



DOW
+77.16
CLOSE
10,959.31

T-BONDS
+0.01
CLOSE
4.56

S&P
+11.97
CLOSE
1,285.45

NASDAQ
+28.75
CLOSE
2,305.62

Business

CREW BACK TO WORK IN HANGAR

New blimp buffs up



BLIMP-BUILDING MILESTONES

This is the latest installment of Blimp Garage, an occasional series chronicling the people and milestones involved in building Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.'s new blimp at Wingfoot Lake.

Dec. 4: Crew finishes patching the 192-foot-long envelope.

Dec. 8: The envelope is inflated with helium for the first time.

Dec. 9: The gondola, or car, is attached underneath the envelope.

Dec. 11: Meet the people who are building the blimp.

Dec. 13: The blimp is moved within the hangar.

Dec. 22: Workers add the nose cone.

Today: Workers continue lacing parts to the envelope

Ohio.com: See previous articles, videos and photos from "Blimp Garage" on the Newsroom Projects page.



PAUL TOPLE/Akron Beacon Journal photos

Rob Delagrance (below) hands a batten to Scott Babbo at the Wingfoot Lake hangar, where workers are lacing the tubelike pieces to the envelope of a new Goodyear blimp.

Metal tubes create strong exoskeleton

By Jim Mackinnon
Beacon Journal business writer

When we last left Blimp Garage in the closing days of 2005, crew members assembling the new Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. blimp had started lacing the first of 16 light aluminum tubes to the front of the airship.

After a week-plus holiday break and a few work days into 2006, they're still at it inside the Wingfoot Lake hangar.

It takes a long time to

properly lace 1,600 feet of flat, braided Dacron rope to the front of a 192-foot-long inflated envelope.

The tubes, called battens, act as an exoskeleton that enables the blimp to keep its shape while in flight. The eight blue and eight silver-gray battens also support the metal nose cone, designed to keep the blimp connected to airfield mooring masts even in high winds.

Please see **Blimp, D8**



Brian Hershberger (left) and Rob Delagrance check the lacing at the metal nose cone where 16 battens come together to support the blimp.

Ohio.com: View videos and photos and read past articles from the "Blimp Garage" on the Newsroom Projects page.



This rope is used by the ground crew to keep the blimp connected to airfield mooring masts.

ON DACRON

Dacron, a trademarked polyester fiber, is ideally suited to the lacings on the new Goodyear blimp.

The fiber is highly resistant to stretching wet or dry, and has high resistance to wear and tear. The flat, braided Dacron rope holds knots more easily than twisted ropes do.

Dacron is used in everything from curtains and clothing to high-pressure fire hoses.



KEN LOVE/Akron Beacon Journal

The annual white sale, a January tradition, is under way at the JCPenney in the Montrose area of Copley Township.

Best bargains are seasonal

Need towels? Buy now. Appliances? Try June and July



MARY ETHRIDGE
Mad Shopper

Every January for decades, frenzied bargain hunters pawed through bins of discounted sheets knowing they wouldn't find such a deal for another 12 months.

They took part faithfully in a retail tradition known as the January White Sale.

February was the traditional time for underwear sales in the "foundations" department. (Foundations - ha! As if women's bodies were such unruly things they needed girders and footers to secure them.)

Although white sales still come around in January, and

bra sales pop up in February, these annual retail rituals are far lower key and less important to merchants and consumers.

The good news is you are now more likely to find bargains throughout the year.

Merchants have become much better at managing inventories, so they don't need to hold the sort of giant clearance sales of the past. At the same time, price competition among retailers has intensified, and consumers have been trained to expect sales.

Please see **Bargains, D2**

Pension freezes put focus on 401(k)s

IBM move highlights changes in all industries

By Brian Bergstein
Associated Press

BOSTON: IBM's freeze of its otherwise healthy U.S. pension plan will reverberate through the corporate world, not only because it illustrates the erosion of traditional benefit packages, but also because it sharpens the focus on 401(k) plans as a source of retirement security.

With the 401(k) increasingly becoming a de facto pension for American workers, several ex-

perts suggest reforms are in order.

International Business Machines Corp.'s announcement this week drew attention because the security of the technology giant's \$48 billion U.S. pension fund stands in contrast to the endangered plans run by airlines and other large companies.

However, retirement analysts found IBM's enhancements to its 401(k) more notable, saying the company is transplanting some virtues of traditional pensions that generally have been absent from newer kinds of plans.

Please see **Pension, D2**

Best Buy, Circuit City cash in on holidays

Both retailers report jump in December sales

By Joshua Freed
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS: Retailers who wondered where their customers went during a so-so holiday season might have tried looking in the TV aisles at Best Buy and Circuit City.

The nation's two largest consumer electronics retailers both reported strong holiday revenue on Friday, driven by surging

BUSH LAUDS ECONOMY

President says U.S. economy has "a full head of steam." **D8**

sales of high-end televisions and larger average purchases.

December sales jumped 5.8 percent at Best Buy Co. Inc. stores open at least 14 months. The increase was 10.8 percent at Circuit City Stores open at least a year, a key industry barometer of a retailer's health.

Please see **Retailers, D2**

BOTTOMLINE

FirstEnergy names CIO

FirstEnergy Corp. has named Bennett L. Gaines vice president and chief information officer.

Before joining FirstEnergy, Gaines was vice president and chief information officer at Cincinnati-based Cinergy Corp.

He will succeed C. John

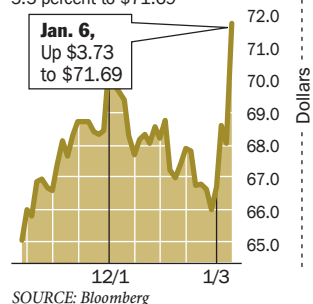
Daugherty, who has been interim vice president and CIO since September. He will retire after a transition period.

At Cinergy, Gaines was responsible for the delivery of all information technology, including the development of a corporate IT strategy and governance process, as well as telecommunications operations.

Northeast Ohio stocks

Featured winner

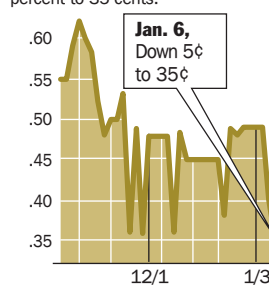
Parker Hannifin Corp.
Shares in the Cleveland maker of motion control products rose 5.5 percent to \$71.69



SOURCE: Bloomberg

Featured loser

National Auto Credit Inc.
Shares in the New York-based communications firm fell 12.5 percent to 35 cents.



Unsuitable cell phone plans can be changed

Like it or not, cell phones come with a commitment - the "plan" - which locks customers into features and minutes for a full year.

If you have received a phone as a gift with an accompanying plan that doesn't suit you, don't despair. You can make changes, but you must act fast to avoid paying penalties.

A basic plan for phone

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

service, voice mail and 100 minutes a month can cost as little as \$40 a month.

Most phone companies allow you a two-week grace period to test your phone and plan. If you wanted, say, a phone with a camera, or if the plan doesn't have enough

minutes for your needs, you can return the phone or cancel the plan with no questions asked or fees incurred. After the grace period, however, cancellation fees can soar well over \$100.

If you want to add features like text messaging or e-mail, or increase the number of minutes, you often must sign a new 12-month contract.