

Summer constellations convey thoughts of pro wrestling ring

As a kid in the early 1950s I loved watching Houston's Friday Night Wrestling on television - until I discovered it was faked.

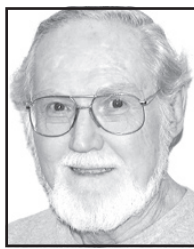
Since that betrayal, I've never watched wrestling since, but that youthful experience gave me the inspiration for an area of the night sky I have named the Macho Quadrangle. Prominent in the early evening from June through September, this region has all the ingredients for a really hokey television wrestling match.

Four first-magnitude stars - Arcturus, Vega, Altair and Antares - represent the four corner posts of the ring. Entering from the northwest, between Vega and Arcturus is the well-known defending champion Hercules the Strong Man. He's large, but having no really prominent stars, he's not real bright. We know he's the champ because beside him is his crown, Corona Borealis the Northern Crown, and his personal trainer, Bootes the Herdsman.

Hercules' opponent is the lesser-known Ophiuchus the Serpent Bearer, not quite as large but slightly brighter. As the challenger he employs some dramatics intended to intimidate the champion - he has entered the ring from the southeast corner, between Antares and Altair, holding Serpens the Serpent in hands.

If you have ever watched wrestling - and you don't have to confess if you have - you know the announcers always state combatants' weights, so we have Libra the Scales just outside the ropes between Arcturus and Antares. (Have you ever wondered why they don't also announce things like IQs or cholesterol levels?)

The winner of championship matches



Paul Derrick
● Stargazer

gets to wear a championship belt, the huge buckle of which looks more like a belly-protecting shield, and just outside the ring between Antares and Altair is Scutum the Shield waiting to be presented to the winner of the cosmic clash in the Macho Quadrangle.

Night Sky Events

Held at arm's length, the width of your fist is 10° and the width of your index finger is 1°. The width of a full Moon is 1/2°.

1 Sunday morning: Venus is 5 degrees below Jupiter low in the east just before dawn.

2 Monday early evening: The Beehive star cluster is 2 degrees to the upper right of Mercury low in the west at dusk; binoculars will help seeing the faint moon-sized cluster.

3 Tuesday: The full Moon is called the Hay Moon and Thunder Moon.

9 Monday morning: This morning offers a dramatic gathering as Venus, passing within the V of the Hyades star cluster, is less than two moon-widths to the upper left of the reddish star Aldebaran with Jupiter 5 degrees above them and the Pleiades star cluster another 8 degrees up - all low in the east just before dawn; all are naked-eye objects, but binoculars will enhance the view.

10 Tuesday morning: The Moon is at

third quarter, and morning star Venus is at its brightest at magnitude -4.5.

14 Saturday morning: The waning crescent Moon is 4 degrees to the lower right of the Pleiades star cluster with bright Jupiter, brilliant Venus and the star Aldebaran below them low in the east.

15 Sunday morning: The crescent Moon is between the two planets.

19 Thursday: The Moon is new, passing between the Earth and Sun.

24 Tuesday early evening: The waxing crescent Moon is 6 degrees to the lower left of Mars with the Saturn and the star Spica further to the upper left, all low in the west.

25 Wednesday early evening: By tonight the Moon is 6 degrees to the left of Spica with Saturn 9 degrees to the upper right and Mars well to their lower right.

26 Thursday evening: The Moon is at first quarter.

30 Monday morning: Jupiter passes within 5 degrees to the upper left of the star Aldebaran with Venus well to their lower left low in the east.

The early evenings of latter July find the center of our Milky Way galaxy some 30 degrees (three fist-widths held at arm's length) above the southern horizon, as high as it ever gets in our sky.

Naked-eye Planets

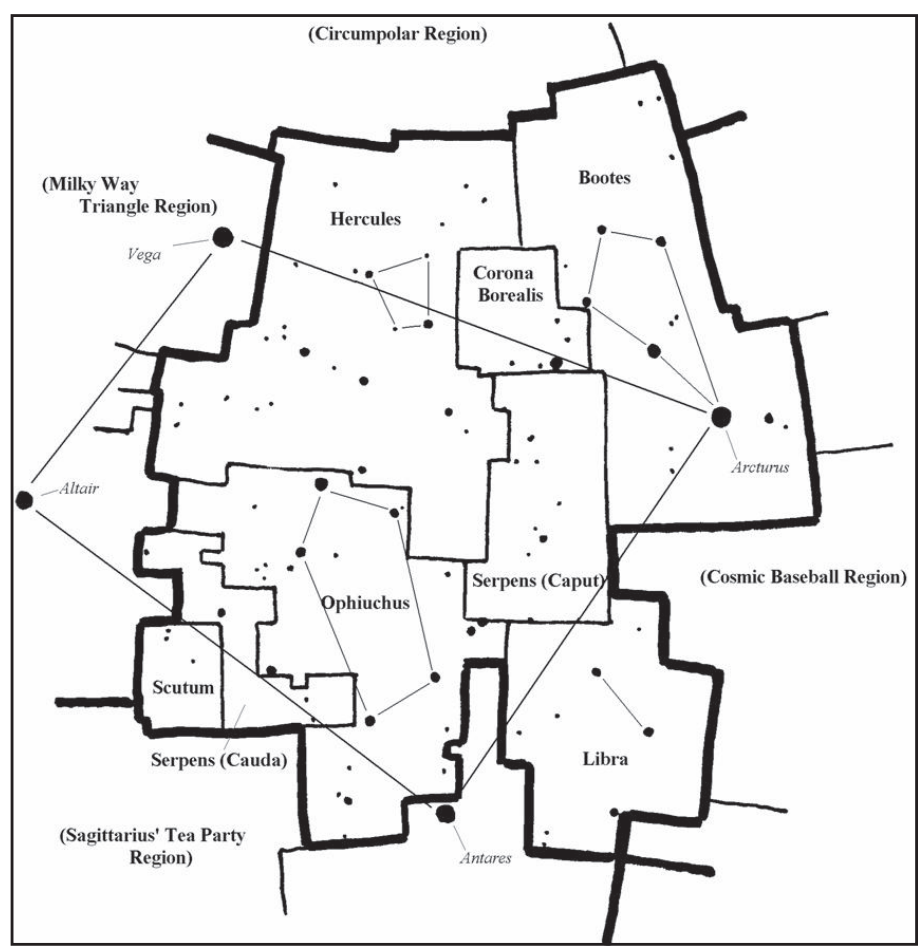
The Sun, Moon and planets rise in the east and set in the west due to Earth's west-to-east rotation on its axis.

