

The Daily Iowan

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RAGBRAI 2023

This year's ride marks the 50th anniversary of RAGBRAI.



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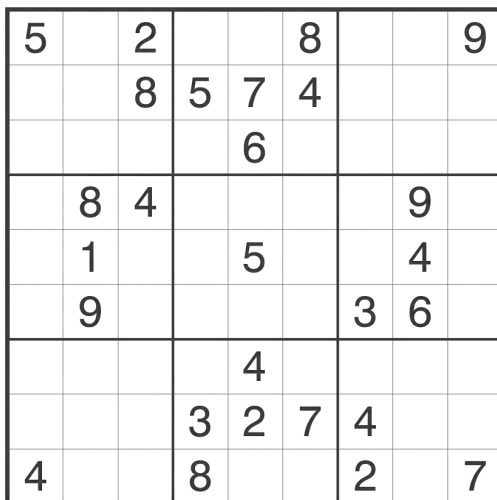
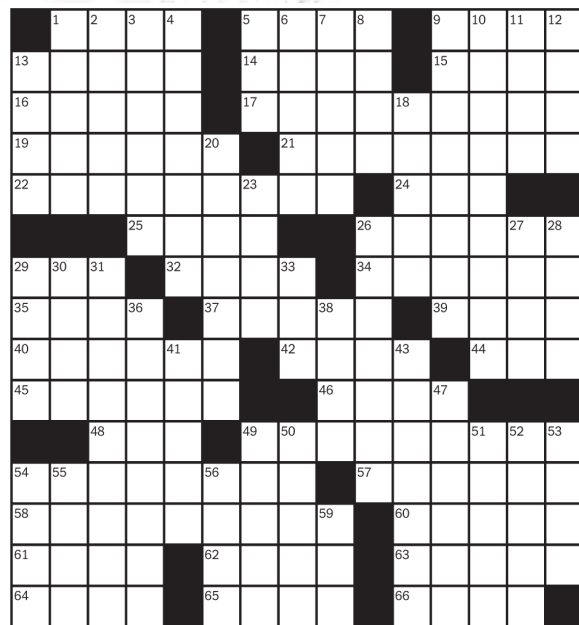
Front Photo: Bikers ride down the street during RAGBRAI on July 27, 2018. Riders rode from Sigourney to Iowa City on Day 6 of this year's event.

Katina Zentz/The Daily Iowan

The Daily Break

The New York Times
Crossword

Edited by Will Shortz
No. 0621



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GRIFOLS

50 years of RAGBRAI

This year's ride across Iowa will extend 500 miles, and will stop in Coralville on July 28.



Emily Wangen/The Daily Iowan

Two bicyclists ride during the Big Rove bicycle event on Saturday, June 29, 2019. The route, which was part of the RAGBRAI training series, was 36 miles long starting in Iowa City with stops in North Liberty and Solon.

Kenna Roering
Sports Editor

RAGBRAI, the Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, has officially kicked off.

This year's ride will extend 500 miles — the longest since 2001 — starting in Sioux City on Sunday, July 23, and ending in Davenport on Saturday, July 29. Riders will climb 16,549 feet along the route,

making it the sixth-highest elevation RAGBRAI route.

The 2023 edition marks the 50th anniversary of the longest multi-day bicycle touring event in the world, with the first ride

in 1973. This year's edition includes five of the eight towns on the original route: Davenport, Sioux City, Ames, Des Moines, and Storm Lake. The other three towns include Coralville, Carroll,

and Tama-Toledo.

“With so much history around this ride, we wanted our fiftieth to celebrate some of those

RAGBRAI

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original communities and add just a little twist to keep riders guessing,” RAGBRAI director Matt Phippen said at the RAGBRAI route announcement party at Hy-Vee Hall in Des Moines on Jan. 28. “RAGBRAI Nation is excited to ride their bikes across our state this July.”

RAGBRAI co-founders John

Karras, a former copy editor and features writer for *The Des Moines Register*, and Donald Kaul, the paper’s columnist at the time, wanted to write stories about their journey through Iowa and ended up inviting readers to tag along. The first ride started in Sioux City, and the men were shocked when they arrived and about 250 people were there to join them.

Half a century later, tens of

thousands of people from across the world clear their calendars the last week of July each year to come and ride through the state filled with rolling hills, corn fields, and unmatched summer sunsets.

