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The Desert Sun

TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2021 | DESERTSUN.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Palm Springs sees hottest July on record

Tom Coulter
Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

Palm Springs had its hottest July on record this year, marking the second consecutive month that the city saw record-breaking average temperatures, according to the National Weather Service.

The average temperature recorded at the Palm Springs airport in July 2021 was 97.6 degrees, about 3.6 degrees above the city's average for the month. The figure breaks the previous July record of 97.4 degrees, set in 2018.

The record-breaking temperatures came just after Palm Springs saw its warmest June on record, as well as tying its record for the hottest day ever when it reached 123 degrees June 17.

The scorching temperatures were brought about by high-pressure systems present throughout the desert southwest, according to James Brotherton, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service of San Diego.

Those systems also caused the Coachella Valley to see substantially more rainfall than usual for this part of the year. For example, Thermal recorded 0.44 inches of rain for the month, marking its eighth wettest July on record.

Palm Springs saw more than double the amount of rainfall that it typically

See RECORD, Page 7A

TOKYO OLYMPICS

LIFTING HISTORY

Desert native Sarah Robles sets a record, captures another bronze



Sarah Robles of the United States competes in the women's +87kg weightlifting event at the Summer Olympics on Monday in Tokyo. PHOTOS BY SETH WENIG/AP

Shad Powers Palm Springs Desert Sun | USA TODAY NETWORK

With a smile on her face and multiple fist-pumps, loud roars and courteous bows along the way, Desert Hot Springs native Sarah Robles lifted her way to the bronze medal Monday at the Olympics in Tokyo, making history in the process.

Robles, who also won a bronze medal in Rio in 2016, became the first American woman ever to win multiple Olympic weightlifting medals.

"It's a really big deal," Robles said in a post-match news conference. "I've struggled a lot throughout my career, it almost feels like I've been going uphill both ways with the wind against me. Going from the bottom in the sport, to the top in the sport, to making history in this sport means a lot to me."

During the medal ceremony after the event which took place at 4 a.m. Pacific time, Robles beamed behind the white mask she wore while accepting the bronze and a small bouquet of flowers. As a safety precaution this year, instead of having the bronze medal put around her neck by an Olympic official, the medal was put on a tray which was extended to Robles, who grabbed it and put it on.

Showing her goofy side, she held up the bronze medal to her eye like a monocle while pointing to friends and coaches and members of the crowd, something she also did on the medal stand in Rio.

See ROBLES, Page 5A

Sarah Robles of the United States poses with her bronze medal.

MEDAL LEADERS

Through Aug. 2

NATION	G	S	B	TOTAL
United States	22	25	17	64
China	29	17	16	62
ROC	12	21	17	50
Great Britain	11	12	12	35
Japan	17	6	10	33

PSUSD students head back to class

School year will start Wednesday, with masks

Larry Bohannon
Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

The new school year for the Palm Springs Unified School District starts Wednesday with the return of full in-person learning for students for the first time in 16 months. But one thing hasn't changed from the hybrid learning model from last spring: mandatory masks in classrooms for students and teachers.

"I'm very grateful for where we are and what we are going to be able to do, the idea that we will be able to open five days a week for full instructional days," said Mike Swize, who has worked for the district for three decades and is starting his first year as superintendent. "And the guidance around wearing masks indoors is something that we certainly all can do and we know that is in the best interest of public health."

The mask mandate was part of the reopening of schools in the final months of the 2020-21 school year. While the district will now have almost all of its approximately 20,000 students back in classrooms full-time, the masks remain part of the guidance the district is following from the California Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control.

"Our school board has always really prioritized health and safety throughout this pandemic and we have followed the guidance very closely," Swize said. "We study it. We get weekly updates. So it wouldn't make any sense for us now, especially in a time when public health conditions appear to be changing slightly, to veer away from that guidance."

