

THE CORONADO NEWS

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Coronado High School grad Austin Varco makes his debut at NASCAR truck series race



Coronado High School grad Austin Varco drives part of the track on North Island before the race. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.

A goal he’s been working on for years will finally come to fruition on June 19 when he races the NASCAR craftsman truck series on North Island

BY MADELINE YANG
The Coronado News

For four years, Austin Varco went to Coronado High School, driving less than 30 miles an hour on city streets. In a few days, he’ll be reaching speeds of over 150 mph for a NASCAR race on Naval Air

Station North Island – minutes from where he used to follow the speed limits every day. Varco found out just weeks ago that he’ll be competing in the craftsman truck series on June 19 with his racing team, Team Reaume. This was a goal that had been in the works for the last eight months, Varco told

The Coronado News. This will be his national series debut, and on the longest track NASCAR has ever constructed. Varco is gearing up for 50 laps – roughly two hours inside a truck cockpit that will reach 130 degrees with no air conditioning.

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How did NASCAR get approved to race on a major U.S. Navy base?

A contract spells out details of the deal, but leaves many questions unanswered

BY DENNIS WAGNER
The Coronado News

In July of last year, the U.S. military breathlessly announced plans for Coronado to host NASCAR racing in 2026, bringing one of the world’s premier stock car events to the island. “NASCAR embodies the very best of the American spirit through speed, precision and an unyielding pursuit of excellence,” declared then Navy Secretary John C. Phelan. “Hosting a race aboard Naval Air Station North Island, the birthplace of naval aviation, it’s not just a historic first, it’s a powerful tribute to the values we share: grit, teamwork and love of country.” In the months since that revelation, Navy warriors have spearheaded a war against Iran, the violent ouster of Venezuela’s president and lethal attacks on alleged drug-trafficking boats in the Caribbean Sea. Meanwhile, U.S. government officials have declined to answer fundamental questions about the auto-racing extravaganza scheduled June 19-21:

- How did NASCAR get approval for races at a secure U.S. military base, and who authorized it?
- With more than 100,000 spectators swarming North Island, how will national security assets and secrets be protected?
- Is NASCAR paying for enhanced security, as well as construction and breakdown of the track, grandstands and concessions? What about other expenses?
- How does America’s national defense bene-



For the first time ever, NASCAR will hold a race on an active military base. The event is at Naval Air Station North Island over Father’s Day weekend. Photo from NASCAR.

fit from NASCAR racing on a military base? In December, The Coronado News submitted a request under the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for correspondence, contracts and feasibility reports concerning the NASCAR weekend. Navy headquarters responded that only one record had been identified — and asserted that the document is exempt from disclosure for privacy reasons. In response to a challenge, the secretary of the Navy’s office acknowledged that other naval offices may have additional records. But the chief of naval operations stressed in an email that stock car racing agreements for North Island are “between the Department of Defense and NASCAR,” rather than the Navy. The Defense Department (rebranded by President Trump as the Department of War) responded to a FOIA request by noting that The

Coronado News was No. 3,348 in a queue. It declined to expedite processing. In late May, Navy Region Southwest provided two documents: a race contract with NASCAR, and a commercial sponsorship agreement. To date, neither the Navy nor the DOD has provided records clarifying who authorized the event or what advance planning took place. NASCAR’s account In a phone interview, Amy Lupo, president of NASCAR San Diego, said the Coronado racing agreement emanated from the Chief of Naval Operations – not the Department of Defense. Lupo said NASCAR officials began looking into San Diego venues more than two years ago, first considering Marine Corps Air Station Miramar

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Sewage entering the Pacific Ocean closes Coronado beaches

Closures remain as the California Coastal Commission permits a temporary project for malodors

BY JULIETA SOTO
The Coronado News

The entire Coronado shoreline remains closed after a sewage pipeline in Mexico collapsed for a second time in May. The following month, the California Coastal Commission approved a permit for the County of San Diego to move forward with a project to reduce emissions of hydrogen sul-

fide at the Saturn Boulevard crossing of the Tijuana River. Addressing the ongoing sewage pollution crisis that impacts communities on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border continues while Coronado deals with consecutive beach closures after a major sewage pipeline in Tijuana collapsed on May 29. In a post on X, The U.S. International Boundary and Water Commis-

sion (IBWC) said the rupture was the second one in the span of two weeks for a 10-mile line that is undergoing rehabilitation. The commission reported the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP) was treating beyond its capacity of 35 million gallons a day (MGD) and up to 60 MGD of untreated flows during the pipeline collapse. By June 4, the federal agency reported completion of repairs to the Tijuana Parallel Gravity Line, but with the potential of odors persisting.

That weekend, beachgoers in Coronado witnessed brown foam in the waters along the Coronado beach shoreline. City staff could not explain the discoloration and directed water quality questions to the county. Donna Durckel, a county communications officer, said the water discoloration is not normal. “The water is closed if there is sewage in the water,” said Durckel.

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this week

21 • Sunday

Coronado's own Matt Heinecke will perform at Spreckels Park on June 21 at 6 p.m. as part of Coronado Promenade Concerts' free summer series.

23 • Tuesday

Richard Lederer, San Diego Union-Tribune's language columnist, will talk about the significance of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Gettysburg Address at 11 a.m. in the Coronado Public Library.

26 • Friday

The Coronado Public Library is scheduled to host a concert featuring San Diego pianist and composer Irving Flores. A celebrated Latin jazz artist with more than four decades of experience, Flores is known for his vibrant piano style, inventive arrangements, and dynamic performances that blend jazz, Afro-Cuban rhythms, and Latin musical traditions. The event is at 1 p.m. in the Winn Room.

27 • Saturday

The Coronado Ferry Landed is slated to host a free weekend concert featuring Ron's Garage Band at 2 p.m.

CONTACT US

For news tips, story submissions and letters to the editor, contact Editor Sofie Fransen at sofie@thecoronadonews.com or 619-990-8465.

To advertise contact Ad Executive Braeden Stegman at braeden@numbersix.com

AROUND THE COMMUNITY



The winners of the 2025 Homefront Judging contest, Larry (L) and Cindi (R) Pearson, stand with Coronado Fourth of July Board member Carrie Downey (front row) by their home. File photo provided by Carrie Downey.

Enter this year’s Patriotic Home Front Judging contest by June 23

Coronado News staff

The 2026 Patriotic Home Front Judging Contest is underway, and The Coronado Fourth of July board is calling all Coronado residents to show their patriotic spirit and participate.

Residents are encouraged to express their creativity by decking out their homes in red, white and blue.

Promoting the beautification of homes in Coronado, The Coronado Fourth of July partnered with the Coronado Flower show for the competition.

A panel led by Coronado Floral Association Home Front judging chairs Kellie Carlson and Ginny Belsha will judge houses based on a point system, using creativity, overall presentation and display as criteria. Each

entry must include an American flag and at least three additional patriotic elements.

Homes must be decorated, and applications must be received, by June 23. Judging will occur on June 25 and 26.

In addition to getting 10 grandstand tickets, the winner will be announced on June 26 on the Coronado Fourth of July website, social media, press releases, and at the parade.