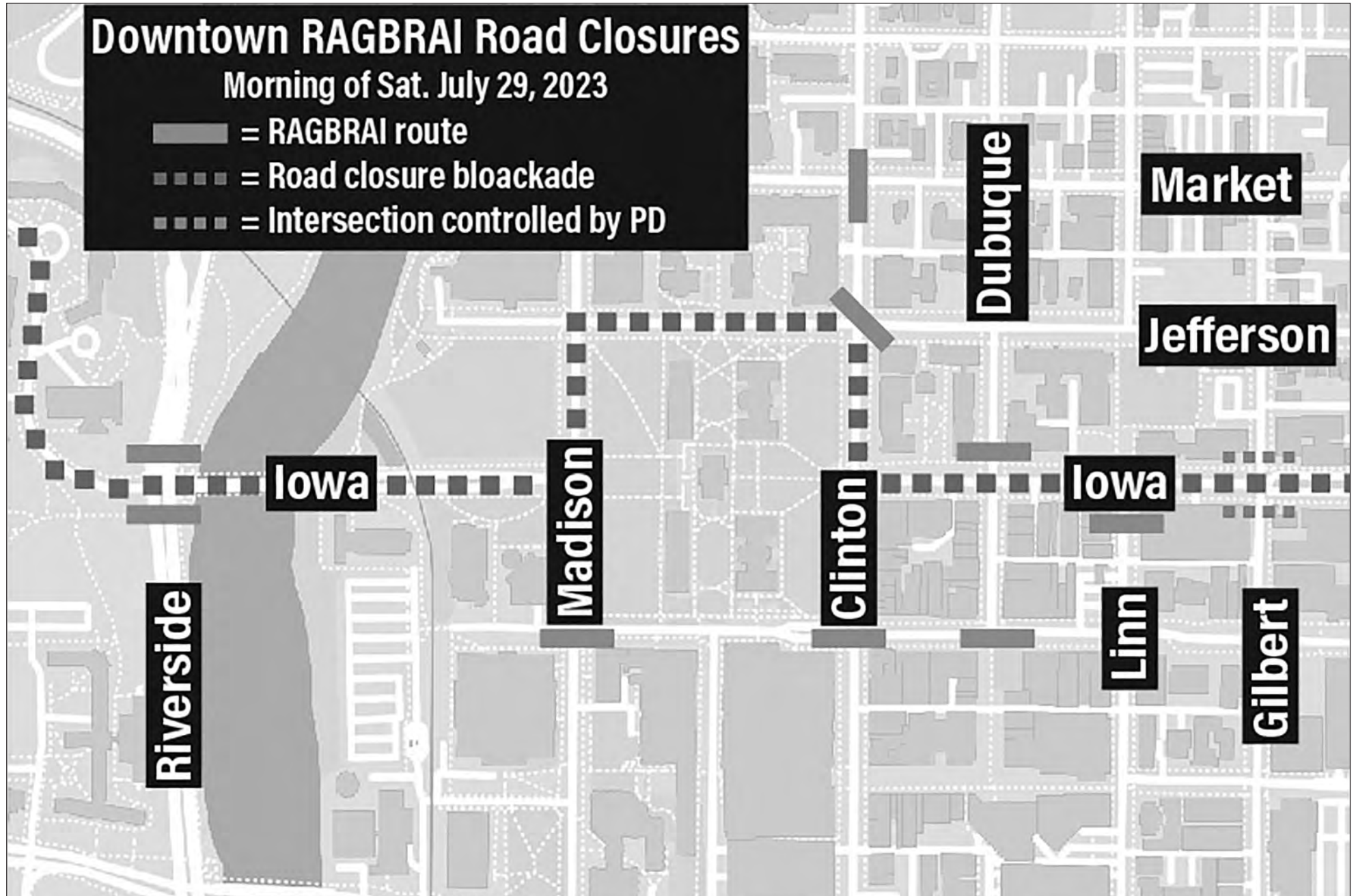
There are 28,000 riders registered, including for single days, compared to last year’s 18,000. Tens of thousands more unregistered riders are expected to join RAGBRAI as cyclists travel

through Sioux City, Iowa City, and the state capital Des Moines, with the potential to break the world record for the largest single-day bike ride.

