

Hooked knives, handsaws blunted from heavy use and NO anesthetic or sterilization: Harvard Medical School founder's Revolutionary War amputation kits go up for auction

- A weird collection of Revolutionary War surgical instruments are up for sale
- The two surgical kits belong to Dr John Warren who performed amputations
- Dr Warren used a hooked knife to cut through skin before amputating the bone
- He would then use a surgical saw to cut off the remaining appendage
- Amputation kits were essential on the battlefield and in high demand
- But this procedure was dangerous and only 35 per cent of soldiers survived

By [JORDAN GASS-POORE FOR DAILYMAIL.COM](#)

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A pair of surgical amputation kits from the Revolutionary War are going under the hammer this month.

The two kits, which feature gruesome implements such as rusted bone saws and hooked knives, were used on wounded soldiers by noted surgeon and Harvard Medical School founder Dr John Warren as he served with the Continental Army.



Together, the historically important kits are expected to sell for up to \$50,000 in the online auction that concludes July 12.

'These remarkable Revolutionary War amputation kits hail to a time before doctors understood the importance of sterilization, and the instruments show heavy signs of use,' said Bobby Livingston, executive vice president with RR Auction.

'Wounds from musket balls were rarely superficial, and amputation was fairly common -- even though as few as 35 per cent of men survived the procedure. Amputation kits were therefore essential on the battlefield and in very high demand.'



Noted surgeon and Harvard Medical School founder Dr John Warren used these rusty surgical instruments to amputate numerous soldiers' limbs during the Revolutionary War

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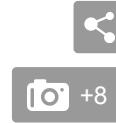
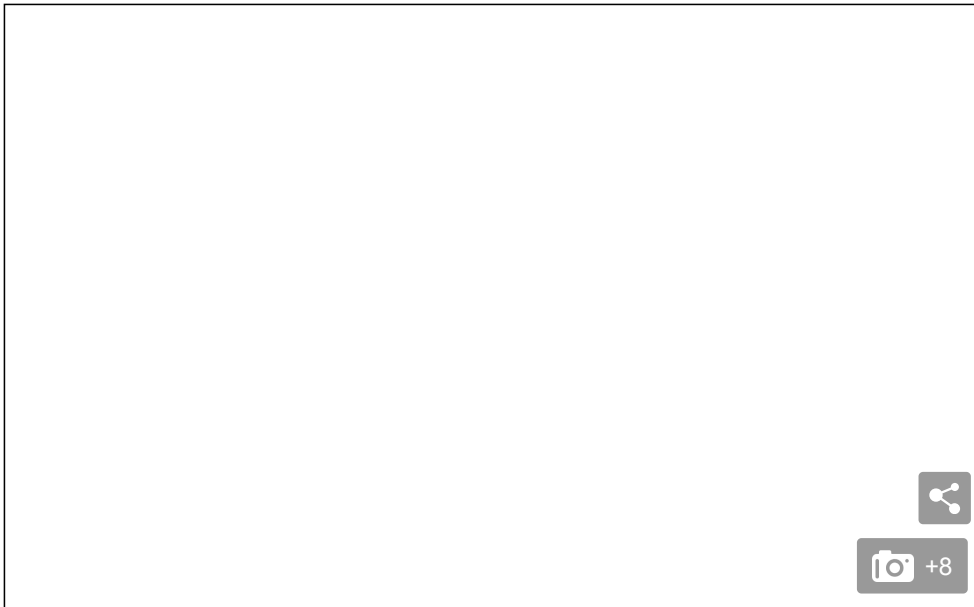
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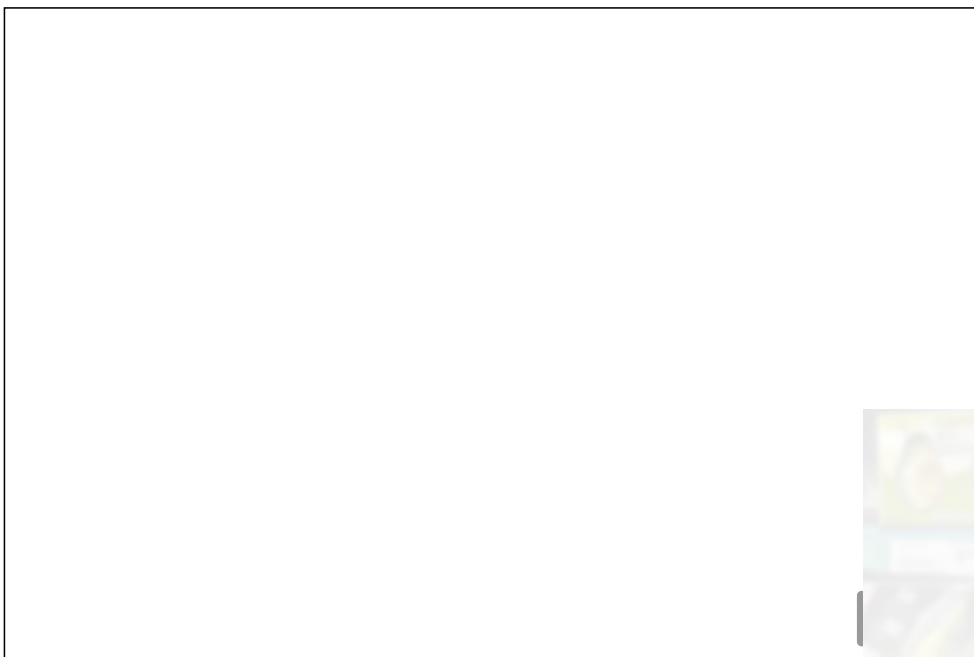