To enter the contest, find the online entry form at <https://coronado-fourthofjuly.com/patriotic-homefront-judging-2026/>



Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera, and tap on the link.

PET OF THE WEEK

Meet Ambrose

PAWS of Coronado

Ambrose is available for adoption at PAWS of Coronado.

Staff members at the non-profit, which provides adoption and rehabilitation services to animals, said that Ambrose is a loving dog that needs a home where he is the only pet.

Those interested in adoption can visit www.pawsofcoronado.org. Fostering, donating and volunteering are other ways to support the organization.

All animals at PAWS are spayed/neutered, microchipped, vaccinated and up to date on flea prevention. Adoptions are by appointment only. If you are interested in adopting Ambrose or other pets, please visit pawsofcoronado.org.



Meet Ambrose, the pet of the week. He's at PAWS of Coronado and is looking for his forever home. See all adoptable animals: Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera, and tap on the link. Graphic/photo provided by PAWS of Coronado.



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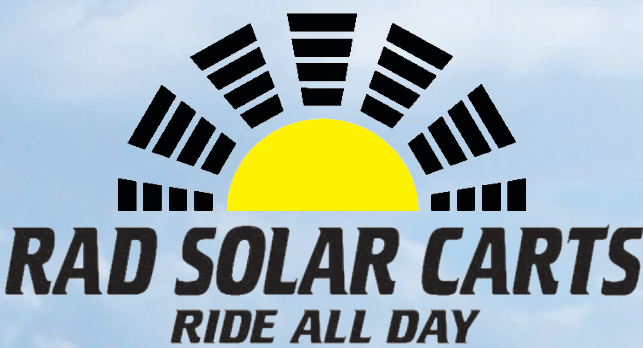
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OPINION

It's true. It's sewage

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD
The Coronado News

On the first weekend in June, Coronado beachgoers were greeted with a murky surprise – a brown and yellow foam-like substance washing up in the tide.

As it does best, the rumor mill ran rampant. Comment after comment on a local Facebook page claimed the discoloration was a direct result of the Tijuana sewage pollution crisis that has been plaguing the area for decades. Others took a different approach, deciding an algal bloom was at fault for the brown swell.

The county of San Diego – the entity responsible for testing these very waters daily to determine pathogen levels – confirmed our fears.

It's sewage, and it's coming ashore just as schools let out and throngs of tourists are hitting the beaches.

Standardly, the county reports 1,413 copies of Enterococcus bacteria per 100 ml. Results peaked at 201,814 copies on June 3 and 288,232 copies on June 4 near Silver Strand, according to samplings posted on the State Water Board website.

And, according to the county, its appearance in Coronado is linked to a large pipeline collapse on May 29 in Tijuana. The 10-mile-long pipe, known as the Parallel Gravity Line, is supposed to divert sewage flows away from the Tijuana River to the wastewater treatment plant in Mexico.



A photo from June 7 shows brown foam in the water at Coronado Central Beach. Photo provided by Craig Harris.

Instead, while the pipe was down, the sewage flowed through the river and into the Pacific. Environmental factors like wind and swell brought the substance to Coronado's shoreline, according to a County communications officer.

That was the second time in the span of two weeks that the pipe collapsed.

It's disheartening that Coronado is yet again dealing with consecutive days of beach closures. This time though, the problem is not invisible. High concentrations of toxic bacteria are apparent in the brown water and foam that fouls a once pristine shoreline.

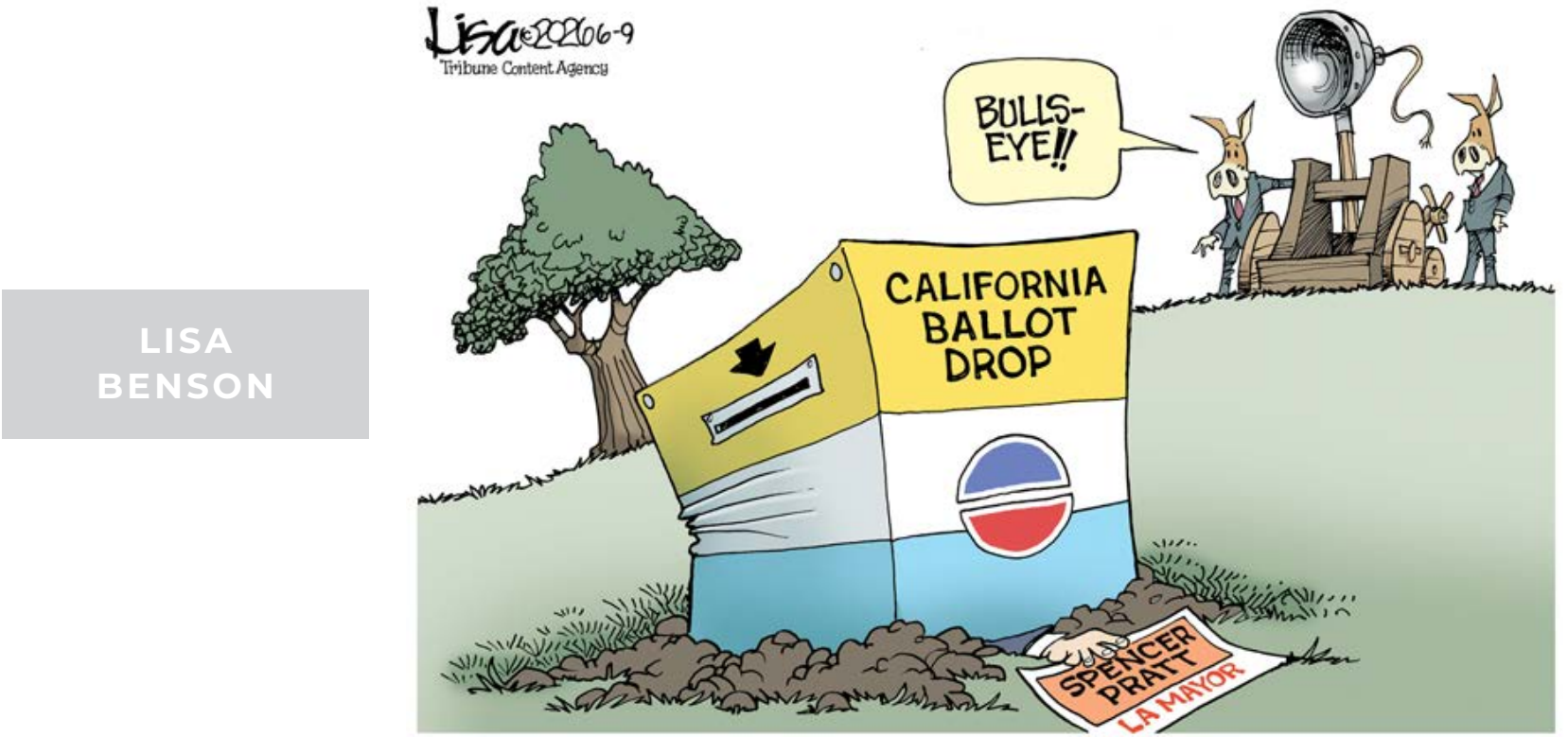
How to be a part of
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Submit a news tip

Capture a cool photo of Coronado and send it in for publication consideration

Respond to an editorial or a news story by writing a letter to the editor

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JACK OHMAN



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CORONADO

Newsom announces \$46 million of voter-approved funding to help address Tijuana River pollution

Associated Press

Gov. Gavin Newsom announced on June 12 he is deploying \$46 million in voter-approved funding to help clean up the chronically contaminated Tijuana River at the California-Mexico border.