A recent surge in COVID-19 cases, propelled in large part by the delta variant, prompted the state and the CDC to continue recommending

See SCHOOL, Page 6A

MORE INSIDE PAGE 9A

'Let it burn' is under fire

Volunteer fire chief Kathy Catron wants answers about why the Sugar Fire ever grew large enough to burn her town in Doyle, Calif. NOAH BERGER/AP

USA TODAY

Employers push vaccine

For months, most employers relied on information campaigns, bonuses and other incentives to encourage their workforces to get the COVID-19 shot. Now, a growing number are imposing rules to make it more onerous for employees to refuse. 13A

Frank Ocean at Coachella

One of the biggest names from the 2020 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival that was canceled due to the pandemic – enigmatic R&B star Frank Ocean – will reportedly return to the famous music festival in 2023. 3A

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Desert Care Network pharmacist Tim Perlick administers a second dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to Brittany Rodriguez Negrete, 17. TAYA GRAY/THE DESERT SUN

July’s COVID-19 vaccination rates in the Coachella Valley

Ema Sasic
Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

In July, Mecca became the Coachella Valley community with the highest share of residents partially or fully vaccinated — almost 94% of residents 12 and older there have gotten at least one shot of COVID-19 vaccine, state data show.

The 92254 ZIP code that encom-

passes Mecca reported 5% of residents got at least one shot during the month, a rate that outpaced all other valley communities. More than 72% of eligible 92254 residents are now fully vaccinated.

The state considers someone fully vaccinated if they've received a single-dose shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine or the second shot of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.

The increase in vaccinations may be

due to ongoing outreach efforts in hard-to-reach communities that local health officials have focused on in recent months. Rising COVID-19 cases among unvaccinated individuals, mainly from the delta variant, which is more contagious than the original COVID-19 virus, may have also encouraged some people to get their shots.

The county saw a 10% rise in the

See **RATES**, Page 7A

COACHELLA 2023

Frank Ocean reportedly to headline music fest

Tom Coulter
Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

One of the biggest names from the 2020 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival that was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic – enigmatic R&B star Frank Ocean – will return to the famous music festival, but not until 2023, the event’s co-founder Paul Tollett told the Los Angeles Times in an article published Monday morning.



Tollett also confirmed a pair of headliners from the canceled event, Travis Scott and Rage Against the Machine, will be featured in the 2022 festival, with a third headliner yet to be announced, according to The Times.

Earlier this summer, event organizers announced that Coachella will take place April 15-17 and 22-24, 2022, while country music counterpart Stagecoach will happen April 29 to May 1, 2022.

Tollett told The Times that he typically wouldn’t announce an act so far in advance, but he wanted to give fans some reassurance after the uncertainty of the last year and a half.

“Right now, it’s the Wild West,” Tollett said. “I’m just trying to be as fair as I can to artists and to the fans to make sure that eventually they get to see everyone that we talked about.”

See **OCEAN**, Page 5A

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Robles

Continued from Page 1A

She lifted a total of 282 kilograms (622 pounds) which is the combination of the best single lift in each of the two disciplines of weightlifting.

She had a snatch – bar goes from ground directly over the head – of 128 kilograms (283 pounds), and a clean and jerk – bar goes from ground to shoulders then overhead – of 154 kilograms (339 pounds).

Her 128-kilogram snatch tied the all-time American record set by Cheryl Haworth in 2003.

The winner in Robles’ weight class, which is for lifters weighing 87.5-kilograms (192 pounds) or higher, was Li Wenwen of China who won the gold in utterly dominating fashion. Wenwen set an Olympic record in the snatch and the clean and jerk along the way, finishing with a total of 320 kilograms, way ahead of silver medalist Emily Campell of Great Britain at 283 kilograms and Robles at 282.

Robles, who celebrated her 33rd birthday Sunday, came agonizingly close to the silver medal. She had what she thought was a successful lift at 257 kilograms in her final attempt on the clean and jerk, but the judges ruled the lift no-good due to some wavering of the right elbow.