The current record for the most amount of riders at a “parade of bikes,” or bike event, is 48,615 riders, which was set in Italy on July 11, 2000. Phippen has said in interviews he anticipates the total ridership this year to potentially hit 100,000,

which would overwhelmingly take the record.

Anyone can technically participate in RAGBRAI without registering, but officially registered riders receive special benefits. Standard registration is now closed, but day passes and non-rider passes will be sold at each overnight and meeting town.



Infographic by Emma Merkes/ Source: The City of Iowa City

RAGBRAI

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Unregistered cyclists can ride the whole route because RAGBRAI is purposely routed along public roads. But this is not recommended by RAGBRAI officials, as registration fees help cover the cost of putting together the route and holding the event.

Displaying their official RAGBRAI wristband gives registered riders access to support and gear services, and they will not be required to cover additional costs for any medical emergencies involving an ambulance ride. The official ride start time is 6 a.m. each day, and safety and medical support services monitor the route until 6 p.m.

Riders will either sleep in hotels, which historically only a small portion of riders can book in time, or campgrounds. These campgrounds provide space to set up tents and include showers, porta-potties, and first-aid stations.

Campgrounds will be set aside by each overnight town on school grounds, city parks, or county fairgrounds, and have enough space to hold all registered riders. Cyclists also rely on support vehicles to transport their luggage and camping supplies. All vehicles must be registered with RAGBRAI before the ride to enter the campgrounds.

There will be bicycle repair shops dispersed throughout the route, including in Coralville and Iowa City, and additional repair services available in designated campgrounds. Bicycle repair shops are labeled on the RAGBRAI bike maps, and sanctioned shops will have signs that say "OFFICIAL RAGBRAI BICYCLE SHOP." Discounts will be given to those who have an official wristband.

While RAGBRAI is not considered a race, it is much more than



Nick Rohlman/The Daily Iowan

Riders ride on Gilbert Street in Iowa City during RAGBRAI on Friday, July 27, 2018. Riders rode from Sigourney to Iowa City on Day 6 of that year's ride.

a simple bike ride.

In each of the eight overnight towns, there will be a show put on by the RAGBRAI Concert Series, with each show free and open to the public. This year's line-up celebrates the rides' 50th anniversary with nostalgic bands from the past five decades such as Hairball, The Spazmatics, The Pork Tornadoes, and Lynyrd Skynyrd, who will perform in Des Moines.

The second-to-last overnight town on the ride is Coralville. This year's event marks

Coralville's sixth time hosting RAGBRAI, dating back to 1995. There will be food vendors located at the Coralville Community Aquatic Center parking lot, and English rock band BUSH will headline the main stage at S.T. Morrison Park at 8:30 p.m. on Friday, July 28.

"RAGBRAI is a special event that the City of Coralville holds near and dear to our hearts," Meghann Foster, the mayor of the city of Coralville, said. "The synergy of this being the 50th anniversary of RAGBRAI and the

150th anniversary of Coralville is a perfect fit. We'll be ready to welcome riders to the 'Hub of Hospitality' in Coralville."

On July 29, cyclists will leave S.T. Morrison Park, ride through Kinnick Stadium for the first time, and travel through the

“RAGBRAI is a special event that the city of Coralville holds near and dear to our hearts. The synergy of this being the 50th anniversary of RAGBRAI and the 150th anniversary of Coralville is a perfect fit. We'll be ready to welcome riders to the 'Hub of Hospitality' in Coralville.

— Meghann Foster, the mayor of the city of Coralville

RAGBRAI

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heart of downtown Iowa City on their way to the final destination in Davenport. There, cyclists will dip their front tires into the Mississippi River, signifying the end of the ride.

RAGBRAI participants will also find vendors everywhere along the route to stay hydrated and nourished. Some vendors include Big Foot's BBQ, Big Grove Brewery, Campbell's Concessions, and Iceskimo Snow.

There will also be non-food vendors set up. In Des Moines, RAGBRAI participants can visit the Retail and Non-Profit Village, which includes Coin Operated Jewelry, Rolling Cigars, and Scudo Sports Wear LLC.

RAGBRAI does not make any decisions about what the vendors may offer to sell to riders

or receive any funds from vendor fees. RAGBRAI is one of the best events for churches, Boy Scout or Girl Scout troops, 4-H clubs, Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts, and other local businesses to promote their work and take in some extra cash.

