"We are concerned with the civilians. I requested to the president to take care of these civilians," Mukherjee told reporters Wednesday.

The United Nations' local office sent a private e-mail to its New York headquarters, describing how its staff in the "safe zone" came under fire several times over the weekend. The memo, which was obtained by The Associated Press on Wednesday, said the staff believed the fire was from Sri Lankan troops.

ODDBALL DAILY

Mistrial after defendant smears feces on lawyer

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A San Diego judge has declared a mistrial in a kidnapping and assault case after the defendant smeared excrement on his lawyer's face and threw it at jurors.

The judge booted defendant Weusi McGowan's bail from \$250,000 to \$1 million after the

Monday incident.

Prosecutor Christopher Lawson says McGowan was upset because the judge refused to remove public defender Jeffrey Martin from the case.

McGowan had smuggled a bag of feces into court and spread it on

Martin's hair and face before flinging the excrement at jurors. No jurors were hit.

McGowan has pleaded not guilty to kidnapping for robbery, assault with a deadly weapon and other counts in connection with a 2007 home invasion.

Wis. school's epic snowball fight flakes out

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — When a whistle blew Saturday afternoon, two teams of University of Wisconsin-Madison students pelted each other with snowballs, but the 45-minute battle won't be going down in history.

Freshman organizer Mike Basak had hoped the epic snowball fight would break a 2006 record set by

3,700 students at Michigan Technological University, but acknowledged Saturday that the turnout at his school was disappointing.

Basak guessed that 2,000 or more students showed up, but other observers put the total at hundreds of students, not thousands.

"It was definitely huge and it was a great event," he said.

In advance of the fight, more than 4,000 people had joined the event's Facebook group, and word continued to spread as rival dormitories got ready to rumble in the center of campus.

School officials also prepared, recruiting a student group of volunteer emergency medical technicians to be on the scene.

Japan to tourists: Please don't lick the tuna

TOKYO (AP) — Tourists are known for acting silly, but licking the tuna?

Overwhelmed by a growing number of misbehaving tourists, Tokyo fishmongers banned all visitors from one of the city's most popular tourist destinations — the pre-dawn

tuna auctions at the world's largest seafood market.

The ban, imposed during the peak New Year buying season, was front-page news before it was lifted last week. Now, the tourists are back, but the debate goes on: Can tourists be trusted around the tuna?

"We understand that the sight of hundreds of frozen tuna looks unique and interesting for foreign tourists," said Yoshiaki Takagi, deputy director of the market. "But they have to understand the Tsukiji market is a professional place, not an amusement park."

Woman's best friend: Plumber finds ring in toilet

PHOENIX (AP) — Just a case of plumb luck.

It took a plumber to retrieve a woman's 7-carat diamond ring after city workers failed in efforts to flush the gem out of the pipes of a restaurant toilet.

The \$70,000 wedding ring fell from Allison Berry's hand when she flushed the toilet in the restroom of the Black Bear Diner on Jan. 14,

the plumber said. The ring plopped in and the water whisked it away, said Elena Castelar, the restaurant's shift manager.

City workers opened a pipe outside the restaurant and continuously flushed the toilet, hoping to push the ring out to the opening. When that didn't work, the city called the office in suburban Tempe, Ariz., of Mr. Rooter, a plumbing services

franchise based in Waco.

"This is going to be like dredging for a treasure chest in the ocean," Mike Roberts, general manager of Mr. Rooter, said at the time.

Roberts guided a tiny video camera into the pipe with an infrared light attached. He eventually spotted the ring just 3 feet down and 5 feet over from where it was flushed.

Sheriff: Mich. man stages break-in, then calls 911

CAPAC, Mich. (AP) — Authorities in Michigan say a 24-year-old man broke into a gas station and called 911 on himself, claiming he wanted to go to jail to be with his incarcerated brother.

St. Clair County Sheriff Tim Donnellon tells the Times Herald of Port Huron that deputies obliged, arresting the man early Tuesday.

Authorities say the man called the emergency number about 4:30

a.m. from inside the gas station in Capac, a village northeast of Detroit. He said he had broken in about 20 minutes earlier.

The man's name wasn't released pending an arraignment.

Postmaster General: Mail days may need to be cut

WASHINGTON (AP) — Massive deficits could force the post office to cut out one day of mail delivery, the postmaster general told Congress on Wednesday, in asking lawmakers to lift the requirement that the agency deliver mail six days a week.

If the change happens, that doesn't necessarily mean an end to Saturday mail delivery. Previous post office studies have looked at the possibility of skipping some other day when mail flow is light, such as Tuesday.

Faced with dwindling mail volume and rising costs, the post office was \$2.8 billion in the red last year. "If current trends continue, we could experience a net loss of \$6 billion or more this fiscal year," Postmaster General John E. Potter said in testimony for a Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs subcommittee.

Total mail volume was 202 billion items last year, over 9 billion less than the year before, the largest single volume drop in history.

And, despite annual rate increases, Potter said 2009 could be the first year since 1946 that the actual amount of money collected by the post office

declines.

"It is possible that the cost of six-day delivery may simply prove to be unaffordable," Potter said. "I reluctantly request that Congress remove the annual appropriation bill rider, first added in 1983, that requires the Postal Service to deliver mail six days each week."

"The ability to suspend delivery on the lightest delivery days, for example, could save dollars in both our delivery and our processing and distribution networks. I do not make this request lightly, but I am forced to consider every option given the severity of our challenge," Potter said.

That doesn't mean it would happen right away, he noted, adding that the agency is working to cut costs and any final decision on changing delivery would have to be made by the postal governing board.

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CHANN. AFFIL. CITY	PBS Lubbock	NBC Lubbock	CBS Lubbock	MYN Lubbock	CW Lubbock	ABC Lubbock	FOX Lubbock
7 AM Curious (HD)	Today Sched. w/ Dr. Nancy Snyderman: home door with design expert Susan Salks author Sandi Richard (HD)	The Early Show	Copeland	(5:00) Daily Buzz	Good Morning America (HD)	(6:00) Good Day Lubbock	
8 AM Super Why (HD)			Believer's J. Hanna	Payne	Regis & Kelly	Martha Stewart	
9 AM Sesame Street (HD)			The 700 Club	Divorce	Payne		
10 AM Dragon Word (HD)			Price Is Right (HD)	Divorce	Payne		
11 AM Martha (HD)	Jeopardy!	Restless (HD)	Alex	Divorce	Payne		
12 PM Watercolor (HD)	News	Beautiful	The People's Court	Roseanne	All My Children	Paid Prog.	
1 PM Beads (HD)	Days of Our Lives	As the World	Paid Prog.	Fam Court	One Life to Live	The People's Court	
2 PM Beth. Lion (HD)	Inside	Guiding Light	Maury	Judge Jeanine	General Hospital	Judge Mathie	
3 PM Arthur (HD)	Oprah Winfrey	Brown	Extra	J. Fox	No Deal	Ellen DeGeneres	
4 PM FETCH! (HD)	Dr. Phil	Judy	Maury	Standing	Rachael Ray	News	
5 PM Maya (HD)	News	News	Fam. Feud	Queens	News	Lopez	
6 PM NewsHour (HD)	News	News	Law Order	'70s	News	Family	
7 PM Old House (HD)	Earl (HD)	Criminal Minds	★ ★ "Dangerous Minds" (95, Dramas) (R)	Smallville "Power"	Ugly Betty (HD)	American Idol (HD)	
8 PM Story (HD)	Office	CSI: Crime (HD)		Supernatural (HD)	Gray's Anatomy	Half's Kitchen	
9 PM Soundstage (HD)	ER "Heal Thyself"	Elaventh Hour (HD)	Jim (HD)	Styfe	Private Practice	News	
10 PM Bus Rpt (HD)	News	News	King	Sex City	News	Two & 1/2	
11 PM Charlie Rose (HD)	The Tonight Show	(10:35) Late Show	TMZ	Married	Nightline	Satire	
12 AM Deetjens (HD)	(11:37) Late Night	Late Late Show	My Lubbock	Cops	Paid Prog.	Frasier	
	Geography	Last Call	Paid Prog.	Paid Prog.	Insider	Paid Prog.	

TONIGHT 7:00PM

American Idol

FOX 34 NEWS

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Iran calls for US to end support of Israel

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's president called Wednesday for "profound changes" in U.S. foreign policy including an end to support for Israel and an apology to the Islamic republic for past misdeeds.

Hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad also urged Washington to withdraw its troops stationed around the world. He said Iran would be closely watching what President Barack Obama's new administration does and would welcome a real shift in its approach.

"Change means giving up support for the rootless, uncivilized, fabricated, murdering ... Zionists and letting the Palestinian nation decide its own destiny," Ahmadinejad said. "Change means putting an end to U.S. military presence in (different parts of) the world."

His comments come as Obama was reaching out to Muslims. He has stressed the importance of engaging Iran, a country the Bush administration often singled out as the most dangerous in the Middle East. In his inaugural address, Obama addressed leaders of hostile nations by saying "we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist."