The U.S. contingent asked for, and was granted, a review but the decision stood.

That left the door open for Campbell to swoop in with a personal best lift in her final attempt to sneak past Robles by one kilogram.

For comparison’s sake, Robles did a little better in 2016 in Brazil than she did Monday. In Rio, Robles lifted 278 pounds in the snatch and 353 pounds in the clean and jerk for a total of 631 pounds.

In addition to being the first U.S. woman to win two Olympic medals in the sport, she is the first American (man or woman) to win multiple Olympic weightlifting medals in 57 years. In 1964 Isaac Berger won his third medal and Norb Schemansky his fourth.

“I hope I’m the first of many American women to be able to medal at consecutive Olympics,” Robles said.

Other notable accomplishments for Robles on Monday: She became the oldest American woman to medal in weightlifting and became only the second American woman to participate



Sarah Robles of the United States celebrates after a lift Monday in the women's +87kg weightlifting event at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, Japan. LUCA BRUNO/AP

“It’s a really big deal. I’ve struggled a lot throughout my career, it almost feels like I’ve been going uphill both ways with the wind against me. Going from the bottom in the sport, to the top in the sport, to making history in this sport means a lot to me.”

Sarah Robles
2021 Olympic bronze medalist in women's +87kg weightlifting

in three different Olympics.

Robles also competed in the 2012 Olympics in London, finishing sixth.

There is a monetary reward that comes with winning an Olympic medal. Robles will get a total of \$35,000 for her efforts, \$20,000 from USA Weightlifting and \$15,000 from the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee’s Operation Gold. The U.S. Olympic Committee gives an American athlete \$37,500 for each gold medal earned, \$22,500 for silver and \$15,000 for bronze.

“You just have to try,” Robles said. “Open your mind and don’t try to fit into boxes. Don’t listen to the people who say you can’t do something until you try it.”

Robles, who grew up in Desert Hot Springs and attended San Jacinto High School, now lives in Canyon, Texas, just outside Amarillo.

Another competitor in Robles’ division that drew a lot of attention was Laurel Hubbard who became the first openly transgender woman to compete in any Olympic sport.

Considered a contender for a medal, Hubbard failed on all three of her lifts in the opening round and did not advance.

More American success

On Sunday, Kate Nye of Oakland Township, Michigan, won the silver

U.S. women’s weightlifting medalists

Only four American women have medaled in the Olympics since women’s weightlifting became a sport in 2000.

Gold: Tara Nott (2000)

Silver: Katie Nye (2021)

Bronze: Sarah Robles (2016, 2021), Cheryl Haworth (2000)

medal in the 76-kilogram division with a total lift of 249 kilograms, the best result for an American since 2000.

Nye became the fourth American medalist since women’s weightlifting joined the Olympic program in 2000. It is also the United States’ first Olympic medal in the women’s light heavyweight division. At 22 years old, Nye is the second-youngest U.S. woman to compete at the Olympic Games.

Shad Powers is a columnist for The Desert Sun.

Reach him at shad.powers@desert-sun.com or follow him on twitter at @shad_powers.

What election? California Dems worry over recall apathy

Kathleen Ronayne and Michael R. Blood
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO – California Gov. Gavin Newsom has a simple way to beat back the recall election that could force him out of his job: Get Democrats to vote.

But it may not be as easy as it sounds. Democratic registration almost doubles that of Republicans in the state, but party leaders are alarmed because Republicans appear more eager to vote, which is backed up by polling. Some Democrats might not be paying attention because they are convinced Newsom is headed toward an easy victory.

The kind of voter Newsom needs to connect with is barber Dwayne Speed, 37, of Sacramento, who is a registered Democrat but has been thinking about switching to independent. He felt Newsom “pushed his own personal agenda” during the pandemic. But he isn’t convinced by recall supporters either and hasn’t decided how he will vote.