Since 2018, more than 100 billion gallons (378 billion liters) of raw sewage filled with industrial chemicals and trash have poured into the Tijuana River, according to the International Boundary and Water Commission. The United States and Mexico signed an agreement last year to clean up the longstanding problem by upgrading wastewater plants to keep up with Tijuana’s population growth and industrial waste from factories, many owned by U.S. companies.

For years, tens of thousands of people have and continue to be exposed to the sewage. During a February visit to San Diego, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin said it will take a couple of years to fix one of the nation’s worst

and longest-running environmental crises that affects largely low-income Latino communities.

“People in San Diego County shouldn’t have to worry about getting sick, losing access to their beaches, and living with polluted air,” Newsom, a Democrat, said in a news release.

The funding will come from Proposition 4, a \$10 billion bond measure approved in 2024 to fund water, climate, wildfire and natural resource projects across the state. At least 40% of the money is supposed to be spent on communities hardest hit by climate change and environmental pollution.

The funding will be made available as competitive grants for projects that reduce bacteria and trash, address public health issues related to the cross-border pollution and support mitigation and restoration.

The raw, foul-smelling sewage that empties into the Pacific Ocean also emits hydrogen sulfide, a toxic gas that can erode neurons in the nose and trigger asthma attacks, and cause symptoms such as headaches, nausea, cough, shortness of breath, skin and eye irritation, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its long-term health problems are only

starting to be understood.

“This funding is desperately needed. Certainly every dollar we can secure to address the Tijuana River crisis is a big help,” said Phillip Musegaas, executive director of the San Diego Coastkeeper, an environmental nonprofit in Southern California. “Unfortunately, this funding is really just a small portion of what’s needed to fully address the crisis.”

He added: “We need more federal funding to fix and expand the wastewater infrastructure that is now under stress and is often failing or inadequate to treat all the sewage that’s being generated.”

In June 12’s announcement, Newsom called on the Trump administration again to find a permanent fix.

“California has stepped up repeatedly, but we can’t solve a decades-long federal failure on our own,” Newsom said in the release. “The Trump administration must do its part, honor its commitments, and finally deliver the lasting solutions this community deserves, and they have a moral obligation to provide.”

“People in San Diego County shouldn’t have to worry about getting sick, losing access to their beaches, and living with polluted air.”

- Gavin Newsom, Governor of California

Sewage entering the Pacific Ocean closes Coronado beaches

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Pipeline failures

San Diego County Department of Environmental Health and Quality’s Beach and Bay Water Quality Monitoring Program conducts daily water testing and posts advisories, warnings, and closures when there is contamination.

Durckel said water contact closures in south county are issued when sewage contaminated flows from the Tijuana River or other transboundary sources enter the United States and negatively impact ocean water quality.

According to Durckel the Tijuana Slough shoreline is frequently impacted and ocean conditions can transport contaminated water northward, resulting in closures at Imperial Beach, Silver Strand, and Coronado beaches.

Durckel said when a pipeline leak occurred around May 14, swells came from the west.

The Coronado shoreline wasn’t closed, but rather was placed in and out of advisory status.

The much larger collapse of the pipeline on May 29 was different.

Noting a longer repair time with pumps being shut off, Durckel said the sewage flowed through the Tijuana River to the Pacific, where wind and swell conditions carried wastewater to the Coronado shoreline.

“We issued a water contact closure on June 2 due to known sewage in the water,” said Durckel.

These closures remain as of 3 p.m. on June 14, according to the county’s website (<http://www.sdbeachinfo.com/>).

The county tests for Enterococcus bacteria with a standard of 1,413 copies per 100 ml.

Samplings posted on the State Water Board website show Coronado beach results peaked at 201,814 copies on June 3 at Avenida Lunar and 288,232 copies on June 4 at Silver Strand Guard Shack.

Ongoing crisis efforts

The State Water Board’s Proposition 4 U.S. Mexico Border Grant Program, with \$46.1 million available for projects addressing water quality problems in cross border rivers and coastal waters, is accepting applications through 5 p.m. on Aug. 31.

Last month the county began its Tijuana River Sewage Crisis Economic Impact Study, focused specifically on understanding the economic conse-

quences of the crisis.

The county invites residents, workers, business owners, visitors, community organizations, and others who have been affected by the sewage crisis to participate. The county says surveys vary and will remain open for at least four weeks with findings published this fall.

The county is also partnering with the University of California San Diego (UCSD) on a yearlong study to help identify and understand chemicals in the air resulting from untreated wastewater flows.

The county said it will coordinate with UCSD and San Diego State University School of Public Health to share findings with the community.

IBWC Principal Engineer Ramon Macias told the San Diego Water Board on June 10 rehabilitation of the Parallel Gravity Line, which experienced ruptures in May, is estimated to be completed in August.

“It seems like you’re really trying and we greatly appreciate that,” Betty H. Olson, board member and vice chair, told IBWC representatives. “But Imperial Beach and other beaches stay closed, which affects the community economically, and

produces innumerable hardships, let alone the intermittent odors, which may have health effects that come along with it.”

That same day the California Coastal Commission unanimously approved the county’s request to extend two culvert pipes to direct Tijuana River flows beneath Saturn Boulevard intended to reduce hydrogen sulfide gas that becomes airborne.

“The situation remains quite dire, the beach remains closed, no timeline for reopening,” Cassidy Teufel, deputy director for the Energy, Ocean Resources and Federal Consistency Division, told the commission. “As we move into the summer

season with swell action coming from the southern hemisphere and current moving from south to north, it’s expected that, unfortunately, the situation, as we saw last summer, to kind of expand outside of that Imperial Beach area up towards Coronado.”

Teufel, who described the situation as devastating, said there’s extensive water quality monitoring and public notification.

“It’s gonna be a lot of work to get to where we need to go to get those beaches open again,” said Caryl Hart, commissioner and vice chair.

Contact: julieta@thecoronadonews.com



Ocean waters in Coronado carry brown foam onto the shoreline on June 7. Photo provided by Craig Harris.

ONLINE 24/7

THE CORONADO NEWS

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featuring artwork
from a local artist*

SPONSORED CONTENT

The Coronado News will be giving away free shirts — featuring artwork from Coronado resident Maylen Nelson — on the 4th of July. Residents and visitors alike are welcome to enter our FREE drawing.

The guidelines are simple: Stop by our table along the parade route (on the 200 block of Orange Avenue between Second and Third Street), and add your name and phone number to a ticket.

After conducting the drawing, we’ll send you a text if your ticket was chosen. Winners can pick up a t-shirt at their convenience at our table until 12:30 p.m., or when the parade is over.