Without mentioning Obama by name, Ahmadinejad repeatedly referred to those who want "change," a buzzword of Obama's election campaign.

"When they say 'we want to bring changes', change may happen in two ways: First is profound, fundamental and effective change ... the second ... is a change of tactics," he told thousands of people in the western city of Kermanshah in a speech broadcast live on state television.

"We will wait patiently, listen to their words carefully, scrutinize their actions under a magnifier and if change happens truly and fundamentally, we will welcome that," he added. "The change will be to apologize to the Iranian nation and try to compensate for their dark records and the crimes they have committed against the Iranian nation."

Ahmadinejad cited the U.S.-backed coup that toppled the elected government of Prime Minister Mohamad Mossadegh in 1953, its support of the unpopular shah, its backing of Saddam Hussein during Iraq's war with Iran in the 1980s and the downing of an Iranian airliner in 1988 by a U.S. naval ship.

In an interview with Al-Arabiya news channel that aired Tuesday, Obama condemned Iran's threats to destroy Israel and its alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons, but added: "It is important for us to be willing to talk to Iran, to express very clearly where our differences are, but where there are potential avenues for progress."

Later Tuesday, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told reporters the U.S. administration is undertaking a wide-ranging and comprehensive assessment of American foreign policy options toward Iran.

Clinton also said Iran had a "clear opportunity" to demonstrate some willingness to engage meaningfully with the international community.

Washington is at odds with Iran over its nuclear ambitions and its threats to destroy Israel as well as Tehran's support of the militant groups Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories.

The U.S. broke off diplomatic relations with Iran after hardline students stormed the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979.

Mentor

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and are thankful to be matched by Mentor Tech. Paschel said her desire to be a mentor started when she was in college, seeking advice from people around her.

Since her time being a mentor, Paschel said she would defi-

nately consider mentoring a student again.

And Sarabia said her experience with her mentor has encouraged her to be a mentor in the future, too.

"It's really a fantastic program," Paschel said, "and I would encourage any staff or faculty or graduate students to get involved because there are a lot of students who need mentors."

Mentor Tech connects a mentor with a student for one year, but both Paschel and Sarabia agreed they would continue to be friends long after they complete their Mentor Tech arrangement.

"I have other daughters," Paschel said, "and now I consider her to be one of them also."

>>hannah.boen@ttu.edu

Rights group asks Obama to release Bush-era memos

WASHINGTON (AP) — Civil libertarians urged the Obama administration to release dozens of memos under its control that could shed light on secret Bush-era interrogation, detention and surveillance activities.

The American Civil Liberties Union's list of at least 41 such undisclosed documents is the most exhaustive produced so far. These memos are a wish list for civil rights, privacy and human rights groups, as well as members of Congress, seeking more information about the legal reasoning that underpinned the Bush administration's secret programs.

In one of his first acts in office, President Barack Obama said he would increase the amount of information the government makes available to the public.

"The government should not keep information confidential merely because public officials might be embarrassed by disclosure, because errors and failures might be revealed, or because of speculative or abstract fears," Obama said in a Jan. 21 memo to his agency heads.

The ACLU's list of memos was culled from documents filed in two lawsuits by the group against the departments of Defense and Justice. There are potentially dozens more memos, but ACLU cannot get enough identifying details to include them on the list.

"The truth is these are a small subset of the memos that we know something

about, where we had the author's name or the substances of the memo," said Jameel Jaffer, director of the ACLU's national security project.

The known memos include one

from October 2001 that said the Fourth Amendment's protections against unreasonable searches and seizures did not apply to domestic military operations.

RAKIN' IN THE SNOW



PHOTO BY BETH MCELHANNON/The Daily Toreador

A TEXAS TECH employee rakes away the snow Wednesday morning for the summer camp job fair.

CORRECTION

In the Wednesday edition of *The Daily Toreador*, a mistake was made in the article "Regional FedEx plane crashes at Lubbock Airport." A quote from Peter Knudsen, a National Transportation Safety Board spokesman, should have read "First, he'll go through the 'on scene' phase." The DT regrets the error.

Canada Liberals rethink toppling government

OTTAWA (AP) — Canada's main opposition party backed away from plans to topple the Conservative government, saying Wednesday the prime minister would remain "on probation" if he agrees to give periodic economic status reports to Parliament.

The opposition Liberals had vowed to use a parliamentary confidence vote to take down Prime Minister Stephen Harper's minority government if Harper's proposed stimulus plan fell short.

But Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff said he would support Harper's \$32 billion plan if it also requires reports to Parliament.

"We are putting this government on probation," Ignatieff said. "Should Mr. Harper fail to satisfy the expectations of Canadians we will be ready to defeat him."

There was no immediate response from the prime minister's office. But Conservative House of Commons leader Jay Hill said the government has no problem with

making reports to Parliament.

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty said earlier Wednesday the government is open to making some changes.

"If there are useful suggestions from opposition parties, of course we will look at them. That's normal in a time of serious economic recession," Flaherty, a Conservative, told CBC television. "I would certainly not look at changing the focus of the document."

Ignatieff's amendment would give the Liberals a chance to revisit their decision to pass the budget three times over the coming year.

The Liberals want fiscal updates by Mar. 26, June 23 and Dec. 10,

along with detailed reports showing how the budget is being implemented.

The credit crisis and the global sell-off of commodities have started to hit Canada hard. The country lost more than 100,000 jobs in the last two months of 2008, and the central bank is predicting economic output will contract 4.8 percent in the first quarter.

The government is predicting a deficit in Canada for the first time in more than a decade.

Flaherty called the crisis "the challenge of our time" and said he is prepared to provide more stimulus if necessary.

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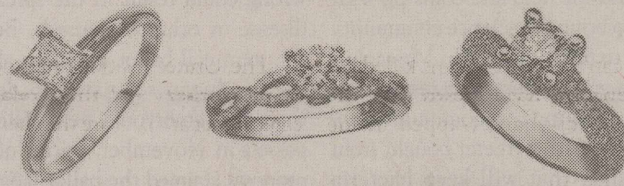
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9	1	7				3
	4		9	6		5
			5			4
	3				5	9
	2					1
7	6					3
8			7			
	6	4	2			8
4			8	2		1

Puzzles by PageFiller

In Sudoku, all the numbers 1 to 9 must be in every row, column and 3 x 3 box. Use logic to define the answers.

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

Solution to yesterday's puzzle

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Higher One choice good, though flawed

It's nothing more than a piece of plastic. It comes in the mail. It looks like something else, something that would traditionally line your trash can, and you treat it as such. Except for this time, you've made a grave mistake.

Texas Tech has hired Higher One to assist in financial aid disbursement and is paying them to get your money to you faster.

I, like most other students, was greatly confused by the onslaught of this new bureaucracy. New forms required my information and signature, and a system that never appeared broken to me before was now so disconnected that I was unsure how to do anything with my new piece of plastic.

Last week, though, I had the pleasure of meeting with Beverly Cotton, vice president of financial affairs for Tech, and I began to understand more about the nature of Higher One. Despite

Ryan Thorpe



my constant tirades against the imposing nature of corporations on our public campus (Barnes and Noble, AT&T stadium and Blackboard), I found myself becoming more and more of a convert of the Higher One system.

I had a lot of concerns going into my meeting with Ms. Cotton because of the invasive nature of Higher One, but my concerns were met with understanding.

Here are the most important facts concerning Higher One: If you use it as a debit card, you get charged. If you transfer your money, you get charged. If you use a non-Higher One ATM, you get charged. All of these charges

don't mean that the card can't be used for free.

You can set up a direct deposit to your bank account through Higher One, and while the six Higher One ATMs that we were promised in our contract are not yet set up, I was assured they were coming soon. Currently, they're all in West Hall.

If nothing else, you still have the option of doing nothing. The old system is still in place, and if you're comfortable waiting then you can do exactly that. This is

the fact most comforting to me. You can still get your money the old fashion way. You just have to wait for it.

While I do think that the switch to Higher One was done in the best interest of the students, I don't believe this initiative to be flawless. Two major problems arise with Higher One. First, a lack of communication to the student body, and the second problem stems from a lack of consultation.

A small article appeared near the end of last semester in

The Daily Toreador that explained a change was being made, but the options students had concerning the system were not clearly explained.

In addition, Higher One customer service representatives have continually failed in delivering the full range of options when asked. As a result of this lack of communication, many people threw away their cards, and others activated their cards without fully knowing what they were getting themselves into.

The lack of consultation about the change also worried me. Ms. Cotton wasn't in her current position when the change was being made and couldn't comment, but all the student government officials that I talked to were all curiously without knowledge of any consultations that took place between the administration and the student government. Such a large change should have been

discussed by the student body as a whole because students are now paying fees for money that they used to get for free.

Higher One is a change, and it's a substantive one. To improve as a university, we much change as university, and the improved refund time comes with a cost: responsibility.

As students, we need to read the fine print, examine the contract as a whole, and think about the consequences of our financial actions. Those of us who are currently here must act as guides for the generations to come because Higher One is here to stay. We have a contract with them, and only educating future generations of Red Raiders will ensure that unnecessary fees remain unnecessary.

