

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | WE SAY

Play Ball!



At the same time recognizing the tough 2013-14 women's basketball schedule USD released Thursday, **THUMBS DOWN** to the lack of "Yankton, S.D." on the 29-game schedule. The Coyotes will host games in three cities across the state, including Vermillion (13 times), Sioux Falls (Drake, Nov. 21) and Rapid City (School of Mines, Dec. 7). We feel

USD could very well benefit from bringing its basketball brand to the Yankton market, with the number of Coyote fans and alumni in our town. It's not uncommon for college teams to move home games for various reasons, and with Yankton's fanbase being only 25 miles away, it could serve USD well to bring a regular-season game (or even an exhibition contest) to Mount Marty's Laddie E. Cimpr Arena or the Summit Activities Center. Keeping in mind that USD's average women's basketball home attendance last season was 1,286, a sellout at MMC's 1,400-seat arena in Yankton would be a very real possibility.

Kicking Off



THUMBS UP to the Wagner Labor Day celebration, which unofficially kicks off Friday night with races at Wagner Speedway. The full schedule of events runs Saturday through Monday, with the 10 a.m. Monday parade expected to draw another throng of about 10,000 persons lined along the route. This year includes three new events: Dueling Pianos, the Veterans' Ride and the Kids' Fishing Tournament. It's all part of Wagner's effort to offer a wide variety of events — many of them free — for visitors of all ages. The Wagner celebration has become a Labor Day tradition and one last fling before the end of summer.

Necessary Steps



THUMBS UP to the South Dakota High School Activities Association (SDHSAA) and the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA) for making student safety as a priority during the current heat wave. The SDHSAA and NSAA have issued guidelines and options for dealing with heat and hydration. The SDHSAA has also issued guidelines for dealing with lightning during contests. Volleyball teams and officials are also dealing with the possibility of condensation on their playing surfaces. With the first major weekend of athletic competition for the school year ahead of us, it comes down to staying hydrated and staying smart for all parties.

Heat Of Summer



A week after we gave a Thumbs Up to the warm weather that really pushed along area crops, we now must issue a **THUMBS DOWN** to the hot, humid weather that has settled in ever since. What's really magnified matters has been the high humidity, which has prevented temperatures from cooling much at night. Indeed, earlier this week, Yankton went three straight days of establishing unofficial records for the warmest low readings on those given dates. All this has resurrected the specter of drought conditions in some places. The good news is that the temperatures are expected to start receding during the upcoming Labor Day weekend. The bad news is that rain — which we are beginning to need *again* — isn't really in sight.

ONLINE OPINION

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the *Press & Dakotan's* Web site are as follows:

LATEST RESULTS:

Should the U.S. take military action in the Syrian conflict?
No 75%
Yes 16%
Not sure 9%
TOTAL VOTES CAST 331

The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.

CURRENT QUESTION:

Should the traffic lights at the corner of Fourth and Walnut in Yankton be discontinued?

To vote in the *Press & Dakotan's* Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Aug. 30, the 242nd day of 2013. There are 123 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On August 30, 1983, Guion S. Bluford Jr. became the first black American astronaut to travel in space as he blasted off aboard the Challenger.

On this date: In 1861, Union Gen. John C. Fremont instituted martial law in Missouri and declared slaves there to be free. (However, Fremont's emancipation order was countermanded by President Abraham Lincoln.)

In 1862, Confederate forces won victories against the Union at the Second Battle of Bull Run in Manassas, Va., and the Battle of Richmond in Kentucky.

In 1905, Ty Cobb made his major-league debut as a player for the Detroit Tigers, hitting a double in his first at-bat in a game against the New York Highlanders. (The Tigers won, 5-3.)

In 1941, during World War II, German forces approaching Leningrad cut off the remaining rail line out of the city.

In 1945, Gen. Douglas MacArthur arrived in Japan to set up Allied occupation headquarters.

In 1963, the "Hot Line" communications link between Washington and Moscow went into operation.

In 1967, the Senate confirmed the appointment of Thurgood Marshall as the first black justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1986, Soviet authorities arrested Nicholas Daniloff, a correspondent for *U.S. News and World Report*, as a spy a week after American officials arrested Gennadiy Zakharov, a Soviet employee of the United Nations, on espionage charges in New York. (Both men were later released.)

In 1987, a redesigned space shuttle booster, created in the wake of the Challenger disaster, roared into life in its first full-scale test-firing near Brigham City, Utah.

