

NASCAR weekend: The highs, the lows, and everything in between

Coronado News staff

Over 100,000 fans entered the gates of Naval Air Station North Island over Father’s Day weekend to attend the first-ever NASCAR racing event on an active military base. The 3.4-mile “Qualcomm Circuit” weaved through the base where sailors typically operate, providing 16 turns for drivers to navigate. One notable corner passed the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson. The USS

Cincinnati, an Independence-variant littoral combat ship, could also be seen along the course. The three-day event blended motorsports with military tradition in a distinctly American spectacle, marking the Navy’s 250th anniversary. **June 19** Day one was dubbed “Navy Community Day” since it was open only to members of the Navy and a limited number of Coronado residents.

The intermittent roar of stock car engines and smell of burnt tires announced the start of the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series Race, which Layne Riggs took first place in. In a fitting nod to community day, Coronado’s own – Austin Varco – made his national series debut on the longest track NASCAR has ever constructed. The 26-year-old, who graduated from Coro-



A young attendee watches the NASCAR Race. Staff photo by Michelle Armas.

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EVERY SECOND COUNTS

A look behind the scenes of a NASCAR pit crew



Crew rolls the No. 21 Ford Mustang out to the track. Staff photo by Michelle Armas.

BY MICHELLE ARMAS
The Coronado News

It is the 42nd lap of Sunday’s NASCAR Cup Series race when driver Josh Berry radios that his Ford Mustang needs a pit stop. Moments later, the No. 21 car brakes into pit road, where tire changers, fuelers and jackmen spring into action, servicing the car in less than 10 seconds. Those 10 seconds may seem as frantic as they are brief, but the real work came during train-

ing sessions and setup prior to the race. Along the 3.4-mile course at Naval Air Station North Island, similar moments play out dozens of times throughout the afternoon as thousands of spectators watch in person and a national television audience tunes in. The Coronado News would spend the day at the NASCAR Cup Series race, following the crew of the No. 21 Ford Mustang fielded by Wood Brothers Racing with driver Josh Berry. And witnessing how race weekends are not sprints — they’re marathons.

9 a.m. The Mustang sits outside a trailer-like garage, lined up alongside the 38 other race cars. Its side fenders and front and rear bumpers are bright white, contrasted by a cherry-red hood. A gold No. 21 adorns the front fender, while a white No. 21 stretches across the top. Brand names including Motorcraft, Quick Lane, DEX and Ford Racing are plastered across the vehicle. The engine, a Roush Yates

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Community grant fund awards 27 Coronado nonprofits

The city allocates over \$1 million each year for its local nonprofit organizations

BY MADELINE YANG
The Coronado News

Coronado awarded \$1.1 million to a total of 27 different nonprofit organizations this year for the city’s community grant program – an annual task with over a million dollars allocated in each of the last seven years. The city utilized its expedited grant

award process again this year to distribute just under \$1 million to 16 nonprofits that had shown consistent, annual and established events, allowing them automatic renewal. Council members were still able to vet each organization, but this year, all nonprofits were funded at 100% of their asking amounts. A 17th group, the Coronado Junior Arts League, approached the city during its June 16 meeting to request funding despite missing its application deadline. Catherine Baker, the founder of

Coronado Junior Arts League, said she didn’t apply this year because she is moving from the island and planned to put her nonprofit on hiatus. However, the organization was able to find a new chairperson and requested a grant like it had in previous years. The city awarded them the grant appeal. Thirteen organizations applied through the city’s mini-grant process that caps funding at \$15,000. Only 11 mini-grant requests were awarded, totaling \$157,000.

- Complete list of grant recipients:**
- Classics 4 Kids Inc.**
 - Music education access for Coronado students: \$15,750
 - Coronado Chamber of Commerce**
 - Advocating for Coronado’s business community: \$70,000
 - Coronado Visitor Center website: \$24,000
 - Holiday Parade & Tree Lighting: \$15,000

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this week

28 • Sunday

The Coronado Ferry Landing is slated to host a weekend concert featuring Moonlight Miles at 2 p.m.

28 • Sunday

On June 28, Coronado's Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 2422 will serve a picnic dinner of grilled chicken on a spring salad, with a croissant and chocolate chunk cookie.

28 • Sunday

Jennifer Butler, a yoga teacher and health coach, is hosting a sound flow summer sound bath series. On June 28, participants can drift into deep relaxation surrounded by various sound instruments. The event is at the Coronado Island Marriott Resort & Spa at 7 p.m.

1 • Wednesday

The Coronado Public Library, in partnership with the Coronado Island Film Festival, presents Film Forum Coronado, taking place the first and third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. in the library's Winn Room. Film expert Ralph DeLauro provides a brief introduction to each film and leads a discussion afterwards, often including pointers about how lighting or camera angles contribute to a scene's mood or propel the story. The featured film on July 1 is "Strongroom."

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

PAWS of Coronado presents
its Animal Mayor Race

The contest for the next animal mayor of Coronado is now open

BY JULIETA SOTO
The Coronado News

Do you think your pet should be the next animal mayor in Coronado? PAWS of Coronado, a nonprofit organization, has opened up its canine mayor race to all animals. The winner of this year's Animal Mayor Race will serve a two-year term. The event is a fundraiser that helps support the animals at PAWS of Coronado.

"Valkyrie is the current resilient rescue dog that held the term from 2024 to 2026," said Jackie Williams, executive director at PAWS of Coronado.

Through June 8, the organization is accepting nominations of any animal that lives in Coronado or has been affiliated with PAWS of Coronado through rescue. Submissions may be made via an online form at: https://form.jotform.com/paws_marketing/paws-of-coronados-animal-mayor.

The nomination fee is \$50 per animal and candidates may begin campaigning once nominated. The new mayor will be announced on July 3.

"We would love everyone to participate by either voting, nominating an animal, sharing through social media the race updates," said Williams. "Hopefully, the winner will be able to be in the parade on the 4th of July with PAWS of Coronado."

