NYT-0901: TRAVEL
Driving Russia's Revived Golden Ring ... By CELESTINE BOHLEN
Medieval churches, hot springs and clouds of butterflies. All part of a magical, if harrowing, road trip through a circuit of ancient towns near Mosco w.
===== notyet
WE knew that driving a rental car in Russia wouldn ’t be easy even before we arrived at the poorly ma rked Europcar counter at Moscow’s Sheremetyevo Int ernational Airport where they deal, on average, wi th only 14 customers a week. There, it took a nice young man 40 minutes to check our reservation, ma ke photocopies of our documents and test two G.P.S . systems. The first was broken; the second, which he deemed O.K., stopped working even as we pulled out of the parking garage.

Then we ran smack into the real problem: Russian r oads, made worse by Russian drivers. On that first afternoon, heading away from Moscow we got a tast e of both. Clogged intersections; clusters of poth oles or “hens’ nests,” as Claire de Laboulaye, my French traveling companion, called them; giant tru cks on narrow roads; big-bellied Russian traffic-p olice officers trolling for offenders, bringing th e flow of traffic to a crawl.

A road trip around Russia’s Golden Ring — a circui t of about 10 ancient towns northeast of Moscow, e ach with its own set of glittering onion-domed chu rches and medieval fortresses — was going to be a challenge, even for us. Both Claire and I were wel l prepared by our years of Russian travel, which f or each of us began in childhood, and picked up ag ain in the 1980s, under the auspices of the Soviet -era Intourist travel agency, with its K.G.B.-trai ned guides, grim hotels and empty restaurants serv ing awful food.

Those days, happily, are gone. In the last 20 year

s another, more accommodating Russia has emerged, beyond the slick tourist hubs of Moscow and St. Petersburg. In the Golden Ring towns — several of them, anyway — this means decent, occasionally even charming hotels, functional phones and Wi-Fi, better restaurants and innumerable churches and monasteries lovingly rescued from Soviet-era neglect.

All of this was enough to lure us into a rented Nissan Tiida for six days of adventure, without a functioning G.P.S., just a Lonely Planet guidebook and a Russian atlas, which, maddeningly, displayed our route over several pages, sometimes with bits missing.

Even in Soviet times, the Golden Ring was a draw for tourists, starting with the magnificent walled monastery in Sergiyev Posad, about 43 miles from Moscow, dominated by bright blue and gold cupolas. From there, the other towns are spaced out about a half day’s drive from each other, as the ring stretches up toward the Volga River.

Some stops — Yaroslavl, Kostroma and Vladimir — are proper (if small) cities, with populations from 300,000 to 650,000. We decided to make only fleeting stops in these and to concentrate on smaller towns — Pereslavl-Zalessky, Rostov Veliky, Plyos and Suzdal — all of which have kept something of their pre-Soviet character. With the exception of Plyos, a pleasant provincial river town, all are steeped in Russian history, linked to towering figures like Alexander Nevsky, Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great and Nicholas II, the last czar.

It’s a region known for its bewildering number of churches, convents and monasteries. After St. Sergius founded his monastery at Sergiyev Posad around 1340, other hermit monks followed his example and headed north, seeking salvation in nature, building an astonishing 150 monasteries in just 100 years. Backed by the power of the Moscovite princes, t

his extraordinary missionary movement was to become a key force in the unification of Russia.

This legacy was destroyed or abandoned during Soviet rule, but in the last 20 years that devastation has been reversed as the Russian Orthodox Church and individual believers undertake a countrywide restoration. Only once on our whole trip did we see what was once a common sight — a church in ruins, with trees growing out of the belfry.

All of this lay ahead of us as we set off from the airport on a summer afternoon, driving through the dust and smog of exurban Moscow.

After a night spent at a private dacha, not far from the glories of Sergiyev Posad, we headed north. That was when we made our first mistake. We assumed a two-way road would put us on the highway to Yaroslavl. Wrong. It suddenly, inexplicably became one-way, sending us straight toward the highway exit. Luckily, there was no oncoming traffic.

“Road Signs in Russia: Change and Continuity in the Modern Era” could be the subject of a graduate thesis, but for us it became a source of both entertainment and despair. Mostly, there were no signs, or they were confusing or of little use, sometimes coming after the turnoff, as if to reassure drivers that they’d made the right guess. On that first stretch of the Yaroslavl highway, just when we wanted to know how far we were from Pereslavl-Zalessky, our first stop, we spotted a sign for, of all places, Arkhangelsk, near the Arctic Circle, 1,125 kilometers (about 700 miles) away.

PERESLAVL-ZALESSKY, a hilly town of 42,000 people whose main road sweeps past a half-dozen monasteries, has a grand past that dates from the 12th century, when it was established by Prince Yuri Dolgoruky, best known as the founder of Moscow.

It is a pretty town, intersected by a tree-lined river where fishermen stake out their favorite spots. Some of the 19th-century two-story town houses have been restored, with coats of pink, green and yellow paint. If you avert your gaze from an ugly new shopping center, you can imagine a scene from a novel about provincial prerevolutionary Russia.

