

THURSDAY

Starting point

Breaking in new point guards is a high priority for SEC coaches. — Sports, 1C



China puts on pressure

It tells U.S. firms to set up union branches or face lawsuit. — Business, 1D



Arkansas Democrat Gazette

ARKANSAS' NEWSPAPER

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Printed at Little Rock • Thursday, Oct. 28, 2004

arkansas Online www.ardemgaz.com

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In the news

Barry Seltzer, 46, told police he was "exercising my political expression" when the registered Democrat was arrested over accusations he nearly ran down Republican Rep. Katherine Harris and a group of her supporters in Sarasota, Fla., with his silver Cadillac.

Sandra Day O'Connor, a Supreme Court justice, told a crowd at Washington's Georgetown law school that "international law is no longer a specialty," but rather a "vital" aspect of the law "if judges are to faithfully discharge their duties."

Steven Kay, the court-appointed lawyer for Slobodan Milosevic, asked the U.N. war-crimes tribunal in the Netherlands to remove him from the case, saying his efforts to defend the former Yugoslav president have been stymied by his client's refusal to cooperate with him and the difficulty in finding witnesses.

Gov. James McGreevey of New Jersey signed legislation that would steer flu vaccines to at-risk people and allow a \$500 civil fine against health-care providers who give the shots to people who are less vulnerable.

Erin Kappen, 22, of Bay City, Mich., got a check for \$711 from Garb-Ko Inc., which operates the 7-Eleven store where she has worked part time for 18 months, after giving birth to her 7-pound, 11-ounce son, Parker John VanWormer.

Robert Mueller, director of the FBI, made an unannounced visit to Mexico to meet with President Vicente Fox, Attorney General Rafael Macedo de la Concha and other top law enforcement officials on issues including terrorism, drug trafficking and money laundering.

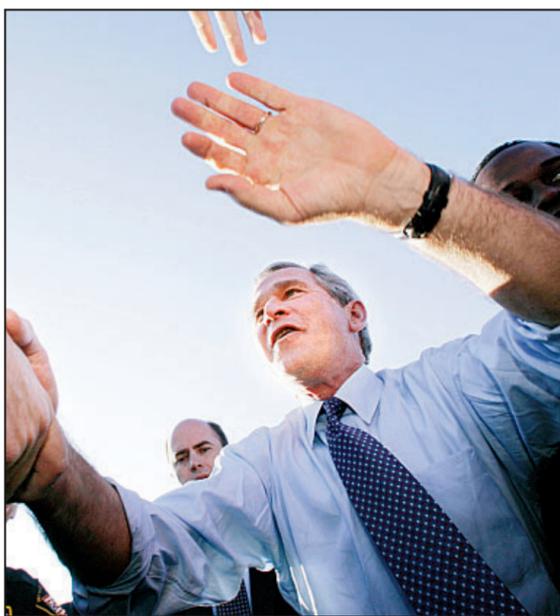
Ricardo Cepates, 33, faces life in prison without parole after being convicted in New Brunswick, N.J., in the rapes of four women and the 14-year-old daughter of one of them, all near Rutgers University.

Dillon Smith and his fraternal twin, Jesse, 16, of Long Island, N.Y., both scored a perfect 1600 on the SAT test, which was achieved by only 939 out of 1.4 million high school seniors who took the test in 2004.

Colin Powell, the secretary of state, dismissed as "nonsense" radio shock jock Howard Stern's suggestion that he was responsible for his son, Michael Powell, becoming chairman of the Federal Communications Commission two days after President Bush's inauguration.

Joshua Phelps, 17, was suspended from school in Pine Bush, N.Y., for 21 days over the arrest of the Civil War reenactor, who was charged with weapons possession when a security guard spotted a replica musket in his car and notified police.

Bush, Kerry spar over explosives cache



John Kerry greets supporters at a rally in Rochester, Minn., on Wednesday, and President Bush shakes hands after an appearance at the Hancock County Fairgrounds in Findlay, Ohio. Both candidates were drawing large crowds in the closing days of their tightly contested race.

War in Iraq fuels onset of endgame

BY DAVID ESPO AND TOM RAUM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LITITZ, Pa. — President Bush summoned support from Democrats whose "dreams and goals are not found in the far left wing" of their own party in a late-campaign appeal Wednesday for crossover votes. Sen. John Kerry said that when it comes to Iraq, the man in the White House "doesn't get it, and he can't fix it."

Bush has made a habit of "dodging and bobbing and weaving" when it comes to tons of explosives missing outside Baghdad, the four-term Massachusetts senator said, and Vice President Dick Cheney "is becoming the chief minister of disinformation."

The president accused his rival of "wild charges" unbecoming a man with ambitions for the Oval Office.

Six days before the election, the president and his Democratic challenger appeared before large late-October crowds as their aides and outside groups made strategic adjustments for the campaign's endgame.

Bush's high command put extra money into television commercials in Portland, Maine, in a bid to claim victory in next-door New Hampshire, where recent polls show Kerry the narrow leader. The challenger as well as groups supporting him stepped up efforts in Hawaii, customarily a safe Democratic state but too close for Kerry's comfort in recent surveys.