In 1991, Azerbaijan declared its independence, joining the stampede of republics seeking to secede from the Soviet Union.

In 1993, "The Late Show with David Letterman" premiered on CBS-TV.

In 1997, Americans received word of the car crash in Paris that claimed the lives of Princess Diana, Dodi Fayed and her driver, Henri Paul. (Because of the time difference, it was Aug. 31 where the crash occurred.)

Ten years ago: A Russian subma-

rine being towed to a scrap yard sank in a gale in the Barents Sea, killing nine of the 10-member crew. The World Trade Organization agreed to let impoverished nations import cheaper copies of patented medicines needed to fight killer diseases. Actor Charles Bronson, 81, died in Los Angeles. Inventor Robert Abplanalp, confidant of President Richard Nixon, died in Bronxville, N.Y., at age 81.

Five years ago: Hurricane Gustav slammed into Cuba as a monstrous Category 4 storm, damaging 100,000 homes and causing billions of dollars in damage, but no reported fatalities. Pro wrestling pioneer Walter "Killer" Kowalski died in Everett, Mass., at age 81.

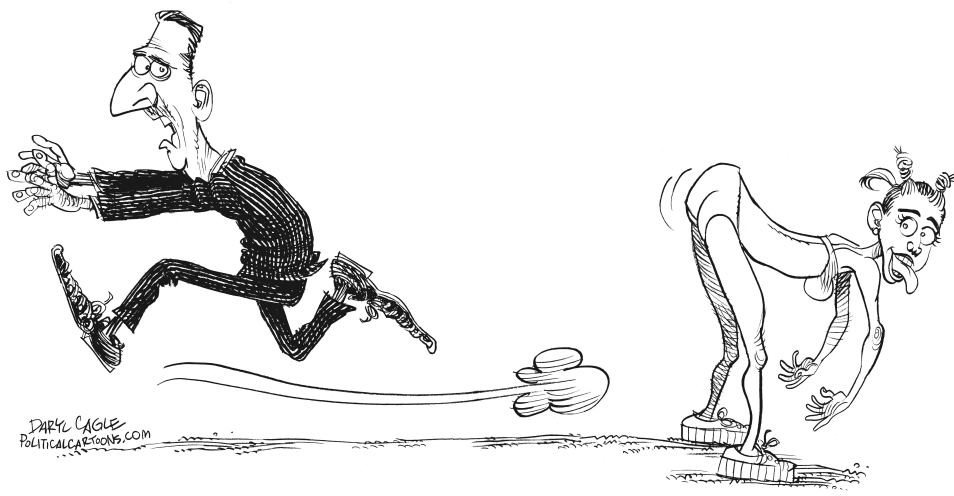
One year ago: Mitt Romney launched his fall campaign for the White House with a rousing, remarkably personal speech to the Republican National Convention in Tampa, Fla., proclaiming that America needs "jobs, lots of jobs." Earlier in the evening, actor-director Clint Eastwood offered an endorsement of Romney that entailed using an empty chair to represent President Barack Obama. The Justice Department announced it had ended its investigation into CIA interrogations of terrorist detainees without bringing criminal charges. Twin satellites were launched by NASA on a quest to explore Earth's treacherous radiation belts and protect the planet from solar outbursts.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Bill Daily is 86. Actress Elizabeth Ashley is 74. Actor Ben Jones is 72. Cartoonist R. Crumb is 70. Olympic gold medal skier Jean-Claude Killy is 70. Actress Peggy Lipton is 66. Comedian Lewis Black is 65. Actor Timothy Bottoms is 62. Actor David Paymer is 59. Jazz musician Gerald Albright is 56. Actor Michael Chiklis is 50. Music producer Robert Cliviles is 49. Actress Michael Michele is 47. Country musician Geoff Firebaugh is 45. Country singer Sherrie Austin is 42. Rock singer-musician Lars Frederiksen (Rancid) is 42. Actress Cameron Diaz is 41. Rock musician Leon Caffrey (Space) is 40. TV personality Lisa Ling is 40. Rock singer-musician Aaron Barrett (Reel Big Fish) is 39. Actor Michael Gladis is 36. Rock musician Matt Taul (Tantric; Days of the New) is 35. Tennis player Andy Roddick is 31. Rock musician Ryan Ross is 27. Actor Cameron Finley is 26.

