

GOOD MORNING



William T. Martin / Rome News-Tribune

Rome Braves' Ardley Jansen ducks underneath South Georgia's Delwyn Young after being called out at second during a double play in the first inning.

Rome Braves shut out Waves

The Braves came up with their second-straight shutout by handing the South Georgia Waves a 5-0 defeat.

SPORTS, page 1B



Students get chance to play the market

Students made their final trade last week in the Stock Market Game, which gives them a hypothetical \$100,000 to invest for 10 weeks.

YOUNG ROMANS, inside

County's recycling baler not 'reliable'

The \$157,000 baler used to compress materials at the recycling center has broken down, causing the center to shut down operations on numerous occasions.

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TODAY'S YOUNG ARTIST



Today's artwork is by Theo Welch, a second-grader at Johnson Elementary School.

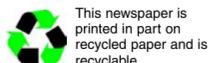
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Tax filing deadline: Tonight

● Procrastinators are expected to add more than 30 million items to the mailstream today, the U.S. Postal Service says.

By Meaghan Marr
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The rush of procrastinating taxpayers has consumed tax and accounting offices, and the post office is preparing for today's annual tax-filing onslaught. Americans putting off their taxes until the last minute are expected to add more than 30 million items to the

mailstream today, the U.S. Postal Service says.

Though the Internal Revenue Service will not have any of its personnel at the post office in the Rome Federal Building this year, according to IRS spokesman Eric Erickson, the post office will stay open until midnight.

Joe Emerson, Rome's postmaster, said he expects it to be a busy day. "It's like this every year," he said, "last-minute shoppers."

On a typical day, the Postal Service nationwide handles 670 million pieces of mail, including about 100 million cards and letters that have to be postmarked. Last year the agency postmarked 148 million items on deadline day.

Erickson urged the public to file an

ROME POST OFFICE TRAFFIC ON THE WEB

It's tax deadline day and the main post office will be swamped. To find out just how busy it is, go to www.romenews-tribune.com beginning at 9 a.m. as we track both car and walk-in traffic throughout the day.

extension if today's deadline cannot be met. But even those asking for an extension must pay almost all their taxes by today to avoid paying penalties.

"My biggest piece of advice is that the extensions are only an extension to file, not an extension to pay," said Evan

Snapper, senior manager with personal finance counseling at Ernst & Young.

Taxpayers must make a good faith effort to estimate how much they owe when they use form No. 4868 to file for an extension, and they must pay 90 percent of their taxes owed for the year to avoid penalties.

Taking a wild guess at the tax bill and pleading ignorance later may cause the IRS to revoke the extension.

The IRS expects more than 8.5 million people to file for the automatic four-month extension. The number of people requesting more time has gradually crept up during the last two decades to more than 6 percent.

Please see TAXES 2A

Lightship



Julie Brown / Rome News-Tribune

Crews for the Pearl River Resort blimp help stabilize it on the ground Monday, anchoring the blimp with two ropes attached to the nose.



Julie Brown / Rome News-Tribune

John Heneisen looks out over Rome from the Pearl River Resort Lightship, a yellow blimp, on Monday.

Blimp visits Super Bowl, Masters – and Rome

By Rebecca Grilliot
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Jose Bernaola drinks a ton of Coke and Mountain Dew to stay awake when his job takes him to the Super Bowl, Masters Tournament or other major sporting events.

It's not because he doesn't like sports, but because the blimp pilot is circling events 1,000 feet in the air for as long as seven hours at a time.

"After three to four hours,

you get a little tired," he said. "I tell the other pilot, 'Hey guy, it's your turn now.'"

Bernaola glided across Floyd County skies Monday aboard the Pearl River Resort Lightship.

The yellow blimp is touring across the Southeast to promote the Pearl River Resort — a Choctaw Indian development that includes casinos, hotels and a water park — in Choctaw, Miss.

Please see BLIMP 2A

Senate passes immigrant driver's license bill

From AP, staff reports

ATLANTA — A measure that would allow undocumented workers to obtain a state-issued driver's license passed the Georgia Senate on Monday.