Editor’s note: This is an advertisement feature from The Coronado News

CORONADO



NASCAR Cup Series driver Shane van Gisbergen drives the track on a simulator. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.

*NASCAR Cup
Series driver Shane
van Gisbergen
demonstrates driving
on a simulator*

BY MADELINE YANG
The Coronado News

Construction for the NASCAR race track is underway as the city expects over 100,000 people over Father’s Day weekend.

NASCAR Cup Series driver Shane van Gisbergen, who will be racing on Sunday, demonstrated driving the track on a simulator on base.

Contact: madeline@thecoronadonews.com





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SCAN ME

How did NASCAR get approved to race on a major U.S. Navy base?

» Continued from Page 1

and the Del Mar Fairgrounds. She said Mark Neville, CEO of Sports San Diego, then suggested North Island as an alternative.

Neville confirmed that his nonprofit organization had sponsored vintage auto racing on the tarmac beginning in the late 1990s. He invited NASCAR leaders to get a birds-eye view of the Navy base from Cabrillo National Monument.

Lupo said she and others gazed down and realized the Coronado venue would be perfect. “We went to the base for the first time in April of 2024,” she added, “and the rest is history.”

Through referrals from Sports San Diego, Lupo said, NASCAR was able to reach Adm. Lisa Franchetti, then chief of naval operations at the Pentagon. (Franchetti is among numerous high-ranking military officers fired by Trump’s Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, in the past year. She could not be reached for comment.)

When asked about the Navy’s contention that racing was approved by the DOD, Lupo said, “I’m not sure where that information comes from.”

Lupo said Trump played no role in authorizing the NASCAR races. She initially said the approval was granted in October 2025, after Trump took office, but later revised that statement saying the permission was granted in October 2024. She did not respond to subsequent requests for a copy of the authorizing letter or email.

Kevin Dixon, public affairs officer for Naval Base Coronado, said he does not know who in the U.S. government authorized auto racing on the base or who directed the Navy to accommodate NASCAR. Those decisions and instructions came out of the nation’s capital, Dixon said, as did any military contracts with NASCAR.

“Something this big would never start at the base,” he added. “...It came from Washington (D.C.) and it was, like, ‘Guys, let’s see what it takes to do this.’ It was pretty much a foregone conclusion by the time it reached us.”

The contract

Although Lupo said North Island racing was authorized under the Biden administration, the Navy contract was signed July 2 of 2025, six months after President Trump began his second term.

The contract, between NASCAR Event Management LLC and the Navy’s Fleet and Family Readiness command, is described as a “no-cost” agreement, meaning the Navy incurs no expenses.

NASCAR’s financial obligation is unclear. The company must pay for all race-related equipment, construction, services, ceremonies, transportation, tear-downs and other expenses. In addition, NASCAR is obliged to pay a “cash guarantee for concession and vendor sales.” But that price has been redacted from documents released to The Coronado News based on a Navy assertion that the amount of money owed to the U.S. government is confidential or a trade secret.

In addition to the concessionaire payment, NASCAR originally agreed to give the Navy 1,000 tickets for the event. In February, those terms were amended, granting the Navy 20,000



Construction for the NASCAR race track is underway. Grandstands have been set up and the track is still in progress. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.

tickets to Military Day events on Friday, June 19; 4,500 tickets for Saturday racing; and 4,500 more for Sunday. (The combined value of those tickets was redacted.)

NASCAR also is required to give North Island a racing simulator system, and to conduct meet-and-greet sessions between 10 racing teams and Navy units on the base.

The general contract specifies that NASCAR will provide all food and merchandise – except alcohol – for concessionaires. The Morale, Welfare and Recreation command retains exclusive rights to sell alcoholic beverages, and to retain profits.

A “commercial sponsorship agreement” with NASCAR Event Promotions LLC authorizes more than three dozen premier event sponsors – companies such as Coca-Cola, Chevrolet, Goodyear and Anheuser-Busch.

Additional contracts were issued covering broadcasting, catering and the use of Navy property, but those agreements were not provided in response to a FOIA request.

What’s at North Island?

Coronado is home to 23 aviation squadrons and 230 aircraft. Three nuclear-powered aircraft carriers are based at North Island. Navy SEALs train there, and the base houses about 80 other commands, including the Fleet Readiness Center Southwest — San Diego’s largest aerospace employer.

Many of the units and operations involve top-secret national projects and technology, such as drones, electronic warfare weaponry and submarines.

As a federal military installation, North Island is outside the jurisdiction of Coronado’s police and fire departments.

For many years, NASCAR was incorrectly touted as the most popular – or most watched – sport in America. Although live crowds were exceptional, overall viewership never compared with major American sports such as

football, basketball and baseball.

Still, racing’s popularity prompted the Army to sponsor NASCAR driving teams, hoping to spur recruiting. That practice eventually was curtailed amid congressional criticism.

According to design plans released by NASCAR, the 2026 course in Coronado covers 3.4 miles with 16 turns. A computer-animated video shows race cars zipping past helicopters, alongside carriers, around runways and between Navy buildings. In a news release, race officials said grandstand seating and hospitality will be available throughout the circuit, “the longest course on NASCAR’s 2026 schedule.”

Collaboration between the military and NASCAR offers benefits to both. As spelled out in promotional materials, the Navy gets to “engage with the next generation of sailors, help build morale, bolster recruitment efforts and promote the Navy’s 250th anniversary.” At the same time, NASCAR gets a new venue and a PR boost.

Coronado businesses also are poised for rewards. The event will hit town at the peak of tourist season, when hotels and restaurants are mostly full, but NASCAR’s presence will likely jack up business.

In fact, while this would be the first NASCAR event at a military installation, it would not be the first time for auto racing at North Island. For almost two decades, vintage cars roared around the tarmac during the aforementioned Coronado Speed Festival, which closed down in 2017. Those crowd estimates peaked at about 25,000, and the Navy said racing did not impede base operations.

Base operations are sacrosanct

The Navy’s contract with NASCAR includes provisions to prioritize the base’s military functions in the event of a calamity – including race cancellations if necessary.

“The operational readiness of the Armed Forces will not be impaired,” says the agreement. “Unforeseen

contingencies affecting national security or other emergency circumstances such as disaster relief may temporarily or permanently preclude the use of military resources.”

Additional passages establish security and vetting requirements for employees of NASCAR and its contractors; indemnify the Navy against lawsuits and property damage; and require NASCAR to obtain more than \$55 million of insurance coverage.

Dixon, the public affairs officer, stressed that, while Naval Air Station North Island is a 365-day operation, military activities won’t be heavily impacted because most of the stock car events will be on a weekend when conflicts are limited. In any case, he added, NASCAR must work around Navy priorities.

“Our needs come first,” Dixon said. “We have an active base, and we have to do what we have to do (for national defense).”

Lupo said the three-day NASCAR event will attract 125,000 fans — 25,000 on Friday, plus 50,000 each on Saturday and Sunday.

That represents a temporary population explosion in a town of 19,000 residents, plus tourists and workers. But the island is accustomed to throngs, including an estimated 100,000 visitors each July 4 for Independence Day celebrations. Moreover, large public events have been held at other bases, including the annual air show at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, which draws about 700,000 spectators over three days.