Virtually all of the Orthodox Christian monasteries in Pereslavl are in various states of renovation. One, the Goritsky, which looks like something from a Russian fairy tale, is the home of the local museum, which was closed. We stopped at two others, which are once again functioning as convents. At the 14th-century Fyodorovsky Monastery, we followed a group of black-clad nuns, one on her cellphone, walking briskly toward the main church. There, after donning aprons made available for female visitors wearing pants (we brought along our own head scarves, an essential item in Russia), we had our first encounter with a familiar Russian facial expression: the scowl that melts into a smile.

We had approached the nun behind the candle counter and asked for the name of the church. “And you,” she snarled, “who are you?” We explained that we were tourists interested in the wonderful restoration, and her face instantly lighted up. Suddenly Sister Natalya was eager to tell stories about the miracles wrought by the church’s breathing icon — a Byzantine-style portrait of the Virgin Mary, whose face peers from behind a fine wrought silver oklad, the classic protective covering put on Russian icons. (Actually, it was a copy, she confided to us, with the sincerity of someone who truly believed what she was about to tell us: The original had been painted during the Virgin’s lifetime by St. Luke, and was stolen in the 1980s.)

This kind of encounter happened again and again. Russians like to tell stories; whether they are true or not is unimportant.

At our next stop, the St. Nikolski convent, a nun told us of the businessman who survived a terrible car accident while clutching an icon and decided on the spot to rebuild her convent, which happened to be nearby. We agreed that her story must be true, since the grounds, with a little pond, were carefully tended, giving it an almost suburban feel — in keeping with the tastes of Russian oligarchs.

After two monasteries, a couple of churches and a peek over Pereslavl's earthen ramparts, we decided to stop for a quick bite. Russia has now come up with its own fast-food outlets, including national chains that offer well-prepared Russian dishes. In Pereslavl, near the main square, we found a local version where we ordered soups — Claire had a classic beet soup; I had a solyanka, a soup prepared with cured meats, lemons, pickles, capers and vegetables — followed by piroshki, or buns with meat or cabbage fillings.

Then we headed off to Rostov Veliky, justly famous for its gorgeous skyline of many-colored cupolas rising above Lake Nero. The Rostov Kremlin, with its white stone walls and covered walkway from which you can look out across the lake, or inward to a pretty garden with a pond, has been restored, in particular its three chapels with orange-tinted frescoes. One, covering an entire wall, is devoted to the Last Judgment and details specific punishments — slanderers, for instance, get hung by their tongues.

In some ways, Rostov, a quiet town with its tidy pedestrian street, has it all when it comes to the sights and sounds of ancient Russia. One of Russia's oldest churches, the Cathedral of the Dormition, is here, hard by a bell tower with 15 bells, weighing from 50 to 70,000 pounds and famed for their deep sonorous peals.

But even here, in one of the crown jewels of Russian tourism, the roads are riddled with potholes. Claire’s slalom-driving skills were sorely tested as she drove into town, and we asked at our hotel, the Boyarsky Dvor — one of several spare but functional hotels in the town center — if there wasn’t a better way to leave. The receptionist shook her head sadly. “There is, but it’s worse,” she said.

On our way to Yaroslavl the next day, we made an impromptu detour to the starkly impressive Borisoglebsky monastery. Getting there was not easy: we had to make a U-turn on the highway, only to be halted at a rail crossing. There we sat for a half-hour, in a line of cars that soon spilled over onto the highway, watching the trains go by, loaded with oil and lumber. It was like watching a documentary on the Russian economy, which was to have sequels all along our route, as we passed makeshift markets where people sold goods ranging from stuffed animals to mushrooms.

We finally made it to the monastery, built in the 16th century, with its massive walls and towers. The grounds inside were unkempt, full of lilac bushes in full bloom, and quiet, except for the sound of a single bell ringing at midday. Soon we ran into Brother Longuine, a red-haired monk in his late 20s, originally from Moscow, who had drifted to this place after what he hinted was a troubled youth.

At first, he was dubious about our right to visit the main church, pressing us on our religious affiliations. “Orthodox?” he asked with a piercing glance. I mumbled something about there being one God for all of us, which seemed to satisfy him.

He ran off to get a key, his black robe swishing through the uncut grass. The key looked medieval, but it opened the door, and we stepped into a high-ceilinged cathedral littered with birch branches, traditional for the celebration of the Holy Trinit

y. The only light came from the open door, and we got a dim glimpse of a magnificent carved wooden iconostasis (a traditional part of a Russian church, decorated with icons). Apparently, it had been “borrowed” from a nearby church destroyed in the Soviet era. That was when the monastery’s original iconostasis was destroyed, its cathedral, like so many others in Russia, turned into a warehouse.

We stopped in Yaroslavl where we spent the night at the Volga Pearl, a converted riverboat station. We had been looking forward to our stay there, and had agreed to take an expensive room, lured by the offer of a view on the river, and a two-room suite. It was, however, disappointing: the view was of the restaurant on the river, and the second bed was a pullout sofa.

We consoled ourselves in the morning with a visit to the Church of Elijah the Prophet, which has splendid wall-to-ceiling frescoes, before setting off for Plyos, 86 miles down the Volga, on the other side of the river.