Thought for Today: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." — Proverbs 1:10.

FROM THE BIBLE

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go." *Isaiah 48:17.* Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



THE ASSAD REGIME NEVER ANTICIPATED THAT OBAMA WOULD DROP MILEY CYRUS ON DAMASCUS.

Twerking For Attention

BY KELLY HERTZ

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Regrettably, I'm compelled today to say something about Miley Cyrus's performance on MTV's Video Music Awards (VMA) broadcast Sunday night. Actually, I'm motivated more by the feverish reaction to it by people ranging from national journalists and cultural critics to social media surfers, who've made this topic oddly unavoidable.

I regret this for many reasons, the main one being that it means her performance worked.

That is, this is probably what Ms. Cyrus (I don't know her well enough to refer to her as Miley, although after seeing a couple of the clips from last Sunday's show, I get the feeling I know too much of her already) was aiming for with her VMA showcase. She now has people talking. She has the Internet on fire and social media in a frenzy. She has the uptight crowd reliably outraged. She's become the punch line of a joke, and she'll be twerking all the way to the bank with it. She'll be seen now not as a teen/tween TV icon but as THIS.

If you were fortunate enough to have skipped last Sunday's show, you missed seeing the 20-year-old former "Hannah Montana" star put her former television character to rest by metaphorically driving a stake through its heart. She did it with a gyrating performance of her hit song, "We Can't Stop," then, barely clad, frolicking around Robin Thicke as he belted out his hit tune "Blurred Lines." (Tweeted Bill Maher at one point: "Watching VMAs. Haven't been in a strip club in a while, but good to see nothing has changed.") Indeed, Ms. Cyrus squirmed like an exotic dancer and wagged her tongue incessantly, grotesquely and inexplicably in one of the most jaw-dropping television performances by a female entertainer since, approximately, earlier that evening when Lady GaGa opened the VMAs and mooned the world.

If you did miss Sunday's show, you've had any number of chances since then to catch it elsewhere. The YouTube video of Ms. Cyrus's performance garnered more than 7 million views in the first 48 hours after the broadcast. The cable news TV channels flocked to this story, even though bigger stories were lurking about, such as the fact that we may be on the verge of war in Syria, California is burning up and MTV actually played some music. Talking heads were arguing about it as if it was, for lack of a more relevant word, important. Armies of media analysts have dissected the performance and attached various meanings to it, including psycho-sexual angles, cartoonish femininity and racial over-



Kelly HERTZ

tones. News websites went nuts, with CNN at one point slotting the Miley-pocalypse as its top story ahead of the other troubles in the world.

In a media-hype world in which attention is capital, she hit the mother lode.

Not all of this is Ms. Cyrus's fault, however.

Sure, we should blame her for serving up a graphic burlesque, and we could fault her for her decision to take THIS route for her performance instead of actually showcasing her singing talents (which she does modestly have).

But the real culprit here isn't the supply so much as the demand. As Gordon Coonfield, professor of media studies at Villanova University, told the Christian Science Monitor: "It is convenient to blame the tabloid press. But ... we participate by taking pleasure in this ritual. So while it may be tempting to blame Cyrus, or her handlers, or MTV, this really goes much deeper."

This has become big news only because we've made it big news. We've reacted just as it was probably planned: We're outraged. We're titillated. We're disgusted. And we're still talking about it.

Perhaps the best observation was provided by the satirical website The Onion, which printed what it described as an op-ed piece from a CNN web editor explaining why she decided to make Ms. Cyrus's performance the top story on its site. In typical Onion fashion, comic absurdity echoed with truth: It was done, the editor "explained," to lure eager eyeballs to the website, even though everyone knows and acknowledges that the bait was "stupid (cattle dung)."

"That's on you, not us," the Onion's satire declared. I found this quite funny because, paradoxically, it isn't.

The visual migraine that was Ms. Cyrus's performance will persevere thanks to our society's digital memory, although the general indignation will fade. After all, somebody will top it — or rather, slither beneath it. Nevertheless, the rank absurdity of Sunday's performance will be all we remember. Perhaps even the ex-"Hannah Montana" herself may one day be ashamed of it.

But probably not today, because what she did worked like a dream. Her name is on millions of lips, just as those images are burned into millions of brains and are being replayed ad nauseum online. Her performance was an exercise in humiliation, cynicism or genius; most likely, it was a combination of the first two, which amounted to the latter. She knew what would sell and who would buy it. And that really is on us.