■ Thorpe is an English graduate student from Dallas. E-mail him at ryan.thorpe@ttu.edu.

“Despite my constant tirades against the imposing nature of corporations on our public campus, I found myself becoming more and more of a convert of the Higher One system.”

Scientific breakthroughs at home

By EMILY BARTON
MICHIGAN DAILY (U. MICHIGAN)

Picture your basement or garage. Picture your high school science lab. Now merge the two scenarios, but without the image of your teacher leaning over and explaining how to use a Bunsen burner.

According to an article published last month by the Associated Press, people around the country are conducting their own amateur genetic research in an effort to better understand the field and come up with ways to bring the science community closer to finding cures. In Massachusetts, a group of amateur researchers is collaborating in a community lab, complete with a freezer bought from Craigslist, that will keep bacteria alive. Other individuals are purchasing lab equipment to set up in their kitchens or garages.

Tinkering in the science and engineering fields is not unknown — as the article pointed out, Apple and Google both began in a garage. Even

though many of these amateurs have undergraduate biology degrees, most don't have the qualifications required to work in actual research labs.

The thought that anyone with enough curiosity could potentially cure Parkinson's or find a vaccination for juvenile diabetes is an encouraging one. Such widespread research will allow more people to find science accessible and allow people without monetary constraints to do research for the sake of research.

But critics are afraid that the implications of an experiment gone wrong could result in the spread of disease or other biohazards. Before the stem cell ballot initiative allowing Michigan scientists to derive their own embryonic stem cell lines passed in November, critics of the proposal claimed the ballot language was too ambiguous and did not provide enough regulations.

They were right to raise the issue: part of the initiative says no state laws can restrict stem cell research and the resulting therapies.

Even though critics have a valid

concern, it's not legitimate enough to shut down these amateur geneticist labs. Genetic engineering requires a lot of background knowledge just to know where to begin, and I think it's safe to assume that anyone interested in setting up a garage laboratory would be interested enough to take the time to understand what they are doing. There's also the matter of purchasing equipment and understanding how to use it. While theoretically anyone could give it a try, the thicker the amateur's wallet, the easier it is.

Will amateur experimentation result in a cure for cancer? Who knows? But the more people there are thinking about the problem and looking at what is required to come up with a solution, the better. And maybe it will get more people interested in science and technology — people who might otherwise assume they wouldn't have the time. Maybe someone will see something that piques the interest of someone else, who can then consult someone else and voila: a new community fostering scientific discovery.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In her Jan. 27 column, “Obama ends Bush era, keeps promises,” Mackenzie Maxwell wrote a mirthful piece on how President Obama has kept his promise and is mending the so called disintegrated policies the Bush Cabinet set forth and stuck to since 9/11.

The predicament Maxwell arises is the so-called solution Obama laid forth. The first issue is of Guantanamo Bay, also known as Gitmo, and whether it should be closed or left open, and if closed what to do with the detainees.

A brief history lesson: Gitmo is a detention camp not on American soil for enemy combatants who either caused harm or planning to cause harm in acts of terrorism. Now, the detainees are not given the title “prisoners of war” when captured because they are considered terrorists. Therefore, they do not fall under the Geneva

Conventions as prisoners of war.

A U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* on June 29, 2006, stated the detainees were allowed minimal protections under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, but not full protections. Article 3 applies to non-international conflicts; therefore, the only detainees the article should apply to would be naturalized or American born citizens.

Since no detainee applies to Article 3, American commanders are legally authorized to hold the enemy combatants. Moving along with Obama and closing Gitmo Jan. 21, the question arises as to what is to become of the detainees who were held legally? Obama and many liberals want to try the detainees in U.S. Federal courts and invoke the detainees with OUR Constitutional rights — rights only guaranteed to American citizens.

The detainees committed crimes against humanity, crimes against America and crimes against the very fabric of American society trying to derail the progress Americans

made since 9/11. Our President and his liberal counterparts want to give the detainees, the terrorists, OUR Constitutional rights! The very idea is blasphemy in my opinion.

Men and women in the last 200+ years died fighting so we can live free today and we want to honor them by first closing down a detention camp aimed at our protection and then by giving these detainees either their release or the rights of an American?

Stand up for our rights, the safety of America and for yourself. Do not listen to the liberal bias on how change is what we need. No, the re-institution of conservative ideals and the fundamental beliefs and actions which embody conservatism is the foundation of the true United States of America.

■ Bradley Madison is a Junior political science and human development and family studies major from Lubbock.



Lame advertising apex: Super Bowl Sunday

By BEN LARRISON
DAILY NORTHWESTERN (NORTHWESTERN U.)

Advertisement lovers, this weekend is your Super Bowl: the Super Bowl.

In the United States, there is only one time a year when television viewers tend to stay tuned during the ads, and that's the night of the NFL title game. So with Sunday's match up featuring two small-market teams, many of the game's 90 million viewers will be primarily focused on the commercials.

This year, a 30-second spot during NBC's telecast will cost you about \$3 million. To give you an idea of how much money this is, imagine someone who's a millionaire. Now imagine three of those people. That's how much a 30-second Super Bowl ad costs. I, on the other hand,

would be happy to mention your product in my next column for a mere 50 bucks. Your move, corporate America.

Here's the thing, though: Even after taking a very informative IMC class last quarter, I still don't understand the logic behind a lot of commercials. Some of them work wonders, but others actually compel me to boycott companies. I mean at this point, I'm pretty sure I can save big money at Menard's, but I will refuse to use Geico as long as they keep employing that freaking gecko. Come on, people, those ads were tired about four years ago. Time to move on.

Come to think of it, absurdity in advertising is pretty prominent nowadays, especially when it comes to diet soda and insurance. Take Diet Dr Pepper, which is an excellent beverage, by the way. In their ads, why do they choose to associate their product with candy and

pastries? When I'm in the mood for some calorie-free refreshment, the last thing I'm thinking is “liquid cake.” Also, are there still 23 flavors in Diet Dr Pepper, or is that distinction reserved for the original? Shouldn't the company's ads be addressing pertinent issues like these?

Or how about that new commercial where LeBron James plays football for the Cleveland Browns? Did you know that's for State Farm? How the hell is LeBron James going to get me interested in buying insurance? I mean, I could understand if they used someone who had been a huge bust during their athletic career — say, Ryan Leaf. Just imagine Leaf standing out there next to an Allstate agent, warning us to never be too careful. That's commercial gold!

See, here's how I think about it: If you're a TV viewer, you're just looking to be entertained, and

that's the best thing a Super Bowl ad can do. But for companies, these commercials establish an image, be it good or bad. Remember Diet Pepsi's “Brown and Bubbly” campaign back in 2006?

If not, it's probably because they stopped running the ads soon after the big game. Well, either that or you blocked it out because “brown and bubbly” is more likely to remind you of the aftermath of a Taco Bell run than America's second-favorite cola. What really amazes me, though, is that marketing experts, PepsiCo executives and focus groups all must have approved that slogan before it hit the airwaves. Man, our society can be messed up.

So what do this year's ads have in store? I guess we won't know until Sunday. But I hope they include some talking babies. Those things are awesome.

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Guest Columns
The Daily Toreador accepts submissions of unsolicited guest columns. While we cannot acknowledge receipt of all columns, the authors of those selected for publication will be notified. Guest columns should be no longer than 650 words in length and on a topic of relevance to the university community. Guest columns are also edited and follow the same guidelines for letters as far as identification and submission.

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HOW OFTEN DURING THE WEEK DO YOU EAT FAST FOOD?

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Workshops improves note-taking skills

By **CHRYSTAL J. GRANT**
STAFF WRITER

Don't go to class clueless. Texas Tech's Student Disabilities Services held a note-taking workshop Wednesday to reinforce skills such as active listening, which contribute to effective note-taking.

"The workshop is open to students and staff interested," said Tamara Mancini, assistant director of Student Disabilities Services. "The workshops can benefit the students taking notes as well as professors providing notes."

The workshop provides students with information about how to study outside of class after taking comprehensive notes during class, she said, because some students may struggle when studying with unorganized, jumbled or incomplete notes.

Student Disabilities Services hosts other workshops in addition to note-taking, said Mancini. Workshops include topics such as effective reading, test anxiety, developing writing skills and finding careers after college.

"The workshops are a part of Texas Tech's retention plan," said Mancini. "The plan is to keep students focused without ending up on probation."

NOTE-TAKING TIPS

Put the date and class topic on the first page of notes every day.

Start a new sheet of paper each day and write on one side of the paper only.

Do not try to save paper when taking notes; write as large as needed and leave plenty of space between ideas.

Sometimes it is okay to just listen in class and not write anything.

Individualize your system: Use colors, shapes or words to identify different ideas.

Include visuals: Draw a picture or diagram to help remember an idea or concept.

Sit near the front of the classroom and make eye contact.

Source: www.familyeducation.com

Most workshops are offered three different days to accommodate students' schedules, Mancini said.

"The purpose of these workshops are to help students at Tech stay at Tech," Mancini said. "I strongly encourage students to take advantage of at least one because it will definitely help an area of weakness."