One concern about RAGBRAI each year is safety. There have been 30 deaths during RAGBRAI, with the last two fatalities occurring in 2014.

Tom Teesdale, a 62-year-old from West Branch, Iowa, died of a heart attack along the route near Graettinger, Iowa, on July 21, 2014. George Brinkerhoff, a 74-year-old cyclist, was found dead inside a tent along the route in Mason City, Iowa, on July 24, 2014.

Most deaths have resulted from heart attacks while resting and other natural causes, but with the increased number of

riders this year, there are more opportunities for crashes on the road.

And with more riders comes more e-bikes, which are equipped with electric motors to help cyclists travel at higher speeds and allow for more control over the pedals.

E-bikes are attractive to cyclists who are older or have physical limitations but still want to experience the thrill and scenery of RAGBRAI. Switching from driving cars to riding e-bikes can also help eliminate greenhouse gas emissions.

These higher speeds, however, can result in more severe injuries in the event of a crash.

Cara Hamman, an assistant professor of epidemiology at the University of Iowa of Public Health, recommends doing research before jumping into the micro-mobility scene.

“Micro mobility devices like e-bikes and e-scooters can be positive additions to our transportation system, but we really need to hone in on safety and policy, and give them the attention they need to keep up with these new devices,” Hamman said.

One way to ensure a more enjoyable ride is to start training

against the wind, and riding hundreds of miles a week.

The organizers of RAGBRAI encourage all riders, regardless of bike type, skill level, or registration status, to follow a series of safety tips: wear a helmet and gloves, carry a spare inner tube in case of a flat tire, call out to fellow cyclists when you are going to pass them, and ride in a

“Micro mobility devices like e-bikes and e-scooters can be positive additions to our transportation system, but we really need to hone in on safety and policy and give them the attention they need to keep up with these new devices.

— Cara Hamman, assistant professor of epidemiology

several weeks before the event because many injuries result from a lack of conditioning. This includes riding over hills, riding

straight line to make it easier for those behind.

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Nick Rohlman/The Daily Iowan

Riders ride on Gilbert Street in Iowa City during RAGBRAI on July 27, 2018. Riders rode from Sigourney to Iowa City on Day 6 of that year's ride.



Nick Rohlman/The Daily Iowan

Tim James, Ron Cornelison and Dudley Rutherford of Loas Angelas California relax on benches in Kalona, Iowa, during RAGBRAI on July 27, 2018. The three are part of a group that rides RAGBRAI every other year. Riders rode from Sigourney to Iowa City on Day 6 of that year's ride.

What does 'woke' even mean?

“Woke” is one of the most prevalent scare words in politics right now, but doesn’t seem to have a clear definition.



Evan Weidl
Opinions Editor

You’ve probably heard the word “woke” a lot recently, but do you have any idea what it means?

Republican presidential candidates like Chris Christie and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis have been using this word heavily and loosely, slapping it as a label on anything or anyone they disagree with. However, in all the

countless times they’ve used it, the candidates themselves have offered little to no explanation of what it actually means.

“Woke” is the newest in a long line of right-wing scare words. The scars of the Red Scare and McCarthyism still run deep in the U.S., as any word related to or in the vicinity of “socialism” or “communism” is often used negatively to this day.

Republicans have crammed their scare words into almost any facet of life they can possibly dig up. U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Fox

News decided that the new Barbie movie was Chinese propaganda because one poorly-drawn map in the movie, which obviously gives no regard to the actual proportions of the Earth, apparently depicted China as being the owners of the entire South China Sea. In case you’re wondering, no, Cruz did not see the movie.

Scare words are one of the most intriguing facets of political rhetoric and marketing. They are used so commonly because they can be sprinkled easily into any sen-

tence or description.

Political strategists and presidential campaign managers know their audiences and know that scare words are the Holy Grail to a viewer watching their program with confirmation bias. It becomes a cue of sorts: as soon as these viewers hear anything deemed as “woke,” they will oppose it vehemently without any further critical thought. Unfortunately, “anti-woke” is no longer just a rhetorical tool.

DeSantis’ war on wokeness has spilled into

Florida’s public schools. Just this week, Florida’s State Board of Education approved a new curriculum pertaining to African American studies that requires that students learn about some of the ways that Black people benefited from slavery.

It is just the latest in DeSantis’ and the Republican Party’s delusional campaign that is based on the inability to process the fact that much of American history is not all sunshine and rainbows for everyone.

