

USA TODAY

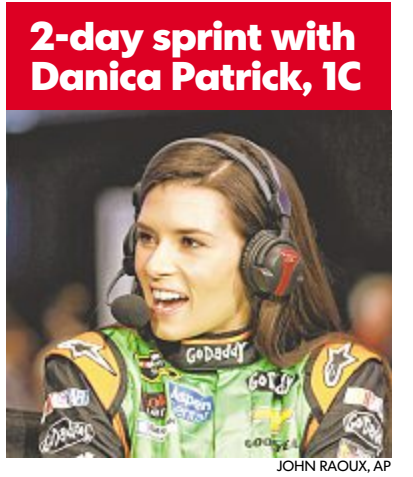
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Will Oscars surprise the experts? 4B

CAPTAIN PHILLIPS BY SONY-COLUMBIA PICTURES



2-day sprint with Danica Patrick, 1C

JOHN RAOUX, AP

NEWSLINE

Fla. verdict again raises race, self-defense debate

Prosecutors plan to retry man for murder in fatal shooting of teen. 3A

ONE ON ONE MARIA BARTIROMO

UBS chief doesn't believe China is slowing down

CEO Sergio Ermotti gives insight on global growth, IPOs and his outlook for 2014. 2B



MEDIA MICHAEL WOLFF

Comcast is likely kicking itself over NBC deal

Now that net neutrality is being undone by courts, the NBC deal that commits Comcast to open-Internet rules is a growing annoyance. 1B



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USA SNAPSHOTS®

Today is a federal holiday

How long these federal holidays have been observed: (years)

HOLIDAYS	YEARS
Independence Day (1870)	143
Washington's Birthday (1879)	134
Memorial Day (1888)	125
Labor Day (1894)	119
Armistice Day/Veterans Day (1938)	75

Source Congressional Research Service ANNE R. CAREY AND VERONICA BRAVO, USA TODAY

BONUS OLYMPICS SECTION INSIDE

USA's spirits high despite fewer medals

Matching 37 set four years ago 'not a realistic expectation'

Kelly Whiteside @KellyWhiteside USA TODAY Sports

SOCHI Four years ago, the U.S. Olympic team turned in its best performance in Winter Games history with 37 medals, the most won by any nation, in Vancouver.

With seven days remaining in the Sochi Olympics, the Americans won't come close to matching that record, which is just fine, according to U.S. Olympic Committee CEO Scott Blackmun. Blackmun has high expectations for the team, but he's also pragmatic. "Vancouver was a once-in-a-lifetime performance by our team," Blackmun told USA TODAY Sports on Sunday.

"While that's a good benchmark from an aspirational standpoint, it's not a realistic expectation every time we compete because it was just so special. It was like competing on home soil, our time zone, our culture, our food — it was that combined with the fact that our athletes had a lot of lifetime best performances."

Heading into Day 10 of the Sochi Games, the Netherlands leads the overall medal count with 17. USA and Russia are tied for second with 16 medals. This week, U.S. skiing stars Mikaela Shiffrin and Ted Ligety should add to the medal haul, along with Steven Holcomb, the defending Olympic champion in men's four-man bobsled. In figure skating, Meryl



Bode Miller added to the USA's medal count Sunday by winning a bronze in super-G.

ROB SCHUMACHER, USA TODAY SPORTS

Davis and Charlie White are poised to win gold after leading Sunday's short dance.

But their podium finishes are far from guaranteed. Several favorites have come up empty here, including snowboarder Shaun White, speedskater Shani Davis and Lindsey Jacobellis, who failed to advance to the women's snowboard cross final Sunday.

Four years ago in Vancouver,

the Americans had 24 medals, including seven gold, at this point of the Games, according to Olympic historian Bill Mallon. "We never do as well at European Olympics," Mallon said Sunday. Especially a Winter Games.

American dominance on snow and ice is a recent occurrence, but as results have improved, so

▶ STORY CONTINUES ON 2A

How IRS really taxes us

Poor customer service costly to taxpayers

John Waggoner USA TODAY

When clients come to Bill Nemeth, they have one wish: Please make it go away. "It," in this case, is a problem with the Internal Revenue Service.

Nemeth makes his living representing people before the IRS: He's an enrolled agent, the highest credential the IRS awards. He helps make nasty tax things — fines, penalties, liens — go away. He's on the phone with the IRS every day. But these days, he's mostly on hold. "I was on hold for an hour and a half last night," he says.

And Nemeth gets to use the practitioner priority line, which puts him ahead of regular taxpayers who just want to know what form they have to file for reporting a capital gain from a stock loss. (That would be Schedule D.) Nemeth says his wait time used to be 15 minutes or so. Now it's often more than an hour.

IRS FUNDING IRS funding has dropped 7.6% over the past 5 years:

- FY 2010 \$12.15B
- FY 2011 \$12.12B
- FY 2012 \$11.82B
- FY 2013 \$11.20B
- FY 2014 \$11.29B

NOTE 2013 TOTAL INCLUDES SEQUESTER. SOURCE IRS

For the average taxpayer, the waits are long and often futile: 39% of those who called the IRS last year simply hung up before their call was answered, according to a scathing recent report by the IRS Taxpayer Advocate, whose job is to take the taxpayer's side at the IRS. (The IRS typically responds to the report at mid-year.) And it's only going to get worse. "Given our very limited resources, phone lines will be very busy, and there will frequently be extensive wait times," IRS Commissioner John Koskinen said on the agency's official YouTube video about the 2013 tax year.

And as much as people love to hate the IRS, the agency's problems become taxpayers' problems. Poor customer service means that many more people will pay someone else to do their

▶ STORY CONTINUES ON 2A

BRUTAL WINTER STYMIES SHIPPING

Delays have 'ripple effect' on economy

Paul Davidson USA TODAY

Snowstorms and frigid temperatures the past six weeks have stalled shipments, forcing some factories to shut for days and delaying deliveries to retailers.

The snarls have compounded the effects of weather on the economy. Last week, the government reported that factory production fell sharply in January. Some workers have seen reduced hours and pay.

The disruptions are also helping drive up some trucking rates — costs that could get passed through to consumers.

"It has a massive ripple effect through the supply chain and the economy," says Bob Costello, chief economist of the American Trucking Association.

Ports in New York and New Jersey have been hit especially hard. New Jersey ports closed during each big storm, and operations were slowed afterward as workers moved snow to make room for shipping containers, says Evans Papantourous, owner of EP Transportation and Logistics. The firm hires trucking companies for shippers.

The snags have spawned truck backups leading to Newark and Elizabeth.

Many deliveries to stores and factories have been a week to 10 days late as workers tried to clear a mushrooming stockpile of goods on the docks, he says. "I haven't seen it this bad in 30 years in the business," he says. "This is killing us."

Many truck shipments leaving cities such as Atlanta, Chicago and Dallas have been delayed two to three days after each storm, says Ben Cubitt, senior vice president of logistics company Transplace.

Subzero temperatures also have caused truck engines to fail. Many manufacturers in the Midwest, Southeast and Northeast have closed plants up to a week because they did not receive raw materials on time, says Chad Moutray, National Association of Manufacturers' chief economist.

Some retailers have seen spot merchandise shortages. Gary Weiner, CEO of Saxon Shoes — which owns Virginia stores in Richmond and Fredericksburg — says 15% to 20% of deliveries arrived two to three weeks late from the Midwest last month.

"Maybe we lost 10 days of selling time" for those items, he says.



Traffic stalls on Interstate 70 near Clear Spring, Md., on Thursday.

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