

CURSE? WHAT CURSE?

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SPORTS DAILY



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KANSAS CITY STAR POLL

Missouri governor race is still tight

By KIT WAGAR
The Kansas City Star

A week before the election, a new poll gives Republican Matt Blunt a 2.5-point lead over Democrat Claire McCaskill in the race for Missouri governor.

The poll, conducted Oct. 22-26 for *The Kansas City Star* and KMBC-TV Channel 9, found Blunt with support from 46.5 percent of the respondents. McCaskill received support from 44 percent, with 10 percent undecided.

That left Blunt's lead well within the poll's margin of error, which was 4 percentage points.

Among poll respondents interviewed Wednesday, those backing McCaskill most frequently cited her 20 years of experience in state and local government as their reason for supporting her. Blunt supporters cited allegiance to the Republican Party, the party's opposition to gay marriage and abortion or a favorable impression of Blunt's father, U.S. Rep. Roy Blunt of Springfield.

Typical among Blunt supporters was Linda Anderson, a 55-year-old homemaker from Willard, a

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Election by the numbers

MISSOURI GOVERNOR

46.5% Matt Blunt
Republican

44% Claire McCaskill
Democrat

9% Undecided*

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

44% Bekki Cook
Democrat

36% Peter Kinder
Republican

20% Other

SECRETARY OF STATE

47% Robin Carnahan
Democrat

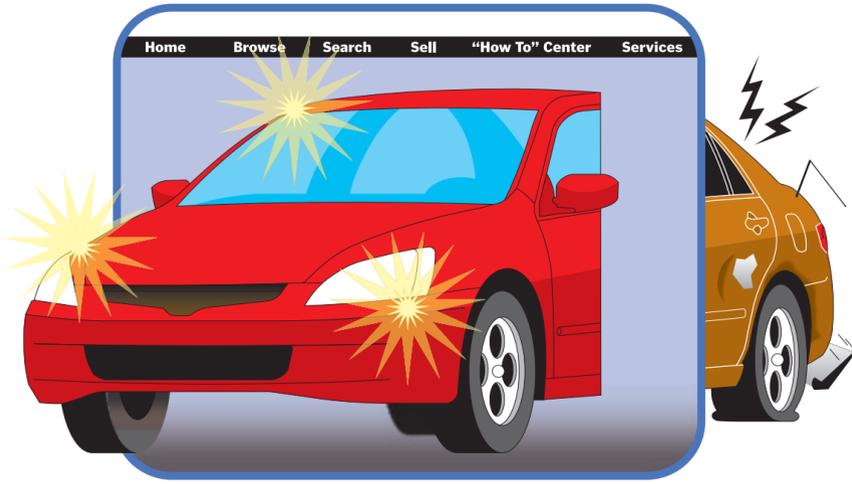
41% Catherine Hanaway
Republican

12% Other

*0.5 percent said they would not vote.

The poll's margin of error is +/- 4 percent.

A few lemons can be found in the giant grove that is the brave new world of Internet auto auctions, and buyers need to be alert to newly emerging problems



ONLINE CAR AUCTIONS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- 1 Understand how the auction works. If you have the winning bid, are you obligated to buy sight unseen? Seek auctions that allow you to inspect a car before the deal is final.
- 2 Know whom you are dealing with. Get a phone number and address. If the seller is a dealer, find out if and where the company is licensed.
- 3 Check out local options. See if a similar car is offered on sites that allow you to buy from a local dealer. Compare the auction price against prices at local dealers.
- 4 Insist on detailed pictures of the car, including the engine and inside the trunk. Ask the seller specific questions about its condition and history.
- 5 Ask for a list in writing of the car's features and how they work.
- 6 Get a background check on the car, which costs about \$10 from Carfax and other online services. But realize many fender benders don't get reported.
- 7 Consider hiring a service that will inspect a car that is located in a distant place. EBay Motors provides information about these services, which generally charge around \$99.
- 8 You may be able to fly to where the car is located and test drive it yourself for the same cost as shipping the car.
- 9 If you are shipping the car, get a definite delivery date and make sure the shipper is insured.
- 10 Pay any required deposit through a legitimate escrow account such as PayPal and use a credit card to preserve your right to dispute payment if the quality of your purchase is not what was promised.

Compiled by PAUL WENSKE/The Kansas City Star

Satisfaction guaranteed? Some car buyers say 'no'

By PAUL WENSKE
The Kansas City Star

Marge and Paul Meyer were elated when they won the sporty 1999 Volkswagen Cabrio convertible in their first eBay Motors Internet auction in late June.

After all, the \$7,000 price seemed a bargain for this cream puff, advertised in "perfect driving condition" with a host of power options, including convertible top and heated seats. "The overall condition of this convertible is GREAT, so BID WITH CONFIDENCE!" the auction listing boasted.