Another note-taking workshop will be held today from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. in Room 246 in West Hall. >> jenelle.grant@ttu.edu

Researchers say stress can cause cold sores

By **ERIN BANCO**
THE DAILY CARDINAL (U. WISCONSIN)

Kids are more likely to get cold sores if they're in a stressful environment, researchers at the University of Wisconsin say.

They published a paper outlining the effects of family stress on the reactivation of herpes virus strains in adolescents. Collaborators on the study included Elizabeth Shirtcliff, a former postdoctoral fellow at UW-Madison, psychology professor

Christopher Coe and Seth Polak, director of the Child Emotion Laboratory.

Coe said though viruses like the flu could occur only once in an individual's body, the herpes virus never goes away, but it may be dormant. "So if you are having a lot of stress, these cold sores can reactivate," he said.

The study focused on measuring Wisconsin adolescents' family environment and its effect on their immune health, Coe said. "We wanted

to know whether specifically [the adolescents] had the herpes virus ... and whether the virus was more likely to be activated based on their familial environment," he said.

The study compared adolescents between the ages of 9 and 14 who came from typical family atmospheres, adopted teenagers and teenagers who experienced neglect or abuse in their families.

According to the paper, "most individuals have been exposed to several different herpes viruses."

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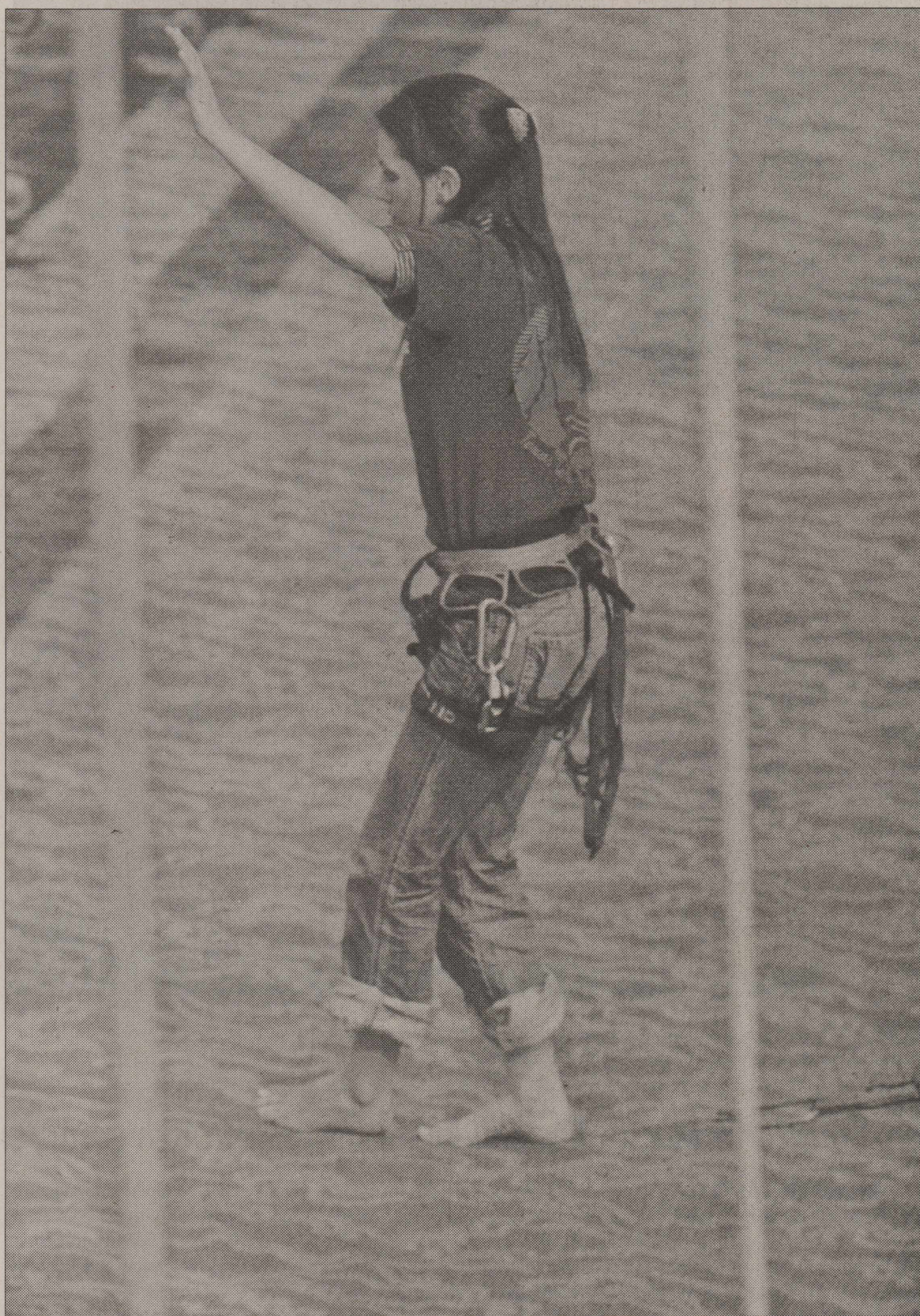


PHOTO BY KARL ANDERSON/The Daily Toreador
MEG EHRENREICH, A junior environmental conservation of natural resources major from Colleyville, walks the slack line Monday at the Robert H. Ewalt Student Recreation Center.

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PHOTO BY COLEMAN MOREFIELD/The Daily Toreador

RYAN BORG, A senior studio art major with an emphasis in sculpture from Fort Worth, works during his Intro to Printmaking class Monday in the Art building.

U. South Florida studies childhood fitness through gaming

By AMARIS CASTILLO
THE ORACLE (U. SOUTH FLORIDA)

University of South Florida is conducting a study to examine elementary school students' experiences in a gaming environment requiring physical activity.

USF installed a room for such a gaming environment, called XRKade, at Belle Witter Elementary School in Tampa about two weeks ago. It was funded by a grant given to the College of Public Health and the College of Education by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a federal

agency that conducts and supports public health activities.

The College of Education's School of Physical Education and Exercise Science will conduct the research.

XRKade is manufactured by iTech Fitness, a company that develops active-gaming technology.

Check out the DT's bloggers online

THE PRESS BOX

By Alex Ybarra, managing editor

If no one is going to do it, then I will. Like it's a big surprise or something, all signs (and analysts, fans and people who call themselves fans) point to former Texas Tech receiver Michael Crabtree being taken in the Top 10 of the upcoming 2009 NFL Draft. I'm not going to dispute that, after all, if I were a general manager I would pick him if I had any questions at wide receiver. But let's just play along with some questions: What kind of receiver will Crabtree be in the NFL? Will he be as dominant as he was in college? Will he be a possession receiver? Will he be mediocre?



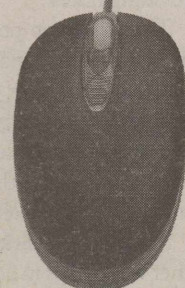
LIVIN' LA VIDA

By Tina L. Arons, features editor

Fear not! I've been busy and forgotten to blog for a while, but all is well. The New Year's resolution to be coffee-free for a month is going strong, despite my boss's attempt to lure me into hot, steamy Columbian sin. I've got 10 days to go, and I'm almost certain I can make it. Moving on to more important things, I found something neat online I've been meaning to share. The language of the Internet is no longer limited to English characters thanks to (who would've guessed?) new innovations in technology. Transliteration tools allow users to translate Roman letters to other languages, increasing accessibility of the World Wide Web.



<http://blogs.dailytoreador.com>



Speakers to debate same-sex marriage tonight

Should same-sex couples marry?

The Tech Activities Board will host a debate 8 p.m. tonight in the Allen Theatre in the Student Union Building at Texas Tech to find out the opinions of two leading speakers on the issue.

"We decided to do this event because gay marriage has been such a controversial topic in recent years with some states making it legal and other states making it legal and taking it back," said Liz Kociolek, activities board nightlife coordinator.

Kociolek, a junior German major from Oakland, Calif., said speakers John Corvino and Glenn Stanton travel together to debate different sides of same-sex marriage, because they believe in the necessity of

civil debating.

Corvino advocates same-sex marriage and argues that same-sex marriage is good for everyone because it promotes stable relationships, according to a news release. Stanton opposes same-sex marriage and argues that it makes men and women optional to the family.

Stanton works for Focus on the Family as a senior analyst for marriage and sexuality, and he also is the director of social research and cultural affairs, according to the news release.

Corvino is the editor of the anthology "Same Sex: Debating the Ethics, Science and Culture of Homosexuality" and a philosophy professor at Wayne State University in Michigan, according to the news release.

Kociolek said she hopes students will attend the event to become better informed about the issue.

"I really hope to educate students on what people go through as well as more of a debate than just discussing religious factors," she said.

Religion will not be a major point of discussion, Kociolek said. And both debaters will focus on challenging each other's argument rather than using personal attacks.

Students will be allowed to ask "appropriate" questions after Stanton and Corvino present their arguments and rebuttals, she said.