Accepting all animal nominations

According to Williams, the organization will be opening the parameters of

another fundraiser next year in search of an animal city manager.

Valkyrie, a one-eyed shepherd mix, is Coronado's eighth canine mayor after receiving the most votes out of 15 dog ambassadors in the 2024 Canine Mayoral Race which raised over \$25,000 for animal welfare in Coronado. She has held a ceremonial position in the annual Fourth of July parade.

Williams said the important position of canine mayor was transferred to animal mayor after PAWS saw an uptick in a wide variety of animals such as ducks, roosters, birds, bearded dragons, guinea pigs, and other animals in need of care.

"The purpose of this change is to open nominations to a larger pool of candidates," said Williams. "As a fundraiser, the more participation we have, the more we can raise for the animals who depend on us."

Williams said the facility is currently full with most of the animals requiring medical support.

Funds raised help cover medical care, including spay and neuter procedures, vaccinations, food, supplies, and other necessities to prepare animals for adoption, she said.

Important dates

The nomination period ends on June 8. Voting begins on June 9 and runs through 5 p.m. on July 3. The new animal mayor begins a two-year term on July 4.

Williams said the animal mayor will be announced on their website, Instagram and Facebook.

"It's a very tight race usually," said Williams.

To learn more, visit: <https://pawsof-coronado.org/>.



PET
OF THE WEEK

Meet Bunny

PAWS of Coronado

Bunny is available for adoption at PAWS of Coronado.

Staff members at the nonprofit, which provides adoption and rehabilitation services to animals, said that Bunny is looking for a calm and compassionate adopter who will let her adjust at her own pace.

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 Bunny or other pets, please visit pawsofcoronado.org.



Meet Bunny, the pet of the week. She's at PAWS of Coronado and is looking for her 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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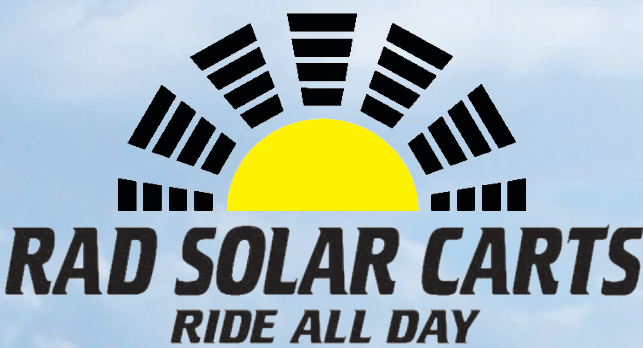
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OPINION

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The high costs of free parking

BY JOHN MURPHY
Letter to the Editor

I recently read “The High Cost of Free Parking” by Donald Shoup, a UCLA urban planning professor, who argues that “free” parking comes with significant hidden costs. By requiring abundant free parking, cities end up encouraging urban sprawl, increasing traffic congestion, and contributing to environmental damage.

Free parking is not truly free — it is a subsidy that shifts costs onto the public while incentivizing driving over more sustainable alternatives. Shoup also points out that a meaningful share of traffic in busy areas consists of drivers simply circling in search of free parking, adding to congestion and frustration for everyone.

His work, widely regarded as highly influential in urban planning, has inspired cities to experiment with market-based pricing and other parking reforms that better balance access, efficiency, and livability.

As Coronado considers its own future, it may be time to rethink the assumption that parking should always be free. A community designed primarily around cars comes at a cost. A community designed for people — walkability, safety, and quality of life — offers far greater long-term value.



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from a local artist

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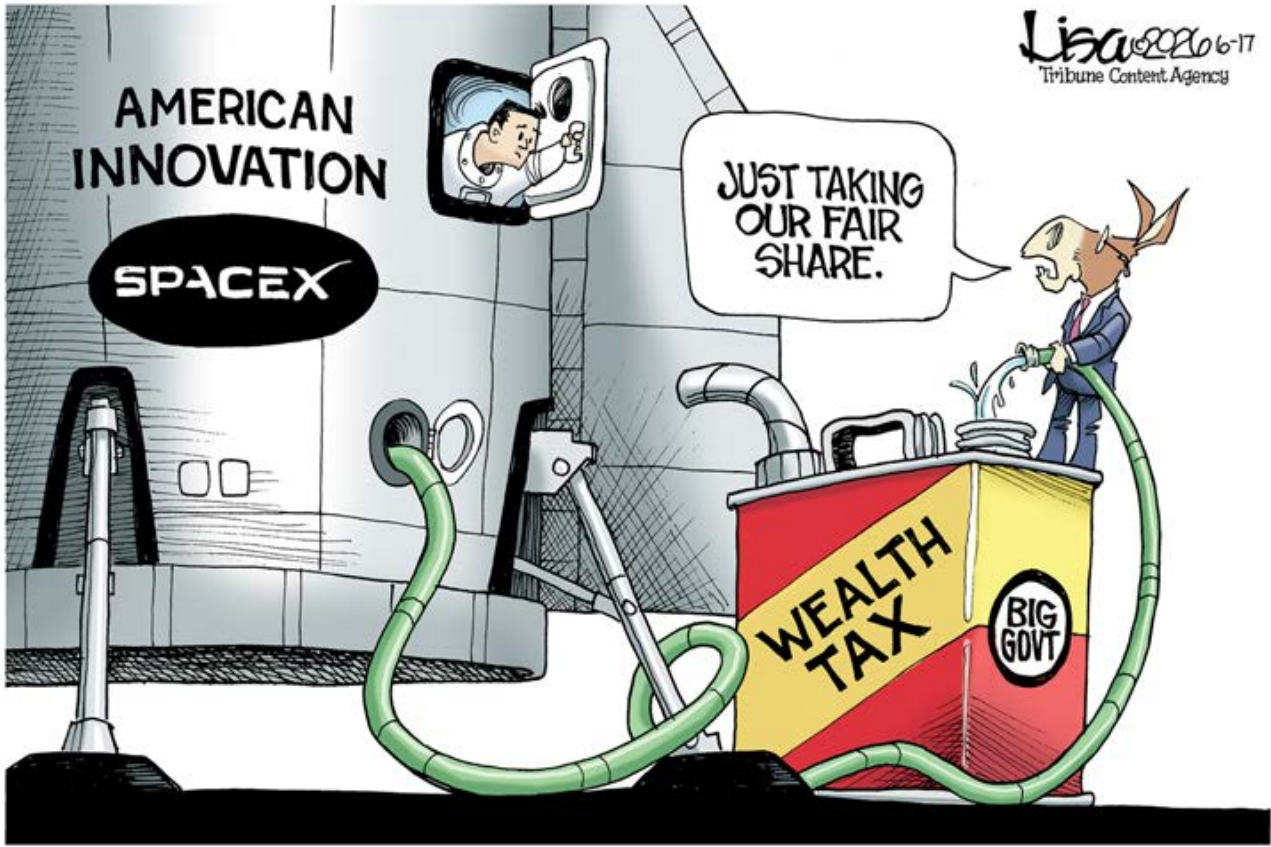
The Coronado News will be giving away free shirts — featuring artwork from Coronado resident Maylen Nelson — on the 4th of July. Residents and visitors alike are welcome to enter our FREE drawing.