Gov. DeSantis’ desperate attempts to kill “wo-

keness,” also known in many cases as simple history or a valid criticism of the U.S., has now started to take on objective reality and truth. There cannot possibly be a benefit to students in not learning the dark sides of American history and present reality.

Words like “woke” are a dangerously common tool meant to discourage critical thinking, and all voters must look out for them and understand their power in construing misinformation.

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What is the best summer activity in Iowa City?

Evan Weidl and Sophia Meador debate the best summer activities in Iowa City.



Sophia Meador
Opinions Columnist

It’s never easy to wake up early on a Saturday morning. But waking up to visit the Iowa City Farmers Market is one exception.

Every local farmers’ market has its own charm. What I love about the Iowa City Farmers Market is the convenient location in the Chauncy Swan park-

ing ramp, which is ideal on hot summer mornings. Walking through the shaded area makes it possible to really visualize all the market’s offerings.

Nothing feels more in tune with summer than seeing the bright colored produce set out across the market. The ambiance of the market is great whether you’re catching up with friends, or going solo and listening to the sounds of pleasant conversations and small talk.

Rather than going to a supermarket to buy essentials like eggs, bread and

produce, I make an effort to go to the farmers’ market each week to stalk up on these essentials.

The farmers’ market is also a great place to make connections with Iowa City locals. I always see familiar faces from a wide variety of backgrounds, including Iowa City City Council members or even megastars from the Iowa Women’s basketball team.

The Iowa City Farmers Market truly makes a larger gathering of strangers feel like community.

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Evan Weidl
Opinions Editor

When looking at the size and stature of Iowa City, one might assume it’s just a small, boring city. Only by being here can you really understand the town’s remarkable ability to be quiet and peaceful most of the time, but pack the streets when there is something to bring people together.

For this reason, I would argue the Iowa City Block Party is the best summer activity in Iowa City.

Everything good about the town is showcased during this event. Famous local bars serve up cold drinks, local businesses and restaurants offer delicious food, and other businesses all come together in one place at one time to share their best qualities.

There is certainly no shortage of fun activities to participate in: you can kick off your shoes and play on a sand vol-

leyball court, then grab some headphones and dance at the silent disco, then watch the drag and fashion shows. All in the midst of it is live music by great local acts.

It has everything you could want and more from a town as relatively small as Iowa City. It is a staple of Iowa City, and summer after summer, it is a must-attend event. The Block Party is endlessly accessible, entertaining, and a great time for anyone who decides to go.

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‘Barbenheimer,’ the double-feature of the summer

Two blockbusters create distinct cinematic worlds about 20th-century figures who couldn’t be more different.

Aspen DeGroot
Arts Reporter

On one side, an explosion of glorious pink, girly-girls dressed in the glitter and frills of their dreams. On the other side, serious faces fit for a cologne ad, with their hats tipped below their eyes and mouths fit for cigars.

The subject of memes, think pieces, and Twitter rants alike, “Barbenheimer” takes its name from the two blockbusters at its center: Christopher Nolan’s “Oppenheimer” and Greta Gerwig’s “Barbie,” both of which hit theaters on Friday, July 21.

Desperate for joy, I wore my floral pink dress and stepped into the “Oppenheimer” theater first,

per the recommended Barbenheimer schedule passed around on social media: “Oppenheimer” first, “Barbie” second.

“Oppenheimer” follows its namesake, theoretical physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, played by Irish actor Cillian Murphy, as he leads a group of scientists working on the Manhattan Project. In the movie are several historical figures, including General Leslie Groves, played by Matt Damon, who oversaw the project during which they developed the first nuclear weapons, namely the atomic bomb.

Throughout the three-hour film, the threat of Nazism felt more urgent than communism. Unfortunately, the latter, particularly

Oppenheimer’s association with communism, was a large plot point that didn’t generate enough palpable tension; more of a political circus than a real threat to the public.

Since the Manhattan Project was born of the desire to beat Nazi Germany through the creation of the atomic bomb, the stakes felt high and clear toward the beginning. Though the outcome of such a project resulted in the tragic, controversial bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it certainly made for rapt, luminous, and cinematic storytelling.

Everyone in the theater held their breath as the scientists test-dropped the very first atomic bomb in the New Mexico desert,

wondering, alongside the characters, if the world would truly end at its detonation.