A pair of Dr Warren's surgical kits are expected to sell for up to \$50,000 in an online auction

While an estimated 8,000 soldiers were killed in the eight-year-long war, there was a higher number of amputations doctors carried out on wounded soldiers. Dr Warren's surgical kits hail to a time before doctors understood the importance of sterilization. Their knowledge of medical issues was basic and often flawed compared to today. Medical personnel was hard to come by and the tools they used were rudimentary.

If a soldier received a wound that required amputation of a limb a painful procedure followed. First, the patient was bled. Next, two people, usually the surgeon's assistants, would hold the person down. Doctors had to move quick because the patient was awake the entire time, and pain medication was rarely used.

Officers could get brandy or rum, if available, but soldiers were only offered a wood stick to bite down on during the surgery, which, based on the doctor's experience, could be done in less than 45 seconds.



Although amputation kits were essential on the battlefield and in high demand, only of soldiers survived the procedure. Many died from infections, such as gangrene

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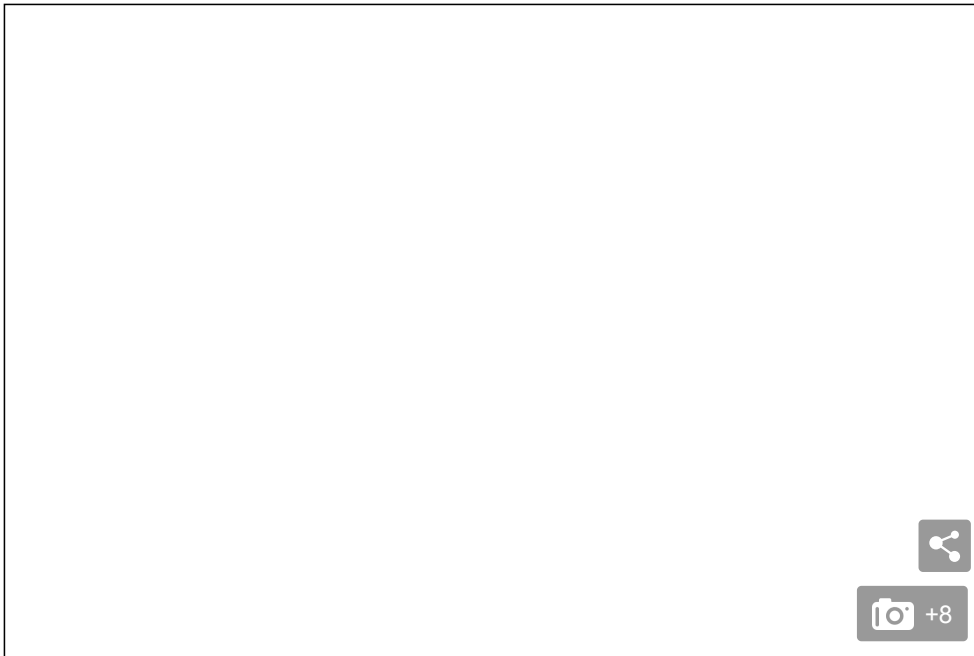
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The instruments in this historically important kit show heavy signs of use and hail from a time before doctors understood the importance of sterilization