Tickets, which are required for attendance, are available at the ticket booth located in the basement of the Student Union Building. Tech students may receive up to two free tickets with a valid student ID. Admittance for the general public, staff and faculty will cost \$12.

► tina.aronson@ttu.edu

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Tech men's tennis looking for more than just NCAA appearance in '09

By ZANE TURNER
STAFF WRITER

Making the NCAA Tournament seems to be no problem for the Texas Tech men's tennis team.

The Red Raiders' goal this season: a deep run in the tournament.

Tech coach Tim Siegel leads the way for the Red Raiders in his 15th season at the helm.

Tech reached the second round of the NCAA Tournament last year in Lubbock, beating No. 48 Harvard in the first round, 4-2, then losing to No. 16 Michigan, 2-4.

Despite the loss of perennial All-Big 12 Conference selection Bojan Szumanski, Tech returns seniors Christian Rojmar, Michael Breler, and Sinisa Markovic, team captain James Wilson, and Milos Kustudija along with freshman stud Raony Carvalho.

"I've never had five seniors in one year," he said. "Especially since all five will contribute. James is our captain, he is like a third coach out there. Sinisa has been a tremendous player for me for three years. He is just a guy that knows how to win. Christian and Mike played No. 5 and 6 last year, they're gonna have to have good singles years for us to be successful."

During the 2007-08 season, Rojmar had a 24-15 singles record, Breler a 27-5 record and Markovic a 24-9 record.

Tech will look for the senior leadership, talent and experience to permeate throughout the team and younger players as the season

goes on.

"We have five seniors, we've had three great years," Breler said. "We wanna end it really well, and we can probably have the best season we've had since we've been here."

Tech's singles lineup to start the season consists of Carvalho at No. 1, Markovic at No. 2, freshman Gonzalo Escobar at No. 3, Rojmar at No. 4, Breler at No. 5, and Kustudija at No. 6.

The three doubles teams are led by Carvalho and Rojmar with Markovic and Breler at No. 2 and Escobar and David Gonzalez at No. 3.

The Red Raiders schedule continues to be a difficult one.

Last spring, Tech ended up playing 21 ranked opponents opposed to six unranked teams.

This season, Tech has 14 teams on its schedule ranked in the ITA preseason poll.

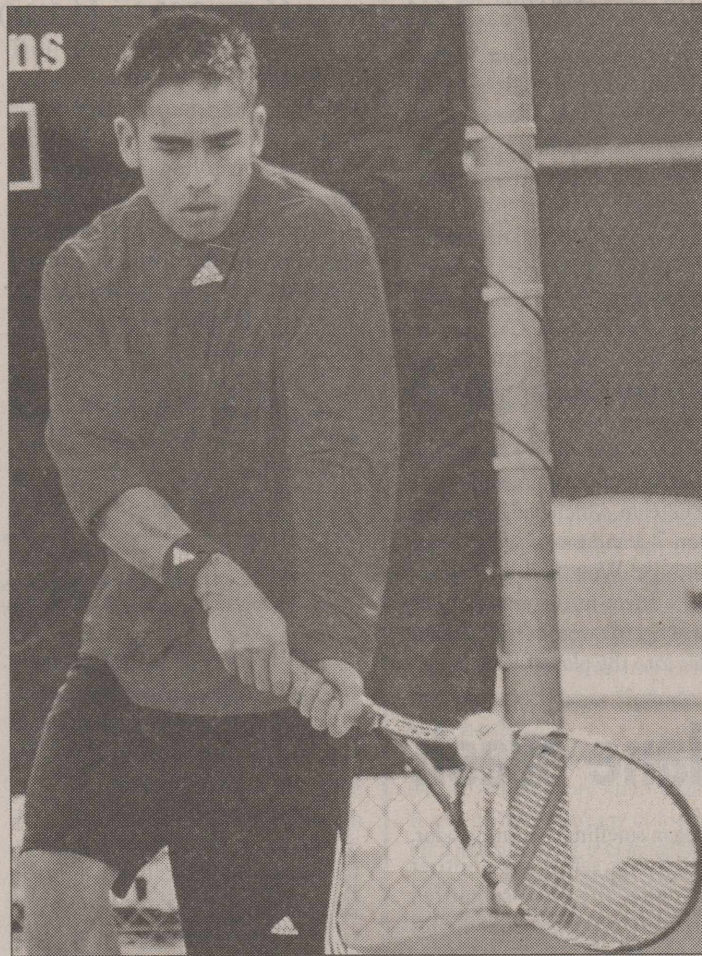
Siegel said he regularly schedules tough non-conference opponents to prepare his team for Big 12 and, ultimately, NCAA play.

"We've had tough schedules," Siegel said. "But this year without question is the hardest schedule we've ever played."

Tech starts the season off against No. 19 LSU at 9 a.m. Saturday in Tulsa, Okla. Depending on if they win or lose, the Red Raiders play No. 13 Tulsa or No. 30 Notre Dame on Sunday.

The team's first five matches will be on the road and against ITA ranked teams.

Tech also will have to maneuver



FILE PHOTO/The Daily Treador

TEXAS TECH'S MICHAEL Breler will start the 2009 season at the No. 5 singles spot.

through a tough Big 12 with five of the seven teams in the ITA Top 25 preseason rankings.

"Every year obviously our goal is to make the NCAA Tournament," he said. "We wanna be a Top-20 team, there is no question about it. But the

numbers aren't as important to me as much as the guys working hard and improving. If they do that, I think we have a chance with the talent level we have to be a Sweet 16-type of team."

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Spaniards Nadal, Verdasco win through to advance to semis

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — The way Rafael Nadal sees it, one good thing will come from the first all-Spanish semifinal in a hotly contested Australian Open.

A Spaniard will reach the final. After improving one round on each of his previous four trips to Melbourne Park, odds are it will be top-ranked Nadal, who finished off a 6-2, 7-5, 7-5 win over

No. 6 Gilles Simon on Wednesday as the temperature dipped to 93 from a daytime high of 109 degrees.

Nadal will meet another Spanish left-hander for a spot in the final after Fernando Verdasco ousted 2008 runner-up Jo-Wilfried Tsonga 7-6 (2), 3-6, 6-3, 6-2.

"I think it's incredible for us," Nadal said. "One will be in the finals, so we have to be happy with that."

No Spanish man has won the Australian title. Nadal reached the semifinals last year without dropping a set, but was upset by Tsonga.

He rebounded from that to win the French Open for the fourth straight time, then ended Roger Federer's five-year reign at Wimbledon and his 237-week stretch at No. 1.

Verdasco had his time in the sun in

November, when he guided Spain to victory in the Davis Cup final at Argentina while Nadal was absent, recovering from knee tendinitis.

If he thought the atmosphere was intense in Argentina, he agreed it was stifling in Melbourne. But that hasn't stopped Verdasco from going past his best previous run of a fourth-round exit at a major.

Armstrong rides into Texas political fight

AUSTIN (AP) — Lance Armstrong is taking a brief detour from his cycling comeback and getting back into the rough-and-tumble world of Texas politics.

On Thursday, the seven-time Tour de France champion returns to the Texas Capitol to put his celebrity and expertise behind an anti-smoking bill in the Legislature. He is scheduled to appear at a news conference to release public polling data showing widespread support for a ban on smoking in public places.

It won't be the first time Armstrong, one of the world's most famous athletes, has ventured into the political arena. In 2007, he was instrumental in helping pass a multibillion dollar bond initiative to pay for cancer research and he has hosted televised cancer forums with candidates for president.

Supporters of the smoking ban, which failed two years ago, are counting on him to put the same kind of pizzazz into their cause.

"The comeback is as much about bringing awareness to this fight against cancer as it is about winning the Tour de France," Armstrong told The Associated Press on Wednesday, three days after finishing 29th at the Tour of Australia. "It all ties in and these are all key parts."

According to the Smoke-Free Texas

coalition, which includes the American Cancer Society and Armstrong's foundation, second-hand smoke kills 53,000 nonsmoking Americans every year and is a known cause of lung cancer, heart disease, low birth weight and chronic lung ailments.

The bill would ban smoking in all public and indoor workplaces, including restaurants and bars.

Two dozen states have already enacted some smoke-free laws with 14 others considering them, the group says.

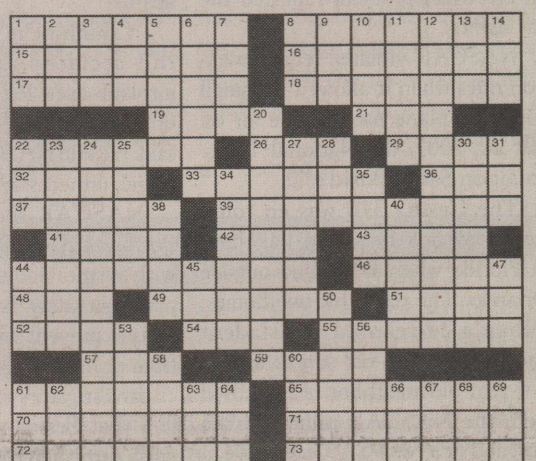
"This is an issue of people's rights," to avoid second-hand smoke, Armstrong said. "Nobody's saying you can't smoke a cigarette, but you don't have to do it around me and my kids."

