

Sports

Page 1B // The Brunswick News // Tuesday, June 28, 2022

ALSO INSIDE: Puzzles 2B

Even Djokovic knew he wasn't at his best in Wimbledon debut

By HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

WIMBLEDON, England — Novak Djokovic's play was not particularly well, Djokovic-esque, at Wimbledon on Monday.

Even he acknowledged as much.

He got broken early and trailed 3-1 as he began his bid for a fourth consecutive championship and seventh overall at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament. He recovered to take that set, then dropped the next. He slipped and fell to the grass. He accumulated more unforced errors than his opponent. Maybe he was a bit un-

der the weather; he grabbed tissues from a black box on the sideline and blew his nose. Maybe he was simply a bit off, not having played a match that mattered in nearly a full month.

So, though, is the top-seeded Djokovic, and there's a reason he extended his winning streak at the All England Club to 22, and his career victory total there to 80 — making him the first player in tennis history with at least that many at each major — by beating Kwon Soon-woo of South Korea 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 at Centre Court under the retractable roof.

And there's a reason that

friends of the wife of Kwon's coach, Daniel Yoo, held up decorated signs in a player guest box bearing Korean messages that Yoo said meant "Fight!" and "Don't get hurt!"

With the exception of a loss for No. 7 seed Hubert Hurkacz, a semifinalist at the All England Club a year ago, Day 1 signaled a fairly routine return to pre-pandemic normal, with capacity crowds, zero masks, the

Wimbledon Queue in full effect and, of course, on-and-off-and-on-again showers.

Hurkacz, coming off a grass title over the weekend, lost 7-6 (4), 6-4, 5-7, 2-6, 7-6 (10-8) to Alejandro Davidovich Fokina in a match that featured Wimbledon's new final-set format: women's third sets and men's fifth sets that get to 6-all will go to a first-to-10-and-win-by-two tiebreaker.

That might as well be called the John Isner Rule, owing to the American's 70-68 fifth-set victory over Nicolas Mahut in 2010 and 26-24 fifth-set

Please see TENNIS, 2B



Kirsty Wigglesworth/AP
Novak Djokovic returns to Korea's Kwon Soonwoo in a men's first round singles match on Day 1 of Wimbledon in London on Monday.

FROM THE TOP DOWN



Please see FA, 2B

Chase Elliott pushes NASCAR to race Nashville Fairgrounds

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

LEBANON, Tenn. — To be clear, Chase Elliott will take a victory anywhere he can get one.

But not long after lifting the celebratory guitar he earned for winning at Nashville Superspeedway, Elliott couldn't help but wonder if NASCAR is still at the wrong race track.

NASCAR's most popular driver is partial to the track at the Nashville Fairgrounds. When he heard the Cup Series would return to the area in 2021 — but at the D-shaped oval in Lebanon, some 40 minutes from the downtown hot spots — he was not pleased.

"One snooze fest at that joint

will put the nail in the coffin of the fairgrounds, bummer," Elliott tweeted in 2020.

He has now raced two consecutive years at the superspeedway, collected a win and the guitar late Sunday night, and his opinion hasn't changed. Elliott wants to race at the fairgrounds, where his Hall of Fame father often did and the two went head-to-head last summer in the Superstar Racing Experience. Chase won the race.

"Yeah, look, I wish we were at the fairgrounds, for the record, but I'm glad we're at least in the market," Elliott said. "This is a cool town. It's a great place to be. It's a great place to race. It's a town that I think embraces us, and we embrace the people that are here."

The Nashville market has indeed become a hot motorsports target since 2019 when NASCAR shifted its season-ending awards ceremony from Las Vegas to Lower Broadway. Nashville Superspeedway was added to NASCAR's 2021 schedule. IndyCar debuted a downtown street race that was a smashing success and SRX will return to the fairgrounds for a second consecutive year in two weeks.