Still, that kind of an influx on a Navy base poses security questions, especially at a time when the U.S. is at war with Iran. In March, the FBI warned California officials that it had received “unverified information” that Iran hoped to retaliate against the United States by launching a “surprise attack” using aerial drones launched from an unidentified vessel off the California coast.

Race preparations will generate an enormous amount of traffic and work to develop the race track, safety walls, grandstands, security fencing and other infrastructure. According to NASCAR, that effort involves the delivery of 1,300 truckloads of materials and equipment.

Lupo said racing at North Island will be an “open base event” and the Iran war has not prompted reconsideration or changes in planning. Guests will be allowed on base through security gates by presenting a NASCAR ticket and a government ID. There will be random vehicle inspections, she added, and visitors will have access only to racing-related areas.

“We’re calling it the ‘NASCAR bubble,’” Lupo said of security arrangements. “We’ll have a full fenced and secured perimeter around every piece of base that NASCAR is utilizing.”

Crowd control and safekeeping will include private contractors, Navy security, local law enforcement and up



NASCAR released its street course for the race celebrating the 250th anniversary for the Navy. Photo provided by Matt Humphrey.

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to 500 volunteers from Sports San Diego, according to Lupo. “Our security team at NASCAR and the Navy security team are in lock step,” she said, “and working to ensure that it’s going to be a safe event.”

Lupo declined to reveal financial details of the contract. However, she said NASCAR will pay an unspecified amount for security as well as constructing and deconstructing the track, grandstands and concessions.

Will the president be there?

It is unknown whether Trump will attend Coronado’s auto races, but he is a noteworthy fan of NASCAR.

At the 2020 Daytona 500, the president served as grand marshal, leading stock cars on a pre-race lap around the course. After last year’s race in Florida, he hosted winners at the White House.

Trump’s support of NASCAR has been warmly reciprocated. In 2016, Brian France — then chief executive officer of the racing organization — endorsed the Republican presidential nominee. In 2020, one Daytona event was dubbed the “Great American Race.” (Brian France stepped down as CEO after a drunk driving conviction in 2019; he was replaced by his nephew, Jim France.)

In December of 2024, NASCAR hired Craig Stimmel, a former vice president at World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), as its senior vice president and chief commercial officer.

The WWE is another professional sports entity that backed Trump, who is a member of the organization’s Hall of Fame. Linda McMahon, cofounder and former head of the wrestling enterprise, serves as chair of America First Action, a Super PAC that raised \$189 million on behalf of Trump leading up to the 2020 elections. She co-chaired Trump’s transition team in 2024 and held a cabinet post in Trump’s first term as administrator over the Small Business Administration. She is currently the nation’s education secretary.

Eight months after NASCAR hired Stimmel, the race agreement in Coronado was made public.

One month later, Stimmel came out with another announcement: The military tech company known as Anduril Industries Inc. would be NASCAR’s “official defense partner” and a sponsor of the weekend in Coronado.

One of the races was promptly dubbed the Anduril 250, celebrating the Navy’s anniversary.

Lupo noted that Anduril is based in Southern California, so it made sense for the company to sign on as a sponsor. Anduril did not respond to an interview request.

A new military-industrial complex?

Since NASCAR racing in Coronado was announced, Anduril’s value has tripled from about \$20 billion to \$60 billion. By any measure, the corporation has emerged as a potent player in the development of U.S. armaments — and in the Trump administration.

Anduril’s primary business involves weaponry using artificial intelligence — surveillance technology, unmanned crafts and other “advanced autonomous systems.” In the conflict with Iran, the company reportedly has played a key role in combating Iranian drone attacks.

Anduril boasts numerous mega-



For the first time ever, NASCAR will hold a race on an active military base. The event is at Naval Air Station North Island over Father’s Day weekend. Photo from NASCAR.

Businesses linked to Tolkien

BY DENNIS WAGNER
The Coronado News

As one enters the rabbit hole of President Trump’s ties within military-tech industries, it becomes apparent that key players are linked by familiarity with JJR Tolkien’s “Lord of the Rings” novels, as well as financial and political interests.

In fact, the tech billionaires often name their businesses after magical characters, items and places found in Tolkien’s fantasy trilogy about a Hobbit. Among the examples:

- **Anduril Industries:** Anduril is a sword with the power to instill fear in enemies. The namesake company builds advanced autonomous systems and defense technology.
- **Palantir Technologies:** Palantir is a stone that allows one to see the future and communicate telepathically.
- **Narya Capital:** Narya is a powerful elfin ring that inspires hope and resists weariness. The venture capital business invests in technology and science industries.
- **Mithril Capital Management:** Mithril is a fictional metal, stronger than steel but lighter than a feather. The company is a venture capital firm that invests in technologies.
- **Erebor Bank:** Erebor is a mountain and subterranean city. The business is a bank dealing in crypto currency that was approved by the Trump administration this year.

deals with the Navy, including two signed this March: a \$642 million agreement to produce counter-drone systems at Marine Corps bases nationwide, and a contract with an unspecified price tag to build large, uncrewed submarines. That same month, Anduril was selected by the Army for a \$20 billion counter-drone project using artificial intelligence.

According to ABC News, Donald Trump Jr.’s investment firm, 1789 Capital, is among those with major stakes in Anduril Industries. The Daily Beast reported that Joshua Kushner, a brother of Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner, is also heavily invested in Anduril.

Anduril was started by a pair of tech billionaires, Trae Stephens and Palmer Luckey, who have been major donors to the current president.

Stephens was on Trump’s transition team in 2016, overseeing changes at the Department of Defense. A year later, he cofounded Anduril and the corporation began seeking military contracts. He is now executive chairman.

Stephens served as a Trump campaign consultant in 2024 and, according to Fortune magazine, was considered for a post as deputy secretary of defense, the No. 2 position in U.S. military leadership. He reportedly advised Trump on how to upgrade the Department of War.

Luckey was among the first tech kingpins to support Trump.

Another tech billionaire, Peter Thiel, helped get Anduril started through an investment entity known as Founders Fund, which also counts Stephens as a partner.

In 2016, Thiel was a headline speaker at the Republican National Convention. He then served on the executive committee for President Trump’s first transition.

Thiel also was an early investor in Space X and several other companies founded by the billionaire Elon Musk, who contributed more than \$250 million to Trump’s campaign and last year directed the president’s Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

J.D. Vance, who has described Thiel as a mentor, invested in Anduril through his own entity, Narya Capital, before becoming vice president. Vance had worked for Thiel as a partner at another investment enterprise, Mithril Capital, and was introduced to Trump by Thiel according to Forbes.

Inquiries to Anduril went unanswered.

Lord of the Rings?

In May, Anduril formed a partnership with an older company, Palantir Technologies, which develops artificial intelligence and has secured huge contracts with U.S. government agencies and the military.

If many of these corporate names seem oddly familiar, it is not mere happenstance: Anduril, Palantir, Narya, Mithril and other businesses in this network derive their monikers from magical features in J.R.R. Tolkien’s “Lord of the Rings” trilogy. (For more on this, see sidebar.)