Armstrong could be a critical figure in the bill's chances of passing. Although his foundation supported the measure two years ago, he didn't make the personal pleas that he did with the cancer research bill.

He carries more than an athlete's celebrity into meetings with state lawmakers. His personal story of overcoming testicular cancer and in-depth knowledge of treatments and research make him a formidable advocate, said Sen. Jane Nelson, a Republican who sponsored the research bond bill two years ago.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

- ACROSS**
1 Surveying instrument
8 Token amount
15 Holiday singer
16 Ground-hugging stems
17 Start of Joe Paterno quote
18 Part 2 of quote 19 (no contract)
21 Bobbey twin
22 Scarcity
26 Bullring shout
29 Camp beds
32 Confront
33 On the front burner
36 Olong, for one
37 Twisted forcibly
39 Part 3 of quote
41 Tip ending?
42 Part 4 of quote
43 Bit
44 Part 5 of quote
46 Buy off
48 Extinct bird
49 Songs of praise
51 Related
52 Irritating tingle
54 Baseball legend
55 Online newsgroup system
57 Gear tooth
59 Writer Ferber
61 Part 6 of quote
65 End of quote
70 Failed to keep a promise
71 Direct route
72 Erik of "CHiPs"
73 D and C, in D.C.



By Alan P. Oischwang
Huntington Beach, CA

1/29/09

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

ASHE UNDO GASSY
COAL NOUN ELATE
CHICKADEE MILLS
TORII ELITISM
DEM LANTANA
EST VIVALDI GAL
LEWS DID PSEUDO
ILES BEANO PNIN
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AND MATTREDS ISO
HOLBEIN SEE
EARNERS EXITS
INDRI SANDRADEE
DEERE SUES LEAN
OBEYS ELEC TART

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- 47 Summer hrs. in D.C.
50 Day's end
53 One with aspirations
56 Hoarder
58 Bonkers
60 Claim to a share
61 Prefix's prefix
62 Hi-graphics
63 Crimson or scarlet
64 Writer LeShan
66 -de-France
67 Dead heat
68 Opp. of syn.
69 Guitarist Paul

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Tough Christmas marked turning point for Cardinals

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Even the weather in Arizona was gloomy in the aftermath of the Cardinals' 40-point loss to New England.

One game remained before the playoffs began, and coach Ken Whisenhunt was mad. "That was the first time I ... saw him really upset," nose tackle Bryan Robinson said.

The grueling Christmas week of practice that followed somehow transformed these NFL chumps into NFC champs who face Pittsburgh Sunday in the Super Bowl.

"I think it's easy to look back on it now and say that it was the turning point," Whisenhunt said on Wednesday. "Obviously, I was very upset with the way we were playing. I also was concerned about a playoff game being two weeks away and the style of football that we were playing."

Concerned is way too mild a word. He was as embarrassed as he was angry, and he apologized to the community.

"We've worked hard to create something here, to gain the trust of a lot of our fans," he said at the time,

"and we feel like we've let them down."

Whisenhunt then issued a public warning to his players.

"We've got a few guys that need to pick up their game," he said then. "If they don't, they'll be some other guys playing."

Whisenhunt put the team in full pads for heavy workouts in a chilly rain on Christmas Eve day. Christmas morning was the same, and the weather was even more miserable for a team accustomed to sunny workouts with temperatures in the 70s.

Usually low-keyed, Whisenhunt let his team have it. He hollered, he criticized.

"He said, 'You know what? Bring the big-boy pads,'" Robinson said on Wednesday. "That's the only way I know to basically show I'm not lettin' up, that I'm keeping my foot on the gas pedal and we'll see what happens."

Whisenhunt told the players that anyone who didn't give it his all would not play in the playoffs.

"It made us wake up and realize the playoffs were coming and if we were

going to keep playing like we did, we would have a short playoff run," defensive end Bertrand Berry said.

The Cardinals had surrendered without a fight in New England; they trailed 28-0 at the half and 44-0 after three quarters.

The Patriots rolled for 514 yards, 183 on the ground and 331 through the air. Kurt Warner completed 6 of 18 passes for 30 yards. The players seemed more interested in huddling around the sideline space heaters than in playing football.

Then there was the trip home. Bad weather kept the team charter on a Providence, R.I., runway for 2½ hours. Once airborne, the plane ran into severe headwinds, forcing a refueling stop in Minneapolis.

All through the 14-hour journey, Whisenhunt simmered.

His team, which had started the season 7-3 and ran away with the weak NFC West, had lost four of five. A defeat in the season finale against Seattle would send the Cardinals into the playoffs at 8-8.

NASCAR faulted in 2007 plane crash

WASHINGTON (AP) — Investigators on Wednesday blamed NASCAR for a "tragic, unnecessary" plane crash in 2007, saying the racing organization let one of its aircraft take off without checking an electrical problem reported the day before.

NASCAR violated federal aviation rules when it allowed the small corporate plane back in the air on July 10, 2007, the National Transportation Safety Board said.

The Cessna 310 was en route from Daytona Beach to Lakeland in Florida when it crashed outside Orlando. The plane hit two homes, killing a 24-year-old law student and her 6-month-old son as well as a 4-year-old neighbor. Also killed were the NASCAR pilot and the husband of a NASCAR executive, a pilot himself.

The safety board also said the crash resulted partly from sloppy maintenance record-keeping at NASCAR's aviation unit. The organization has a fleet of planes comparable to a small charter operation or a tiny airline.

"I think we're going to find that this accident started before the airplane even left the ground," said one board member, Robert Sumwalt said. He said NASCAR "enabled this tragic, unnecessary crash."

NASCAR spokesman Ramsey Poston said NASCAR has worked with aviation industry experts "to improve our safety management systems so as to prevent an accident like this from occurring in the future."

Investigators said the pilot who flew that Cessna the day before the crash turned off the radar system and pulled its circuit breaker in midflight

he began smelling a burning odor. After flying safely for another hour or so, the pilot submitted an incident report to NASCAR's maintenance division.

But NASCAR did not inspect the problem before the plane was allowed back in the air on July 10.

The pilot in charge that day was told of the incident before he took off and should have investigated further, investigators said. But he may have believed the radar system was simply broken and could have reset the circuit breaker.

About one-third of the way into the 100-mile trip, an electrical problem recurred. The pilot reported smoke in the cockpit minutes before going down. Investigators later found extensive evidence of an electrical fire on board.

SPORTS SHORTS

Radio Shack cancels Mexico soccer-voodoo campaign

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Radio Shack has withdrawn from a Mexican newspaper's promotional campaign inviting fans to prick voodoo dolls to boost the nation's soccer team in an upcoming match against the United States.

The Fort Worth, Texas-based company said in a statement that it wishes "the very best of luck" to Mexico, the U.S. and all teams in the final round of regional qualifying for the 2010 World Cup.

Mexican sports daily Record confirms that it was notified

Wednesday of Radio Shack's withdrawal.

Record marketing manager Daniel Paz says the decision was a "surprise." The paper plans to continue the promotion and is looking at possible other partners.

Rangers' Benoit has surgery on torn rotator cuff

ARLINGTON (AP) — Rangers reliever Joaquin Benoit is expected to miss at least half the 2009 season following surgery to repair a torn right rotator cuff.

The operation on Benoit's pitching shoulder was performed Tuesday in Cincinnati by Dr. Timothy Kremchek, the Reds' medical director.

Benoit has been a key member of Texas' bullpen the past few years, but shoulder problems plagued him most of last season. In 44 appearances, he was 3-2

with a 5.00 ERA — his highest mark since 2004 when he made 15 starts.

The 32-year-old Benoit was shut down for part of last season with shoulder fatigue and eventually went on the disabled list with shoulder inflammation. He is 30-26 with a 4.79 ERA and eight saves in 273 career appearances, including 55 starts.

"Joaquin was affected most of last season, and it didn't allow him to perform to his abilities," Rangers general manager Jon Daniels

said in a statement Wednesday. "He attempted to rehab the injury this offseason. He worked hard, but the results weren't there."

Texas went through a similar sequence with right-handed starter Eric Hurley. A first-round pick by the Rangers in 2004, Hurley made his major league debut and four other starts last year before shoulder soreness sidelined him. He had an injection in August and tried rehabilitation through December before finally having surgery on the rotator cuff last week.

UIL's executive director Farney to retire

AUSTIN (AP) — University Interscholastic League Executive Director Bill Farney is retiring at the end of the month, the UIL announced Wednesday.

Farney has held the top spot at the UIL, the governing body for Texas public high school sports, since 1995.

During Farney's tenure, the league implemented the No Pass, No Play law that requires athletes to maintain passing grades to participate in sports.

In 2008, the league also

started the nation's largest high school steroids testing program. Ordered by the Texas Legislature, the program will test up to 50,000 students by the end of the current school year.

