



Interview with USL
Head Coach
Mark Briggs

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Spider-Man to
Pokemon At Ohana
Comic-Con

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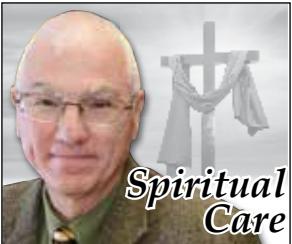


Arden Arcade News

VOL 01 • ISSUE 03 Bringing You Community News For Over 30 Years MARCH 8, 2024

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TO TELL THE
TRUTH, I WASN'T



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BY TENFOLD



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OUT OF CRISIS
WILL COME
OPPORTUNITY



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POSTAL CUSTOMER

Café Offers a Taste of the Undead



Customers enjoy the café's space on a winter Saturday during brunch hours.

Story by Mitch Barber,
photos by Matt Jones

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - If you have been to the Temple Coffee on S Street in recent years, there was a heavily-bearded man behind the bar with an ironic wit who went against the grain.

After six-and-a-half years

working there as a barista, Ted Evans has opened his own café with three partners just last October.

This isn't his first coffee rodeo: Before moving to Sacramento, Evans was getting a master's degree at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. At the same time, he picked and processed

coffee from Wai'anāe Kai Forest Reserve, on the west side of Oahu, where he had a field site that was formerly a coffee plantation, while specializing in natural resources and environmental management.

Once he graduated, Evans immediately started working in a little, craft,

mom-and-pop-type café called Morning Glass on the islands.

His new downtown Sacramento venture, Immortal Café and Supply, consists of a long corridor occupying the former space of Naked Coffee's coffeehouse at 11th and H

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Major Takedown of Vast Organized Retail Crime Operation

CHP News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The CHP, California Department of Justice, and allied federal agencies announced the takedown of a vast organized retail theft operation spanning 21 counties and involving \$8 million worth of stolen beauty products.

The ringleader of an extensive organized retail crime operation spanning 21 counties, involving an estimated \$8 million in stolen beauty products, was arrested and charges were filed. The announcement signals the culmination of several months of collaborative investigatory efforts in the CHP's ongoing fight against retail crime.

The investigation was conducted by the California Department of Justice (DOJ), CHP, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Postal Inspection Service along with Ulta's Loss Prevention Organized Retail Crime team and Sephora representatives. It is alleged that the ringleader of the scheme paid more than seven people to steal from Ulta Beauty stores, as well as other retail outlets. The ringleader would then sell the stolen cosmetic items on her Amazon storefront.

CHP Commissioner Sean Duryee said, "The success of this investigation is due to the collaboration between several of our Organized Retail Crime Task Force teams throughout the state, the CHP's Computer Crimes Investigation Unit, the DOJ, our federal partners, and retailers. Through increased collaborative efforts, retailers and law enforcement have become more efficient and effective in our fight against organized retail crime."

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River Cats Changing In the New Baseball Year



Dinger stands perched on top of the dugout at Sutter Health Park, 400 Ballpark Drive, West Sacramento.

By Mitch Barber,
photos courtesy of
Sacramento River Cats

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - If you've ever watched Triple-A baseball, you know that it is extremely competitive and just one level below the

major leagues. It also happens to be a lot of fun.

Before the 2024 season gets underway in late March, Messenger Publishing Group interviewed a well-informed man in Sutter Health Park's press box: Jake Ward, who is the Sacramento River

Cats communications coordinator.

The interview began with discussion about Dinger, the River Cats' full-of-fun mascot who plays a key role with the team at and away from the ballpark.

"Every year, one of the

big events that we do, one of our draws, is Dinger's birthday party. So, we have a lot of mascots in the area come to the game for his birthday," Ward said. "Last year, there was Quackals... Dunkson from Stockton... I believe Herky T. Hornet

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River Cats Changing In the New Baseball Year

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was here.”

The UC Davis mustang mascot, Gunrock, also attended.

Dinger’s birthday event will be on July 21 this year during the Albuquerque Isotopes game.

