

# The Washington Post

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## LONDON 2012



GREGORY BILL/ASSOCIATED PRESS

"You just have to not be afraid and go out there and just dominate," Gabby Douglas, above, said after winning the individual all-around gold medal on Thursday.

## Douglas is America's newest golden girl

BY LIZ CLARKE

LONDON — It took tremendous courage for Gabby Douglas to move away from home at 14, leaving her beloved mother and siblings behind in Virginia Beach, to train with a world-class coach who would push her to excel.

And it took untold practice,

sacrifice and pain for Douglas and Liang Chow to transform this better-than-average gymnast with bigger-than-average dreams into a bona-fide Olympian in less than two years' time.

Thursday at the London Games, Douglas demonstrated that the world likely hasn't seen the limit of what this uncommonly self-possessed youngster

can do by winning the sport's most prestigious title: the individual all-around Olympic gold medal.

Douglas seized the lead at the outset with the world's most difficult vault and then stood tall, at 4 feet 11, to fend off a charge by two formidable Russians, delivering a performance that was packed with power, grace and a

palpable joy that women's gymnastics sorely lacks.

"You just have to not be afraid and go out there and just dominate," Douglas said afterward, a stuffed Olympic mascot under one arm, a bouquet of flowers in one hand and an Olympic gold medal around her neck. "You

GYMNASST CONTINUED ON A2

### Phelps adds to gold haul; Lochte is short of goal

Swimmers near the end of the biggest head-to-head competition of the Games. D1

### U.S. has first gold in judo

Harrison is less than five years, removed from testifying in a sexual abuse trial against her ex-coach. D1

## In senators' attempt at tax reform, perks win

BY LORI MONTGOMERY

It was supposed to be a first step toward tax reform. But as lawmakers tackled a list of 75 special-interest tax breaks, the special interests repeatedly won.

An accelerated write-off for owners of NASCAR tracks: That has to stay.

An economic development credit for a StarKist tuna canner in American Samoa: That stays, too.

A rum-tax rebate for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands worth millions of dollars a year to one of the world's largest distillers: Check.

A \$2,500 credit for electric motorcycles and other low-speed vehicles: That stays. But "in the spirit of tax reform," its sponsor, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), said he agreed that electric golf carts would no longer be eligible.

When the dust settled Thursday, members of the Senate Finance Committee congratulated themselves for agreeing to jettison 20 of the perks, including a \$5,000 credit for first-time home buyers in the District and a cash-incentive program for wind-energy projects that has been derided as benefiting foreign companies.

But their failure to weed out dozens more pet provisions

TAXES CONTINUED ON A5

## Afghan troops find it's tough going it alone

Months after handover of U.S. outpost, a profusion of problems

BY KEVIN SIEFF

JALREZ VALLEY, AFGHANISTAN — After U.S. soldiers left Combat Outpost Conlon in February — packing up weapons, generators and portable toilets — their Afghan successors rushed to the American barracks and command center, eager to inspect their inheritance.

The Afghans renamed Conlon in Dari and scrawled Koran verses on the walls. The base was now theirs, and they were proud.

Months later, it's a dismal scene. The 240 Afghan soldiers are down to three hours of electricity a day. Almost all of their

vehicles have broken down. They don't have the night-vision goggles needed to guard their base after sunset.

As the Taliban ramped up its attacks in eastern Afghanistan's Wardak province this spring, the Afghan soldiers here came to a painful conclusion: They were not ready to take on the fight alone. But it was too late — the Americans were not coming back.

The transition of Combat Outpost Conlon to Afghan control — marked by a flag-raising ceremony and a visit from top U.S. military brass — was an early milestone in the NATO drawdown that will continue through 2014.

But Afghan officials worry that the problems plaguing Conlon could be replicated across the country as the U.S. military hands

AFGHANISTAN CONTINUED ON A12



KEVIN SIEFF/THE WASHINGTON POST

An Afghan soldier guards the perimeter of Khote Ashru, the former Combat Outpost Conlon, which in February became one of the first U.S. bases in Wardak province to be handed over to Afghan control. Since then, Afghan troops have struggled to maintain the base.

## Drought worsens in heart of U.S.

### RANCHERS HIT ESPECIALLY HARD

Dried-out crops likely to increase food prices

BY ALYSSA A. BOTELHO AND JOEL ACHENBACH

The historic drought of 2012 is intensifying in the most parched areas of the American heartland, roasting much of the corn and soybean crop, scorching the grasslands and pastures essential for cattle grazing, and threatening to send food prices surging in the United States and abroad.

More than a fifth of the contiguous United States rates as being in an "extreme" or "exceptional" drought, according to official statistics released Thursday. And it's hot out there: Government meteorologists say this has been the hottest year on record in the lower 48 states, and there are still four more weeks of August. In the driest areas of the Great Plains and the Midwest, there are dismally few dark clouds on the horizon.

"The timing of this year's heat and the real drying out that took place in June and July have been horrific for the corn and soybeans," said Brad Rippey, a meteorologist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This year was supposed to have a bumper crop of corn, with 96.4 million acres planted. But the new numbers from the National Drought Mitigation Center, based at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, show the drought intensifying in the Corn Belt. Nearly 40 million acres of corn are baking in drought conditions rated extreme or worse.