It was on this drive that we contended with the hair-raising passing techniques of Russian drivers, even as we began to savor the magic of the Russian countryside. At one point, driving through a forest, we were nearly engulfed by waves of tiny white butterflies, which for a moment we thought were snowflakes. When the countryside opened up again, we found ourselves driving past uncultivated fields, thick with wild purple lupines and crisscrossed with undulating creeks.

In this region the izbas, or cottages, are brightly painted in turquoise, blue, green, yellow, even pink, their windows decorated with intricately carved frames. Typically, villagers set up stands outside their gates, selling vegetables, lilacs and peonies.

We got to Plyos by evening, in time to have dinner at a cafe on the Volga, where we watched the late evening sun sink over the river. This old trading town has recently undergone a full-scale renovation, promoted by a businessman who is at once the town's mayor and its chief investor. The main hotel — Fortecia Rus, a functional modern establishment — belongs to him, as do a series of nicely renovated houses that are available, at Western prices, for long- and short-term rentals.

The town's most appealing inn does not belong to the local mingarch (a lesser version of an oligarch) but to a French-Russian couple, who have created a pricey version of a French maison d'hotes, called Chastni Visit (Private Visit), which is poised on a hillside, with a commanding view of the river, terraces with separate dining rooms and a zoo with small animals.

Over the last 12 years, this tiny full-pension hotel has acquired a loyal clientele among Moscovites, mostly Russian but also a few foreigners. It specializes in Russian cooking with a French twist. The food gets high marks: according to one story, a client once sent his car from Moscow — about 186 miles away — to pick up a batch of 600 of its meat-filled piroshki for a birthday party.

Andre Magnenan, the French half of the couple, explained the family's decision to open a hotel in Plyos. "We bought the view," he told us over platefuls of pastries, accompanied by tea, when we dropped by late that evening. "People come as clients, and leave as members of the family," he said.

IN Suzdal, our last stop, the tourism industry is operating at full tilt. Where there were once only horse-drawn carriages, there are now also bright pink buggies, shaped like pumpkins and pulled by ponies. The trading arcade (a row of businesses sheltered by an arcade), a standard feature of old Ru

ssian towns, is full of restaurants, crowded with tourists in the high season, both Russian and foreign.

Suzdal became a monastic center during the reign of Ivan the Terrible and has maintained its Old World look and feel. We opted for a visit to the Museum of Wooden Architecture and Peasant Life, which has examples of Russia's famous multitiered wooden churches, brought from isolated villages. The ensemble also includes a wooden house of a kulak, the name for rich Russian peasants who were savagely repressed during the Stalinist era, and, in a new addition, the town house of a kupets, the name for middle-class merchants also cut down by the Russian Revolution.

It was our last night on the road, and we decided to treat ourselves to a sauna and swim at Goryachi Klyuchi (Hot Springs), a hotel complex on the outskirts of Suzdal. For the reasonable sum of 1,300 rubles (about $42, at 31 rubles to the dollar) an hour, we were able to rent a small wooden banya (bathhouse), perched on the banks of a branch of the local river, and indulged in the full Russian banya experience — the sweating in the dry heat, the beating of arms and back with birch branches, the dunking in a tub full of ice-cold water before starting again — topped with a swim in the river, and servings of vodka, black bread and pickled vegetables.

The next day, when we finally dropped the car off in Moscow, at a Europcar agency hidden away on a back street in a bank building, we checked our speedometer: as it turned out, we had gone more than 800 miles, well beyond Arkhangelsk.

IF YOU GO

Car rentals are available at Sheremetyevo International Airport in Moscow, and also at Domodedovo, the city's other international airport. For seven d

ays, our Europcar rental (europcar.com), with unli mited mileage, cost 14,600 rubles, or about $474.

For individual tours to towns on the Golden Ring, you can try Tsar Voyages (contact@tsarvoyages.com) , a French-Russian tour agency with English-speaki ng guides.

WHERE TO STAY

In Rostov Veliky, Boyarsky Dvor (4 Kamenny Most; 7 -485-36-60446; reinkap-hotel.ru), a renovated two- story 19th-century town house, is convenient and c omfortable, with breakfast included, for a reasona ble price of 1,900 rubles a night for a double roo m.

In Plyos, an overnight at Chastni Visit (7 Ulitsa Gornaya Sloboda; 7-499-500-3808; pless.ru), with f ull pension, is an expensive 9,000 rubles for two in summer, 7,500 in the low season. The view, the food and the company make the price worth it.

The main hotel in Plyos, Fortecia Rus (90 Ulitsa L enina; 7-493-394-3781; plios.ru, for information a bout this hotel, cottages and private apartments f or rent), has rooms for 5,200 rubles in low season , which can be in the main building or in wooden c abins next door.

In Suzdal, a double room at Goryachi Klyuchi, the Hot Springs complex (14 Ulitsa Korovniki; 7-49231- 24-000; suzdalkluchi.ru) outside of town, comes to a reasonable 3,000 rubles in high season.

In Yaroslavl, the Volga Pearl hotel (Vozhskaya Nab erezhnaya; 7-4852-73-12-73; river-hotelvp.ru) is a converted riverboat station, poised right on the banks of the Volga. The price of a luxury suite (a ll that was available) was 7,500 rubles, too much to pay for a view onto the roof of a restaurant, a nd two tiny rooms, but the evocative location made

up for these deficiencies.