Ward outlined another enjoyable event, a ballpark get-together, that took place last year.

“We did a sleepover night where we had some fans who could purchase a package to stay on the field and then they showed the movie, ‘Sandlot,’ while they had some sleeping bags and some tents out there on the grass,” Ward said. “...That was a pretty cool one (event).”

This year, on March 30, gameday festivities will revolve around the movie.

But the River Cats aren’t a team of kids with one that says, “You’re killing me, Smalls.” They are a professional team affiliated with the San Francisco Giants in the Pacific Coast League (a league that includes the Sugar Land Space Cowboys, a team name indicative of more fun).

The River Cats’ field is a step up from the makeshift one in the movie. Ward explained how Sutter Health Park is different from the former Raley Field: “We’ve been completely remodeling the inside of our clubhouse.”

There is no irony in what the organization is doing with Sutter Health Park.

“Mental health is just as big as physical health,” Ward said. “It’s something that our organization stresses all the way from the Giants up at the top, all the way down through San Jose (its Single-A



Nick Avila, Turlock native and member of the Sacramento River Cats, pitches at Sutter Health Park.

affiliate).”

“In addition to expanding our weight-room area and adding a second batting tunnel, they’re also adding family rooms and they’re adding a mental health room,” Ward continued.

The family rooms would make it possible for players to meet a spouse or their children in a laid-back atmosphere.

Another modification has to do with the lights.

“We’re replacing a lot of our lights; we’re moving to LED lights just to be a little bit more energy efficient,” Ward said.

He said they wouldn’t have to go through the warmup period required of standard floodlights before they shine bright.

Ward was happy to announce that what will stay the same is the head coach.

“Dave Brundage will be back for his seventh season,” he said.

Brundage has the second most wins in franchise history.

A staff change this season revolves around a promotion.

“Our pitching coach from last season — Garvin Alston — he earned one of

those promotions (to the major leagues) and he is now going to be the bullpen coach for the Giants,” Ward said.

He was happy about the news, but more focused on the River Cats. “The home opener is Friday, March 29, against the Salt Lake Bees at 6:45 p.m.,” said Ward.

Ward also knew about another special game: “Just about a week prior — this isn’t our opening day but a big event that we’re excited for — we’ll be facing off against the Giants in our exhibition game on Sunday, March 24th.”

The San Francisco Giants and the rest of Major League Baseball don’t use the automated ball-strike (ABS) system, but this year, like last season, the River Cats and the rest of the PCL will use the automated ball-strike. The first three games of each six-game series “will be all-automated,” Ward said, meaning that all ball and strike calls will be relayed to the umpire through an earpiece and called using the Hawk-Eye tracking system. (Tennis fans might recognize the Hawk-Eye name.)



Fans arrive at Sutter Health Park to watch a day game.



Fans relax on the outfield grass during a game at Sutter Health Park.

The last three games of each series, Ward said, “We go back to a more traditional system where your umpire calls balls and strikes but we use a challenge system...so if a batter feels that a pitch was called a strike, but he thinks, no, that pitch was

outside or it was high, he can turn around and he can initiate a challenge by tapping his helmet.”

Each team will get three challenges to start the game. The pitcher, batter or catcher can initiate a challenge — the inquiry cannot be initiated by the

dugout.

“It goes up on the jumbotron,” Ward said.

It’s all part of the competitive, fun experience that is Sacramento River Cats baseball. Play ball!

Sutter Health Park is at 400 Ballpark Drive, West Sacramento. ★

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**FEBRUARY
thru
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Reception
Dr. Jan Cooper
March 30, 2024
3:30-5:30



A man with a long beard and a pink party hat is holding a small camera. He is wearing a Star Wars t-shirt. He is in a coffee shop, with a coffee grinder and various coffee-making equipment visible in the background.

Continued from Page 1
streets. Art with a still-life bias greets customers, hung on bluish-green walls that make the café, on a cloudy day, seem almost underwater. There is a bar with six stools if you want to chat with a staff member making drinks. Heavy metal likely plays on the sound system and there is a disco ball gracing the ceiling — a trenchant juxtaposition.