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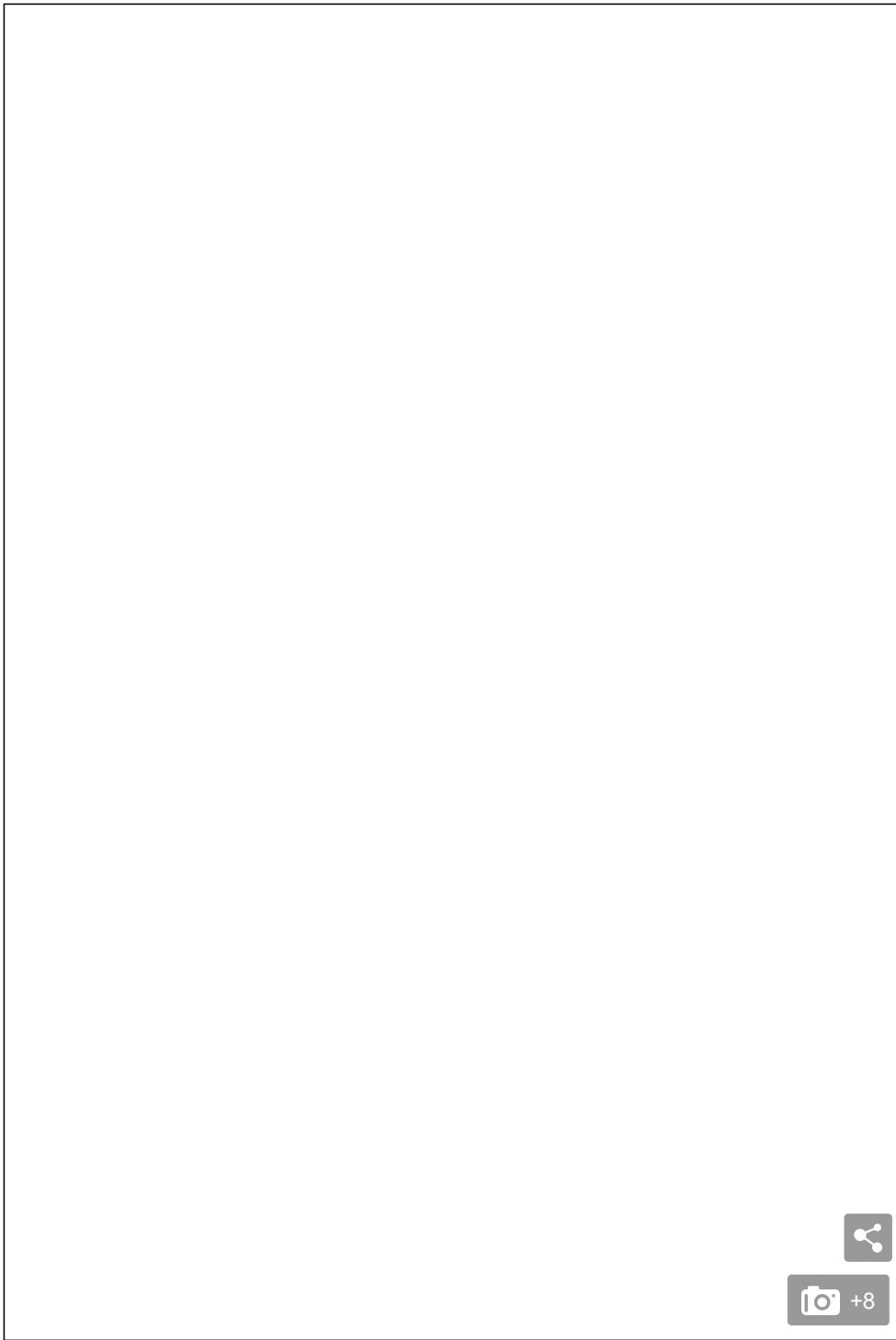
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A bone saw and a hooked knife hint at the gruesome nature of 18th-century warfare