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

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THE CORONADO ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL
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CORONADO



The Fourth of July parade is almost here, and these are all the things you need to know for the big day. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.

Parking and road closures for the 2026 Fourth of July

BY MADELINE YANG
The Coronado News

For the 100,000 people anticipated to visit Coronado on July 4, and long-time island residents, the Police Department has announced road closures, parking restrictions and a full schedule for the city's most celebrated day.

The city's main street, Orange Avenue, will be closed for the parade between First Street and R.H. Dana Place from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Vehicle traffic will be facilitated across the parade during planned moments, but Third and Fourth streets will be closed off.

The 100 and 200 blocks of D, E, F, G, H, I and J avenues are the parade staging areas and will have restricted access. First Street between Alameda Boulevard and Orange Avenue will be closed and so will Churchill Place and a portion of Isabella Avenue.

These roadways will be reopened after 1 p.m. so plan parking accordingly.

Vehicles left along the parade route, staging areas, Glorietta Boulevard or Strand Way on the morning of the 4th will be towed starting at 4 a.m.

As long as posted parking signs are followed, cars will not be towed, according to the city. Parking is allowed in any marked legal parking spot except where "No Parking" signs have been placed.

For information on towed vehicles, contact the Coronado Police Department.

ment.

Free bus service will be provided via the Metropolitan Transit System. Public transportation will stop at usual locations, except on the parade route.

The shuttle service will run from 9 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. on the 4th.

For Coronado Cays residents, the bus will operate from 7:30 am to 11 p.m. in 30-minute intervals. It will go from the northeast corner of the Cays and Grand Caribe to the southeast corner of Avenue de las Arenas and Silver Strand Boulevard.

It can stop upon request at Silver Strand military housing.

The best place to view the parade would be along the southbound lanes of Orange Avenue from First Street to Churchill Place.

Fireworks will start at 9 p.m. from Stingray Point. This will result in the closure of the beach to prevent people from setting up in the launch area. All people and vessels have to be out of Stingray Point by 6 p.m.

On July 3, free anchorage zones will be established in Glorietta Bay for boaters to view the fireworks, but they must remain in those areas during the show and keep clear of the fallout zone.

The Coronado Fire Department will let mariners know when the firework show is over. There will be a live broadcast of the parade and the fireworks on the city's YouTube page.

Contact: madeline@thecoronadonews.com

Community grant fund awards 27 Coronado nonprofits

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- Coronado Community Band**
 - July 4th Patriotic Concert: \$1,500
 - Operations support: \$18,500
- Coronado Floral Association**
 - Coronado Flower Show: \$95,600
- Coronado Fourth of July**
 - Coronado Fourth of July celebration: \$105,000
- Coronado Historical Association**
 - Keep the Coronado museum free: \$104,000
- Coronado Island Film Festival**
 - Production of the 5-day Coronado Island Film Festival: \$50,000
 - Year-Round production & outreach: \$50,000
- Coronado Junior Arts League**
 - FY 2026-27 season: \$30,000
- Coronado Philharmonia Orchestra**
 - CPO 2026-27 season: \$50,543
- Coronado Schools Foundation**
 - Coronado Art and Wine Festival: \$24,850
- Emerald Keepers**
 - Community programs, events, & education: \$27,800
 - Youth services, leadership development & engagement: \$42,300
- KMAC Foundation**
 - Accessible sailing regattas and training: \$15,000
- Lamb's Players Theatre**
 - 2026-27 season: \$75,000
- Memorial Day Ceremony planning committee**
 - Coronado Memorial Day Ceremony 2027 grant: \$4,000
- Musica Vitale**
 - 2026-27 main stage and school program: \$15,000
 - Crown City Chorale Coronado Choir: \$10,000

- Safe Harbor Coronado**
 - Family support services: \$50,000
 - Healthy Families Program: \$75,000
- Villa-Lobos International Chamber Music Festival**
 - Coronado residency: \$14,386
 - Coronado school outreach: \$7,920
- Mini-grants: Anchor Booster Club**
 - Making Waves: \$7,500
- Camp Able at Coronado**
 - Camperships 2026: \$15,000
- Coronado Community Theatre**
 - Coronado Playhouse 2027 Free Classic: \$15,000
- Coronado Hospital Foundation**
 - Wellness clinic at Sharp Coronado: \$15,000
- Coronado School of the Arts Foundation (CoSA)**
 - Artistry in Action: \$15,000
 - Sound board: \$8,000
- Crown City Water Polo**
 - BBMAC Pool Fees: \$7,500
- Pacific Animal Welfare Society (PAWS)**
 - Mini grant: \$15,000
- So Say We All (SSWA)**
 - Long Story Short: Coronado Showcase: \$4,170
- Storytellers of San Diego**
 - Lore and Legends of Coronado: Community Storytelling and Cultural Heritage project: \$10,000
- Westwind Brass**
 - Coronado Brass Connections: A Community Residency by Westwind Brass: \$15,000

Contact: madeline@thecoronadonews.com

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July 4th through Labor Day

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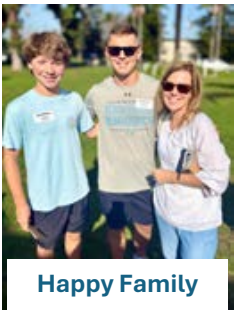


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COMMUNITY’S CIVIC AFFAIRS.