Evans is one of four owners of Immortal Café and Supply, which is not a coffee shop, he underscored, but a café that emphasizes food and beverages in addition to coffee.

When asked about what was behind the name of the café, Evans became existential. He said, "And how I interpret it is totally different from the other owners and how they would interpret it... We want something that just continues to live on...Living on in infamy of sorts."

Co-owners Eric Cockrell and Jess Weddle-Cockrell are behind the food. She has worked at Canon and he has worked for Cru, a couple of Sacramento favorites. The fourth owner, Shan Dan Horan, is a silent partner who has a music record label.

This writer sampled the vegan biscuits and gravy for \$13, part of the Saturday brunch menu. Evans said, “Jess, one of the owners-slash-I-guess-you-could-call-her-head-chef-slash-baker

makes the biscuits. She and Eric tag team to make the gravy. They are husband and wife.” (Evans, in Evans’ ironic fashion, initially joked that the delicious biscuits were Pillsbury.)

Evans said, “Everything is vegetarian, most things are vegan — we are not a vegan café.” He continued, “Labeling yourself as a vegan café pigeonholes you — people avoid vegan cafés because for some reason, people are like, ‘I don’t eat vegan food.’”

He asked, "Like if you close your eyes, did it taste like biscuits and gravy to you?" This writer said, "Yes." He said, "That's the point." The biscuits were flaky-scrumptious and the gravy had a pleasant earthiness.

They serve other dishes such as savory bread pudding, or "strata," with rotating ingredients including spinach and leeks, with cheddar cheese that goes for \$13, as well.

If you're looking for a more economical hand-crafted option, you could go with the house-made kimchi, a Korean touch at \$4.

But wait, there are beverages sold at the café, as well. They have your standard espressos (\$3.75) and cortados (\$4.50), and a variety of coffees from four different roasters, including Olympia Coffee in Washington. One staff member with the

company was a regular at Morning Glass. Another is a good buddy of Evans' from Hawaii who visits his mom in Sacramento's Pocket area.

Evans said of Olympia, "They've got six or seven Hawaii connections."

For the 21-and-over crowd, there is a full beer and wine menu — a large, glass refrigerator greets customers just inside the entrance.

His dreams for the future include perhaps opening a second location that specializes (more so than the current iteration) in something like wine or a beer bar. Evans mused, “Maybe if I can get a little roaster and do some tiny batch roasting on the side.”

Immortal Café and Supply's building is supposed to become a boutique hotel; Evans and his partners signed a long-term lease and have committed to staying open during the remodeling.

Where would he like to be in 10 years? He said, "I'm going to be old in 10 years. My back can only take so much." He is 38 and full of irony.

Immortal Café and Supply
1111 H St., Suite 102
Sacramento, CA 95814

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Half-Pitch

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Memory Care Communities

By Tenfold Senior Living

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - In this series, we discuss topics that are top-of-mind for a person navigating the changes that occur when a family member has Alzheimer’s disease or any other type of dementia. In this article, we provide guidance for selecting a Memory Care community.

When dealing with the complexity of caring for a loved one with dementia, many of us consider a Memory Care community. While browsing websites and brochures is one step, those resources don’t necessarily tell you what to look for to ensure the best situation for your loved one and your family. Here are our suggestions for what to look for when you research and visit Memory Care communities.

1. Understand types of communities.

- A community with ‘a continuum of care’ has Independent Living, Assisted Living, and a secure Memory Care area, enabling residents to stay as they need additional support. Others are stand-alone Memory Care, with the entire community being a secured facility. Size is important. A smaller community may be more intimate, while large communities sometimes offer additional services.

2. Be smart in your research.

- These 3 tips will make the most of your time:
a. When you look at ratings, pay attention to how the community responds to both



When dealing with the complexity of caring for a loved one with dementia, many of us consider a Memory Care community. MPG courtesy photo

negative and positive comments. If they’ve taken the time to answer thoughtfully, that means they take feedback seriously.

b. Check the community’s Facebook or Instagram page. Frequent updates and photos of activities indicate a strong activities director and program.

c. It’s essential to see communities in person. Visit at different times of day to see the range of activities. Be wary of a community that limits you to preplanned visits.