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

In Rostov Veliky, the restaurant Russkoye Podvorye (9 Ulitsa Marshala Alexeyeva; 7-48536-6-42-55; russkoe-podvorie.ru) was a good choice with an exhaustive menu, presented in leather covers. The specialties are Russian, including good soups and main dishes cooked in earthenware pots. The price for two with the local medovukha, a slightly alcoholic drink made from honey, was 1,200 rubles.

Mostly, we avoided the main tourist restaurants because we were looking for lighter fare. Pelmeni (Russian dumplings); piroshki (buns with meat or cabbage fillings); chebureki (fried pastries with meat fillings); blinis, with red caviar and smetana (sour cream); and fresh salads (avoid those with mayonnaise) are available at small restaurants, or Russian chain restaurants, like Yolki-Palki or Teremok, which specializes in blinis.

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NYT-0902: MAGAZINE
The Amputee QB ... By KEITH O'BRIEN
Can a one-legged quarterback stay in the game?
===== notyet (4 pages)
The call in the huddle, just moments before the injury, was Stanford Left Heavy Q7 Power, with two tight ends, two fullbacks and Jacob Rainey in the shotgun. His job was to take the snap, follow the right guard pulling to the left, find a hole in the defensive line and go. A quarterback running play drawn up just for Rainey.
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Coming into the scrimmage that day, Sept. 3 last year in Flint Hill, Va., Rainey had reason to feel good about things. The previous season, as a newcomer repeating his sophomore year at Woodberry Forest School, a boarding school for boys about 30 miles northeast of Charlottesville, Rainey split time at quarterback with another player. Now, as a 17-year-old entering his junior year, Rainey was hoping to have his best season yet. Just weeks before, he ran a 40-yard dash in 4.6 seconds — remarkable speed, given his 6-foot-3, 225-pound frame. College football coaches were taking notice. His teammates were, too. Earlier in the year, a pass from Rainey ripped open a glove worn by one of his receivers, Greg McIntosh. “He had a lot of power,” McIntosh told me. “But he also had touch — and that was kind of hard to find for a quarterback.”

In the Flint Hill scrimmage, Rainey was proving that once more. Following a 40-yard pass play to McIntosh, Rainey’s teammate and friend Carlson Miliken said he felt as if he were watching “the Jacob show” all over again. Then the coaches called that running play.

Rainey went left and cut back to his right. A tackler dived and grabbed his legs. Rainey tried to shed him, fighting for more yardage, and then he went blank. “I feel like I blacked out for a second,” he told me. “I just heard a pop, and the next thing I knew I was on the ground.”

Jeff Johnson, Woodberry’s athletic trainer, knew it was bad even before he laid eyes on Rainey. “The screams were just overwhelming,” Johnson told me, recalling the moment months later. “I still hear them.”

Rushing to Rainey’s side, Johnson quickly realized that the injury was unlike any he’d seen. Rainey’s lower right leg was dislocated at the knee and c

ocked at an impossible angle — “an obvious deformi ty,” in Johnson’s words.

He asked the quarterback not to look at it. Rainey didn’t listen. He asked him to take deep breaths. Rainey was inconsolable. “My season,” he kept say ing. “My season.”

Teammates began to cry. At least one felt ill. Joh nson stayed at Rainey’s side. Knee dislocations ar e associated with severed arteries and blood loss, potentially life-threatening injuries, which the Raineys would soon learn. The poplit-eal artery in Jacob’s leg had been ruptured, cutting off circul ation to his lower limb.

The Raineys, who have consulted a lawyer, declined to discuss the details of what happened at two di fferent hospitals in the hours following the injur y. What’s known is that with this kind of trauma, tissue, deprived of blood carrying oxygen and nutr ients, begins to die rapidly. Dead tissue can lead to infection and even death. Despite multiple ope rations, Rainey’s lower right leg could not be sav ed. Doctors amputated it a week later above the kn ee joint. Rainey’s entire right femur remained, bu t that didn’t leave him much hope of playing quart erback again. As Rainey’s friend and teammate C. J . Prosise puts it: “There was no doubt in my mind that he was done.”

Certainly that was the assessment of medical exper ts. Even with the latest, modern prostheses — whic h can enable an amputee to compete in the Olympics , as the runner Oscar Pistorius did this summer — hardly any amputees have played quarterback compet itively. In part that’s because no prosthetic knee has both the agility and durability the position demands. In football, a player needs to be able to cut, turn, dive and then be able to endure hits f rom 250-pound defenders running at full speed. Pro sthetic legs simply aren’t designed to handle all

that.

So while people question whether Pistorius's carbon-fiber legs give him an unfair advantage, representing the first step into a future of bionic athletes, that debate is not happening in football. On a prosthetic leg, especially one that begins above the knee, a football player is expected to be limited. Which is why the experts suggested, months ago, that Rainey try channeling his competitive energies into something else: the Paralympics.

The quarterback wasn't interested. "I'd rather play football," Rainey said, and then surrounded himself with believers to work against time, his own body and the limitations of prosthetic science. "It's just my mentality," he says. "When people tell me I can't do something, the stubbornness I have just pushes me forward."