NASCAR weekend: The highs, the lows, and everything in between

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nado High School, has been racing since he was four. He finished 17th in the race on June 19.

June 20

Qualifying races began early in the day on June 20, and as drivers walked to the track, fans clamored at the fence to catch a glimpse of their favorites: Tyler Reddick, Kyle Larson, Jimmie Johnson, Chase Elliot, the list goes on. One-by-one, crews whistled to clear a path through the crowds. Nearby, a NASCAR enthusiast gave the rundown of each driver to his young son, rattling off

facts and stats.

The qualifying race was in preparation for the Cup Series on Sunday, the weekend's main event. Attendees prepared accordingly by lining up Saturday in front of dozens of concession trucks – each one plastered with photos of NASCAR drivers – to buy paraphernalia as engines revved in the distance.

As the afternoon went on, fans made their way to seats for the O'Reilly Auto Parts Race, concession food and drinks in hand.

Austin Hill took first place, marking the first win for the RCR team since unexpectedly losing its NASCAR Cup Series driver Kyle Busch

four weeks prior. Busch passed away unexpectedly due to pneumonia. Hill said he found himself talking to Busch on the straightaways. "I was like 'Man, Kyle, if you're here, give me something, let me find another gear,'" he said.

A notable red flag period came from a 23-car incident after Sam Mayer nicked the inside wall, lurched to the other wall, and started a chain reaction, eliminating many of the strongest cars.

A second red flag period sparked a delay after a sewer vent cover impaled the nose of Corey Day's car. Crews spent an hour repairing the vent.

June 21

With the street course up and running again, crowds flocked to the Naval base again for the final day. An aerial view of the Coronado Bridge in the morning would reveal a thick line of cars heading to Naval Air Station North Island's entry gates.

Pre-race events again showed the seemingly seamless collaboration between NASCAR and the U.S. Navy. As Naval aircrafts streaked across the sky, spectators pledged allegiance to the flag, and a sailor led attendees in a prayer. The Navy Leap Frogs parachuted onto the track (as they had the two days prior) with a massive American flag

billowing behind them. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth waved the green flag to kick off the Cup Series race.

The entire weekend culminated in Corey Heim's decisive victory, where he made the winning pass after Reddick slipped in in the 73rd lap, allowing an opening for 23-year-old Heim.

His reaction to winning his first-ever Cup Series race was summed up in a statement:

"I'm speechless," he said. "We get to hold on to those memories forever," Coronado resident Maria Sauter said of the event. "People get to take those memories with them. That's what's most important."

Behind the scenes of a pit crew: Where every second counts

» Continued from Page 1

Engines-built Ford V8, churns with 670 horsepower, a speed machine.

Mechanics and engineers are stationed in the Cup Series garage with No. 21. Rusty Loggins, a longtime NASCAR transporter, hauled the car from North Carolina the week before.

He explains that the road crew is composed of mechanics and engineers who work on the car all week, while the pit crew consists of athletes who arrive on race days.

"(The road crew) are the ones working on the car, making adjustments and getting the setup right," Loggins said. "The pit crew is a crew of five guys that go over the wall and do pit stops in less than 10 seconds."

9:30 a.m.

Over on pit road the five person pit crew is already setting up a two-level pit box. On the bottom, there's a command center with monitors displaying live race broadcasts and scoring. There are heavy metal drawers filled with specialized equipment, nitrogen bottles to power air guns, wrenches, spare parts and the like. Around the box sits massive fuel tanks and fresh tires stacked on top of another.

The top of the pit box is an elevated, canopy-covered viewing deck featuring seating for the crew chief and engineers, communication headsets, and a massive bank of data-monitoring screens.

"It takes about 45 minutes to get set up every week. That's a huge weight off our shoulders," says Parks Jones, a tire changer.

Because of the layout of the temporary course at North Island, the car enters the pit stall differently than on a typical track.

"Things can go wrong quick," Jones says.

Normally assigned to change the front tires, Jones is preparing to work on the rear tires instead because the track is reversed.

Jones says the crew practices pit stops three days a week. Many members were jocks in high school or college. During the week, they work with an athletic trainer and focus on recovery.

"My hips hurt. There are so many minute movements," Jones says. "You get a lot of back injuries or ACL injuries."

Landon Honeycutt, the crew's jackman, says he swims to help his body recover and stay in shape.

The crew travels to races for 36 weekends each season.

10 a.m.

The pit crew walks back to the garage and assists the road crew with final adjustments to the car.

Kirk Almquist, the team's car chief, has been doing the job since 1999 and has worked in NASCAR since 2017. He and Miles Stanley, the crew chief, make the major decisions.

Almquist says NASCAR vehicles must pass a series of inspections before race day, including an overbody scanner that evaluates factors such as weight and body dimensions. He explains that the parameters are strict and technical.

When asked whether the car ever fails inspection, Almquist laughs.

"Oh, yeah, we fail all the time."



Car Chief Kirk Almquist assists with last minute car adjustments. Staff photos by Michelle Armas.



Car chief Kirk Almquist monitors screens in real time during the cup series race.

While the car is being prepared in the garage, Honeycutt discusses race strategy. He explains that teams constantly balance two goals: earning stage points and gaining track position for later in the race.