3. Look at the physical environment.

- This will be home for your loved one. Is the environment warm and inviting, or does it feel institutional? What’s in the common area? Are activities the main focus, or is the living area dominated by a TV?

4. Ask about programming.

- What does a typical day look like? Ask to see the activities calendar. Is there a mix of activities to engage the mind, encourage social

interaction and maintain physical mobility? Is there a dedicated activities director? If you’re seriously considering this community, ask to meet them.

5. Talk to the staff.

- How you’re treated is a good indication of how your loved one will be treated. Are you greeted as you walk through the community? Are staff interacting with residents? Talk to a staff member. Ask them about their favorite activities to do with residents.

Resources such as senior placement services and agencies offer information about senior living communities and help you to compare factors like cost and services offered. But just like buying a home, the best choice will be very much about how you feel. When we speak with families that are happy with the choice they’ve made, they often say simply “It just felt right.” In our next article: how to talk to your family and loved one about memory care. ★

To Tell the Truth, I Wasn’t



Ten years ago, I was at a writing seminar hanging around the snack table, when one of the seminar instructors joined me for a Danish.

He was a quiet, introspective man, truly a statesman among aspiring student writers. That’s why I guided him to the quiet side of the room to tell him I thought he was lying.

Not in those exact words. I constructed a more diplomatic approach that went something like this:

“You were introduced as a ‘Pulitzer Prize nominee,’ but a quick Internet search tells me that we share some confusion over the term ‘nominee.’”

For a moment he glanced at this watch, but unfortunately realized he had time to hear me out.

“If you’d met me last year,” I explained, “I would have told you that my syndicated column had received a Pulitzer Prize nomination.”

“And it was not?” he asked.

“Sadly, no.”

I told the aging professor how my “Florida Today” editor had submitted the dozen columns I’d written during my 2009 deployment to a combat field hospital in Iraq.

“Yes,” said the professor, “My publisher also submitted my work.”

As he gathered his lecture notes, he dismissively added, “Congratulations, it sounds like we are both Pulitzer nominees.”

“No, we are not.” I said, “but we both made the same assumption. We assumed that our editor’s submission of our work equaled a Pulitzer

nomination.”

Sadly, the difference between a Pulitzer submission and a Pulitzer nomination is about as far as “ticket purchaser” is from “lotto winner.”

I showed him the Pulitzer website on my tablet where he read “More than 2,500 entries are submitted annually for Pulitzer Prize consideration, yet only three in each category are bestowed with the prestigious title of Pulitzer Nominee.”

“In fact,” I said, “anyone of my fellow conferees can submit their work for Pulitzer consideration as long as they send \$75. But only the Pulitzer committee can bestow the title of Nominee.” The professor seemed embarrassed that a pupil had schooled him in the difference.

Our stories beg the complicated question: “Can one be a lair if one doesn’t know he’s lying?” Another facet of the question is: “Does one’s story default to becoming the truth if one doesn’t bother to fact check the story?”

In other words, in a quick check of the Pulitzer website you’ll note the glaring absence of our names. And that omission, for a time, made us both liars.

For the duration of the conference, the professor continued to allow his introductions to claim a Pulitzer connection. Just as it took some time for me to remove the notation from my website.

I guess we felt much like the claim made in the movie in “A Few Good Men,” by Jack Nicholson’s character, Col. Jessup.

When Jessup is questioned on the witness stand, a shouting match ensues. Tom

Cruise’s character Lt. j.g.Kaffee demands the court finally be told the truth behind a hazing incident in the Marine barracks.

We all know Col. Jessup’s answer, so say it with me.

“You can’t handle the truth!”

Neither the professor nor I handled our truths very well. Sadly, our websites boasted our Pulitzer claim for a few more months.

