

Can you trust AI’s advice?
Financial experts weigh in

We asked chatbots common personal finance questions. Here’s how answers varied. **In Money**

Pro baseball trailblazer:
‘We’re finally being seen’

Kelsie Whitmore hopes women’s league inspires next generation of female athletes. **In Sports**

Yeoh recalls
why she had
to shift her
career focus

Oscar winner chats about channeling her “feisty” mom in animated movie “Ne Zha II” and what her granddaughter thought of her in “Wicked.” **In Life**

USA TODAY

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DAN MACMEDAN/USA TODAY



Officials
dismissed
wildfire
warnings

Grand Canyon blaze grew
as they reassured public

Stephanie Murray and Robert Anglen
Arizona Republic
USA TODAY NETWORK

National Park Service officials say there was no way to predict the Dragon Bravo Fire would turn into an inferno, jump containment lines and rip through the Grand Canyon’s North Rim, leaving a historic lodge and 100 other structures in smoking ruin.

But records, including the Grand Canyon’s fire management plan, are at odds with the official narrative. They show officials downplayed threats to public safety – and decided to let the fire burn for seven days – even as fuel and weather conditions repeatedly reached the brink of critical thresholds for fire risk.

The management plan lists four conditions that signal when a fire could get out of control. Two days after lightning sparked the July 4 fire, a combination of high temperatures, low humidity, wind speed and gusts began coalescing in a way the park’s plan warned could “greatly increase fire behavior.”



The Dragon Bravo Fire burns on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon as seen from the South Rim on July 14. MICHAEL CHOW/USA TODAY NETWORK

That was the first time. An analysis by The Arizona Republic, part of the USA TODAY Network, using data recorded by the National Weather Service at the North Rim found temperature, humidity and wind came even closer to reaching critical thresholds on July 9 and closer still on July 10.

Three of the threshold conditions were sustained for nearly six hours on July 10, and at one point all four would have been met if wind speed was only 2 mph greater.

Added to the critical conditions is a warning about the North Rim’s landscape of mixed conifer forests, which the fire plan says “supports the potential for extreme fire behavior that leads to large fire growth.”

Park officials chose to manage the fire “under a confine and contain strategy” despite weather and fuel conditions. They said in public statements and in social media posts that letting the fire burn “allows for the natural role of fire on the landscape while minimizing the risk to infrastructure and park values.”

National Park Service spokesperson Rachel Pawlitz maintained the fire was “expertly handled” and said the quick response by firefighters saved hundreds of lives.

The Dragon Bravo Fire is now the

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Danger, injury lurk
on dirt racetracks



TOP AND RIGHT: NICK AGRÒ FOR USA TODAY; LEFT: PROVIDED BY KAWASAKI MOTORS CORP., USA

“Your life’s on the line every time you put your leg over that bike, and there’s really not much you can do besides just train and stay smart.”

Carson Wood
15-year-old
motocross rider

Family members of motocross racer Aidan Zingg attend his memorial Aug. 18. The 16-year-old died June 28 during a midrace crash on a dirt track in Mammoth Lakes, California.

Death of 16-year-old rising star shines light
on involvement of kids, teens in motocross

Josh Peter USA TODAY

HURRICANE MILLS, TN

Forty-two teenage boys with helmets and colorful uniforms pushed their dirt bikes to the starting line. • They were among about 1,000 riders, who must be at least 4 years old to race. The site is Loretta Lynn’s Ranch, about 70 miles west of Nashville and home to the most prestigious event in amateur motocross – the Monster Energy AMA Amateur National Motocross Championship. • On the opening day of racing at the 44th annual event held July 28-Aug. 2, the teens revved the engines of 250cc motorcycles built to soar off jumps and tear around the 1.1-mile dirt track. It’s regarded among the safer tracks in amateur motocross despite three riders having died since 2008 from injuries suffered while racing on it. • The field was full again this year, organizers said, as were 42 gates with riders baking under the sun before the first 250 B race of the week. • Organizers resisted calls to leave one gate empty in honor of Aidan Zingg, a 16-year-old rising star who died June 28 during a midrace crash in Mammoth Lakes, California. Zingg won the Supermini 2 national championship last year and would have graduated to 250 B this year. • “Nope, that’s not how it works here,” said Tim Cotter, director of MX Sports, which runs the event. “The next guy up, he goes in the gate.” See MOTOCROSS, Page 2A

Pronouns center of growing work conflicts

Fight heats up over trans rights, religious freedom

Jessica Guynn
USA TODAY

Jocelyn Boden, 47, managed a Bath & Body Works store in West Valley City, Utah, for 3½ years.

In March, she hired a transgender man as a retail associate and, during their first shift together, Boden said she twice referred to the employee as “she” in keeping with her faith as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints, which teaches that gender is an immutable characteristic of a person’s “eternal identity.”

After two associates corrected her, Boden informed her manager she would use the employee’s chosen name but would not “degrade my religious and moral beliefs by lying and calling this biological girl a he,” she told USA TODAY.

Boden was fired. Her termination notice cited “unwanted conduct directed at an individual based on their sex, which includes sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or

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Jocelyn Boden says her termination was religious discrimination. PROVIDED BY JOCELYN BODEN



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