But the car that arrived at the Meyers' Kirkwood, Mo., home was something different. For one thing, it didn't have a power convertible top or heated seats. What it did have was a cracked

Where to complain

- Contact the state attorney general where you live and where the car is from
- www.ftc.gov and www.econsumer.gov.
- National Fraud Information Center: www.fraud.org.

windshield, a sick engine, bumper damage and a mildew odor "that hit you like a ton of bricks," Marge Meyer said.

The couple has paid more than \$1,900 on body and engine repair, not including what it will cost to get rid of the smell.

Consumer experts say the Meyers' experience is much like that of others who have been burned in their naive efforts to get great car deals through Inter-

net auctions. While the vast majority of auction sales are legitimate, the anonymity of the Internet often makes it hard to distinguish a great deal from a lemon that has been damaged or wrecked.

EBay Motors won't reveal how many auto complaints it gets. Spokesman Hani Durzy said confirmed cases of fraud occur in less than 1/100 of 1 percent of eBay auctions, which recorded 8 million bids a day this summer on everything from cars to antique lamps.

"Are people bidding and doing it safely each and every day? Yes, they are," Durzy said.

But as Internet auto auctions grow in popularity, so do the chances to get suckered.

See AUTOS, A-6

CONFLICTING REPORTS IN MIDEAST

ALARM GROWS OVER 'VERY SICK' ARAFAT

Palestinians have no clear successor

By MICHAEL MATZA
Knight Ridder Newspapers

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Top Palestinian officials gathered early today at Yasser Arafat's battered headquarters in Ramallah amid reports that the longtime Palestinian leader's health was deteriorating rapidly.

Arafat, 75, collapsed Wednesday night, was unconscious for about 10 minutes, and remained in a "very difficult situation," Palestinian officials told The Associated Press. A team of Jordanian doctors was urgently summoned to treat Arafat.

The Reuters news agency quoted officials and medics as saying Arafat was slipping in and out of consciousness. A Palestinian minister, who asked not to be named, was quoted by Reuters as describing Arafat as "very, very sick."

A Palestinian official in Arafat's office told The Associated Press that Arafat had created a special committee of three senior officials, including Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia, to run Palestinian affairs



First glance

■ Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat is reported to be seriously ill after collapsing and losing consciousness for about 10 minutes.

■ An official in Arafat's office says a committee has been formed to run Palestinian affairs while Arafat is incapacitated.

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while Arafat was incapacitated.

However, other Palestinian officials, including his spokesman, Nabil Abu Rdeneh, denied that Arafat had lost consciousness or that a

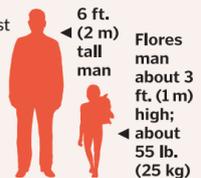
See ARAFAT, A-9

AHEAD OF OUR TIME Heavens, Frodo! Scientists discover a tiny predecessor



This Hobbit isn't fiction. Scientists have discovered a miniature relative of modern humans and nicknamed her "Hobbit." The name refers to the small stars of the Oscar-winning "Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

- The species, Homo Floresiensis (also called Flores Man), had a brain the size of a grapefruit but could use tools and language.
- "Hobbit," a 30-year-old female, was found on a remote island, east of Bali.
- Scientists think that the species was wiped out in a massive volcanic eruption 12,000 years ago.



To read more about the "Hobbit," see Page A-5.

Vote 2004

SEVERAL SCENARIOS SURFACE FOR AN ELECTION-NIGHT NIGHTMARE



On the road with President Bush

- President Bush visited Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan. "If you're a Democrat, and your dreams and goals are not found in the far left wing of the Democrat Party, I'd be honored to have your vote."
- Bush will be in the same three states today.

On the road with John Kerry

- Sen. John Kerry stopped Wednesday in Iowa and Minnesota. He told the middle-class Bush had sold them out to help the wealthy and now wants "four more years so that he can keep up the bad work."
- Today, Kerry goes to Ohio and Wisconsin.



Chaos lurks in Electoral College system

By DANA MILBANK
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Could one of these Electoral College nightmares be our destiny?

- President Bush and Sen. John Kerry deadlock Tuesday with 269 electoral votes apiece, but a Bush elector in West Virginia defects, swinging the election to Kerry.
- Or Bush and Kerry are headed

ON THE WEB

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- toward an Electoral College tie, but the 2nd Congressional District of Maine breaks with the rest of the state, giving its one electoral vote — and the presidency — to Bush.
- Or Kerry wins an upset victory

in Colorado and appears headed to the White House, but a Colorado ballot initiative passes, causing four of the state's nine electoral votes to go to Bush, creating an Electoral College tie that must be resolved in the U.S. House.

None of these scenarios is likely, but none is far-fetched, either. Tuesday's election will probably be decided in 11 states where polls show that the race is too tight to

predict a winner. Assuming that the other states go as predicted, a computer analysis finds 33 combinations in which those 11 states could divide to produce a 269 to 269 electoral tie.

"Fluky things probably happen in every election, but because most are not close, nobody pays any attention," said Charles Cook, an

See VOTE, A-4

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