But centuries before that movie, Jesus set the scene for real truth in John 8:32 when he said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

The professor, while not religious, had no doubt heard the scripture quoted in his academic circles by those promoting academic freedom and the power of learning.

It was a minute before he and I found a way to handle our truth, but the truth eventually set us free from our egos—just as Jesus promised it would.

Note: While nowhere near Pulitzer fame, Norris does boast the 2019 Will Rogers Humanitarian Award for his columns about Chispa Project. The charity, started by his daughter Sara, establishes Spanish libraries in Honduran elementary schools. The Honduran school year began this month so your continued support is greatly needed at <https://www.chispaproject.org/nextchapter>.

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Out of Crisis Comes Opportunity

Reducing Ambulance Patient Offload Time

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Every second counts in an emergency, and when it comes to medical emergencies, time is of the essence.

The time it takes for an ambulance to offload a patient to the emergency department (ED) can make all the difference; the longer the wait, the more critical their condition can become.

It’s an emotional and stressful situation for patients and their loved ones, who are already worried about the outcome of their medical emergency.

As the population of Sacramento County continues to grow, so do the demands on its emergency medical services. One crucial metric that affects patient outcomes and the overall efficiency of emergency medical services is the Ambulance Patient Offload Time (APOT).

The time interval is between the arrival of an ambulance patient at an ED and the time that the patient is transferred to the ED gurney, bed, chair or other acceptable location and the emergency department assumes the responsibility for care of the patient. In Sacramento County, that time has hit a high of 72 minutes but the county has an ambitious goal to drop that time to 20 minutes. This goal comes as Assembly Bill 40, which takes effect on July 1, will require every local EMS agency to develop a plan not to exceed 30 minutes for 90% of ambulance arrivals and report the standardized time to the authority.

Sacramento County, with prehospital providers, local hospitals, interested community members and Sacramento County Board of Supervisors Patrick Kennedy and Pat Hume, shared their innovations and



Sacramento County Board of Supervisors want to reduce the time that it takes to get an ambulance patient into a doctor’s care from 72 minutes down to 20 minutes. MPG courtesy photo

best practices Feb. 13 to address the Ambulance Patient Offload Time crisis.

Dr. Gregory Kann stated the importance of sharing ideas and innovations to create better services for all, adding that out of this crisis comes opportunity.

Sutter Roseville, a not-for profit hospital that is part of the Sutter Health network, shared a real-time data system implemented to monitor its Ambulance Patient Offload Time. By using its medical health record system, EPIC, Sutter Roseville tracked a patient’s emergency room trip from entrance to transfer, allowing obstacles to be identified and any issues to be corrected. The hospital leadership also educated staff to help identify when a patient needed ER treatment or could be moved to another department or service. These efforts helped the hospital reduce the time from 100 minutes to 31 minutes, according to the Sutter Roseville presentation.

A Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District (SMFD) presentation approached the Ambulance Patient Offload Time issue another way. The fire district implemented the county’s revised protocol (Policy Number 5050 – Destination), which authorizes patients to be taken to their medical health system’s hospital, instead of the closest hospital, allowing for faster treatment since their medical records were already there. ★

The Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District also determined if a patient needed to be directly taken to the ER or if they could safely wait in the lobby. The fire district also partnered with other ambulance providers to provide additional ambulances to support the 9-1-1 system.

The fire district implemented a Mobile Integrated Health program, which means a Physician Assistance/Nurse Practitioner teams with a paramedic who responds to calls and determines what a patient might need and if they can be treated at the scene without going to the emergency department.

The Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District’s innovations aim to get patients to the right place the first time, whether that’s the ER, lobby or another service, according to the presentation.

The Feb. 13 event demonstrated that local hospitals, prehospital provider and the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors are strongly committed to improving Ambulance Patient Offload Time and emergency medical services, according to the county. With continued collaboration, innovation and inspiration, Dr. Kann emphasized that these conversations are what will fuel the plan to better lead the Ambulance Patient Offload Time and deliver better outcomes for patients in Sacramento County. ★

Major Takedown of Vast Organized Retail Crime Operation

Continued from Page 1

Recognizing the complexity and scale of the operation, in August 2023, federal investigators requested the CHP’s Organized Retail Crime Task Force (ORCTF) join their ongoing investigation. In December, simultaneous search warrants were executed by ORCTF investigators in Southern California and the suspects were taken into custody.

