



Big conference matchups lead the schedule, including No. 4 Penn State at No. 3 Iowa.



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In today's paper LOCAL: White House condemns NC Lt. Gov. Robinson's anti-LGBTQ comments. 23A

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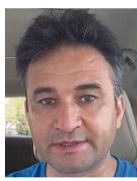
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Afghan refugees need help with housing, advocates say

BY WILL WRIGHT AND LAUREN LINDSTROM
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Charlotte's refugee resettlement agencies are warning of a potential roadblock for the influx of Afghans who fled the country during the Taliban takeover in August: finding an affordable place to live.

Resettlement agencies — those tasked with providing



Ahmad Shirin

displaced families.

In Charlotte, though, it will be complicated. Housing markets are tight. Apartments and

support for refugees, asylum seekers and others who flee international crises — rely on landlords for open apartments and houses where they can place

houses are bought up or rented quickly, leaving few options for the agencies tasked with helping vulnerable international families who are starting new lives in the United States.

The agencies are calling for help.

Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte, one of two resettlement agencies in Charlotte, said they are struggling to find vacant units — despite their guarantee that rent will be paid on



WAKIL KOHSAR/AFP TNS

Afghans sit on the tarmac as they wait to leave the Kabul airport in Kabul, Afghanistan on Aug. 16, 2021, after a stunningly swift end to Afghanistan's 20-year war.

time.

The 300 or so Afghans coming to Charlotte will be given job training and other services to

become self-sufficient. Along with that, resettlement agencies

SEE HOUSING, 14A



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The exterior wall featuring ads, suites and a press box at North Wilkesboro Speedway in North Wilkesboro, N.C., on Thursday. North Wilkesboro Speedway was a NASCAR short track that operated from 1949 until 1996.

NASCAR abandoned North Wilkesboro, but the town has hope

BY ANDREW CARTER
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NORTH WILKESBORO

In the days when they raced here, the sound carried through the pines and off of the hills and down into the valleys. It sounded like thunder, locals who can still hear it, even in the silence, said again and again recently. Like hours of thunder echoing through the Appalachian foothills.

In the days when they raced here, people came from all over to see the races, and to see the races meant navigating "the biggest traffic jam in the history of creation," Tom Wolfe wrote in Esquire in 1965. Cars backed up for miles along U.S. 421 on their way to the North Wilkesboro Speedway ...

"... millions of cars," Wolfe wrote, "pastel cars, aqua green,



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Traffic on U.S. Route 421 passes by the grandstand in turns one and two at North Wilkesboro Speedway on Oct. 7. North Wilkesboro Speedway was a NASCAR short track. The track operated from 1949 until 1996.

aqua blue, aqua beige, aqua buff, aqua dawn, aqua dusk, aqua aqua, aqua Malacca," and on went the lyrical start of his

story — "The Last American Hero is Junior Johnson. Yes!" — that mythologized Johnson and stock car racing and "the New

South" in a way that made it seem like it'd all go on like that forever.

Now it was a Monday afternoon the first week of October, 56 years after Wolfe wrote one of the great American magazine stories and almost 25 years to the day since the final NASCAR race at the North Wilkesboro Speedway. Johnson had been gone for almost two years, and the writer who once described him as the last American hero had been gone about a year longer than that. And the place that brought them together was gone in a way, too, abandoned next to the highway while cars sped past on their way to somewhere else.

None were aqua. Or "Assassin pink" or "Rake-a-cheek raspberry" or "Honest Thrill orange" or any of the other

SEE NASCAR, 8A

NC dad will finally push son's wheelchair in Boston Marathon

BY THEODEN JANES
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Over the past couple of years, Bill Johncock has spent hundreds of hours running thousands of miles while pushing his son Logan in a wheelchair in pursuit of a big running goal — the Boston Marathon — and an even bigger personal goal: keeping a smile on his son's face.

And while good cheer can come easily to Logan, who has a rare genetic disorder that makes walking difficult and talking impossible, there have certainly been moments when Dad thought they'd never get to Boston.

Barring any sort of spectacular unforeseen curveball, however, on Monday morning, the father-son team will toe the line at the famous race, which will be run for the first time since 2019 after having been postponed twice and canceled once since the start of the pandemic.

It is the only 26.2-mile race in the U.S. that requires the majority of participants to run a qualifying time at another marathon to gain entry, and getting in the way Bill Johncock did is a unique challenge. Of the 20,000 registered entrants, Bill and Logan are among just 13 participating as a "duo team," meaning a tandem comprised of a runner pushing a non-ambulatory person with a permanent physical impairment in a customized racing wheelchair.

Logan may have virtually no concept of what this all means, but Bill knows exactly how big a deal it is, for both of them — and it's hardly a lark for him.

In fact, the Hickory-based podiatrist has been trying to run down this dream for him and his son for more than 16 years.

'MAYBE I'LL BE GOOD AT SOMETHING'

Johncock developed a nearly instant passion for running as a boy of 13, and it's kind of a fun-

SEE BILL JOHNCOCK, 11A



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