His parents, Lee and Kathy, worry that Rainey, the third-oldest of their five children, hasn't taken time to grieve over his loss. But they admit there's been little time for that. Woodberry opens its football season on Friday, and Rainey expects to be more than just an inspiration on the sideline. The high-school senior, now 18, wants to play quarterback and prove his doubters wrong, drawing on lessons he learned before his horrific injury. Rainey always prided himself on knowing how to beat a defense, how to find that gap, hit that seam, make something out of nothing.

The condolence letters poured in from all over. Handwritten notes from an entire eighth-grade class in Davie, Fla. "It may not mean much," one boy wrote, "but you will be in my prayers always." Personalized letters from college-football coaches. "Stay strong, Jacob," Nick Saban, the University of Alabama football coach, wrote. Well wishes from N.F.L. stars like the quarterback Tim Tebow, the linebacker Clay Matthews and the Houston Texans' head c

oach, Gary Kubiak. “Please accept my heartfelt thoughts and prayers for you and your loved ones,” Kubiak wrote, “during this difficult period of your life.”

People struggled at times to find the right words to comfort Rainey. Even now, friends have trouble explaining what happened. Some find themselves calling it an accident, as if the word “injury” isn’t big enough. The fact that a leg was amputated seems almost an impossibility — and, statistically speaking, it practically is.

Dawn Comstock might know more about high-school sports injuries than anybody else. A researcher at the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, Comstock publishes the nation’s foremost annual report on injuries to American high-school athletes. She tracks them all: concussions, sprains, fractures and very rarely something worse.

Since 2000, at least two other football players have suffered in-game injuries that led to leg amputations not unlike Rainey’s. But limb loss hardly registers among football mishaps. In the last decade, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, which monitors football injuries in a representative sample of American hospitals, has recorded just eight amputations at any level of the sport — seven of fingers, one of a thumb — which is too few to calculate a national estimate.

By comparison, over the same time frame, the C.P.S.C. estimates that there have been roughly one million football-related fractures. Even paralysis appears to be more common. In the last decade, the Annual Survey of Catastrophic Football Injuries, published by Frederick O. Mueller at the University of North Carolina, has documented 94 cervical-cord injuries with paralysis — more than 10 times the number of reported amputations. “Amputations in fo

otball are incredibly rare," Comstock told me. "And a leg amputation? I can't even tell you how rare it is, to be honest with you. . . . We just don't see it happen."

Last fall, Rainey knew better than anyone just how unusual his case was. Laid up for months, he had plenty of time, perhaps too much, to think. Insomnia only made matters worse. At night, while his family slept, Rainey killed time by surfing the Internet and watching television. Sometimes he read stories about himself and even relived his injury. "I got the scrimmage film in the fall, and I watched that a lot," he told me. "I don't know why I did, but I couldn't stop watching it."

For a while, Rainey, like others, believed it would be his final football play; among other problems was the fact that he dropped 60 pounds after his injury. But well before he received his prosthetic leg in late December, he was considering a comeback. His parents supported him; failure, they told him, was not trying at all. Before winter was over, he was becoming impatient with his physical therapists and the slow pace of his recovery. "We weren't really doing anything," he said, "but just walking in circles."

David Lawrence works as a physical therapist, in a low-slung, redbrick office complex in Richmond, about a 90-minute drive from the Raineys' house in Charlottesville. He's 50 and beginning to gray around the temples but exudes youthful enthusiasm. He's seen enough to expect the impossible — or at least to encourage it — from patients who are missing limbs.

Lawrence once coached the national disabled volleyball team. He still works with one of the players: Joe Sullivan, a below-the-knee amputee who became a prosthetist and shares office space with Lawrence. In late March, they met together with Rainey f

or the first time.

At that point, Rainey wasn’t even close to running. The previous month, he was forced back onto crutches by pain in his residual leg. “He was at a 70-year-old-amputee point,” Lawrence says. “He could walk. He could put weight on his leg. But he was basically carrying the leg around.”

Rainey was using his prothesis like a stilt, Lawrence explains, balancing on it, but not walking in concert with the device, not controlling it. If Rainey wanted to play football, he had to trust the leg beneath him. By the end of their first meeting, the Raineys could see that Lawrence and Sullivan understood what Jacob wanted to do, and believed they could help him do it. “They both started brainstorming right then,” Kathy Rainey says. “They were onboard from the beginning.”

Rainey’s dream is a legitimate one, at least from a rules standpoint. Since 1978, state athletic associations have had the authority to permit prostheses in sports. And many associations, including Woodberry’s, allow them. There is also a precedent for playing football — even quarterback. Jeremy Campbell, who was born without a right fibula and had his leg amputated as a young child, played several positions, including quarterback, during high school in Texas a few years ago.

Still, Campbell’s experience doesn’t offer an exact road map for Rainey, who is just a year removed from his amputation and still adjusting to his new reality, relearning everything, while also rushing to get back on the field. “It’s almost like our biggest enemy right now is time,” Lawrence says. “We almost don’t have enough time to pull it off.”

And then there are the limitations of the technology itself. Over the last two decades, prosthetic science has evolved rapidly, with microprocessors r

eplacing free-swinging knee hinges. For example, t he sensors in the Genium knee, sold by Ottobock fo r the first time last year, communicate with the l eg’s microprocessor roughly 100 times a second, pr oviding increased mobility.