The charges, brought by the California DOJ,

include Organized Retail Theft, Conspiracy, Receipt of Stolen Property, and multiple counts of Grand Theft.

The thefts occurred in Alameda, Placer, Kern, Contra Costa, Orange, Los Angeles, Santa Clara, San Diego, Sacramento, San Mateo, Solano, Riverside, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Napa, Marin, Tulare, San Bernardino, Sonoma, Ventura, and Yolo counties.

Since the inception of the ORCTF in 2019, the CHP has been involved in

more than 2,300 investigations leading to the arrest of more than 2,200 suspects and the recovery of over 761,000 stolen goods valued at \$41.7 million.

If you witness one of these crimes occurring, do not attempt to intervene — call 9-1-1. Members of the public and retailers can also report retail crime tips directly through the CHP’s website.

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A graphic banner with a dark background. On the left, the text "WE SUPPORT FIRST RESPONDERS" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. To the right of the text is a white oval containing the MPG logo, which consists of the letters "MPG" in a stylized font with a small star above the "P". On the far right, there is a close-up, black and white photograph of a police vehicle's emergency light bar, showing the lights are illuminated.

Spider-Man 2099 to Pokemon Attended Ohana Comic-Con

**Story and photos
by Emanuel Espinoza**

ELK GROVE, CA (MPG) - Scores of residents joined the world of comics, anime, science fiction and other fandoms as the Ohana Comic-Con returned to Soccer World on March 2.

Several attendees dressed as their favorite characters, including Spider-Man 2099, The Predator and Pokemon members.

Ziggy Star, co-promoter for the convention, said this event is held “every weekend” as they travel to various cities. One example was the con in Hollister the following day and the following weekend in Folsom, and a couple of others in Salinas and Santa Cruz. Star said that they differ from other cons because of how often this one is held.

“We hold these events every weekend,” Star said. “But we are also helping my buddy with the Omega Con on Memorial Day weekend in Fresno.”

Like many other cons, this event had several vendors ranging from artists who do fan art and comic books to vendors selling sports memorabilia and autographed pictures to also vendors selling video games and plushies.

Artist Jade Gonzalez of Woodland, owner of Jadedxcreations, said she had done the Ohana Comic Con in her hometown before and is looking to branch out into doing cons in other locations. However, Gonzalez said

she had done other events in the Bay Area and Sacramento before.

Gonzalez’s booth was devoted to her artwork. She said she was selling prints at the moment, but some of her other works were of original canvas paintings and also had done digital artwork.

“I took pictures of my art and made them into prints and did all of this at home,” Gonzalez said.

Branden Sanderson, owner of Midnight Comics and artist/writer of his “Malevolent Rising” comic book series, said he had been doing a lot of comic cons as of late, one of which being the Lodi Comic Con Fall this past September.

“I usually do a con every weekend,” Sanderson said. “I do three a month. I am all over the place.”

Sanderson said he had been self-publishing his work since 2019. After every con and show he participated in, Sanderson said, he had gained more followers. He said his comic business gets bigger every year and makes more books and travels farther to do other events.

“As time has gone on, I’ve grown quite a bit,” Sanderson said. “When I first started promoting my work, I hardly had any followers, but now I have little under a thousand followers.”

Amelia Pendleton, a watercolor and digital artist from Palo Alto, said she had come back to doing cons this past year after being away because of the pandemic.



Residents of all ages had fun at the Ohana Comic Con at Soccer World on March 2.

“The first con I went to after a long time was the Fan Expo in San Francisco,” Pendleton said. “My friend and I had a great time and I’ve been enjoying doing shows and getting back into them since.”

Pendleton said she started drawing fan art after watching a particular series and wanted to do more with some of the characters and bring her own twist and flair to them.