Evenings: Mercury (early in the month), Mars, Saturn.

Morning: Venus, Jupiter.

• Mercury starts the month low in the west at dusk and begins sinking into the setting Sun by mid-month.

• Venus, becoming the dominant



Facing south, the Macho Quadrangle Region is prominent in the early evenings from June through September.

"morning star" low in the east, is keeping company with Jupiter.

• Mars, in the west southwest in the early evening, sets around midnight.

• Jupiter, well up in the east in the morning, is above the even brighter Venus; the king and queen of the planets are slowly separating each morning.

• Saturn, in the southwest in the evening, sets well after midnight.

Midyear Milestones

The midpoint of the year 2012 occurs at 1 a.m. Monday.

Wednesday Earth is at aphelion, its farthest point from the Sun in its ellipti-

cal orbit. With an average distance of 93 million miles, the July distance is about 3 percent greater than when nearest the Sun at perihelion in early January. This variation has little effect on Earth's atmospheric temperature and has nothing to do with Earth's seasons.

Paul Derrick is an amateur astronomer who lives in Waco, Texas. His website (www.stargazerpaul.com) contains an archive of past columns. Contact him at paulderrickwaco@aol.com or (254) 723-6346 or write 918 N. 30th St., Waco, Texas, 76707.

Calf deaths attributed to weeds

A rancher and a veterinarian in western Kansas recently called in the Production Animal Field Investigation Unit at Kansas State University to help solve the mystery surrounding deaths of calves on a drought-stricken ranch.

Gregg Hanzlicek, director of the unit and a veterinarian in the diagnostic laboratory, said the veterinarian had eliminated all contagious diseases as the cause of the deaths.

"We knew this area had been through two to three years of drought," Hanzlicek said. "We found a well-managed herd, with

the calves getting plenty of milk. But we did notice very little grass for the animals to graze on."

The calves were grazing on multiple weeds, which were collected and sent for analysis.

"The weeds were all nontoxic, except for one, a Senecio species that causes acute to chronic liver toxicity, which was identified by toxicologist, Dr. Deon van der Merwe," he said. Pathology reports showed that the calves died from liver toxicity.

In a drought where there is no grass, animals will graze species of plants they don't normally eat.

He advised moving the cattle off of the pasture and weaning the calves early.

"In a drought situation, producers usually don't have this alternative. Supplement some type of feed every other day or so, enough to keep them full so they don't eat other plants they don't normally consume," he advised.

In this case, the producer is providing sorghum-sudan as an alternative feed source.

Hanzlicek advised calling in a local veterinarian to investigate any unknown cause of calf deaths.

On the Beat

COLBY POLICE Sunday

12:22 a.m. - Two-vehicle accident.

12:39 a.m. - Driving under the influence report filed for above accident.

11:13 a.m. - Caller reported dog locked in pickup cab for a while. Checked on animal.

12:32 p.m. - Provided information about trespassing.

12:39 p.m. - Provided information about possible scam.

1:50 p.m. - Welfare check: provided information about child custody.

8:13 p.m. - Provided ride for

possible drunk pedestrian to his residence.

11:13 p.m. - Driving under the influence report filed for traffic stop.

THOMAS COUNTY SHERIFF Sunday

2:07 a.m. - Booked Lawrence D. Hapke II.

2:16 a.m. - Released Hapke.

3:39 a.m. - Rawlins County Sheriff's Office called to advise of a ditch fire at mile 202 K-25. Turned over to fire department.

4:10 p.m. - Caller reported theft of items. Information provided.

4:23 p.m. - Caller reported poss-

sible baby carrier in roadway at eastbound I-70 mile 62. Removed from roadway.

4:50 p.m. - Caller reported man walking eastbound at I-70 mile 69. Not found.

5:40 p.m. - 911 caller reported grain truck ran two cars off roadway and was speeding southbound at K-25 mile 201. Unable to locate.

7:43 p.m. - Stalled vehicle on E. U.S. 24. Had help coming.

11:24 p.m. - Helped Colby Police unit with traffic stop at Plum and Franklin.

11:33 p.m. - Booked Christopher A. Hurd.

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