But such prostheses are still lacking when it come s to athletes like Rainey. Todd Schaffhauser, a fo rmer Paralympic gold medalist sprinter and now the director of patient programs for International Pr osthetics on Long Island, told me that today’s mos t advanced prostheses are best at one thing: runni ng straight, not quarterbacking. “There really is nothing,” he says, “that’s available for that kind of mobility.”

This challenge has seemed to energize Lawrence, wh o began training Rainey last spring. By June, the quarterback was running outside. By early July, it was time to see what Rainey could do on the footb all field, while his parents, coach, two prostheti sts and Lawrence watched.

“We’ll start with our Zone Right,” said Woodberry’ s offensive coordinator, Ryan Alexander, easing Ra iney into the workout in the 100-degree heat by ha ving him execute some handoffs. Next Alexander cal led for Rainey to throw out of the shotgun. “Step and throw, O.K.?” Then he called for screen passes . “We’re going to have to be good at the screen to slow the rush down.” Finally, Alexander wanted to know if Rainey could roll out and throw on the mo ve. “He should be able to do it,” Lawrence informe d the coach. “He needs to try it.”

For several minutes, Rainey rolled to his right an d left, hurling passes down the field. His speed w as still lacking. But the throws, tight spirals, w ere almost always on target. Though he still had c oncerns, Alexander was impressed. Before the worko ut, the coach had been, at best, cautiously optimi stic that Rainey could play quarterback on a prost

hetic leg; by the end of the session, Alexander was beginning to see it.

The therapists assured Alexander that they could modify Rainey's prosthesis to make it faster. A few weeks after the workout, Rainey decided to go with a different prosthesis altogether, choosing the Moto Knee, an aluminum device originally designed for amputees to use on snowmobiles and Motocross bikes. With the Moto Knee, Rainey felt more stable. And when he trusted the prosthesis, planting it into the turf, stepping into the throw with his left leg and then rotating his hips as he released the ball, he showed flashes of his old talent.

"My God, he's a heckuva athlete," Don Payne, one of the prosthetists, marveled. "Did you see what happened when he planted that leg and turned those hips into the throw? That ball was out 30 yards — bam — on a laser. It shows you how strong he is."

Payne used to be a skeptic, doubting that playing quarterback again was a realistic dream for Rainey. Now he and others are coming around to the possibility that it might happen. In the time that some amputees take to learn to walk with proficiency, Rainey is both running and throwing, to the surprise of even his biggest advocates. "I don't know whom you credit that to — if you credit that to his work ethic or you think it's a miracle from God," says Carlson Milikin, Rainey's friend. "I think it's a combination of both, to be honest with you."

Still, the Raineys are well aware of the challenges that lie ahead. What happens if the pocket breaks down? What if Jacob needs to scramble? What if he's not ready? In late July, three weeks after his workout at Woodberry, Rainey was back at Lawrence's office in Richmond complaining anew about pain in his residual leg — "a sharp, tingly pain," he called it.

“Doggone,” Lawrence said, examining the angry red rash and irritated purple skin on Rainey’s leg. “Here’s our spot,” he added, pointing to an inflamed area. “That’s kind of our epicenter, the tip of the volcano.”

“That spot,” Rainey agreed. “And over here, too.”

Lawrence had no idea what was causing it — perhaps the new socket that Rainey had started wearing recently, perhaps all the running he had been doing that week, perhaps neither or both.

“Maybe my skin’s just not ready,” Rainey suggested.

“Yeah,” Lawrence said. “Or we’re bringing it on too fast or too hard.” But with football season looming, they had no alternative. As Lawrence put it on another occasion: “Right now, we have a very small window. If he’s ever going to be a quarterback . . . this is his chance.”

Rainey isn’t sure he’ll be able to play football in college, which increases the pressure he feels to play now. He relishes that, but he also worries about letting people down. And he still thinks about the play that changed his life.

“I shouldn’t have gotten tackled,” he says. “I might have missed the hole. I think it’s my fault. I don’t think it’s someone else’s. I think it’s me being stubborn. Not going down. Me not finding the right hole. Me not being fast enough, not strong enough.”?

In those condolence letters he received last fall, Rainey often heard the same message over and over. The injury, he was told, happened for a reason.

Rainey wasn’t so sure about that. “There might be,” he says, “there might not be.” To him, it sounds

like a cliche. But lately, he has been dreaming. He pictures himself taking the field with his team mates on Friday night. He imagines throwing not ju st a pass, but a touchdown. For now, Rainey seems willing to at least consider the possibility that things might go his way: “What if it all works out?”

Keith O’Brien wrote about McDonald’s for the magaz ine in May. His book on high-school basketball wil l be published in January.

Editor: Dean Robinson
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NYT-0916
Shocker Cools Into a 'Rite' of Passage ... By RICHA RD TARUSKIN
"The Rite of Spring," Igor Stravinsky's ballet tha t celebrates human sacrifice, is widely praised to day but was a flop when it was first produced, in Paris in 1913.
===== notyet (3 pages)
“THE RITE OF SPRING,” or “Le Sacre du Printemps,” Igor Stravinsky’s historic shocker, a ballet that shows and celebrates a remorseless human sacrifice , will be 100 years old next May. The bandwagon of centennial commemorations is getting an early sta rt on Thursday with the New York Philharmonic. But in stark contrast to its present-day lionization, it was a spectacular flop at its first showing, b y Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, at the Theatr e des Champs-Elysees in Paris.

