



FUN
Southern Showdown
Gamers prepare for largest Louisiana 'Halo: Combat Evolved' tournament ever

SPORTS
LSU opens play in SEC tournament
■ See Page 1D

WEATHER
High: Around 70
Low: Mid-40s
Chance of rain: 20%
■ Details, 12B

The Advocate

MARCH 12, 2004

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

50¢

IN BRIEF

Former aide arrested as agent for Iraq

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK — A former reporter and one-time press secretary for four members of Congress was arrested Thursday on charges she served as a paid agent for the Iraqi intelligence service before and after the U.S. invasion last year.



Lindauer

Susan Lindauer, 41, was taken into custody in her hometown of Takoma Park, Md., and made a brief court appearance in Baltimore, where lawyers argued over whether she should be granted bail.

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Marines searching for weapons in Haiti

By The Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Haiti's new prime minister began choosing a Cabinet on Thursday, looking to a former army general to stabilize his traumatized country as U.S. Marines carried out their first disarmament mission.

With morgues full and government offices closed, bodies were piling up in the capital, littering the streets for days and serving as bitter reminders of an armed rebellion that has divided the country.

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Bush keeps 9-11 as campaign's heart

By The Associated Press

EAST MEADOW, N.Y. — President Bush defied criticism and kept the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks at the center of his re-election campaign Thursday, solemnly helping dedicate a new memorial to victims with a spade of dirt and hugs for the still grieving.

But barely had the earth slipped from his shovel at the memorial's groundbreaking before critics leveled fresh charges for what they say is his exploitation of the tragedy for election-year gain.

■ See story, Page 2A

Electrocution sparks action by utilities

By The Associated Press

When a New Yorker walking her dogs was electrocuted in January by faulty wiring under the pavement, it seemed like the freakiest of accidents — until several pets in other big cities were killed or shocked in the weeks that followed.

Now utilities are rushing to fix the problems — blamed largely on work crews tearing up the streets — and to reassure the public. Dog owners, meanwhile, are buying booties for their pets to insulate their paws.

"People are getting current up through their arms or their legs," Boston Councilor-at-Large Maura A. Hennigan said this week. "How much more current do they need to get for us to do something about it?"

■ See story, Page 9A

Kerry rejects calls for apology to GOP

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry on Thursday rejected demands that he apologize for calling his critics in the Republican Party "the most crooked, you know, lying group I've ever seen."

As Republican congressional leaders criticized Kerry's proposals and called for him to stop name-calling and negative campaigning, Rep. Jack Kingston, R-Ga., said they see Kerry as "Ted Kennedy on a South Beach diet."

■ See story, Page 2A

Terrorists hit Madrid



Photo by Reuters

A Spanish policeman walks past a hole blasted through a train in an explosion Thursday at Madrid's Atocha train station. Simultaneous blasts killed at least 192 people on packed rush-hour trains.

INSIDE

■ E-mail to news-paper claims al-Qaida link, Page 4A
■ Families search for loved ones at hospitals, Page 4A

Bombs kill 192 commuters on 4 trains in Spain

By MAR ROMAN
Associated Press writer

MADRID, Spain — A series of bombs hidden in backpacks exploded in quick succession Thursday, blowing apart four commuter trains and killing at least 192 people and wounding more than 1,400. Spain at first blamed Basque separatists but a shadowy group claimed responsibility in the name of al-Qaida for the worst terrorist attack in Spanish history.

Panicked rush-hour commuters tram-

pled on each other, abandoning their bags and shoes, after two of the bombs went off in one train in the Atocha station in the heart of Madrid. Train cars were turned into twisted wrecks and platforms were strewn with corpses. Cell phones rang unanswered on the bodies of the dead as frantic relatives tried to call them.

"March 11, 2004, now holds its place in the history of infamy," Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar said.

The bombing came three days ahead of Spain's general election on Sunday. A

major campaign issue was how to deal with ETA, the Basque militant group that is seeking greater autonomy.

Campaigning for the election was called off and three days of mourning were declared.

The bombings occurred exactly 2½ years after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, and was Europe's worst since the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jetliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed 270 people.

The attacks also reawakened terrorism fears among investors. Stocks fell

in London and in New York, where the Dow Jones industrial average dropped nearly 170 points. On Friday, Tokyo stocks opened sharply lower.

The 10 backpack bombs exploded in a 15-minute span, starting about 7:39 a.m., on trains along nine miles of commuter line from Santa Eugenia to the Atocha terminal, a bustling hub for subway, commuter and long-distance trains just south of the famed Prado Museum. Police also found and deto-

■ See MADRID, Page 5A

Car owners fume over problems

Computers can't always talk to auto at inspection

By HEATH DRUZIN
Advocate staff writer

When Rick Davis brought his 2002 Kia Optima to a Baton Rouge service station for his annual inspection three weeks ago, he knew it would pass.

The car he had bought just one year before had given him no problems and his display panel was blissfully free of illuminated warning lights.

However, the shortcomings of the state's computer software quickly turned Davis' optimism into frustration.

Davis' car failed the inspection, not because there was anything wrong with it, but because software employed by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality could not link to the comput-

■ See PROBLEMS, Page 4A



Advocate staff photo by John H. Williams

Roy Badaeux Jr., who owns Jamison's Auto Service Inc., puts a sticker Thursday on a car that failed an emission inspection. Software the state uses to test vehicle sensors cannot link to computers in certain makes and models.

Blanco tax renewal squeaks by House

By SCOTT DYER
Capitol news bureau

Without a vote to spare, the state House on Thursday approved an 11th-hour compromise to renew \$160 million in business utility taxes for five years.

The centerpiece of Gov. Kathleen Blanco's special session, House Bill 1 by Rep. Bryant Hammett, D-Ferriday, started out as a proposal to renew and make permanent the 2.8 percent state sales tax on business utilities.

Because the bill levies a tax, the proposal requires a two-thirds majority vote to pass — and appeared to be in trouble Wednesday.

But Blanco met individually with several lawmakers Wednesday night and Thursday morning in order to shore up support for HB1.

One lawmaker who admits that Blanco changed his mind was Rep. Tommy Wright, D-Jena, who was

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Suspect in weapons case accused of threatening judge

By PENNY BROWN ROBERTS and JOHN MCMILLAN
Advocate staff writers

A Sorrento man is accused of buying a rifle and silencer from an undercover agent at a Port Allen gas station three days ago and threatening to kill an Ascension Parish judge over a 13-year-old grudge.

A U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives affidavit

made public Thursday claims Carruth C. Motichek, 55, 9295 La. 22, paid undercover state and federal agents \$320 Tuesday for an unregistered Automatic Weapons Company silencer and silenced semiautomatic Ruger rifle.

At a deal-making meeting in February at the Amoco gas station on La. 415, Motichek also said if he "ever caught" 23rd Judicial District Judge

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