



PLAYERS on the Pali High football team burst through a banner before the Sept. 5 game in Santa Monica.

**COLUMN ONE** 

# A fresh set of downs for Pali High

The football team of wildfire nomads searches for elusive normalcy. Could the program survive upheaval after the campus burned?

By Daniel Miller

wenty-four days after the worst wildfire in L.A. history burned their stadium, members of the Palisades Charter High School football team stretched and twisted on a middle school field in Santa Monica.

To the north, a sickly orange haze hung along the horizon, a reminder of the inferno that had reduced parts of their school to a ragged tangle of charred masonry, metal and wood. About 10 players had lost their homes in the Palisades fire.

During these confusing, grief-ridden days, those close to the football team — which in 2024 made it to the City  $Section\,Division\,I\,championship\,game\,--\,questioned$ whether continuing the program was possible.

Would there be enough players to field a team? Would first-stringers transfer? With their Stadium by the Sea in ruins, what would constitute a home game?

But on Jan. 31, the same day the Palisades fire was declared 100% contained, simply gathering for a practice felt like a kind of quiet reclaiming.

A dramatic viral video featuring several star players would set the tone for the next eight months as the team, forced into a fellowship of nomads, searched for what it had lost: normalcy.

"I am not going anywhere," the players echoed in the social media clip.

"We will field a football team," one of them insisted.

[See Pali High, A10]

## Mexico's president is carving own path

In first year, country's first female leader has high approval ratings despite challenges.

By KATE LINTHICUM

MEXICO CITY — Each September, Mexico's president appears before a crowd of tens of thousands in the nation's central square to perform the grito, the shout of independence commemorating the country's break from colonial rule.

This year, for the first time, a woman will lead the masses in chants of "Long

live Mexico!" Monday's ceremony in Mexico City's main plaza will be a historic moment for the nation and for President Claudia Sheinbaum, who, in her first year as the country's first female leader, has maintained remarkably high marks despite a spate of domestic and international challenges.

Sheinbaum, 63, who took office last Oct. 1, boasts approval ratings above 70% and has notched multiple victories: winning passage of constitutional reforms, overseeing unprecedented judicial elections and deftly negotiating with President Trump, making concessions on immigration and security to avert the worst of his threatened tar-

iffs on Mexican goods. She has also overseen a 25% drop in homicides, an impressive feat in a country exhausted by drug violence that she chalks up to her administration's aggressive new crackdown on organized crime.

"We're doing well and we'll get better," Sheinbaum said this month during a speech to Congress, where [See Sheinbaum, A4]



A PRESERVED brain highlights the UCLA Brain Research Institute's work.

## UCLA puts federal cuts on display with science fairs

By Jaweed Kaleem

UCLA scientists, medical professors and graduate students are accustomed to presenting their research into cancer, stroke, brain injury, nerve regeneration at conferences of their peers with the aid of high-tech audio and visual equipment.

But in back-to-back

events in Westwood Village and on a campus courtyard last week, they tapped into their high school memories. erecting handmade posters on easels and bringing in props from their labs - including a human brain — to simply explain their complex work.

Welcome to the "Science Fair for Suspended Research," perhaps an understatement of what's at stake. UC President James B. Milliken said early this month that the University of California is facing "one of the gravest threats in UC's 157-year history" after the Trump administration cut off grants before demanding a \$1.2-billion fine as punishment for UCLA's alleged

antisemitism. [See UCLA, A9]

### **CRIMES OF THE TIMES**

## Popular L.A. sheriff touted reforms. Then a young FBI agent showed up

When Leah Marx began visiting Men's Central Jail in downtown Los Angeles in 2010, it did not immediately raise alarm among the people who ran it. Most of the time, jailers just looked at her federal ID and let her in without asking why she was there. If they did, she said she was investigating a human trafficking case. It was a good-sounding story. Believable. Perfect to deter further questions.

He promised transparency, but stories of corruption persisted

By Christopher Goffard

Marx was in her late 20s, just beyond her rookie year at the FBI. She had been sitting at her desk when her supervisor handed her a letter from an inmate alleging jailers were brutalizing people in their custody. It was different from other letters. It had details.

Now she and her FBI colleagues were at the jail conducting secret interviews, trying to separate fact from

[See Baca, A11]

# U.S. Christian nationalists call Kirk a 'martyr'

### Experts on faith warn of potential for extremism and retribution

By Hailey Branson-Potts

A few hours after Charlie Kirk was killed, Sean Feucht, an influential rightwing Christian worship leader, filmed a selfie video from his home in California, his eyes brimming with tears.

The shooting of one of thenation's most prominent activists, conservative Feucht declared, was no less than "a line in the sand" in a country descending into a spiritual darkness.

"The enemy thinks that he won, that there was a battle that was won today," he said, referencing Satan. "No, man, there's going to be millions of bold voices raised up out of the sacrifice and the martyrdom of Charlie Kirk."

Soon afterward, Pastor Matt Tuggle, who leads the Salt Lake City campus of the San Diego-based Awaken megachurch, posted a video of Kirk's killing on Instagram, adding the caption: "If your pastor isn't telling you the left believes a evil demonic belief system you are in the wrong church!"

Kirk's death has triggered a range of reaction, much of it mournful sympathy for the 31-year-old activist and his family. But it also has sparked conspiracy theories, hot-take presumpthe left responsible and calls for vengeance against Kirk's perceived enemies.

At a vigil for Kirk in Huntington Beach last week, some attendees waved white flags depicting a red cross [See Kirk, A8]

## His 25-year fight to win innocence

Man convicted of attempted murder as a teen freed after LAPD scandal was revealed.

By James Queally

On the night Los Angeles police claim he carried out an act of gangland vengeance. Oscar Eagle could barely walk.

In March 1998, Eagle was only 17 and using crutches to get around after he was wounded in a drive-by shooting. The bullet is still in his leg to this day, marked by a coin-shaped indentation on his calf.

At the same time that police allege Eagle opened fire on an 18th Street gang member in an act of retribution, he says he was at an East L.A. hospital because a friend's cousin was giving birth, according to court re-

Eagle knew he was innocent. Witnesses placed him

at the hospital and he said medical records could prove he wasn't mobile enough to carry out the crime.

But a combination of dubious legal representation and an arrest made by members of a notoriously corrupt unit in the Los Angeles Police Department saw Eagle sentenced to 25 years to life

In July, a judge granted a int motion from the California Innocence Project and the L.A. County district attorney's office to vacate Eagle's conviction, citing ineffective assistance of counsel and questions about the behavior of LAPD detectives on the case.

For reform advocates, Eagle's case epitomizes the problem with prosecuting teens as adults, but it also marks a positive sign for the L.A. County district attorney's office's conviction review unit under Nathan Hochman, who personally appeared at the hearing

where Eagle was set free. [See Eagle, A9]



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### **EMMYS PREVIEW**

Which shows and stars will win big? Awards expert Glenn Whipp share his picks. Also, what to make of host Nate Bargatze. ENTERTAINMENT

#### 1,000 kids at risk of deportation

A list that started with Guatemalan children is now feared to include Hondurans and Salvadorans. NATION. A6

Business ..... A12 Opinion Voices ..... A16



#### Another burro shot by an arrow

Cupid is recovering after the latest in a string of bow attacks on wild donkeys in Moreno Valley. california, b5

### Weather

Mostly sunny. L.A. Basin: 83/65. **B10** 

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