It was Stravinsky’s third ballet for Diaghilev’s c ompany. The earlier ones, “Firebird” and “Petrouch ka,” were historic triumphs. What made the opening night of “The Rite” historic was the audience’s p henomenally bad behavior. “A real Paris scandal!” one Russian correspondent marveled. Stravinsky gam ely reported to his friends, “Things got as far as fighting.”
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But it was not Stravinsky’s music that did the shocking. It was the ugly earthbound lurching and stomping devised by Vaslav Nijinsky, the greatest dancer in the troupe but a novice choreographer, that offended the Paris public, for whom ballet was all about swans and tutus and elevation. Once the whistlers and hooters got going, nobody even heard the music. Most of the reviews paid no attention to Stravinsky beyond naming him as the composer before turning with gusto to the weird antics onstage and the weirder ones in the hall.

Being ignored is much more wounding than being jeered, and Stravinsky faced the possibility of a career-ending fiasco. Not even Diaghilev, the man who had discovered Stravinsky and made him famous, was offering any encouragement this time. Stravinsky wrote a friend that Diaghilev “gives me horrible news about how people who were full of enthusiasm and unwavering sympathy for my earlier works have turned against this one.” And: “I simply cannot write what they want from me — that is, repeat myself — repeat anyone else you like, only not yourself! — for that is how people write themselves out. But enough about ‘Le Sacre.’ It makes me miserable.”

That was Stravinsky’s mood until April 1914, when the score was rescued by a concert performance under Pierre Monteux, who had conducted the drowned-out premiere. This time he gave “that crazy Russian” (as he called Stravinsky after their first meeting) the night of his life. Audible at last in all its shattering glory, unencumbered by Nijinsky’s grating visuals, it earned Stravinsky what he called “a triumph such as composers rarely enjoy.”

After this vindication “The Rite” began to make its way, not as a shocker but as a modern classic. Diaghilev, back on board, revived the ballet as soon as he could after the Great War, in new choreography by Leonid Massine. His company was now a trou

pe of postrevolutionary emigres, and the new production soft-pedaled the national aspect of the nearly plotless scenario, just a series of fertility rituals and group dances and their grisly culmination.

Stravinsky claimed that his music was abstract and pure: “architectonic, not anecdotal,” as he put it to a French reporter. After the last performance by the original company, in London in June 1929, Diaghilev, with only a month to live, wrote ecstatically that a review in The Times of London “says that ‘Sacre’ will be for the 20th century what Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony was for the 19th!”

Diaghilev, spinning as usual, completely misrepresented the way that the anonymous reviewer for that newspaper, writing in the regal plural, reported a bit of overheard partisan scuttlebutt, quite likely planted by Diaghilev himself. “Le Sacre,” he wrote, “is ‘absolute’ ballet, and we are assured that it will come to be regarded as having a significance for the 20th century equal to that of Beethoven’s choral symphony in the 19th. Well, perhaps; meanwhile there was a rather thin attendance in stalls and boxes last night, but the lovers of true art in the gallery applauded to the echo.” Clearly the writer found the comparison absurd.

But, just as clearly, it was under his skin. By now it is commonplace. But what do the cruel “Rite” and the lofty Ninth have in common? Both have cast enormous shadows. “We live in the valley of the Ninth,” wrote Joseph Kerman, the musicologist and critic. “That we cannot help.”

For many the Ninth is a musical mountain that inspires a paralyzing awe. Robert Craft, Stravinsky’s assistant during the composer’s last decades, was more sanguine about “The Rite,” naming it “the prize bull that inseminated the whole modern movement.” Monumentality of scale the two scores certainly share, which is an extra tribute to “The Rite,” o

nly half the length of the Ninth. What it lacks in length it more than makes up in weight of sound.

But in other ways the two are opposites. Pablo Casals, the great cellist, was asked to comment on the comparison, attributed this time to Francis Poulenc, a zealous Stravinskian. “I completely disagree with my friend Poulenc,” Casals retorted. “To compare these two works is nothing short of blasphemy.”

Blasphemy: a violation of holiness. The Ninth has that aura. It voices the ideals for which Casals had become a symbol, as famous for his antifascism as for his cello playing. He too had an aura of sanctity, which made him allergic to “The Rite”: not exactly a herald of universal fellowship and certainly no “Ode to Joy.” You would never perform “The Rite” at an occasion like the breaching of the Berlin Wall, where Leonard Bernstein so memorably did the Ninth in 1989. But neither could you imagine performing “The Rite” before an assemblage of the Nazi elite on Hitler’s birthday, as you can still behold Wilhelm Furtwangler and the Berlin Philharmonic doing the Ninth in 1942 on YouTube.

The transferability of noble aspirations (for the Nazis certainly thought their cause was holy) has cast a countershadow over the Ninth. From many, now, the Ninth attracts derision the way a cartoon millionaire’s top hat attracts snowballs. Ned Rorem, the American composer, has made it a mission to spread contempt for it, insulting it in print (“the first piece of junk in the grand style”) and in public speech (“utter trash”).