You can follow Kelly Hertz on Twitter at twitter.com/kelly_hertz

Michael Reagan

The President's Incompetence

BY MICHAEL REAGAN

CagleCartoons.com

I don't know who's more confused about Syria, President Obama or me.

With his alleged use of poison gas against his own people, including women and children, Bashar al-Assad of Syria has crossed our president's famous red line — again.

But unlike the last time Assad crossed the president's red line, this time President Obama means business.

No, seriously. He does. Really. He's not just talking you-know-what.

In the words of *The New York Times*, the war hawk-in-chief is going to "hold the Syrian government accountable for a 'moral obscenity' that has shocked the world's conscience."

An attack on Syria's military assets looks inevitable.

The administration is turning up the rhetoric and lining up our allies to support us. The cruise missiles are parked and taking aim offshore. The news media are on full alert.

It could happen this weekend. But whoever is truly responsible for the use of poison gas in the suburbs of Damascus is still an important question without a credible answer.

The U.S. Department of State, our intelligence agencies and the corrupt charlatans at the United Nations all assure us that it was Assad's side.

They're still collecting the evidence but, "Trust us," they say, "it was the rebels. We'll have the proof for you in just a few months."

Is it just me, or do you feel a "Gulf of Tonkin" moment coming on?

A lot of wise people who don't work for Obama are wondering how Assad would be so stupid.

He's beating the rebels. He's already murdered 100,000 of his unfortunate citizens with bombs and bullets. (Was that OK as long as he didn't use poison gas?)

Why would Assad want to guarantee the military wrath of the United States by using the only weapon short of tactical nukes that could get three ex-peaceeniks like Obama, Joe Biden and John Kerry calling for military intervention against him?

Even Hillary Clinton could tell you it's the Syrian rebels who stand to gain the most from Assad's use of chemical weapons.

And the Russians are not the only ones to suspect that the rebels, in their desperation to get out-

side help, might have sacrificed a few hundred innocent lives to get it.

It wouldn't be the first time that cold-hearted calculus was used in that bloody part of the world.

President Obama insists he's not after regime change in Syria, which is another thing that makes no sense. Is he trying to send Assad some sort of subtle hint?

He'd be better off sending U.S. warplanes on a midnight bombing run to Assad's favorite palace. That's what my father did in 1986 to signal Mr. Gaddafi that we were serious about wanting him to cut the terrorist crap — and it worked for the next 20 years.

Obama's too smooth for that blunt kind of message-sending. And now he's clearly being suckered into throwing our military weight behind the rebel side in another ugly civil war in the Middle East.

Obama's overall lack of leadership, his dithering and delaying during the revolutions in Libya and Egypt, his empty blustering, his kowtowing to the United Nations — they don't inspire confidence for success in Syria.

No one — least of all the White House — knows what will happen after the missiles hit. Will Russia, Syria's longtime friend and bodyguard, use our intervention as an excuse to reheat the Cold War?

Will Assad say "uncle" and split for wherever island the world's worst despots retire to? Will the democracy-loving Syrian rebels — whoever they really are — take over?

Will Syrians just choose up new sides for a new and bloodier sectarian civil war between Muslims or between Muslims and Christians? Will U.S. military aid or ground troops be next?

Don't ask Obama. He's as confused as the rest of us.

We'll probably never know who was responsible for using poison gas in Syria. But we'll always know whose blundering incompetence got us into an unnecessary war there.

Michael Reagan is the son of President Ronald Reagan, a political consultant, and the author of "The New Reagan Revolution" (St. Martin's Press). He is the founder of the email service reagan.com and president of The Reagan Legacy Foundation. Visit his websites at www.reagan.com and www.michaelreagan.com. Send comments to Reagan@caglecartoons.com. Follow @reaganworld on Twitter.

YOUR LETTERS

About The Mall ...

Harry Nagrom, Yankton

Yankton's mall sucks. It should be the backdrop of a Post-Apocalyptic film where the only place to visit before the zombie/nuclear/W/Will event is a JC Penney's and a movie theater.

Seriously, I don't know what is more classy about our mall: the inviting broken glass doors mended with duct tape, the ingenious wiring in the ceiling with random surge protectors coming out of the ceiling tiles or the potholes that will destroy your car or, when filled with water, drown a small child.