Palantir was co-founded in 2003 by Thiel and others with seed funding from a CIA corporation known as In-Q-Tel. Thiel is Palantir’s board chairman.

Palantir specializes in data analytics. One of its software products boasts of an ability to “achieve AI-driven combat superiority, from space to mud.”The company claims to be reshaping modern warfare in an AI mode, and its technology has been described as the “core backbone” of Israeli and U.S. targeting in the Iran war.

Domestically, the company’s AI systems gather, merge, track and analyze information about people, using databases from agencies such as ICE, the FBI and the DOD. Palantir technology, for example, is currently used by ICE agents to identify and catch undocumented immigrants.

In May, Trump signed an executive order requiring federal agencies to share data with one another. According to the New York Times, Palantir was selected to coordinate those efforts, creating a potential master file of personal information on Ameri-

cans “that could give (the president) untold surveillance power.”

“Palantir’s selection as a chief vendor for the project was driven by Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency, according to the government officials,” the Times reported.

According to the Times, in the year after Trump’s second presidential election victory Palantir stock value rose 240% — peaking at \$490 billion. A Wall Street Journal analysis concluded that no company had ever reached that valuation so quickly. As of late May, Palantir’s enterprise value was listed at \$320 billion — up 2000% in three years.

Last year, Palantir was a sponsor for the president’s military parade honoring the Army’s 250th anniversary. In May, according to CNBC, Trump acquired hundreds of thousands of dollars in Palantir stock shortly before the president put a post on Truth Social praising the corporation for its “great war-fighting capabilities and equipment.” A Trump Organization representative said the president’s investment holdings are independently managed by third-party financial institutions.”

While the corporations with Tolkien-derived names already have taken in billions of American tax dollars, they are pursuing much more.

Earlier this year, Anduril and Palantir formed a “consortium” with Musk’s Space X to develop components of the so-called Golden Dome, a Trump project that theoretically would use satellite and AI technology to protect the United States from nuclear attacks. The dome’s projected price tag varies dramatically, depending on who makes the estimate: \$175 billion (Trump), \$542 billion (Congressional Budget Office) or \$3.6 trillion (American Enterprise Institute).

On Oct. 31, Space X was awarded the first contract — for \$2 billion. Reuters reported that executives from Anduril, SpaceX and Palantir met with top officials in the Trump administration and Pentagon to pitch plans that would launch up to 1,000 satellites into space as an anti-missile detection system. Another 200 armed satellites would be deployed to take down enemy missiles.

In early June, Trump signed an executive order promoting AI for national security. About the same time, he reportedly began considering Palantir’s chief technology officer, Shyam Sankar, to head the nation’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

The Tolkien network’s reach

Because the Navy secretary’s office has declined to provide records or clarify the genesis of NASCAR events at North Island, it is impossible to say what role, if any, the president or military-industrial companies played in bringing stock car racing to Coronado.

But, as engines roar around the Navy base and war continues in the Middle East, Anduril Industries — and, by association, its partners — will play a prominent role in both venues.

Lupo, the NASCAR San Diego president, said advance ticket sales have been “incredibly strong,” with purchasers from 17 countries as of early April.

She added that NASCAR is excited to be working with Coronado residents and businesses, as well as the Navy.

The company has established a “Checkered Flag Challenge” for homeowners to put up lawn signs, and for local shops to participate in racing specials and promotions.

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NASCAR San Diego president Amy Lupo stands at one of the construction sites for the race. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.

CHS grad Austin Varco makes his debut at NASCAR truck series race

» Continued from Page 1

Varco said he plans to take saunas leading up to race day to prepare for the heat.

The 26-year-old has been racing since he was 4, with parents who were both amateur club racers. He started on go-karts and in college, earned a scholarship that allowed him to attend racing school while studying at the University of Southern California.

Varco's first full season was in 2022. He finished the year with three wins, 11 podium finishes and 14 top-five finishes. The results were good enough to finish second in the Spec Miata Championship and win him the 2022 SCCA Rookie of the Year.

In college, Varco was officially diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. He started a nonprofit organization, Race4Autism, that is branded on his vehicles to help spread awareness.

Race4Autism hosts between nine and 12 events per year. He brings his trophies, race cars and a driving simulator he uses for training. He even lets children drive on the simulator to see or feel some of the things he may experience on the track.

When Varco started racing in a NASCAR-sanctioned series, the two goals for his career remained the same.

"There have not been any drivers in NASCAR history openly diagnosed with autism to win at any level," Varco said. "That's my biggest goal is to win a race in NASCAR at some level."

And now, he's prepping for his very first NASCAR national series race.

His vehicle for the race is a Ford F-150, and to get a feel for that, he tested out the course with his friend's truck – although it's not too different switching from racing a car to a truck, Varco said.

"They're very similar. Aero is the main difference," Varco said, talking about the aerodynamics of trucks.



Austin Varco watches a simulation of the track. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.

He explained that the way trucks are made, they actually help the driver have a bit more grip when they're rounding a corner.

"I've been running a smaller version of the truck series on the West Coast at a high aero track and have gotten pretty used to the way that the air goes around that car," Varco added.

Most of the circuit is still being built, but he was able to drive about a third of it on June 10, taking in the feel of the road.

The biggest thing that he learned: the tracks are very uneven.

This is a street course, which means NASCAR kept the original roads for the track instead of laying down a new road.

Jeremy Casperson, the engineer of the 3.4 mile course, explained that there are four types of pre-existing road conditions: old and new concrete, and old and new asphalt.

Some of the track will be on runways used by the North Island, but other parts of the track are just regular roads that have been filled in over the years.

"This is going to be brutal," Varco laughed. "I'm going to need a chiropractor after this."

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SPORTS

US team settles into World Cup training base with optimism and gratitude for fan support

Associated Press

The U.S. national team already knew it was in for a once-in-a-lifetime experience this month as the home team in a World Cup.

But when the 26 players took the field at Orange County's Great Park on June 8 to the cheers of several thousand fans who had turned out just to watch a mere practice, they were given yet another reminder of just how special this opportunity will be if they seize it.

The Americans projected confidence and excitement as they settled into their training base for at least the next three weeks in Southern California. The team convened in Georgia last month before playing two friendlies in the past eight days.

All three of the Americans' World Cup group stage matches are on the West Coast, starting with their opener on June 12 against Paraguay at SoFi Stadium, the palatial NFL arena about 50 miles away in Inglewood, California.

"I think the group is in a really good place at the minute," U.S. captain Tim Ream said. "We've all been, I wouldn't say overwhelmed, but pleasantly surprised by the excitement and the buzz around the team and in the stadiums. Pulling up here with 5,500 fans ready to watch a training session is incredible. I just think we're in a good place mentally right now. It's been a long two weeks, a hard two weeks, but guys are in a great position mentally, physically and emotionally, and ready to get going."

The team was greeted in Irvine by rows of enthusiastic fans who won a multi-stage lottery among 32,000 applicants for the chance to watch practice and to get autographs at FIFA's Community Day event. U.S. coach Mauricio Pochettino entertained the crowd and got a "U-S-A!" chant going while his team was doing a brief gym workout before it got on the grass.