Inside Dr Warren's surgical kit is the hooked knife -- a popular 18th-century tool for surgeons -- that he would use to separate a patient's flesh and muscle from the bone. After this had been completed, he would use a saw to cut off the remaining appendage.

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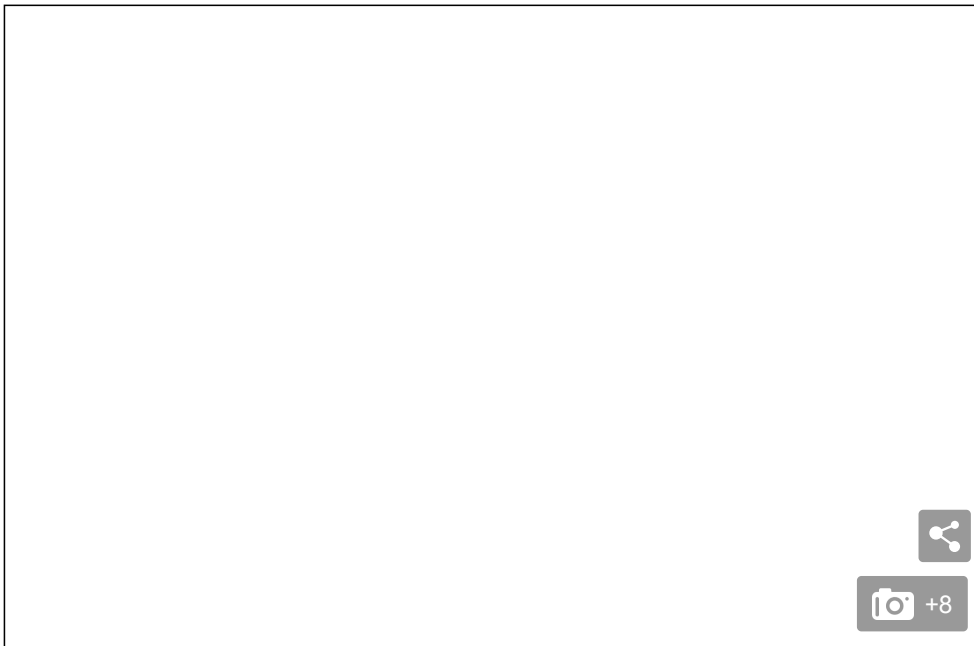
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Most patients went into shock after the amputation and the majority died of infections, such as gangrene.

The Continental Army didn't provide their doctors with many surgical instruments, so surgeons were forced to rely on their own equipment to make it through the war. Dr Warren carried these kits throughout his military service, tending to the wounded at the Battles of Long Island, Trenton and Princeton.



This second kit in a sharkskin case features a rusty saw used to chop off fingers and an extra blade for a large amputation saw



A handwritten card inside the sharkskin kit shows that surgeon Henry J Bigelow received the kit from Warren's son John Collins Warren, a surgeon and first dean of Harvard Medical School

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Attached inside the hinged cover of the sharkskin case is a typed early 20th-century card that reads: 'Instruments. Revolutionary War. Surgical instruments used by Dr John Warren in the war, and presented to him by his brother, General Joseph Warren. Dr J Collins Warren'

Following the war, Dr Warren founded and became the first professor of anatomy and surgery at Harvard Medical School, where he taught until his death in 1815.