The bill, passed 37-18, is a top priority of the state's rapidly growing Hispanic community. The legislation would allow immigrants to apply for driver's licenses using two internationally recognized foreign documents such as passports or birth certificates attesting to their age and identity.

Sen. Preston Smith, R-Rome, voted against the bill. "I just feel like that's a bad precedent to set," he stated.

A similar measure was defeated earlier this session in the House.

The 2000 Census counted 4,983 Hispanics in Floyd County.

The legislation's sponsor and Georgia's first Hispanic senator, Sen. Sam Zamarripa, D-Atlanta, said there is an enormous population of immigrants living, working and driving in the state. The bill would ensure they are legally licensed, understand the rules of the road and carry auto insurance.

"The bill doesn't give illegal people anything," Zamarripa said. "It sets forth what the DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles)

'I just feel like that's a bad precedent to set.'



Sen. Preston Smith, R-Rome who voted against immigrant driver's license bill

will see as proper documentation."

Sen. Jeff Mullis, a Republican from Chickamauga, didn't see it that way. Mullis, who voted against the bill, passed an amendment that would identify a person's status on all new driver's licenses beginning July 1. For example, if a new driver is a citizen, it would be noted on the license. Similarly, if a driver is an immigrant, it would also be noted.

"My amendment made a terrible bill a little less terrible," Mullis said. "It's against my ethics to vote for a bill like this. My hats are off for the clever antics of Sen.

Zamarripa and how he presented it."

Some lawmakers expressed concern that the bill gives privileges to people who are in the country illegally.

"I don't understand how we can grant someone the privilege of driving when they are here illegally," said Sen. Casey Cagle, R-Gainesville. "Under federal law, it is a felony for someone to be in America without the proper documentation."

Still, Sen. Vincent Fort, D-Atlanta, said the bill helps eliminate a public safety concern and forces drivers who can't get a license now to learn the rules of the road and buy auto insurance.

"It's not going to make us less safe or make us susceptible to homeland security issues," Fort said. "It's just going to make undocumented people more likely to get insurance and make the roads a little safer. It's good for Georgia and the Latino community."

Smith said that a motion for reconsideration passed Monday likely will mean the Senate will vote on the bill again Thursday.

Staff Writer Meaghan Marr contributed to this report.

America shifting military role to security

● Pentagon says "major combat engagements" probably are finished.

By Eric Schmitt and Bernard Weinraub
New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon on Monday declared that major combat operations in Iraq were over after U.S. forces took control of Tikrit, the last bastion of Saddam Hussein's government. Meanwhile, senior Bush administration officials again accused Syria of harboring Iraqi leaders. Secretary of State Colin Powell threatened Syria with economic or diplomatic sanctions if it continued to provide "safe haven" to fleeing officials of Saddam Hussein's government. Other administration officials accused Damascus of backing terrorists and amassing weapons of mass destruction.

The White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, used even harsher language, calling Syria "a rogue nation" and its president, Bashar Assad, an "untested leader" who now has his chance "to be a leader who makes the right decisions."

U.S. officials also expressed alarm that Syria is developing chemical weapons. As an example of the close ties between the guerrilla terror group, Hezbollah, and the Syrian government, they said intelligence shows some members of Hezbollah have entered Iraq from Syria in recent days.

Pentagon officials said there were no plans to attack Syria, and that the military's focus is to send some troops home and reposition others in the country for long-term, postwar stability missions.

"I would anticipate the major combat engagements are over because the major Iraqi units on the ground cease to show coherence," Maj. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, a Pentagon spokesman, told reporters. "There will be a requirement for combat power for some period of time. But clearly, the requirements for civil affairs, engineer organizations, military police, will be significant."

It was unclear Monday how many troops would remain in Iraq and for how long. But signs of a shifting mission were evident in force changes throughout Iraq that reflect an emerging new phase of the operation, in which ground forces will increasingly assume peacekeeping duties even as combat troops continue to root out remnants of the Iraqi military and paramilitary forces.

Please see IRAQ 7A