“It comes from the love of watching the series and wanting to do more like bring my own twist and flair to the characters,” Pendleton said. “I did that a lot with the books I read as a kid like ‘Harry Potter’ and ‘Lord of the Rings.’” ★



Many attendees participated at the March 2 Ohana Comic-Con while dressing up as their favorite characters. Pictured here is one man dressed as Spider-Man 2099.

Interview with USL Head Coach Mark Briggs

By Mitch Barber

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Mark Briggs has a clear mission for the 2024 United Soccer League (USL) season, Republic FC’s 11th. He told the Messenger Publishing Group that “it is to go one step further than last year and win the championship. Pretty simple, I think, after where we got to last year and reaching the conference final. We gotta go one step further this year and try and be better than what we were.”

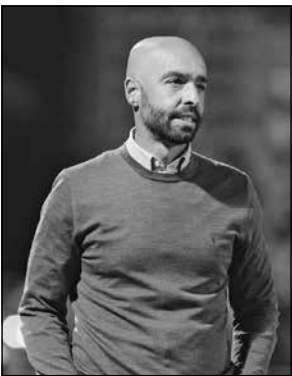
The club won its only USL championship in 2014.

The Tower Bridge Battalion has been cheering since then.

Briggs said of them, “I think they’re like a 12th person on our team. They give us extra energy when we’re in difficult moments. They make us run those extra five yards when we’re tired. I can’t speak highly enough of the Tower Bridge Battalion. I think they’re incredible and we’re proud to have them as our supporters’ group.”

The Tower Bridge Battalion will support numerous players this season who made their way through the Republic FC Academy, such as forward Rafael Jauregui, the youngest goal scorer in club history; forward Da’vian Kimbrough, who just turned 14 and signed with the club at 13 becoming the youngest pro in U.S. team sports history; midfielder Blake Willey who grew up in the Pocket area; and 16-year-old central defender Chibuike “Chibi” Ukaegbu.

Briggs also started his own career at an early age in



Sacramento Republic FC Head Coach Mark Briggs.
Photo courtesy of Sacramento Republic FC

England. When asked about pickup soccer there, he said, “It’s a huge thing. You drive past every park and there’s people going on [the pitch] and, it was for me every single day growing up, soon as I finished school, there would be 20, 30 of us at the park just playing. I think it’s where the game over here...You don’t get that in America. I think you can go anywhere else in the rest of the world, England, Italy, Brazil, Argentina, like there’s always just people playing, you know? Of course, you don’t need anything —just a ball. [If] you can’t find a goalpost, use trees, use whatever it is, you can just play and I think that’s what I’d like to see happening a little bit more over here in America.”

And then there’s veteran midfielder Rodrigo Lopez, who was on Republic FC’s 2014 championship team, winning MVP honors in the final. He’s from Guadalajara, Mexico, another country with quite the pickup soccer scene.

USL soccer is a different level of soccer. Coach

Briggs said of Republic FC, “You have professional players, a professional team of the highest caliber there has ever been in Sacramento. I think the reason to come out and support your local club [is] first and foremost, but also you have top top players that are in this league, and I think a lot of people still have the perception that it’s semi-professional, and it’s not semi-professional; it’s fully-professional. If you have a kid that likes soccer, there’s no better learning tool than watching a professional live.”

What does Briggs do when he isn’t coaching elite soccer?

“I’m usually with the family: my wife, my kids, my dog. Usually walking around parks or playing with the kids,” the coach said. “Every now and then, I pick up a pickleball racket or tennis racket. Sometimes a golf club and the majority of the time’s with the kids and with my wife.”

Briggs is comfortable in Sacramento. He said of the city, “It’s not flashy — you know the glitz and glamour of your L.A.’s and San Diego’s. It’s humble people that work hard and enjoy life and I certainly feel at home here.”

Let’s see if he and the team can bring Sacramento another championship in 2024.

The Indomitable Club will open their season on March 9 against Orange County SC at Heart Health Park, 1600 Exposition Blvd., Sacramento. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m. ★



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