Elliott won't be in the SRX field next month, but the morning after beating his father there last year — and after he had earlier been disqualified and finished 39th in the NASCAR race at the superspeedway — he made a passionate plea for NASCAR to take its Cup cars to the fairgrounds.

the fairgrounds.

"Just the atmosphere of the fairgrounds, the energy last night was absolutely unbelievable. I wish all of you had been there to see it. It was nuts. It just further made double sure that's where we belong in my eyes," Elliott said. "I've always felt that way, but that other track (the superspeedway) is not the answer. The energy is right there in town, and we don't need to search any further."

Marcus Smith agrees, and as head of Speedway Motorsports he is pushing to return NASCAR to the 0.596-mile track for the first time since 1984. The initiative has been met by local resistance in public meetings. In

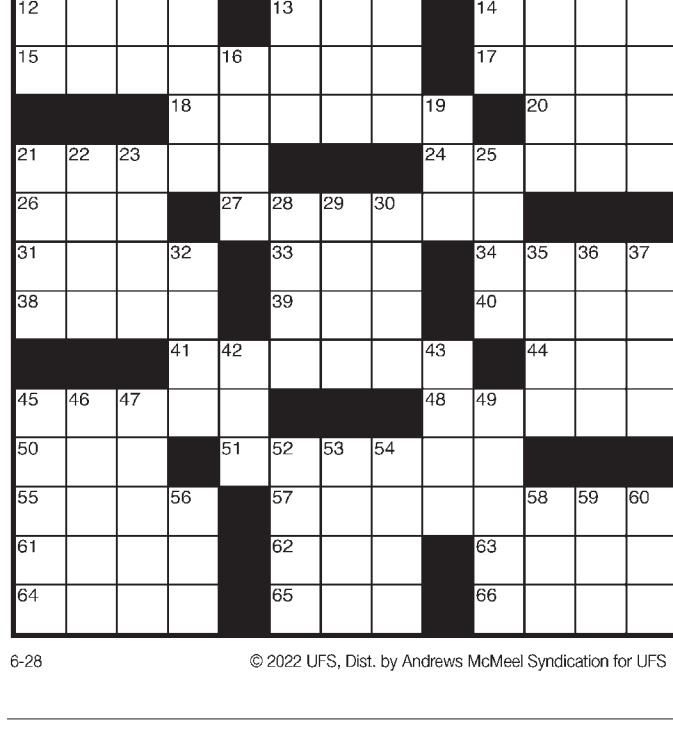


Mark Humphrey/AP
Chase Elliott poses with his guitar after winning a NASCAR Cup Series race Sunday in Lebanon, Tenn.

Fun & Games

ACROSS

- 1 Acorns
- 5 "My, my!"
- 8 Gentle creature
- 12 Big — elephant
- 13 Deep distress
- 14 Great Wall locale
- 15 Appeal
- 17 Night flyers
- 18 Spotted ponies
- 20 Cassius Clay
- 21 Whiz
- 24 Column type
- 26 Geological period
- 27 Foxiest
- 31 Carvey or Wynter
- 33 Ump's call
- 34 In that case (2 wds.)
- 38 Clapton or Dane
- 39 "I — Camera"
- 40 Dove into second
- 41 Give



6-28

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44 Common oath (2 wds.) 45 New Mexico's flower

48 Elector 50 Geisha's accessory

51 Shot a movie 55 Solemn promise

57 Brings in the herd (2 wds.) 61 Shoestring

62 A hundred percent 63 Ms. James

64 Iffy attempt 65 No, to a lassie

66 Hero of Clancy novels

DOWN

- 1 Snooze
- 2 Not waste
- 3 Do lacy thread work
- 4 Marsh bird
- 5 Look-alike sibling
- 6 Chimney deposit

Answer to Previous Puzzle



CONTRACT BRIDGE

By STEVE BECKER

South dealer.

Both sides vulnerable.