"The facilities are amazing," Pochettino said. "It's more than we expect, and not only the facilities, but the people who are here working. Great facilities and great people are an amazing combination. We are grateful, and I want to say a big thanks."



United States defender Chris Richards, front left, gives autographs to fans after the national team's first practice at its World Cup soccer tournament training base in Irvine, Calif., Monday, June 8, 2026. AP Photo/Greg Beacham.

The fans stood in lengthy security lines at this sprawling athletic complex for an up-close morning look at a team that isn't among the favorites, but has the backing of millions in a country where soccer has proliferated in popularity since the World Cup's last visit in 1994. The Americans' training stadium is the normal home of Orange County SC, a club in the second-tier USL Championship, which didn't exist three decades ago.

"I'm old enough that I remember bits and pieces of 1994," said the 38-year-old Ream, who grew up in St. Louis before his lengthy career as a defender in England and the U.S., where he now plays for Charlotte in Major League Soccer, which didn't stage its inaugural season until 1996.

"So I've tried to tell guys and tried to convey the messaging that this is a once-in-a-career opportunity, and with that comes more expectation,

more pressure," Ream added. "But we have to enjoy it. There's nobody putting more expectation and more pressure on us than ourselves, and that's the way it should be. For me, it's about just opening your eyes and taking everything in, because this is unique. This is completely different from anything any of us has expe-

rienced. So take it in and embrace everything that it is, because it's so unique, it's so special, and it's not something we'll ever be doing again."

The most notable part of practice was the full participation of top defender Chris Richards, who injured his left ankle last month while playing for Crystal Palace.

Miles Russell qualifies for the US Open at age 17 with Tiger Woods' son on the bag

Associated Press

Miles Russell was among two 17-year-olds who earned a spot in the U.S. Open on June 8. Still to be determined was whether Russell brings his caddy from the 36-hole qualifier — the son of three-time champion Tiger Woods — to Shinnecock Hills next week.

Russell, the No. 10 amateur in the world, survived a bogey on the first playoff hole and grabbed the fourth and final spot from the Florida qualifier. Charlie Woods is one of his close friends who has the same commercial agent and is following Russell to Florida State.

"It kept it so light," Russell said. "It's the first time I've had a buddy on the bag. I really like it, not talking much golf, just having a good time."

Russell smiled when asked if he would have Woods at Shinnecock Hills, saying only: "We'll see what he's doing. To be determined."

The medalist from the Florida qualifier was Giuseppe Puebla, who ranks second behind Russell in the American Junior Golf Association ranking.

They were among 715 players at 10 sites from coast to coast and into Canada, all of them vying for 43 spots available for the 126th U.S. Open.

Previous qualifiers were held in England, Japan and Dallas.

Vaughn Harber, who just finished his sophomore year at Ohio State, played his final five holes at The



FILE - Miles Russell smiles after his tee shot on the 10th hole during the first round of the Rocket Mortgage Classic golf tournament at Detroit Country Club, June 27, 2024, in Detroit. AP Photo/Paul Sancya, File.

Lakes in 5-under par — including an eagle — and then advanced in the 4-for-3 playoff in one of the two Ohio qualifiers. Jackson Van Paris birdied his last two holes to qualify without extra holes.

That qualifier also produced the first player from Iceland to play in the U.S. Open, Arni Sveinsson, who plays for LSU.

In the other Ohio qualifier, Billy Horschel found a happy note in an otherwise tough season when he was among five who made it through. Tony Finau missed out by two shots and will not be at the U.S. Open for the first time since 2017.

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SPORTS

Law firms cheated in filing claims with NFL’s \$1B concussion settlement fund, report says

Associated Press

The court officials overseeing the NFL’s \$1 billion-plus settlement fund for concussion-related injuries have barred five law firms from handling any more claims from former players, after finding that they fraudulently steered clients toward doctors willing to give them a Parkinson’s disease diagnosis whether they exhibited symptoms or not.

The five firms represented or performed work involving 98 former players who in recent years sought six- to seven-figure payouts from the settlement for Parkinson’s disease claims, the special masters appointed to help oversee the settlement wrote in a report filed Monday in U.S. District Court in Philadelphia.

Of those, 37 remained pending and will now be denied, with a chance for the players to restart the claims process. But 57 were approved — totaling more than \$95 million — before tips about suspicious activity prompted an audit. The attorneys’ share of that came out to about \$20 million, the report said, and additional firms may have been involved in similar actions.

The report called it “an organized scheme ... in which these law firms — and potentially others — circumvented the Settlement’s anti-fraud safeguards and laundered questionable Parkinson’s Disease diagnoses into payable claims.”

According to the report, the attorneys involved included Bart Oates, a former three-time Super Bowl champion with the New York Giants and San Francisco 49ers who earned his law degree while still playing in the NFL. Oates did not immediately return a message left by The Associated



FILE - The NFL logo is displayed on a goal post at Acrisure Stadium before an NFL football game. AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar, File.

Press on his law firm voicemail seeking comment.

The NFL in 2013 agreed to establish the fund, meant to last for 65 years, to settle class-action allegations that it long hid what it knew about the neurological risks of playing after concussions. The plan offers retired players baseline testing and compensation of up to \$5 million for the most serious illnesses linked to football concussions, including Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and deaths involving chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE.

The fund is uncapped; so far it has awarded more than \$1.6 billion on about 2,100 claims.

The league has previously expressed concerns about doctor-shopping or other fraud in the disbursement of the money, while some attorneys representing players have accused the league of throwing up roadblocks for players seeking payment.

A judge in 2019 terminated three of the four lawyers serving as class counsel after they objected to restrictions on geographical restrictions on the doctors who can evaluate retired players for dementia and other brain

injuries.

A 2020 lawsuit uncovered racial bias in dementia testing that prevented some Black players from being awarded payouts. Hundreds more qualified after they were reassessed using race-neutral tests.

“The NFL remains committed to ensuring that players and their families receive the benefits they deserve, and any misconduct threatens the integrity of the Settlement and the prompt payment of legitimate claims,” league spokesman Brian McCarthy said in a statement to the AP. “We are pleased with the Special Masters’ Decision, which sends a clear message that fraud in the NFL Concussion Settlement Program will not be tolerated.”

Under the settlement, only doctors contracted with the claims program are allowed to render qualifying diagnoses; those doctors must be board-certified, have expertise in neurology, and comply with anti-influence rules designed to prevent fraud or kickbacks.

The report said that the law firms circumvented that requirement by recruiting retired players as clients and sending them to unapproved doctors who diagnosed them with Parkinson’s and prescribed them a drug that suppresses the symptoms.

At one point, retired players waited in a hotel lobby in Dallas to meet with a traveling doctor who had rented a suite for the purpose of examining them for Parkinson’s, the report said. Another unapproved doctor used by the firms was neither board-certified nor known to be a movement disorders specialist, but even if he were, he would have been ineligible due to past bankruptcy, tax liens and civil judgments, it said.