And that may be the fairest standard of comparison between the Ninth and “The Rite.” They are the most strenuously resisted pieces in the repertory of what we used to call great music. Stravinsky’s own resistance to “The Rite” began when he called it architectonic, not anecdotal. What he was resisti

ng might at first seem only the parts of it for wh ich he was not responsible — Nijinsky’s scandalous choreography, Nicholas Roerich’s folkish sets and costumes — and which he may have blamed for the i nitial failure.

There has always been resistance to the troubling, antihumanitarian scenario. Stravinsky gave permis sion to detach the work from its subject when he w rote, in a late memoir, that seeing Diaghilev’s po st-Nijinsky revival, “I realized then that I prefe r ‘Le Sacre’ as a concert piece.” That is how the New York Philharmonic will celebrate it on Thursda y, as will the Los Angeles Philharmonic on Sept. 2 8. Stravinsky’s later claim that his first thought of “The Rite” took place not in his mind’s eye (i magining the sacrifice, as he originally said) but in his mind’s ear in the form of a musical theme was typical of a man who spent the second half of his life telling lies about the first half.

Even without jettisoning the subject in toto, the message of “The Rite” has been regularly muted in performance. The clumsiest attempt, surely, was th e first Soviet production, choreographed for the B olshoi Theater in Moscow by Natalia Kasatkina and Vladimir Vasiliev in 1965 in the aftermath of Stra vinsky’s 80th-birthday visit to his homeland in 19 62. But though he was newly persona grata, the imp licitly religious scenario remained a problem. The choreographers solved it by having a young Soviet hero leap out of the corps de ballet during the l ittle flute scale right before the end, sweep the sacrificial victim off her feet and out of danger, and (coinciding with the last crashing chord) plu nge a dagger into the idol before which she had be en dancing.

The Joffrey Ballet’s version of 1987 purported to reinstate Nijinsky’s harsh original. It will be re vived next March as part of a season-long celebrat ion by Carolina Performing Arts, which begins on S

ept. 30. But even it allowed a bit of sentimentali ty to seep into the concluding “Danse Sacrale,” wh en the victim tries repeatedly to break out of the circle of tribal elders who confine her. There co uld not have been such a concession to a banal sen se of the tragic in the original, or Jacques Rivie re, the French literary critic, couldn’t have writ ten that “not for an instant” does the victim “bet ray the personal terror that must fill her soul.”

“She is absorbed by a social function,” he continu ed, “and without giving the slightest sign of comp rehension or of interpretation, she acts according to the will and the convulsions of a being more v ast than she.” Her fate is shown not as horrible b ut as inevitable and, by the lights of her tribe, beneficent. That’s what’s horrible.

We don’t get, because we don’t want, this message from “The Rite” anymore. In the concert hall the p iece has become Olympic fun and games, a showcase of orchestral prowess. But it was not always so. T he earliest recordings, by Monteux and by Stravins ky, show it to have been almost unplayable at the time and literally unplayable when it came to main taining the marked tempos. They are sweaty and slo ppy, and in the “Danse Sacrale” they convey someth ing of the crushing force and tension that take th e victim’s life.

You can still hear that tension in Stravinsky’s 19 40 recording with the New York Philharmonic. The “ Danse Sacrale,” like the doomed dancer, totters mo re and more inelegantly as it nears the end. But i t wasn’t the orchestra’s fault. Nobody knew the pi ece very well then, and the seemingly random accen ts and erratic phrase lengths were a constant, dis ruptive, frightening shock. Nor was Stravinsky a s killed conductor. The combination of his uncertain beat and the orchestra’s need for guidance throug h the rhythmic thickets conspired to prevent a goo d performance, if by a good performance you mean a

fluent and rhythmically secure one.

That is not what Stravinsky originally intended. A recent study of “The Rite” by the musicologist Matthew McDonald argued plausibly that to evoke a genuine sense of primitive hysteria the composer used arbitrary formulas to assemble rhythmic patterns that would defeat anyone’s expectations, even his own, and prevent the music from ever becoming familiar or comfortably predictable. But now everybody knows “The Rite.” It is an audition piece that every music student practices, so that now any conservatory orchestra can give a fleet and spiffy performance of what used to stump their elders, and professional orchestras can play it in their sleep, and often do.

Stravinsky came to want it so. One of the strangest fruits of his postwar Neo-Classicism was his infatuation with the pianola, a mechanical instrument that never missed a note or a cue and never grew tired. It can maintain superhuman regularity of tempo and rhythm, and Stravinsky arranged all his music for the machine that so epitomized his new impersonal (or, in the language of the period, “dehumanized”) ideals. His piano roll arrangement of the “Danse Sacrale” turned the piece from a bringer of lethal fatigue into a paean to limitless stamina and celerity.

Ever since, that has been the ideal for “The Rite.” It became the goal of performers to match or even exceed the piano roll’s rendition, and when the first recordings to do so (by Benjamin Zander and Robert Craft) were issued in 1991, they were greeted as a breakthrough.

But what they actually accomplished was the ultimate resistance to “The Rite,” and in that sense its ultimate rejection. It is now our much-loved musical decathlon. But that seems a trivial status next to the dark masterpiece that haunted the early 2

0th century and reminded people of the Ninth.