“I want to know every single basis that they’re trying to recall him on,” Speed said. “Nobody’s going to have a job and do it 100% perfectly.”

Interviews with about 20 voters across Sacramento, Fresno and Los Angeles reveal the challenges Newsom faces just two weeks before ballots start arriving in voters’ mailboxes ahead of

the Sept. 14 contest. While a handful of voters had decisive plans to vote for Newsom, many were aware of the recall but hadn’t yet formed an opinion, did not know when the election was scheduled, or were lukewarm on Newsom.

Among Newsom’s challenges: Voters aren’t used to elections in odd-numbered years, and certainly not in September.

The recall effort was launched by novice Republican activists last year before the pandemic took hold, and they successfully gathered more than the 1.5 million signatures required by state law to place it on the ballot. Their effort was initially seen as a long shot that drew little attention.

But signatures spiked after Newsom was caught dining out at the high-end French Laundry restaurant in Northern California for a birthday party while urging people to stay home and avoid gatherings.

In Los Angeles, Nick Yi, 24, a registered independent who is between jobs, said he hasn’t been paying much attention to the recall, in part because he has been staying away from news to avoid accounts of Asian hate crimes, which he finds upsetting.

He expects to vote and tends to lean Democratic. But he doesn’t have a strong impression of Newsom, calling him someone who is passionate and “Republicans don’t like.”

Stagecoach in 2020 and 2021.

Aftab Dada, general manager of the Hilton Palm Springs and chair of the local nonprofit PS Resorts, previously told the Desert Sun that he has a “strong feeling” that demand will be high when the festivals return – and “applicable to all our special events.”

It remains to be seen whether many COVID-19 restrictions will be in place when the festival returns next spring. Tollett’s business, Goldenvoice Productions, is in the early stages of planning, and isn’t requiring vaccinations or tests, according to The Times. “We’re monitoring everything,” Tollett said. “I don’t want to put anything in cement right now, because I just don’t know.”


Previous reporting from Desert Sun staff writer Brian Blueskye was used in this report.

Ocean

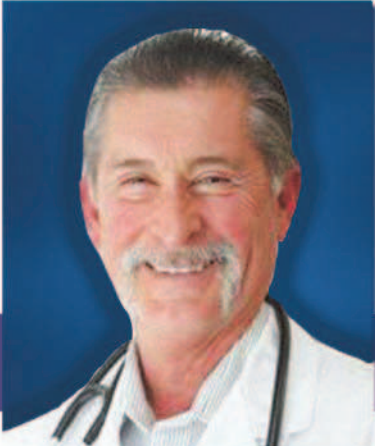
Continued from Page 3A

Ocean was originally set to headline the 2020 show alongside Scott and Rage Against the Machine, but he was not available for the rescheduled dates in April 2022. Ocean has performed at Coachella once before in 2012.

The June announcement of the festivals’ return was cheered by local leaders throughout the Coachella Valley, as the event bring tens of thousands of people to Southern California each spring, filling hotels and boosting the local economy. A 2020 report from the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership found the desert will likely lose roughly \$1.4 billion from the cancellations of Coachella and



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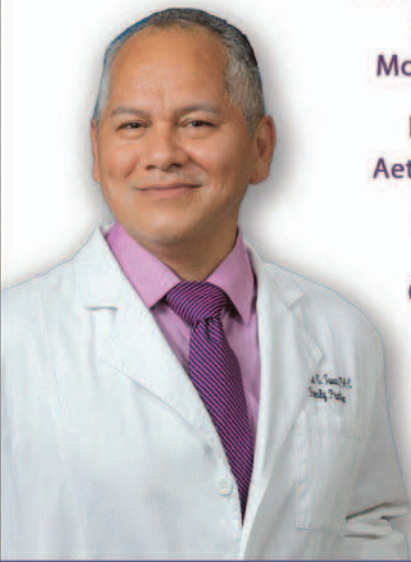


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