Murphy gave a compelling performance as the self-seeking, womanizing scientist haunted by the moral infractions of his invention; in his later years, the real Oppenheimer was a vehement opponent to the further development of nuclear weapons.

Even with ample opportunity to explore the personal and political ramifications of the atomic bomb outside the context of the U.S. government, the film chose to platform the perspective of Oppenheimer as a victim of his genius and portrayed the mass death of Japanese civilians as a necessary evil.

Ultimately, the film meditated extensively on the complexity of the atomic bomb’s aftermath while neglecting to spotlight those who were directly affected.

Coincidentally, the imagery of men in boardrooms did not escape “Barbie,” a wildly different film about another 20th-century figure who was, in many ways, just as iconic. Though partially produced by Mattel, the film poked relentless fun at the men who hold the top positions of power within the company.

However, “Barbie” relegated these Mattel exec-

utives to a secondary plot point: the primary story followed Stereotypical Barbie, played by Margo Robbie, who wakes up every morning in the perfect pink world of Barbieland with the other Barbies and Kens.

This was, of course, until the day she began to experience uniquely human traits, like finding cellulite on her otherwise perfect thigh, and intrusive thoughts of death.

With help from Weird Barbie, played by Kate McKinnon, Barbie learned of a rift between the human and doll world, which could only be fixed if she journeyed to the human world to find the little girl who owned her and whose sad thoughts were distorting Barbie’s perfect life.

Alongside a comical Ken, played by Ryan Gosling, she travels out of Barbieland and discovers that women of the real world are not as empowered as they are in her world, but are instead sexualized at every turn, and Barbie bears the brunt of these insults.

Barbie shed her first real tear as she was struck with a vision of lost girlhood and the impact of real-world patriarchy.

She came to discover that the main rift was not between humans and Barbies, but between a mother and daughter. Barbie’s particular human, Sasha,

a teenage girl played by Ariana Greenblatt, struggled to connect with her mother, Gloria, played by America Ferrera, as she felt more and more alienated as a young woman. In a surprising turn, this mother-daughter dynamic — a beloved theme of Gerwig’s — was the heart of the film, beautifully mirroring the tension between fantasy and reality, dolls and women.

“Barbie” is a delightful watch, but often its big ideas — ideas which, according to the film, “live forever” — failed to live up to its lofty aspirations. Certain events felt tonally clunky when placed together, and the feminist dialogue can come off a little awkward.

Still, nothing can compare to the overwhelming feminine joy of women seeing themselves on the screen, a feat that “Oppenheimer,” in all its classically cinematic glory, could not replicate.

In terms of entertainment value, the films succeeded and even complimented each other. As stand-alone movies, however, they occasionally faltered under the spotlight.

Nevertheless, the filmmakers must be commended for their thorough, dedicated insight into their respective subjects.

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Cody Blissett/The Daily Iowan

Posters for the new films Oppenheimer and Barbie are seen at the Chauncey at FilmScene in Iowa City on July 23.

'Storytime at the Stanley' explores the story of 'Red: A Crayon's Story'

The event is the first collaboration between the Stanley Museum of Art and the LGBTQ Iowa archives, held on Saturday, July 22. It featured a reading of the book, "Red: A Crayon's Story," which tells the story of a blue crayon that is mislabeled as red.

Emma Gaughan
Arts Reporter

The Stanley Museum of Art partnered with the LGBTQ Iowa Archives & Library to host a storytime on the morning of Saturday, July 22, reading "Red: A Crayon's Story" by Michael Hall.

The book tells the tale of a blue crayon mislabeled as red, and the struggles the crayon faces because of that. The reading was followed by a scavenger hunt throughout the museum that families participated in to win prizes.

This event was the first collaboration between the Stanley and the LGBTQ Iowa archives & Library, creating a new environment and experience for everyone involved. Outreach coordinator at the archives Zach Morris, and curator of learning and engagement at the Stanley, Kimberly Datchuk, worked together in order to bring the event to life.

"I think the Stanley Museum of Art provides a lovely atmosphere," Morris said. "People can come in and listen to the storytime, then go upstairs and appreciate wondrous art."

The archive aims to increase community outreach to kids, students, and adults alike by creating a diverse range of opportunities so they can reach a diverse range of people, especially those who have not yet heard about the organization.