Former President Clinton was giving satellite interviews to television stations in Hawaii. "Both sides are playing everywhere they can, because it's a close race and because they can — money is no problem for either campaign so they're spreading it around," Democratic consultant Dane Strother said. "It's too close to leave anything to chance."

In any close race, presidential campaigns focus their resources on states that could add up to the winning 270 Electoral College votes, a majority of the 538 available. See CAMPAIGN, Page 9A

War, Rx imports debate's only discord

BY JAKE BLEED ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

First District Congressman Marion Berry and his challenger, Vernon Humphrey, met in their first and only debate of this campaign Wednesday, both agreeing that northeast Arkansas needs a stronger economy, better roads and a leader of faith. They disagreed over the war in Iraq and importing pharmaceutical drugs from Canada.

Held on the campus of the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, the event was one of four debates among congressional candidates sponsored by the Arkansas Educational

CAMPAIGNING INTENSE for initiatives, candidates in Arkansas. Page 1B.

Telecommunications Network ahead of the election Tuesday.

Berry of Gillett is a Democrat. Humphrey of Mountain View is a Republican.

The debate lasted about 40 minutes, after each of three panelists asked three questions, as was originally planned, said Steve Barnes, who moderated the debate for AETN.

Debate organizers had agreed to end the debate after three questions to avoid cutting off a candidate's response time, Barnes

said. The debate had originally been scheduled to last an hour, Barnes said.

"Nearly everybody takes the full hour," Barnes said. "Both candidates, especially Mr. Humphrey, took substantially less time in their response than was allocated."

Barnes added that "there was remarkably little disagreement between the two."

The candidates said they want more federal funds for highways in the district, with Humphrey saying construction should be coordinated to help promote economic development by building highways to industries and

river ports, and encouraging commerce.

Berry responded by pointing to the money he has secured for the district for highway construction, saying, "We're getting half of all the money that is earmarked for the state of Arkansas to be spent on highways in the 1st Congressional District."

Berry said funding for highway construction in the 1st District had led to several highways being expanded from two to four lanes.

They also said they want to keep airlines flying into Jonesboro, support farmers along the See DEBATE, Page 8A

Lincoln only sure bet for Senate in South

BY PAUL BARTON ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

WASHINGTON — Sen. Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas is the only Democrat heavily favored to win a Senate race in the South in next week's elections, political analysts say.

As a result, some analysts contend, the number of Democratic senators from the region is almost certain to decrease, making room for Lincoln to stand out more in her party.

Should all of the party's Southern candidates lose their Senate races, Lincoln would become one of three Democratic

senators left in the region — the others being Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Bill Nelson of Florida.

"If they all lose, Blanche Lincoln will become a star," said Chuck Todd, political analyst for the National Journal, a Washington public-policy magazine.

"She's the only sure thing," added Hastings Wyman, editor of The Southern Political Report, about the Democrats' chances in the region's Senate contests.

Some polls have given Lincoln See SOUTH, Page 8A



Early voters make their choices Wednesday at a public library in Bettendorf, Iowa. Early voting appears to be a hot trend across the country, with about 11 percent of voters nationally already casting their ballots and another 11 percent expected to do so. Article, 8A

Worsening health hits Arafat hard

Team of doctors, wife summoned

BY MOHAMMED DARAGHMEH THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Yasser Arafat collapsed Wednesday evening, was unconscious for about 10 minutes and remained in a "very difficult situation," Palestinian officials said. A team of Jordanian doctors was urgently summoned to treat the ailing Palestinian leader.

Within hours, three senior Palestinian officials formed a special committee to run Palestinian affairs during Arafat's illness, according to a Palestinian official in Arafat's office.

The committee includes Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia, his predecessor, Mahmoud Abbas, and Salim Zaanoun, head of the Pales- See ARAFAT, Page 11A

Abductee makes new plea as British head north



Army Sgt. Jessie Jackson screams in pain from shrapnel wounds Wednesday as he and Spc. Dustin Hughes are evacuated by helicopter from their base north of Baghdad. Jackson said his unit from the 91st Engineers was on a mission to recruit informants when insurgents fired a rocket-propelled grenade.

BY TINNI TRAN THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — A kidnapped British aid worker made another plea for her life in a video aired Wednesday, urging Britain to withdraw troops from the country as some 800 British soldiers headed north toward Baghdad to bolster U.S. forces.

The tape broadcast on Al-Jazeera television showed a distraught Margaret Hassan, the 59-year-old head of CARE International in Iraq, blinking back tears as she spoke.

"Please don't bring the soldiers to Baghdad. Take them away. Please, on top of that, please release the women prisoners," she said.

No group has claimed responsibility for her abduction. But followers of Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi made the same demand for the release of female prisoners in the abduction of two Americans and a Briton last month. All three were beheaded.

On Wednesday, Britain began redeploying some 800 See IRAQ, Page 10A

WEATHER

ARKANSAS Today Partly to mostly cloudy, chance of scattered showers. High Upper 70s to mid-80s. Tonight Slight chance of showers and thunderstorms. Low In the 60s.

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