Farney, 67, has been with the UIL since 1977. He was director of athletics when the state implemented the No Pass, No Play law that requires athletes to maintain passing grades to participate in sports.

Farney is the sixth execu-

tive director in the 100-year history of the UIL, which has about 1,300 schools and more than 700,000 athletes. His successor was not immediately announced.

"My favorite thing here at the league is seeing kids compete," Farney said. "UIL gives students a chance to compete and be unique. It's not a matter of beating someone, but the thrill of competing and doing your best."

New York Times retains Goldman for Red Sox sale

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Times Co. says it has retained investment firm Goldman Sachs to help explore a sale of its stake in the company that owns the Boston Red Sox.

Investors have been pressuring the company to sell assets as

advertising revenue plummets.

The company holds a 17.8 percent stake in New England Sports Ventures, which owns the Boston baseball team as well as Fenway Park, a portion of a cable sports network and other properties.

The Times reported in Decem-

ber that its parent company was exploring a sale.

The announcement came Wednesday as the Times Co. reported its earnings plunged 48 percent in the fourth quarter because of lower advertising revenue in a weak economy.

Texans TE Owen Daniels headed to 1st Pro Bowl

HOUSTON (AP) — Texans tight end Owen Daniels is headed to the Pro Bowl for the

first time. The third-year pro was named Wednesday as a replacement for

San Diego's Antonio Gates. He joins teammates Andre Johnson and Mario Williams, two other 2006 draft picks who were both chosen as starters for the AFC.

The 6-foot-3, 246-pound Daniels was second among AFC tight ends with 862 receiving yards. He and Johnson were the most prolific tight end-receiver combination in the NFL with 185 catches for 2,437 yards.

The three Pro Bowl selections are the most in the seven-year history of the Texans. The game is Feb. 8 in Hawaii.

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Warner's super comeback rooted in faith, hard work

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Four years ago Kurt Warner was having a hard time finding a job.

No matter that he had been to two Super Bowls and won one of them, or that he'd been an NFL and Super Bowl MVP.

The perception was that he was washed up, finished, that his storybook career was approaching an ignominious end.

Then the 37-year-old quarterback wrote the most amazing chapter of all with a season that might cement him a spot on football's Hall of Fame, especially if he can lead the Arizona Cardinals, of all teams, to a Super Bowl victory Sunday over the Pittsburgh Steelers.

"Hopefully, it would recognize him for exactly what he is — one of the best players to ever play his position," his

coach, Ken Whisenhunt, said.

Warner's story is rooted in a deep faith and a persistent drive to be the very best he can be as a person and a football player.

"My approach is hoping that every player that I've played with, every place that I've been, that in some way, shape or form, I leave my stamp on those people and those places," he said at the Super Bowl media day on Tuesday. "That's what I want my legacy to be. The football stuff, that's all gravy."

The football stuff impresses his Pittsburgh counterpart, Ben Roethlisberger.

"He's gone through so much and done so much," Roethlisberger said. "To me, I love watching him play. He throws an unbelievable pass and — you know what? — I have a lot of respect for him and the way he plays the game."

Warner's return to the top is a dominant theme leading up to this Super Bowl, just as it was in his 1999 season.

"Most times when you do something great, it's not overnight," he said. "It's not something that comes easy. It comes with a lot of hard work, a lot of time, a lot of commitment."

The comment pretty much sums up his life.

Warner played for Northern Iowa, but didn't start until he was a senior. Then he tried out for the Green Bay Packers, but was quickly released. So it was back to Cedar Rapids, where he got a job stocking shelves for a supermarket.

His route from there to the NFL included three seasons with the Iowa Barnstormers of the Arena Football League and two years with the Amster-

dam Admirals in NFL Europe.

Before the 1999 season, Warner was a backup with the Rams when starter Trent Green was injured. Coach Dick Vermeil turned to Warner, and the result was one of the most prolific offenses in NFL history.

In the next three years, despite missing five games because of injury, Warner threw for 12,612 yards and 98 touchdowns. There was the Super Bowl championship season and the near-miss against New England in 2001.

But injuries to his finger and hand in 2002 signaled the beginning of the end of his days in St. Louis.

He lost the starting job to Marc Bulger and was released by the Rams after the 2003 season.

"I never felt like the physical part of my game ever disappeared," Warner

said. "I felt like that was always there. The one question I had when I left St. Louis was would I ever get the opportunity to display that again."

He signed a one-year deal with the New York Giants, but was replaced by rookie Eli Manning 10 games into the season after an awful game against the Cardinals.

At 33, Warner found no serious offers, except from the lowly Cards, perennial doormats in the NFL.

Even in Arizona, success never came easily.

"I worked my butt off this year to try to prove they made the right decision, not only this year but when they signed me four years ago," Warner said, "to try to pay back as much as I can for what they've given me."

Warner was limited by injuries to 10 starts in 2005. In 2006, then-coach

Dennis Green made Warner the starter after training camp, but again he was replaced by a rookie — when Matt Leinart took over five games into the season.

Whisenhunt replaced the fired Green in 2007, and Warner had to prove himself all over again.

"This league is so much built on what someone's perception of you is," Warner said. "I know that even when this coaching staff came here ... that they really felt that this guy is on the tail end of his career, he's just kind of hanging on."

Whisenhunt kept Leinart as the starter, but sent Warner into three games to operate a productive, no-huddle offense. Then Leinart went down with a broken collarbone five games into the season, and Warner had the job full time.

In Pittsburgh, the big hits keep coming

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Ryan Clark levels Willis McGahee and Wes Welker.

Hines Ward breaks Keith Rivers' jaw.

James Farrior stacks up Derrick Ward.

The Pittsburgh Steelers don't deliberately try to injure opposing players. It's just that it happens sometimes when a team is taught to hit only two ways: hard and harder.

The Steelers are as physical as it gets in the NFL, and the Arizona Cardinals understand they must be mentally to match that hit-or-be-hit mentality if they want to win the Super Bowl. The Ravens-Steelers AFC championship game might have been the NFL's most punishing all season, and the Cardinals know what's ahead.

Let's get physical, indeed. "They're definitely different," Cardinals linebacker Karlos Dansby

said Wednesday. "They fly around to the ball and they play with a passion, and that's a beautiful thing when you see a team play with a lot of passion. ... You admire stuff like that, seeing people coming down, making big hits and changing the game."

Playing with toughness and an edge didn't begin in Pittsburgh with the Bill Cowher or Chuck Noll eras, either. The Steelers teams of coach Buddy Parker were rugged, hard-hitting and nasty in the late 1950s and early 1960s, too, although they didn't win like their predecessors did.

The Steelers transformed physical play into an art form during the Steel Curtain days, an image personified by Jack Lambert's body-slam hits, Joe Greene's meanness, Mike Webster's blocking and Mel Blount's punishment of wide receivers at the line of scrimmage.

"The way they ran the ball in the

1970s, the way they played defense, you had to be physical," cornerback Deshaun Townsend said. "Pittsburgh, it's a rough city. It's a tough city. A lot of hard-nosed people live in that city, so you have to be that type of team to fit in there."

Cardinals wide receiver-returner Steve Breaston grew up in Pittsburgh and was educated at length about those Steelers teams. He plays a skill position, yet he has always tried to make his family proud by playing with toughness, too.

"The football there is smashmouth and a real physical style. The Steelers, that defines them right there," Breaston said. "Look at their linebackers, secondary, all the way through. They're all making plays, getting to the quarterback. You see (Troy) Polamalu flying around the field, that's Pittsburgh. They make plays. You have to match it or it's going to wear you out, wear you down."

Super Bowl takes a hit: Recession zaps big game

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — There were mountains of jumbo shrimp, and caviar everywhere. Muhammad Ali would show up, maybe amid a fleet of shiny Cadillacs. Five-star hotels were packed, and getting a dinner reservation for Saturday night was impossible. Finding a ticket for Sunday was even harder.

In years past, the Super Bowl was so much more than a game. It was an outright orgy of football, glitz and gluttony, a celebration of excess where too much was never enough.

The No. 1 sporting event in America is still a big deal. Nearly 100 million of us will tune in Sunday night when the Pittsburgh Steelers play the Arizona Cardinals.

But in these tough economic times, it's easy to see: The Super Bowl is taking a hit, too.

General Motors and FedEx pulled their TV ads, even though NBC lowered the price. Playboy canceled its annual party. Almost 200 fewer media credentials were issued.

"When I think of the NFL, I think of recession-proof," Cardinals lineman Elliot Vallejo said this week. "But that's not true anymore."

Used to be everywhere you looked around a Super Bowl town, all you could see was advertising. There were commercial booths at every turn. The headquarters hotel and media center looked like giant trade shows.

Now you can look pretty much everywhere and actually see things. Such as empty tables at local restaurants and vacant hotel rooms downtown.

StubHub does have a sign on the mezzanine level at Raymond James Stadium. The nationwide ticket bro-

ker also had more than 3,000 seats for sale, as of midweek. They were getting less expensive by the minute.

"In terms of pricing, this game has become the Limbo Bowl — how low can it go?" StubHub spokesman Sean Pate said. "When it comes to plunking down \$7,000 for a weekend, people are becoming more pragmatic. They have other needs."