After the diagnosis and prescription from an unapproved doctor, the law firms sent the clients to approved ones — who were hamstrung in making a decision about whether the former player had the disease, because the player was already on medication to suppress the symptoms, the report said. The approved doctors typically could rely only on the past medical history: the prior diagnosis and current prescription.

The report identified the law firms involved as Douglas Grossinger, Attorney at Law; Feder Law, LLC; Pro Athlete Law Firm, P.A.; Syme Law, PLLC; and Reppert Oates & Vytell, LLC. It said the practice began with Grossinger, who then recruited other attorneys to submit claims for him so as to avoid raising suspicion for submitting so many Parkinson’s claims.

Oates did not farm out claims to other attorneys, but he engaged in a similar practice with diagnoses, the report said, with informants telling auditors that he “cold-called Retired NFL Players, promising a Diagnosis of Parkinson’s Disease” if the players switched from another law firm to his.

“By structuring their clients’ evaluations in this way, Mr. Grossinger and ROV deliberately put (approved) Physicians in a position where they had little choice but to defer to manufactured outside records,” the report said.

Grossinger, a New York-licensed attorney, declined to comment on the record when contacted by the AP. Pennsylvania-based Fred Feder said in a text message he would not make any statement without first consulting his lawyer. The AP could not immediately confirm contact information for Syme Law or Pro Athlete Law Firm.

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SPORTS

MLB’s hitters are struggling to thrive after 35 in the age of analytics and increased velocity

Associated Press

Nolan Arenado was slugging his way through the month of May when the Arizona Diamondbacks third baseman woke up one morning with an ailment that’s familiar to those who felt invincible in their 20s but have advanced to their mid-to-late 30s.

His back hurt.
Not bad. Not enough to keep him out of the lineup. But it was one of those inexplicable moments that comes with being an aging Major League Baseball player — threatening to derail a hot streak for an eight-time All-Star who just turned 35.

“There’s more aches and pains,” Arenado said. “There’s just a little more work in the gym, getting prepared for the game, than there used to be. That’s a learning curve.

“I’ve always been in the gym, always did that stuff, but there’s definitely more maintenance.”

Arenado got past the minor back issue and is continuing a bounce-back season in the desert, batting .256 with eight homers and 30 RBIs through Monday’s games. He’s among a group of the 35-and-older crowd getting solid results at the plate, joining Los Angeles Dodgers veterans Freddie Freeman and Max Muncy, along with Houston’s Christian Walker.

But it’s a small club that’s become smaller over the past decade.

MLB hitters who are 35 or older have combined to provide just 5.6 WAR (Wins Above Replacement, per FanGraphs) through roughly the first 1/3 of the season, continuing a trend that’s accelerated over the past decade.

In the early 2000s, older stars were the norm in the big leagues. It peaked



Los Angeles Dodgers' Freddie Freeman hits a two-run home run against the Arizona Diamondbacks in the first inning of a baseball game, Tuesday, June 2, 2026, in Phoenix. AP Photo/Rick Scuteri.

in 2003 when older hitters combined for 71.3 WAR, with a group highlighted by Barry Bonds, Frank Thomas, Kenny Lofton, Luis Gonzalez and Jeff Bagwell.

So what’s changed?
Let’s look at some of the reasons why MLB is skewing younger this days:

Analytics like younger players

Baseball’s analytical era can be traced back to the work of Bill James in the 1970s and 1980s, but terms like

WAR, wOBA, BABIP, and OPS+ didn’t start to become widespread in the big leagues until at least the late 2000s.

Suddenly, the eye test wasn’t enough for MLB general managers. Cold, hard numbers were in.

And — overwhelmingly — those numbers showed that the best years for a big league hitter usually come from their mid-20s to early 30s.

That’s directly correlated to MLB teams locking up young players to long-term contracts. Arizona’s Corbin Carroll, Detroit’s Kevin McGonigle, Pittsburgh’s Konnor Griffin, Kansas City’s Bobby Witt Jr. and Seattle’s Julio Rodriguez are among dozens of promising players who were signed to lucrative deals well before they reach free agency.

Spending on veterans is no longer in vogue. Walker — a three-time Gold Glove first baseman who has hit nearly 200 career homers — signed with the Astros for a relatively modest \$60 million, three-year deal after the 2024 season when he was 33 years old.

“I think it has a lot to do with the ability to measure guys’ value on the field,” Walker said. “For a long time, WAR didn’t exist, wRC+ wasn’t a stat, right? So, you went off of the optics or this guy’s a good clubhouse guy or he’s got experience, he’s been to a World Series.”

Velocity has exploded during their careers

Today’s young stars have come of age in a game where velocity is king, but it wasn’t that way when Freeman and others broke through. The average MLB fastball in 2026 is north of 94 mph, with 18 qualified pitchers averaging at least 96. When Freeman debuted 17 years ago, the league-wide average was under 92 and no qualified pitchers averaged at least 96.

Arenado said that one of the first things that becomes tougher for MLB veterans is the ability to handle really good fastballs — particularly inside. It makes for tough matchups against pitchers like Milwaukee’s Jacob deGrom, who routinely throws 100 mph.

“I feel like just the general age of the levels and the development is trending younger and younger,” Walker said. “And there might be something to that — like your best bullets might be when you’re 27 years old.”

Big league teams value flexibility more now, too

Dodgers manager Dave Roberts has Freeman and Muncy in his lineup on nearly a daily basis. He also played in the big leagues until he was 36 years old, retiring in 2008, giving him some personal experience on the aging process.

“The hardest part is to expect and want the same output you’ve always had, but not be willing to change the equation,” Roberts said.

Roberts said the process is different for every player. Some need to work out more. Some less. Others need more sleep. Diet becomes more important. The tricky part is that the habits that brought you to the big leagues might not be the same ones that will keep you there in your mid-to-late 30s.

Walker, who didn’t become a starter in the big leagues until he was 28, said he’s embraced getting older and enjoys analyzing his blood tests that might signal what’s causing vitamin deficiencies or inflammation. The tests also show how much alcohol might affect his body or the importance of a good night’s sleep.

“For myself, no real magic recipe, just chalk it up to being a late bloomer,” Walker said. “My age is older than most guys, but service time isn’t. I haven’t been in the big leagues for 20 years or anything like that. Just fortunate that I still can help the team.”

Arenado embraces change

Diamondbacks manager Torey Lovullo said he believed there were two main reasons Arenado was still having success in his 14th big league season. First, he gave credit to the D-backs’ hitting coaches.

But maybe most importantly, Arenado has listened to those coaches, embraced change and found new ways to have success.

“There’s an adjustment to work habits and mindset once you get to that level where things aren’t as easy as they used to be,” Lovullo said. “Some say ‘I’ve had my career, it’s not as easy as it once was, and I want to shut it down.’”

Later he added: “It’s fun to watch Nolan Arenado have all this success, but he’s worked his butt off. He’s working as hard as any 22 or 23 year old we have on this team.”

Attention, Coronado Art Collectors and Art Enthusiasts



Pauline Johnson- Brown
Worldwide Art and Auction Advisor
New York, San Diego, Washington D.C.
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