One of the surgical kits up for sale includes stainless-steel forceps, scissors and handsaws blunted from heavy use, along with its original sharkskin case. Attached inside the hinged top cover is a 19th-century handwritten card tracing its place of origin.

The kit, which dates between 1773 and 1775, was a gift to Warren from his older brother Dr Joseph Warren, a Boston patriot and leader of the revolutionary Massachusetts Provincial Congress.

Also up for sale is another surgical kit which contains more saws and scissors, as well as a curved amputation knife inside a mahogany case. The interior is fitted for these instruments but it's missing a scalpel. Nailed to the front edge of the case is a faint handwritten identification label: 'Used during the Revolutionary War by Dr. John Warren.'

This second kit was exhibited in a 1906 Harvard exhibition of surgical instruments, organized by Warren's grandson Dr J Collins Warren.

The two amputation kits were passed down into the collection of Harvard Medical School, where they remained for almost 200 years, before being sold at a warehouse auction by the university to a private collector.

The photos below are portraits of soldiers wounded in battle during the American Civil War. They depict men who have had limbs amputated. Amputations remained popular on the battlefield and were performed similarly to those during the Revolutionary War.

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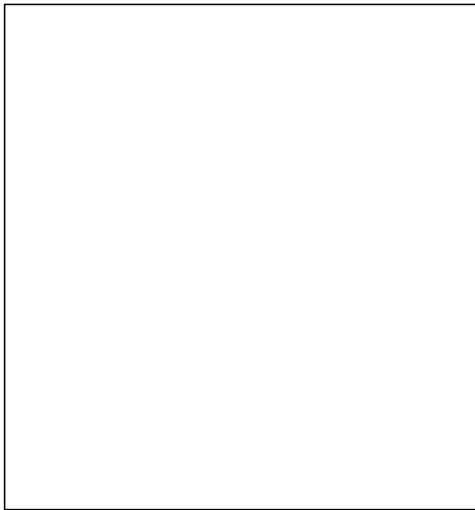
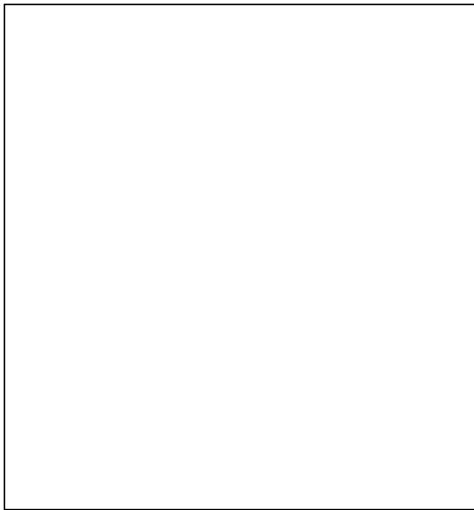
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Amputations remained popular -- and deadly -- on the battlefield 78 years after the Revolutionary War. During the Civil War, surgeons had to resort to amputations because of a new type of bullet that created terrible wounds when it struck bone



Civil War amputations were performed with surgical knives and saws on operating tables which were often wooden planks or doors which had been taken off their hinges

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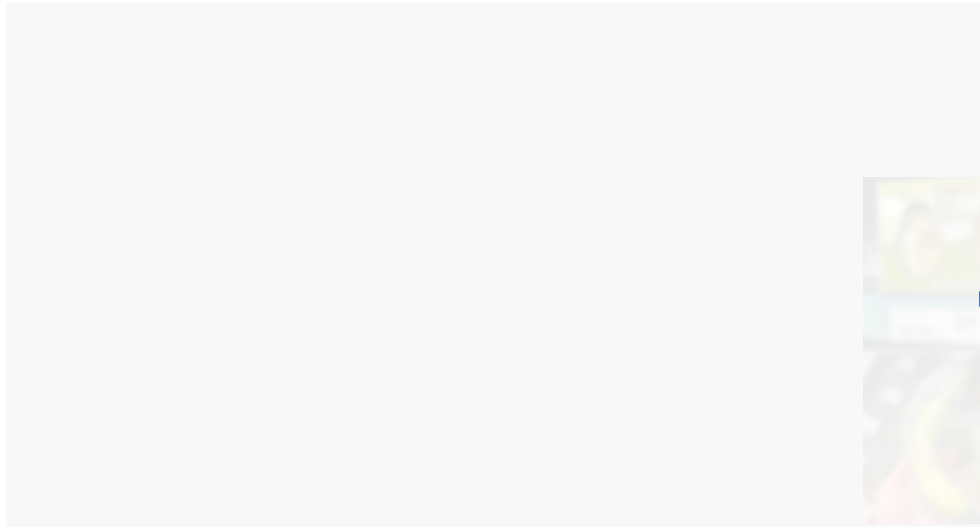







