



San Francisco Chronicle

SFCHRONICLE.COM

TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2024

CONTAINS RECYCLED PAPER

\$3.00



Photos by Lea Suzuki/The Chronicle

Ron Friedman, left, of Menlo Park and Austin Liu of Palo Alto play at the Mitchell Park Courts in Palo Alto on Thursday. Both men say they have suffered injuries playing pickleball.

Pickleball's gains bring literal pains

Sprains, fractures, tears rise, especially for older players

By Catherine Ho

Ron Friedman remembers the exact moment he hurt his right knee.

"It was in the middle of a pickleball rally, and I aggressively moved toward the ball and made a sort of twisting movement and I felt it right then," Friedman said of the match in February at Palo Alto's Mitchell Park. "It happened in an instant."

Worried he might have reinjured his meniscus, which he'd previously torn while playing pickleball a few years prior, Friedman, 74, made an appointment to see his doctor. Luckily, the pain mostly subsided by then and he was able to resume playing after taking a few days off to rest and stretch.

Pickleball injuries like those sustained by Friedman — who has also experienced muscle strains and tennis elbow during the five years he has played the sport recreationally — are becoming more common, according to sports medicine doctors and emerging research.

It's not that playing pickleball is more likely to cause injuries than other sports, said Friedman's doctor, Stanford orthopedic physician



Friedman, 74, injured his knee playing the popular sport. "Sometimes older people, myself included, aren't in the best shape," he said.

Dr. Michael Fredericson. Rather, there are simply more people playing the sport now than ever before. The rise in pickleball-related injuries marks another way the increasingly popular game, which has triggered noise complaints and fights over court space, is having a ripple effect among its ardent enthusiasts and neighboring communities.

About 8.9 million people now play pickleball in the United

States, according to 2023 estimates from the Sports and Fitness Industry Association, a trade group that represents sporting goods manufacturers. That represents a 158% increase from just three years ago.

Nationally, bone fractures related to pickleball have also soared from one in 2005 to 91 in 2022, with a notable surge between 2020 and 2021, according to an analysis presented last month at the annual

Pickleball continues on A7

Woman booked in crash that killed 3

Victims believed to be members of S.F. family; infant survives

By Nora Mishanec

A San Francisco woman identified by authorities as the driver of an SUV that crashed into a Muni bus stop and killed three family members in West Portal over the weekend has been booked into County Jail on suspicion of charges including felony vehicular manslaughter.

Mary Fong Lau, 78, was booked into jail on Sunday and remained in custody Monday morning, records show.

Lau was arrested on suspicion of three counts of felony vehicular manslaughter as well as misdemeanor counts of reckless driving and driving the wrong way. She was also accused of speeding, an infraction, jail records show.

The San Francisco Police Department said Monday that officers had arrested Lau. District Attorney Brooke Jenkins said Monday that her office was in the process of receiving case information and evidence from the police department, but had not yet filed formal charges following the arrest.

Jenkins said her office was awaiting additional materials, including toxicology results and a review of the vehicle's operating systems, before making decisions about charges. She noted that "vehicle operating systems will need to be carefully

Crash continues on A8

Ex-PUC leader gets 4 years in corruption case

By St. John Barned-Smith

A federal judge on Monday sentenced former San Francisco Public Utilities Commission chief Harlan Kelly to four years in prison, following his conviction last year on fraud charges as part of the FBI's wide-ranging investigation into corruption in city government.

Prosecutors had sought 6½ years behind bars — lower than the 15 years he could have faced but higher than what Kelly's attorneys had argued for.

Kelly was arrested in November 2020 and stepped down from his position. In July 2023, a jury found him guilty of fraud, after prosecutors accused him of accepting bribes from a politically connected permit expeditor and defrauding a loan company by misrepresenting debts in a loan application.

On Monday, U.S. District Judge Richard Seeborg handed down the sentence about 10 minutes after Kelly's hearing began. "It's a difficult case, no doubt," Seeborg said. He noted the scores of letters that Kelly's supporters, including former Mayor Willie Brown, sent him,

Kelly continues on A7

'Lot of construction' ahead as Presidio gets upgrades

By John King

San Francisco's Presidio soon will have something new to look at: detour signs.

Roads will be torn up so water and sewage pipes can be replaced. Overhead wires will go underground. The three last vacant buildings in the Main Post will be brought back to life.

All of which is for a good cause — improving an unusual national park that in recent years has attracted nearly 10 million visitors but is required to be financially self-sufficient. Still, even leaders of the so-called Presidio Forward project anticipate headaches ahead.

"For a couple of years, there is

going to be a lot of construction," said Jean Fraser, CEO of the Presidio Trust, which manages nearly all of the 1,491-acre park at the foot of the Golden Gate Bridge. "People will appreciate the improvements, but maybe not when a crew is digging a trench in the middle of a road where they want to go."

The effort being launched this spring is largely funded by the federal government, which included \$200 million for Presidio infrastructure upgrades in 2022's Inflation Reduction Act. Though not enough to tackle all the deferred maintenance dating back to when the forested realm was an army post, it will be the largest coordinated effort since

the Presidio joined the National Park System in 1994.

That coordination is aimed not only at fixing worn-out systems, Fraser said, but also at improving the environment and sustainability of a park that includes 870 buildings and is home to more than 3,000 residents and 200 commercial tenants.

The utility upgrades, for instance, will replace an electrical grid from the 1960s with one providing enough extra capacity to, over time, phase out gas heating and help the trust toward its goal of making the park carbon-neutral. Money this year will also go to purchasing four electric vehicles for the popular Presidio Go

Presidio continues on A8



Stephen Lam/The Chronicle

The Presidio is about to undergo an infrastructure upgrade with \$200 million in help from the federal government.