"We might pit before the stage and try to cycle up a bit," Honeycutt says.

He also explains that every week, coaches review video of pit stops and critique the crew's performance.

"We kind of just take it to the chin and forget about it," he said, laughing.

Throughout the day, the crew members constantly crack jokes to one another. Jones and Honeycutt both said they were not nervous.

"He just sits here and looks pretty," one of the crew says, talking about Honeycutt. They both laugh.

11 a.m.

The crew rolls the car to the track before taking a break to eat lunch and rest. Engines are not started until before the race.

"It's like golf, if you're nervous all day, you'll gas yourself out," Jones says.

12:30 p.m.

Fans gather to view the cars before the race.

The crew lays out on a foam roller, stretching while they wait for the track to clear. By this point, members have their fire suits half zipped up.

1 p.m.

The race begins, Josh Berry starts near the back of the pack, in 35th place.

Crew members immediately turn their attention to times and scoring

data. Throughout the race, the driver, spotter and crew chief remain in constant communication through radios. The crew is not noisy, but collected and calm – they are focused on the screens, hardly talking, but intently watching.

The crew chief and engineers monitor the race from atop the pit box while guests watch from seats behind them.

1:45 p.m.

The crew completes its first pit stop of the day in 10 seconds. Josh Berry is in 27th place when he enters pit road, but the lightning-fast stop allows him to leapfrog several cars.

It's like a highly choreographed dance in which each crew member has a specific role: jacking up the car, changing tires, making adjustments and cleaning the windshield.

Jones says the goal is to accomplish all of that in under 10 seconds. "If you run a 9.5-second pit stop – every tenth after that is like 300 feet lost on the track."

Pit stops are also among the most dangerous moments of a race.

"We're allowed to jump in front of the car when the car is one pit box away," Jones says. "If the driver misses the pit box, that's when people usually get hit. One guy got hit and was out cold," he said referring to a previous race that season.

2:25 p.m.

The crew completes its second pit stop of the day. Berry is in 18th place.

The crew springs into action once again. They are perched on the pit wall in a ready position, waiting for

the No. 21 Ford to come screeching to a halt. They jump in front of the car when Berry reaches the adjacent pit box.

A harmonized madness erupts. Tires are flung and rolled. The 6-foot-4 jackman lifts one side of the car, then the other, as wrenches whine and tires are changed. In seconds, the engine roars and the car is back in action.

Approximately 3:15 p.m.

On Lap 43, Berry's car is hit from behind and spins out. Watching intently from the war wagon monitors, the Wood Brothers Racing crew witnesses the entire wreck unfold in real time.

Collective groans immediately fill the team radio headsets as they watch the No. 21 car snap sideways and take a heavy secondary hit from Cole Custer.

NASCAR requires the team to pit for repairs. Crew members cut away crushed bodywork around the front wheel so the car can continue safely, but the damage and time lost effectively end any chance of working back through the field.

"There's no climbing back at that point," Jones said.

Approximately 4 p.m.

Twenty-three-year-old Corey Heim wins the cup series race. Berry is 29th to take the checkered flag in a field of 39 cars.

One of the crew members, Anthony Briarly, who throws the fuel hose said, "It sucks when you wreck, but it's kind of like the luck of the sport."

The crew begins breaking down the pit box.

"I had a good day," Jones says. "I feel overall our crew did a good job today and we're gonna fight back. Josh is ready to fight back, too."

The pit crew packs up its equipment, ready for trucks to haul everything to Sonoma Raceway in California for another NASCAR day of racing.

Contact: michelle@thecoronadonews.com

NASCAR

In photos

Watch a [video recap](#) of our NASCAR coverage online. Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera, and tap on the link.



Service members holding the American flag before the start of the race. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.



NASCAR pit crews work on tires before the races. Staff photo by Michelle Armas.



Coronado native Austin Varco greets fans before the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series race at Naval Base Coronado on June 19. Staff photo by Julieta Soto.



The crowd in the grandstands. Approximately 40,000 people were anticipated to be at the June 21 race. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.



Pete Billington surveys the race track during the Craftsman Truck Series race at Naval Base Coronado on June 19. Staff photo by Julieta Soto.



A sign reading “It’s not just a race, it’s a mission” is displayed at Naval Base Coronado during NASCAR Cup Series race weekend in Coronado. Staff photo by Michelle Armas.



United States Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth made an appearance at NASCAR's Cup Series race on June 21. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.



Kyle Larson's pit crew prepares the No. 5 Chevrolet Camaro ZL1. Staff photo by Michelle Armas.



Trucks lined pit road in preparation for the June 19 race. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.



Pit crew members of Viking Motorsports embrace prior to the NASCAR O'Reilly Auto Parts Series race. Staff photo by Michelle Armas.



The country's 250th celebrated with having a NASCAR race on Naval Air Station North Island on Coronado. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.

MILITARY

Military officials identify all 8 victims of fiery B-52 crash at California Air Force base

Associated Press

The eight men killed in the fiery crash of a B-52 during a test flight at California's Edwards Air Force Base included four active duty airmen, a reservist and three civilians who were on a team devoted to keeping the bomber flying for decades to come, military officials said on June 17.

The airfield where the Boeing B-52 Stratofortress crashed shortly after takeoff on June 15 remained closed but other base operations have resumed, according to a base spokesperson. No cause has been determined. Officials said it could take six months to complete the investigation.

The victims were identified as: Col. Gregory Watson, 53; Retired Lt. Col. Miles Middleton, 50; Lt. Col. Gabriel Estrella, 40; Maj. Alexander Davis, 34; Maj. Robert Dee, 40; Maj. Brad Hovey, 35; Jeromy Smith, 32; and Christopher Rischar, 41.

"They were dedicated professionals, beloved family members and irreplaceable teammates," Col. Thomas Tauer, commander of the 412th Test Wing at Edwards, said in a statement.