NORTH

♦ 5 3
♦ 8 6 4 2
♦ A Q 4
♦ J 8 5 2

WEST

♦ K J 9 7 6 2
♦ 7
♦ 8 5
♦ A 9 6 4

EAST

♦ 10 8
♦ K Q J 9 5 3
♦ 7
♦ K 10 7 2
♦ K Q 10 3

SOUTH

♦ A Q 4
♦ A 10
♦ K 10 7 2
♦ K Q 10 3

The bidding:

South West North East

1♦ 1♦ 2♦ 2♦

3 NT

Opening lead — seven of hearts.

Assume you're in three notrump and West leads a heart. You can't very well afford to win East's jack, since West might have another heart, so you duck.

East now shifts to the ten of spades. There's nothing to be gained by taking the finesse, since West is marked by the

The luxury finesse

bidding and play with the K-J of spades. So you go up with the ace in order to retain the guarded queen.

You then play the king of clubs, taken by West with the ace.

If West now returned a spade or a diamond, you'd have nine ironclad tricks. Unfortunately, though, he returns a club, leaving you with just eight tricks.

To make the contract, you need to score four diamond tricks, but you can't be sure of getting them by simply playing the A-Q-K, since the jack might not fall.

However, there's no need to tackle the diamonds yet, so first you cash your three club tricks and the ace of hearts. Now comes the A-Q and another diamond, and when East produces the nine, you have reached the critical point of the play.

Should you finesse the ten of diamonds, hoping East has the jack, or should you go up with

the king, hoping West has the jack? You are home safe and sound if you guess right, but how can you tell which is the winning play?

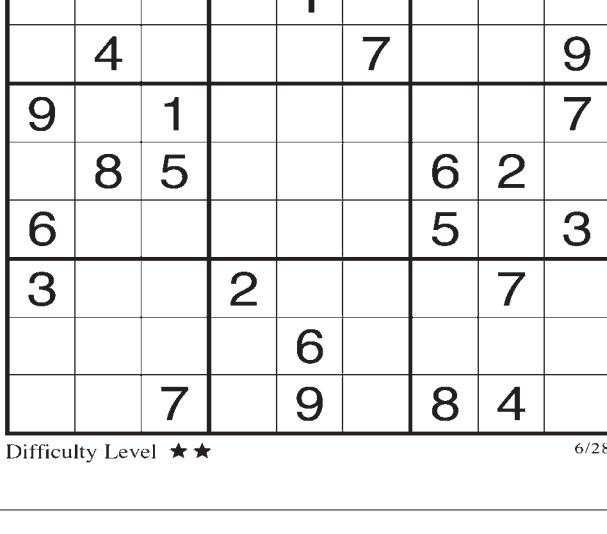
The answer is that you can guarantee the contract by playing the ten. If the ten wins, you have nine tricks, and if the ten loses, you also have nine tricks! In the latter case, since West can't have any more hearts, diamonds or clubs after he takes the jack of diamonds, he would have to concede a trick to your queen of spades and thereby hand you the contract.

Tomorrow: A reflex reaction.

Today's Birthdays: Comedian-movie director Mel Brooks is 96. Comedian-impressionist John Byner is 85. Former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta is 84. Rock musician Dave Knights (Procul Harum) is 77. Actor Bruce Davison is 76. Actor Kathy Bates is 74. Actor Alice Krige is 68.

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green



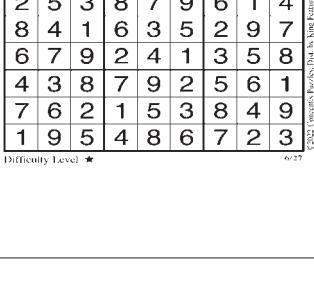
Difficulty Level ★★

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Sudoku instructions:

Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9.

Yesterday's Answer



Difficulty Level ★

FA

Continued from page 1B

Baseball and girls basketball each picked up two points for state playoff appearances, and boys soccer, boys basketball and football were each awarded four points for advancing to the state quarterfinals.