The big drought of 2012 has been tough on farmers but even more brutal on ranchers. Most crop farmers have insurance to cushion the blow of a bad harvest, and the rise in prices is a windfall for those with something to harvest and sell.

The ranchers, however, have hungry cows and a serious quandary. The grass on rangelands is dying across the country, and the price of corn and hay for animal feed is soaring. House lawmakers

DROUGHT CONTINUED ON A12

## European financial crisis has ripple effect on U.S. businesses

Worried consumers hold off on buying cars, computers and coffee

BY ARIANA EUNJUNG CHA

MADRID — The newest Apple store in Spain, like its counterparts in other parts of the world, is designed to draw you in. Stone floors, glass doors, and rows of blond wood tables stocked with scores of gleaming iPhones, iPads and MacBooks as far as the eye

can see.

On a recent weekday afternoon, the cavernous showroom was missing only one thing: customers.

Only a handful were scattered throughout the store — and most were just browsing. "I would have liked to buy lots of things, but I have no money," sighed Nacho Corral, a 37-year-old government worker whose salary was recently cut 7 percent along with those of other civil servants.

The eerie emptiness of the store, in an upscale shopping mall in Madrid, is an indicator of the

growing severity of the impact of the European financial crisis on U.S. companies.

In the latest series of earnings announcements from U.S. corporations, top American brands such as Whirlpool, Ford, General Motors, Starbucks and Apple have reported disappointing revenue because of Europe's troubles. These results, over the past two weeks, have heightened concerns on Wall Street about the health of U.S. business.

The ripple effects of the European financial crisis, like its roots, are complex, but the impact on

European consumers may be one of the easiest things to understand. As unemployment rates have soared — to a high of 11.2 percent in the euro zone as of Tuesday — consumer spending has plummeted. Surveys show that many Europeans, regardless of whether they have a job, have become increasingly uncertain about their economic future and are holding off on purchases of big-ticket items such as cars and appliances as well as splurges such as tech gadgets or an extra cup of coffee.

Their reluctance to spend has

become a drag on U.S. corporate profits and a problem for President Obama as he seeks to keep the American economy growing in the run-up to the November

ripples continued on A11

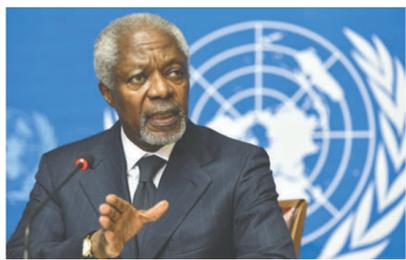
### No action from ECB — yet

Markets sag after the European Central Bank says it "may" intervene in bond markets. A10

### Static employment

Experts said they expect to see little change in the jobless rate in Friday's government report. A10

## IN THE NEWS



MARTIAL TREZZINI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Stinging rebuke** Kofi Annan resigned as U.N. envoy for Syria, faulting the world community for not halting the violence in the country. A7

**Revised evaluation system** More District teachers will be at risk of losing their jobs for poor performance in coming years. B1

### THE ECONOMY

**Facebook** dropped 4 percent to a record low of \$20.04 per share, as two senior executives said they're leaving the social network. A13  
**The firm** that distributes Buckyballs magnets unleashed an advertising blitz aimed at Washington policymakers as it tries to save itself from what it called the antics of overzealous regulators. A11  
**San Bernardino**, a California city facing a \$45.8 million budget deficit, formally filed for Chapter 9 bankruptcy protection. A10

### THE NATION

**Some members** of the University of Colorado at Denver community have expressed dismay that accused killer James Holmes, a student, escaped detection by a campus threat assessment team. A3  
**A bill** establishing security standards to prevent large-scale cyberattacks on the nation's critical infrastructure failed in the Senate. A3  
**A double-decker** Megabus blew a tire and slammed head-on into a concrete bridge support pillar in Illinois, killing at least one person. A3

### THE WORLD

**Prime Minister** Hesham Kandil asked Egyptians to support his government after the country's first post-election cabinet was sworn in. A6  
**A junior official** from the British Embassy in North Korea rode with leader Kim Jong Eun on a roller coaster, highlighting the tentative rapprochement between the two countries in recent years. A9

### THE REGION

**Two federal agencies** and Congress said they were investigating a near-miss incident involving three commuters jets at Reagan National Airport. B1

### The ACLU

filed suit on behalf of thousands of high-level federal employees to try to block requirements that would publish their personal financial information online. B1  
**The 12-year-old** Fort Washington boy charged in the beating death of a 2-year-old foster child told investigators he did not like the girl and did not want her in his home, a prosecutor said. B3

### SPORTS

**Jayson Werth** hit a single and drove in a run in his first game back from wrist surgery as the Nationals beat the Phillies, 3-0. D1

## INSIDE

### WEEKEND ►

#### Architecture to digest

Not all the interesting buildings in the District are made of white marble.

### STYLE

**'American Grown'** Michelle Obama's book gives voice to the White House's green thumb. C1



BUSINESS NEWS.....	A10
CLASSIFIEDS.....	F1
COMICS.....	C5
LOTTERIES.....	B3
OBITUARIES.....	B6
OPINION PAGES.....	A15
TELEVISION.....	C4

PostPoints  
(DETAILS, B2)

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