Watson, a weapons systems officer, and Middleton, a pilot, were Boeing employees and the company said their loss "is deeply felt across our teams, and our hearts remain with their families, loved ones and those who worked with them."

Engineer remembered for his passion for flight

Rischar was a flight test engineer with government contractor JT4 who had worked at Edwards for 10 years, said his wife, Rebecca Rischar. She said he loved going to airplane museums and showing their two children, 15 and 14, different types of aircraft and how they functioned.

She recalled how her husband's father, who also works at the base and had seen the crash, called her to ask if Christopher had been flying.

"I knew he was on that flight," she said. "It was routine, and if the plane went up, he was going up with it."

Rebecca and Christopher met at a church youth group while attending the same high school in nearby Lancaster and had celebrated their 17th



Smoke plumes rise from a B-52 bomber that crashed shortly after takeoff at a U.S. Air Force base in Southern California, Monday, June 15, 2026. Debbie Reyes Katz via AP Photo.

wedding anniversary in April. He had just started helping their teenage daughter learn how to drive.

"Our marriage is not just for this life here on Earth but for eternity, so we are sealed together," she told The Associated Press.

Bomber was part of a test program

The B-52 that crashed June 15 was taking part in a test mission as part of a program aimed at making the 65-year-old bomber fleet operable through at least 2050. The bomber had arrived at Edwards in December after having a modernized radar installed at Boeing's facility in San Antonio, an Air Force press release said at the time.

The plan was to use the bomber as a testbed throughout 2026 to help military officials decide whether to proceed with the B-52 Radar Modernization Program, the Air Force said.

For almost a decade before the plane served as a testing platform, it was based in Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, where the bomber was the

flagship of the 307th Bomb Wing.

Its pilot, Col. Bruce Cox — an alumni of Texas A&M — dubbed the bomber "The Spirit of Ag-gieland." An Air Force press release from 2015 said that the bomber was "dedicated to former and future cadets that graduated from Texas A&M; University's Corps of Cadets Program."

Cox would go on to take his final flight aboard the bomber in 2017 before retirement, according to the unit's Facebook page.

The crash came quickly

The aircraft took off shortly before noon on a clear day, heading southwest into the prevailing winds. It flew straight and crashed on the same 15,000-foot (4,572-meter) runway. The compact wreckage indicates the plane dropped sharply.

Aviation safety experts have said their first thoughts about what might have caused the crash were about a malfunction in the flight controls or engines, but it is much too early to know. Investigators will consider several factors, including the age and maintenance of the plane.

Aerial footage showed virtually nothing left of the aircraft that went down at the base in the Mojave Desert about 100 miles (161 km) northeast of Los Angeles.

Lauren Smith told Eyewitness News KBAK-CBS and FOX58 that her husband, Jeromy Smith, was a flight test engineer for the U.S. Department of Defense and died doing what he loved.

"It is such a horrible hurt, and I'm still processing everything that happened," she said.

The B-52, a long-range bomber that entered service in 1955, is designed to carry both conventional and nuclear weapons. It has been used in conflicts involving the U.S. military from Vietnam to Iran.

Edwards is home to the 412th Test Wing, which conducts regular developmental testing of all Air Force aircraft, weapons systems, software and components before purchase by the service as well as throughout their life span. Test missions take place at Edwards daily, officials said.

The base is where Air Force test pilot Chuck Yeager reached a speed of Mach 1.05 and broke the sound barrier in 1947.

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SPORTS

Corey Heim outduels Tyler Reddick for first NASCAR Cup win

Associated Press

Corey Heim, a part-time driver making only his 13th start in the Cup Series, outdueled teammate Tyler Reddick to win the inaugural NASCAR race at Naval Base Coronado.

Heim, who will move into a full-time ride next season at 23XI Racing, snatched the lead from Reddick with two laps remaining after stalking the points leader around the 16-turn, 3.4-mile street course on Coronado Island, just south of downtown San Diego.

It's the second time in three years that an inaugural street race has produced a first-time winner in NASCAR's premier series. Shane van Gisbergen won his Cup debut in the 2023 Chicago Street Race.

Bubba Wallace finished 10.365 seconds behind Heim in a 1-2 finish for 23XI Racing, the team co-owned by Denny Hamlin and NBA legend Michael Jordan. Reddick suffered a flat tire in the closing laps and fell to 25th.

Kyle Larson finished third, followed by Zane Smith and AJ Allmendinger.

Hamlin, the driver-owner who had won the past three races for Joe Gibbs Racing, finished 14th.

SVG stunner

Van Gisbergen finished 38th in his bid for an eighth road or street course victory (which will make him the active leader among Cup drivers).

After starting from the pole position, van Gisbergen was caught in a crash that started when Trackhouse Racing teammate Connor Zilisch and Austin Hill collided while battling for the lead on a Lap 32 restart.

The nine-car incident caused a nine-minute red flag for wall repairs.

"I felt like I was giving Austin space, and the next thing, I was in the wall," said Zilisch, who led the first eight laps of his Cup career in the highlight of a miserable rookie season. "Really unfortunate. I hate to end both days for both Shane and I. We had a really fast car today. I had a lot of fun. I really enjoyed just getting to race out front and lead laps."

Driver swap

During the first caution, Christopher Bell was replaced in the No. 20 Toyota by Brent Crews, but the driver relief stint was short. Crews exited in last place after a gearbox problem on the 28th lap.

Bell is still recovering from a broken wrist in a June 7 crash at Michigan International Speedway and said getting out of the car was precautionary and not because of pain.

One more for Johnson

In his second and last Cup start of the 2026 season, Jimmie Johnson slammed a tire barrier after missing a chicane on the fifth lap and finished 28th.

The seven-time series champion said that he still plans on the 2027 Daytona 500 as his final start as a Cup driver, but he is open to racing in other series.

Up next

NASCAR will stay in California, heading north to Sonoma Raceway on June 28. Van Gisbergen dominated in winning on the road course last season, leading 97 of 110 laps from the pole position.