Girls soccer and boys tennis both made it to their respective semifinal rounds, earning six points each towards Frederica's total, while eight points were awarded to both the Knights' boys cross country and golf teams for second-place finishes at their respective state tournaments.

The top point getters for Frederica: a pair of state championship teams in girls cross country and girls tennis, demonstrating the

school's commitment to every sport equally. Five girls sports were responsible for 32 of Frederica's 68 total points.

"We had such a really strong senior class of female athletes, and those girls who were seniors this year really helped us bring up girls throughout the last four years in all our programs," Nash said. "When I look at our female programs the next few years, they're going to be strong just because the direction they went in the last few years with the strong female athletes we had this year like Ellie Runyan, Josie Brock, Merrill Been.

"You have amazing young female athletes who have carried on and taught the young girls what they need to do to be successful. To me, I think it just sends a message of our commitment



Provided Photo/Barry Kaminer

Frederica Academy's boys cross country team smile with their GISA Class 3A runners up trophy.

to all of our student athletes."

The athletic programs at Frederica Academy have been on a steady upswing over the last several years, hoisting eight state championships since 2016.

Nash doesn't take any credit despite his role as athletic director, instead attributing the school's success to

a number of factors.

"Being close to the island has its advantages in many ways because it's so beautiful here, and we do attract some good coaches here because of a lot of that," Nash added. "But also, I think it's because we have such a great school, really great people here, and our coaches just

work extremely hard to not just teach the game or the sport that they're coaching, but I also think they do a great job off the field, off the court, off the trails, off the diamond.

"They just do such a great job of being a mentor to all these kids, and our student-athletes are taught the right way."

Even the outside support system for each student-athlete at Frederica Academy played a sizable role.

"I don't know if we give enough credit to our parents sometimes because they're the ones who have to pick their kids up from late practices, and they're the ones who go out of town and watch all their contests," Nash added.

"They're the ones who have to put up with the losses and the wins of their kids. It is difficult. Our parents

go through a lot."

Still, the award will be a feather in the cap of Nash, who consistently demonstrates his care for every aspect of the department. The former Chinese Basketball Association head coach frequents games and competitions for each sport as much as possible, noting his pride in the coaches and student-athletes under his direction.

While it will be Nash who accepts the Drake Award at the GISA's annual conference July 18 on Jekyll Island, he is doing so as a vessel for those that made it possible.

"I tip this award to all of those coaches and to all of those student-athletes that we've had, not just this past year, but that we've had the last few years," Nash said. "They just all worked extremely hard to be better at what they were doing."

Wolff, Ortiz among the latest to join Saudi-backed LIV Golf

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

The Saudi-funded LIV Golf series added three more players to its roster for the second tournament in Oregon, a group that includes 23-year-old Matthew Wolff and Oklahoma State's Eugenio Chacarra of Spain.

LIV Golf had been expected to announce additional players from its inaugural event outside London three weeks ago. The big surprise was Brooks Koepka, who only a week before he signed on had been in full support of the PGA Tour.

LIV Golf also said Monday that Carlos Ortiz of Mexico is joining, one week

after Abraham Ancer of Mexico signed on.

The 48-man field at Pumpkin Ridge in North Plains, Oregon, starts Thursday for another \$20 million purse, with an additional \$5 million prize fund for a team competition. Charl Schwartzel won the inaugural event and its \$4 million payoff.

Wolff, who also played at Oklahoma State, made an instant impact on the PGA Tour when he turned pro at age 20 and won the 3M Open in Minnesota in his third start. A year later, Wolff shot 65 in the final round to tie for fourth in the PGA Championship, and he had the 54-hole lead

at Winged Foot in the U.S. Open until he shot 75 on the last day and finished six shots behind Bryson DeChambeau.