"We want spaces for queer and trans and questioning kids and teens, and this event is one way to do that," Morris said.

Morris said an important part of their job is ensuring that an event like this reaches their target audience. This storytime targeted a younger crowd, so advertising in the correct spaces was key in creating the event.

Another point of consideration in the planning of the event was gauging how the younger audience was already being served in the community to create space for their event to serve its own purpose, Datchuk said.

While storytime events are a common activity for youth in the Iowa City community, the museum wanted to add a twist.

"We wanted to see how we could make this unique, so we're having the book reading and then a special scavenger hunt with our collection in the galler-



The Stanley Museum of Art is seen in Iowa City on Sunday, July 23, 2023.

Cody Blissett/The Daily Iowan

ies [that were] focused on the themes in the book," Datchuk said.

Both the museum and the archive focused heavily on making an enjoyable and welcoming environment in order for the storytime to be successful.

Datchuk said that she wants people to enjoy being at a museum in a new way.

"I hope it kind of opens

eyes to what a museum can be," she said. "I think often the stigma around museums can be that they're kind of stuffy, but it can be a fun place."

Part of that fun is the story itself, which was read aloud by Debra Marqusee, an art teacher and a storyteller at the Stanley. Marqusee has had experience with events like this and said she had been

looking forward to it and felt that the Stanley was the perfect place for an event like this.

"One of the primary goals and benefits of storytelling is that it can help teach children important lessons about right and wrong, good and bad, and basic morals such as honesty, kindness, and generosity," Marqusee said.

The storytime last-

ed about 15 minutes, and was followed by a self-guided tour and scavenger hunt.

"I hope to accomplish these goals by engaging their imaginations and expanding their horizons in which to discover and learn new things about the world around them," Marqusee said.

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The downside of eliminating divisions

The Big Ten is abandoning divisional play following the 2023 season. Here's why that won't work.



Brad Schultz
Sports Reporter

Ahead of the 2011 season, the Big Ten decided to add divisions.

The divisions were titled “Legends” and “Leaders,” and traditional rivals were placed in opposite divisions, such as Wisconsin and Iowa. This change was met with a lukewarm reaction from fans.

After the 2013 season, the divisions were changed to accommodate the inclusion of Rutgers and Maryland. The new divisions were primarily focused on geographic regions and titled “East” and “West.”

Since introducing these new divisions, the East has come out on top in each conference championship game. Fans criticize the weakness of the West Division while marveling at the strength of the East Division.

Now, with a new era of college football in full swing across the country, the Big Ten decided to abandon divisional play following the 2023 season.

Here's why getting rid of divisions is going to hurt the Big Ten.

Too many teams

Starting in 2024, the top two teams at the end of the regular season will play in the Big Ten title game.

In 2010, the final year without divisions, the conference only had 11 teams, and Wisconsin, Michigan State, and Ohio State all shared a piece of the conference title.

In 2024, the Big Ten will have a whopping 16 members when USC and UCLA join.

Simply put, it's impossible to pick out two squads for a conference championship game when there are probably five or more teams that are good enough to win the title.

It will be the same teams

Many Big Ten fans argue that getting rid of divisions will allow the best two teams to play for the championship game, and they have a point.

Within the first few years, the college football world will be captivated by a championship edition of “The Game” between Michigan and Ohio State.

Don't get me wrong, those games will be incredible, but after a few years, fans will get tired of the same championship matchup between the same few teams such as Michigan, Ohio State, and Penn State.

The bottom line here is that fans don't want the same teams every year to



Jerod Ringwald/The Daily Iowan

Michigan running back Blake Corum fights for yards while running the ball during a football game between Iowa and No. 4 Michigan at Kinnick Stadium in Iowa City on Saturday, Oct. 1, 2022. Corum rushed for 133 yards. The Wolverines defeated the Hawkeyes, 27-14.

win a conference title. I strongly believe that more people would tune in to watch a rematch of Iowa and Michigan State than another edition of “The Game.”

Divisions can be restructured

The current divisional landscape in the Big Ten has been one-sided, as the West has yet to produce a conference champion.

But the divisions can be restructured to prevent lopsided title games.

The “Legends” and “Leaders” divisions were criticized, but those divisions allowed two good teams to battle for the title and led to amazing championship games.