Shane Van Gisbergen (97) and Bubba Wallace (23) come out of Turn 2 during a NASCAR Cup Series auto race, Sunday, June 21, 2026, in Coronado, Calif. AP Photo/Denis Poroy.



Participants pose at the finish line of the 2025 Crown City Classic Run. Photo by @rwbmultimedia-63.

Crown City Classic returns to Coronado in 2026

Coronado News staff

On July 4, 2026, the Crown City Classic celebrates its 53rd year, inviting runners of all ages to start their holiday with purpose, patriotism and panoramic views along San Diego Bay. The event features a 12K (7.4 miles), a fast-paced 5K, and the kids half-mile race.

Participants will start in Tideland

Park and run along Glorietta Boulevard. All finishers receive a race t-shirt, chip-timed results, a medal and access to the Crown City Classic Expo.

"The race is a symbol of patriotism for runners, a chance for all to come together and celebrate America, especially this year as we mark the nation's 250th birthday," said Jamie Monroe, Race Director of the Crown City Classic. "It's a great day that combines

athleticism and national pride into an opportunity to support the Coronado community and our local youth."

Through race proceeds, the event contributes over \$20,000 annually to help fund resources for the Islander Sports Foundation, according to organizers.

Races begin at 7 a.m. For more information at to register, visit crown-cityrun.com.

Chargers' Justin Herbert adjusting footwork during offseason program

Associated Press

New Los Angeles Chargers offensive coordinator Mike McDaniel wanted to change Justin Herbert's footwork, so he has taken the football out of his star quarterback's hands for parts of the offseason program.

While it might seem counterintuitive, McDaniel believes Herbert can better focus on learning those adjustments when not throwing.

"To change it, and in one offseason, make it something that's in the unconscious that you're not thinking about where you have to think about a lot of other things, you really have to take an intentional attack on it. So I think he understood the extreme measures," McDaniel said.

McDaniel is teaching Herbert to lead with his non-dominant left foot, with the right-handed passer having put his right foot forward when first handling the football in each of his previous six seasons in the NFL.

McDaniel initially took notice of the off-foot technique as an assistant to Kyle Shanahan with Houston in 2007. Brett Favre had been using it throughout his Hall of Fame career, and Tom Brady adopted it for the 2007 season when he threw 50 touchdowns passes, setting a then single-season league record that has since been broken.

Shanahan, who was the Texans quarterbacks coach at the time, and McDaniel extensively studied the possible benefits in the approach before adopting it, including when they continued worked together in Washington and San Francisco. McDaniel also took it to Miami when he was the Dolphins head coach for four seasons until being fired in January, leading the left-handed Tua Tagovailoa to start with his right foot forward.

"You have your pros and cons for anything that you do from a tech-



Los Angeles Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert runs a drill during the NFL football team's practice, Monday, June 8, 2026, in El Segundo, Calif. AP Photo/William Liang.

nique perspective, but having the non-throwing-hand foot forward, there was some advantages that I kind of lean toward. By the time we got to Washington (in 2010), we started training quarterbacks that way," McDaniel said.

With McDaniel installing a quicker passing game that emphasizes allowing receivers to accumulate yards after catch, the tweak in footwork is intended to maximize the timing Herbert needs to get the most out of those opportunities.

"I kind of look at it like you're trying to find the margins where you can improve, and you have a quarterback of high achievement like Justin, who wants to make gains in this game. You find the most margin that you can improve upon, and identifying that, and it being shorter time throws and footwork, there's a necessity to really focus on footwork from the ground up," McDaniel said.

That meant asking Herbert to spend portions of organized team activities working with a large green exercise ball instead of a football. He also ceded throws in 7-on-7s and other periods to backups Trey Lance and DJ Uiagalelei, leaving Herbert to simulate drop-backs.

McDaniel's aim was to put the emphasis on process rather than result.

"It's as simple as where your focus is, and when you don't watch a ball go, you don't attribute any emotions toward, 'Oh, that was a good throw. Oh, that was a bad throw.' You only can really lean into one thing, and that's the footwork that you're doing. And if you make that the end-all, be-all — at the quarterback position, you have 900 things to think about — and in a short period of time, you can really master it to where you're not thinking about it at all," McDaniel said.

Herbert was receptive to the request to change his footwork, having spent his college career at Oregon operating in a neutral stance with his feet placed evenly.

As for the reduction in passing, Herbert accepted it, a minor surprise given his past insistence on getting lots of extra throws in before and after practices. Herbert said the new approach is as much about making sure his arm is fresh when the Chargers get to the stretch run of the season as mastering the new footwork.

"I've thrown a lot of footballs, and it's May and June, and I didn't think it was as necessary to throw as much now. I'm doing everything I can to get the footwork ready and get the offense down, and the throws, they'll be there," Herbert said.

SPORTS

United States' Alex Freeman, top, reaches for the ball over Paraguay's Antonio Sanabria during the World Cup Group D soccer match in Inglewood, Calif., near Los Angeles, Friday, June 12, 2026.

AP Photo/
Jayne Kamin-Oncea



One Extraordinary Photo

Alex Freeman's leap over Paraguay

Associated Press

Jayne Kamin-Oncea been an Associated Press freelance photographer in Los Angeles for the past 10 years. She began her photo career as an AP stringer in Miami in 1978 while at the University of Miami. She also spent 27 years working with the Los Angeles Times.

Why this photo?

The US-Paraguay match on June 12 was the first match of the 2026 World Cup in the United States and you could feel the emotions throughout the stadium. Alex Freeman and the other US players say they were

focused from the start. During any match, players regularly battle along the sidelines and I look for photos that show players appearing to balance on a tightrope near the edge of the out-of-bounds line as they're trying to keep the ball in play. As I was shooting, I knew it was turning into a nice photo with intensity. The frame showing Freeman airborne above Antonio Sanabria's head and shoulders could also be viewed as an illustration of the US dominance over Paraguay.