Since then, Wolff has struggled with relating happiness with the scores he was posting, and he stepped away in 2021 for 10 months to cope with mental health issues. Once as high as No. 12 in the world, he now is No. 77. His lone finish in the top 20 this year was a tie for sixth in the Saudi International.

The additional signings

— which include DeChambeau and Patrick Reed as the London event was concluding — means the LIV Golf Invitational will have eight of the top 50 in the

world at Pumpkin Ridge, with the highest-ranked Dustin Johnson at No. 16.

Ortiz, who is No. 119 in the world, won his only PGA Tour title in the Houston Open in 2020.

The Portland event is the first of five LIV Golf events scheduled for the United States, the first time PGA Tour members are competing on U.S. soil the same week as a PGA Tour event. The John Deere Classic does not have any of the top 50 in the world.

Players who compete in LIV Golf are suspended by the PGA Tour. Some of them, such as Sergio Garcia and Johnson, have resigned their membership.

Tennis

Continued from page 1B

loss to Kevin Anderson in 2018, both at Wimbledon, both before the tournament adopted deciding-set tiebreakers.

On Monday, Isner was back on Court 18, the site of the Mahut marathon, and smacked 54 aces in a 6-7 (6), 7-6 (3), 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 victory over Enzo Couacaud. Isner's next match figures to be held at a bigger court, because he'll be facing Andy Murray, who has won two of this three major championships at Wimbledon.

Murray's 4-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 win over James Duckworth came at Centre Court and followed another triumph there by a British major title winner, reigning U.S. Open champ Emma Raducanu.

"From the moment I walked out through those gates, I could really just feel the energy and the support and everyone was behind me from the word 'go,'" the 19-year-old Raducanu said after defeating Alison Van Uytvanck 6-4, 6-4. "I just really tried to cherish every single point out there. Played every point like it could have been one of my last on that court."

Djokovic, a 35-year-old from Serbia, had not played

since losing to rival Rafael Nadal in the French Open quarterfinals and it seemed to show. Kwon's piercing, flat groundstrokes and soft drop shots were effective for stretches.

"I did not start, or did not play, at my best," said Djokovic, whose 20 Grand Slam trophies are tied with Roger Federer for the second-most in men's tennis history behind Nadal's 22.

"But I think when I needed to find the right shots, I did. I think (my) serve got me out of trouble in some decisive moments. I know I can do better."

Keep in mind, too, that this might very well be Djokovic's last major event of this season — and for 11 more months, until the 2023 French Open.

As things stand, he will not be allowed into the United States as a foreigner who hasn't gotten his COVID-19 shots and must miss the U.S. Open, which begins in August. He also could end up sitting out a second consecutive Australian Open because he is unvaccinated — a status he said Saturday he would not consider changing.

After Monday's match, Djokovic said he's not thinking ahead to New York at the moment but added: "I'm hoping some things can change and that I'll be able to go and compete. I would want to."

Elliott

Continued from page 1B

the meantime, Speedway Motorsports last December purchased the superspeedway in Lebanon and was the official promoter this past weekend.

Speedway Motorsports founder Bruton Smith died last week at 95, and then Marcus Smith's mother suffered a stroke Friday. He was not available at the superspeedway this weekend to discuss Speedway

Motorsports' plans for the Nashville area.

But many in the industry believe the market can support multiple races, even with NASCAR, SRX and IndyCar all stopping in Nashville over three consecutive months.

Elliott stumped for the fairgrounds, though he conceded that even with three hours of weather delays, a determined crowd hung around for a race that took seven hours to complete and was a better product than last year.

"It was way more racy

than I thought it would be. But it still doesn't mean I prefer this over the fairgrounds and what that could be," Elliott said. "It's just that racetrack and the history of that racetrack and its location is just something that we're never going to replicate again."

He then pointed to other markets where tracks are 30- to 45 minutes outside the city — in Michigan or Atlanta or Miami.

"With the fairgrounds you'd be drawing from an area that is 15 blocks away or so," he said. "Correct me