One instance was the classic 2013 title game between 11-1 Michigan State and 12-0 Ohio State. Michigan State, a five-point underdog, won the game, 34-24, and knocked the Buckeyes out of the running for the national championship.

The Big Ten could easily rebalance the divisions, and as an example could have Ohio

State and Michigan in one, and Penn State and Michigan State in the other.

Most teams won't win a conference title

This reiterates my point of having the same teams play in the title game every season, but it's worth mentioning that over half of the conference most likely won't ever win a Big Ten championship under this new format.

Sleeper teams that are consistently at the top of their divisions such as Iowa or

Wisconsin have a steep uphill climb to be one of the top two teams in the conference. And rebuilding programs such as Nebraska or Illinois have little to no chance to win a title, although the right coach could change that.

Until the 1980s, the Big Ten was considered the “Big Two, Little Eight,” because Michigan and Ohio State were consistently the top two teams in the conference. Without divisions, the Big Ten will head in that same direction.

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Picking up the pace

Iowa men's basketball's freshmen class of four has made impressive strides so far this summer.



Matt Sindt/The Daily Iowan

The ball flies through the net during a women's basketball game between No. 7 Iowa and Purdue at Target Center in Minneapolis on Friday, March 3, 2023. The Hawkeyes defeated the Boilermakers, 69-58.

Kenna Roering
Sports Reporter

The change of pace and physicality from high school basketball to the Big Ten can be stunning.

But Iowa men's basketball's freshmen class — forward Owen Freeman, forward Pryce Sandfort, forward Ladji Dembele, and guard Brock Harding — has impressed head coach Fran

McCaffery so far this summer.

“They have picked everything up amazingly quickly,” McCaffery said before workouts on July 20. “We’re throwing it all at them ... and a lot of the time it takes a while. These guys have, I think, basketball instincts.”

The Hawkeyes have had four freshmen average 10 points or more per game since 2017, including Jor-

dan Bohannon, Luka Garza, Joe Wieskamp, and C.J. Fredrick.

McCaffery added that the team is working at an even faster rate than usual because they are heading overseas. From Aug. 5-16, the Hawkeyes will travel to Paris and Spain for a three-game tour. The trip will be the first for Iowa since visiting Germany, Switzerland, and Italy in the summer of

2017.

This will be a great opportunity for the freshmen to get experience playing against other athletes at the collegiate level and with one another.

“It’s awesome because coming here is the first time that we haven’t really had AAU basketball,” Harding said. “To have games to look forward to in August kind of makes the summer grind

that much more fun knowing that we have something to look forward to, and it’ll make the transition easier once we get to the fall.”

What’s helped Harding transition smoothly so far is his relationship with Freeman. Freeman joined Harding at Moline High School ahead of his senior season, and the pair helped propel the Maroons to a Class 4A state title in March.

Harding was named Illinois “Mr. Basketball” after averaging 18.5 points and 5.6 assists.

“It’s really good to have someone that you’re super close with to go along with you on the journey,” Freeman said. “He’s like my brother.”

But those two aren’t the only Hawkeyes who have a connection, as Pryce Sandfort joined his junior brother and guard Payton Sandfort when he committed to the Hawkeyes.

Pryce Sandfort is thankful he has someone to go to off the court. Because the freshman lives in the dorms and doesn’t have a car, Payton Sandfort gives him rides to practice and helps him navigate Iowa City.

The most difficult transition for Iowa’s 2022-23 “Mr. Basketball,” however, might be guarding his older brother in practice.

“It’s actually really difficult to guard him,” Pryce Sandfort said. “He’s trying to get me up to speed. He obviously has some really good parts to his game that he can score on me with, but I feel like I’m getting better every day and getting better defensively.”

The last commit to the 2023 class was Dembele, who is 6-foot-8 and up to 260 pounds, McCaffery said.

With the departure of starting forward Filip Rebraca, who averaged 14.1 points and 7.5 boards last season, the Hawkeyes are in desperate need of a big man who can compete with the physicality of the Big Ten on the glass.

Dembele said he has been practicing dribbling and watching lots of film, specifically his defense, to nail the little details before heading overseas in August and playing in Carver-Hawkeye Arena this fall.

So far, McCaffery is liking what he sees from Dembele down low.

“He has been a phenomenally impressive rebounder, every day since he got here, which is what we need from that position,” McCaffery said. “Most freshmen don’t come in and consistently rebound the way he has.”

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