How I made this photo

I shot with Nikon Z9 and 400 2.8. The play was WAY down-

field, so I hit the crop sensor button. A lot of photographers don't like the light at SoFi but I love it because my camera set up loves it! I have my camera set up 30FPS with the pre-release at one-third of a second. I always shoot at a very high shutter speed to limit any motion blur. 4000th of a second and just adjust the ISO with the changing light.

Why it works

The composition of the image stands out, especially how high Freeman jumps of Paraguay's Sanabria and kicks his leg up high. From the time the moment the play started the photos actually got better in the final frames.

New Zealand's Tyler Bindon and mom Jenny are the first mother-son duo to play in the World Cup

Associated Press

When Tyler Bindon came in off the bench for New Zealand in its World Cup opener against Iran, he made a bit of history with his mom.

Jenny Bindon and Tyler are the first mother and son to play in the World Cup.

Jenny, a goalkeeper for New Zealand from 2004-14, played in the Women's World Cup in 2007 and 2011, as well as the Olympic Games in 2008 and 2012.

Tyler, 21, is a center back who plays in the Premier League for Nottingham Forest. He was a late substitute on June 15 when New Zealand played to a 2-2 draw with Iran. His parents cheered him from the stands in Inglewood, California.

Both of Tyler's parents are athletes. His father, Grant, was a captain of New Zealand's volleyball team.

When Tyler was 12, the Bindon family moved to California because Jenny was named an assistant coach of UCLA's women's team. Tyler was a product of the Los Angeles FC academy system.

"I find watching him play even more challenging that playing myself," Jenny Bindon posted on social media last year. "I get more nervous, but he is an absolute joy — an amazing human being."

There have been more than two dozen fathers and sons who have played in the World Cup. Among them are Claudio Reyna and his son, Gio, who scored for the United States in its win over Paraguay. Norway's Erling Haaland is the son of Alf-Inge Haaland, who played in the 1994 World Cup.

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SPORTS

The NBA offseason begins, with lots of eyes on Giannis Antetokounmpo, LeBron James and more

Associated Press

And just like that, it's next season in the NBA.

The New York Knicks were feted with a championship parade through the streets of Manhattan after a post-season in which they successfully rallied from six double-digit deficits to win games in the playoffs, including all four of their victories in the NBA Finals against the San Antonio Spurs.

It continued the unprecedented run of NBA parity, with eight different franchises winning championships in the last eight seasons — Toronto in 2019, the Los Angeles Lakers in 2020, Milwaukee in 2021, Golden State in 2022, Denver in 2023, Boston in 2024, Oklahoma City last year and now New York.

“To me, it just really speaks to the state of NBA basketball and the state of the future of the game,” NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. “And now with this draft class coming in this year — again, not just the first pick, but a draft that’s considered the deepest in many years — there’s so much talent everywhere. ... So, it’s a really bright future ahead for the league.”

It is, but every team is now chasing the Knicks. They had all the answers.

For 29 other franchises, at least on some levels, there seems to only be questions.

— Will Milwaukee really trade Giannis Antetokounmpo after 13 seasons, 10 All-Star selections, two Most Valuable Player awards and an NBA championship in 2021?

— Will LeBron James come back to the NBA for a 24th season? If so, will it be with the Los Angeles Lakers for a ninth year or will he look for a pre-



San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama, right, blocks a shot by Oklahoma City Thunder center Chet Holmgren during the first half in Game 5 in the Western Conference finals NBA basketball playoffs series, Tuesday, May 26, 2026, in Oklahoma City. AP Photo/Gerald Leong.

sumably final chapter elsewhere?

— What will Washington do with the No. 1 pick in the draft later this month?

— And who will coach in Chicago, Dallas and Portland?

Those are just some of the major issues facing teams around the league as summer gets underway. It’s going to be hard for the Knicks to repeat, because it’s hard for any team to repeat — as the Thunder found out this season.

“The history of the NBA is littered with teams that were not able to find ultimate success again,” Thunder general manager Sam Presti said. “I think there have only been three teams that have repeated since we’ve been in Oklahoma City, and the reasons for that are many, probably too many to list. But the fact is that it helps illustrate how rare and how special it is when you do have a

chance to win at the highest level in this league or in professional sports in general.

“However, NBA history is also built on the backs of those teams that saw their losses as a continued quest for improvement and progress. Most importantly, they saw it as what competition boils down to, what it’s all about at any level of sports.”

The Giannis question

Antetokounmpo, the biggest star in Milwaukee, will be eligible this fall for an extension that could be worth up to \$275 million.

But the Bucks don’t have a roster that’s a championship contender. If they trade Antetokounmpo, they can essentially start over with what would be a slew of players and draft picks. If they keep him, there’s no guarantee he’ll be happy — because it seems like he’s primarily interested now in

trying to win more titles.

“I just think before the draft is a natural time, right, because if Giannis does play somewhere else we’re going to get a lot of assets. ... You’ve got to get it right,” Bucks co-owner Jimmy Haslam said in May, when the team introduced new coach Taylor Jenkins — who was told that Antetokounmpo may or may not be with the franchise when next season starts.

The draft is next week. And logic would suggest that the Bucks — if they are going to trade Antetokounmpo — may do so at least a few days before the draft, so they have some specific idea of who to target with the capital that they’ll get as part of whatever deal might go down.

Miami has been mentioned in the Giannis sweepstakes for months, and the Heat are involved in talks with the Bucks again.

LeBron watch

James has never gone into a summer with this much freedom.

He could stay with the Lakers. He could pick another spot. He could retire. He could demand a max salary. He could take less money to help a team out. Or he could just continue posting videos of chip-ins on Instagram; yes, James has the golf bug.

“When the time comes, you guys will know what I decide to do,” James said when the Lakers were eliminated this spring by Oklahoma City in a 4-0 sweep.

The Lakers have a lot of other decisions, including how to handle an extension for Austin Reaves. But getting some sense from James about his plans will surely go a long way toward having other moves fall into place.



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