Dave Gornick hears that from his pals. Now a dentist in Gibsonia, Pa., the lifelong Steelers fan grew up in steel-mill country.

"Some of the guys I tailgate with, they're blue-collar guys making \$30,000 or \$35,000 a year, and they didn't have the \$1,600 you had to put up in advance to get into the lottery for Super Bowl tickets," he said. "In the past, I think they would've done anything to get to the Super Bowl. Not now, not with this economy."

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Forget the BCS mess, the NFL has problems with its own system

The Bowl Championship Series system has left many college football fans begging for a playoff, but after watching the NFL playoffs, I see a system that is just as flawed.

While the NFL is praised for its parity-driven playoff system, the college system has been frowned upon because the participants in the championship game often are decided by things other than on-field competition.

What some people fail to realize is that the NFL has a playoff system in place, but the participants of the playoffs are not always decided on the field.

Many sports fans point to Texas, USC and Utah as teams left out by a flawed system, but the NFL playoff formula has been far from flawless. How else do you explain an 11-5 New England Patriot team being left out of the playoffs while the 8-8 San Diego Chargers host a first round playoff game?

Making the situation even more ridiculous is the fact that the Patriots played in a far superior division than

Landry Locker



the Chargers.

The other three teams in the Patriots' division, the AFC East, combined for a record of 27-21, while the teams in the Chargers' division, the AFC West, combined for a record of 15-33.

There is no reasonable formula in the world that would put the Chargers in the playoffs ahead of the Patriots. Not even the BCS.

Since the NFL adapted a salary cap following the 1995-96 season, the league has been embraced for its parity because the small-market teams have a chance to compete with the large-market teams.

While the league is not lacking parity, the unbalanced divisions in the league have led to postseason mediocrity.

An inferior teams often makes the playoffs because it plays in a weak division. This can be an advantage at the beginning of the playoffs for these teams because those from the weaker divisions are not as worn down as teams from the more competitive ones. This is one of the main reasons why there are so many first round upsets in the NFL playoffs.

Upsets often seem exciting at the beginning of the playoffs, but recent Super Bowl history has shown the teams from weaker divisions eventually get exposed and often bring a weak product in the Super Bowl.

Last season the New England Patriots stormed into the Super Bowl undefeated and were pretty much already crowned champions before the game was even played. What a lot of the "experts" failed to realize was the other teams in the Patriots' division combined for a pathetic 12-36 record, which had a lot to do with the Patriots' perfect record.

In one of the biggest upsets in Super Bowl history, the Patriots

were defeated by the battle-tested New York Giants from the NFC East where the three other teams in that division combined for a 30-18 record.

This may seem like a mere coincidence, but teams coming from divisions with better records than the opponents have won the last eight Super Bowls.

I do not expect this streak to end, and that is why I am picking the Steelers, with a 19-28-1 combined record of the other three teams in their division, over the Cardinals, with a 13-35 combined division record, in yet another below-average Super Bowl.

Since the start of the decade representation in the Super Bowl has been weak at times. The Giants in 2000, Oakland in 2002 and Seattle in 2005 (the last NFC West team to appear in the Super Bowl against the Steelers) are just a few examples of mediocre teams appearing in the "Big Game."

There appears to be no realistic short-term solution to the BCS, but

the NFL problem could be solved easily.

The two conferences in the NFL, the AFC and NFC, are each composed of sixteen teams with each conference composed of four four-team divisions. During the NFL schedule format, each team faces the other teams in its division twice. This can be an unfair advantage to teams in weaker divisions and can lead to weak representation in the playoffs.

Instead of having a team play each team in the division twice, why not have each team play the other 15 teams in their conference?

It would be awesome to have every team play the other 15 teams in the conference and then just use the final week of the season to match up teams to solve possible tiebreakers. This would make Week 17 exciting in the NFL instead of the joke it has become with third-string quarterbacks getting playing time.

This would not only make the Super Bowl more competitive, but it would also become more intriguing

because it would be the only matchup between the AFC and NFC during the season.

Each conference would have better representation in the playoffs because each team would have virtually the same schedule. Fans would have more of a rooting interest because conference pride would increase.

This formula would not only make the playoffs more competitive, but it would also eliminate the weak regular season and give the NFL an intense regular season similar to the one we see every week in college football.

We might not see a college playoff for a while, but there is the solution to ending Super Bowl mediocrity and perfecting the NFL playoffs. The college football fans want a playoff similar to the NFL system, but the NFL should strive for the regular season intensity the college game has.

Locker is a senior broadcast journalism major from Southlake. E-mail him at landry.locker@ttu.edu.

Baseball still rules in White House

WASHINGTON (AP) — This much apparently isn't changing at the White House: You better know the language of sports.

When press secretary Robert Gibbs set out Wednesday to explain the status of a massive economic bill, he repeatedly spoke in baseball terms.

Reporters pressed him on details such as why some programs were worthy of getting money and whether President Barack Obama was disappointed about opposition from House Republicans as a vote neared.

Gibbs then took the field. "I hesitate to call the game after the third inning. I hate to declare the winner," Gibbs said. "I know we all have analysis to write, but let's not — let's not stop after the third inning and tell us who won in the ninth. It's a long process."

It was reminiscent of the George W. Bush White House, where officials often explained even the most serious matters in sports analogies.

A reporter asked Gibbs if some spending programs might be scrapped when a final bill emerged.

"I think this largely proves my somewhat maybe possibly weak baseball analogy," Gibbs said. Again, he said, it is only the third inning.

But they keep score in baseball in every inning, a reporter pointed out. By this point, Gibbs was just warming up.

"They do," Gibbs said. "But they don't declare winners. You get up and stretch at one point during the game. And there's a man that says you can't buy beer after a certain time, but the umpire doesn't declare the game over except for one point in the game, so I guess I would stress that, even as you get up to stretch and buy beer, they only call one winner, so let's hope that that one winner is the American people, because both teams have worked together."

A seventh-inning stretch was needed after that one.

Parties competing at Super Bowl

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Kevin Costner signed on to host a glitzy Super Bowl party this year, but the truth is he doesn't really like parties all that much. Too much glad-handing, picture-taking and standing around.

The 54-year-old Hollywood star would much rather be up on stage with his band, Modern West, grinding out original tunes in a dark club somewhere, showing people how serious he really is about the music. So if you really want to get Costner to appear somewhere, invite the band, too. Playing live in the middle of the biggest weekend in sports is why he's coming to Tampa.

"It's clearly not the need for attention. I've had enough of that for a lifetime," Costner chuckles during a telephone interview. "It's no fun being a celebrity. I'd rather be a performer. I'd rather sing for my supper."

But attention is clearly the

point for many of the celebrities who stage one of the glitzy, see-and-be-seen happenings that have become as much a part of Super Bowl week as the game itself. The Hollywood types are here, along with the hip-hop guys, dozens of current and former NFL stars, plenty of scantily clad models, prize fighters and assorted Kardashian sisters.

Ashton Kutcher and Lindsay Lohan are scheduled to be here. So is Snoop Dogg. Mike Ditka says he's bringing 100 former NFL stars with him.

The lousy economy this year led some regular party sponsors to cut back or pull out of the Super Bowl scene — Playboy and Sports Illustrated both bagged their annual affairs — but there's still enough going on in Tampa to keep the paparazzi busy all weekend.

Costner and ex-New York Giant Michael Strahan are co-hosting the Saturday Night Spectacular.

Grown-up Big Ben leads Steelers

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Ben Roethlisberger was along for the ride, and he knows it.

Some teams win a Super Bowl because of their quarterback, the Pittsburgh Steelers managed not to lose one in Detroit three years ago despite Big Ben's self-described bad game. Tom Brady, he wasn't.

As nervous as a teenager taking his driver's test, Roethlisberger was 9-of-21 with two interceptions and a 22.6 passer rating. He was so ineffective, the Steelers needed a wide receiver, Antwaan Randle El, to throw the pivotal touchdown pass as they beat Seattle 21-10.

Roethlisberger became the youngest quarterback to win a Super Bowl at age 23, but he was as much relieved as he was happy. Not long after, the mood of a player better known for his competitiveness than his perfectly placed spirals began to change.

"I obviously got a little bit upset I didn't play so well, I let the guys

down and I didn't help the team win the game," Roethlisberger said Tuesday, a three-deep crowd huddled around his Super Bowl media day podium. "It fuels the fire that you want to come out and play a better game the next time. You have to get over the initial hoopla, the flash, the lights and just make it a game."

Just a game. There's no such thing to Roethlisberger, who is such a competitor that he rarely holds the door open for someone because he doesn't want anyone — sometimes, even a date — beating him outside.

A friendly game of cards, a swat of the ping-pong paddle, a determined dribble of the basketball — almost anything sets off Big Ben, the man who refuses to lose. So imagine what a football game does.

Imagine what this second Super Bowl in four years is doing, the one he will play Sunday against the Arizona Cardinals and coach Ken Whisenhunt, his offensive coordinator in that Detroit Super Bowl.

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