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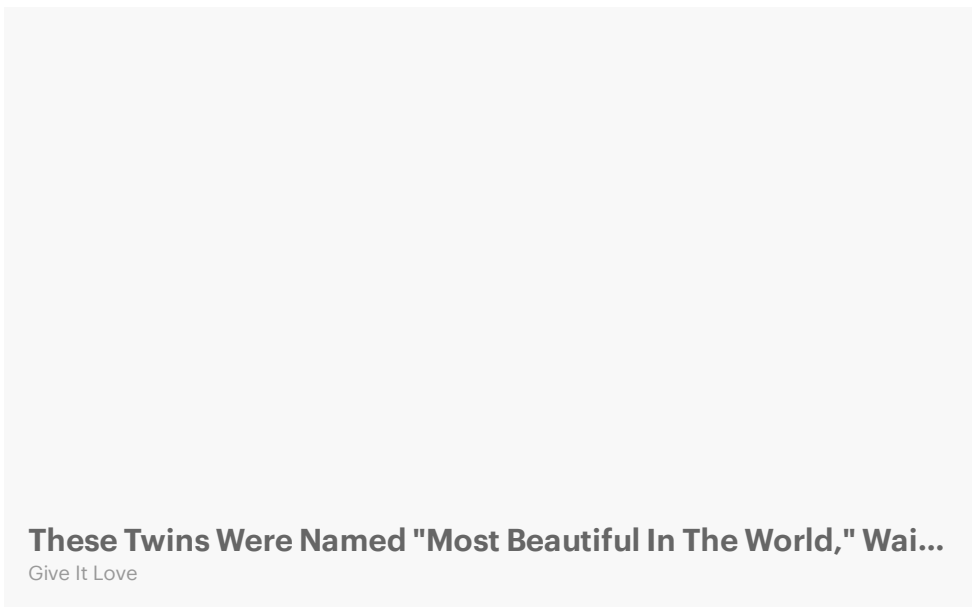
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Pair hit the town together

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At LIV nightclub

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Minnie Driver steps out in stylish cropped jacket and black knit beanie in West Hollywood after enjoying family Christmas

The British actress, who's 49, paired the jacket with a black top and loose-fitting black and blue patterned trousers. She added a pair of black bover boots.

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Cheered on his old team

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She loves to jetset

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Catherine Zeta-Jones shares family portrait with Michael Douglas... after her children, Dylan and Carys, enjoy a 'tin bath surprise'

TV chef Nigella Lawson, 59, praises 'brave' women who go without makeup as she admits she uses cosmetics as 'armor'

Eva Longoria flaunts her taut bod in strapless bikini before hitting the beach with baby Santiago in Mexico She's been staying with her Beckham pals

Royal photographer reveals his top three photos of 2019 - including a striking shot of Meghan Markle in South Africa

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▶ Lucy Hale slithers in snakeskin patterned coat as she rehearses for Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve hosting gig alongside Ryan Seacrest

▶ James Packer cracks a rare smile as he jokes around with a female friend during a wintry holiday in Aspen with girlfriend Kylie Lim
Day out

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TOP VIDEOS**

▶ **grandmothers who fancy me'**

▶ **Mariah Carey braves the snow for a spot of shopping at Louis Vuitton in Aspen with her beau Bryan Tanaka**

▶ **'Oh God!' You star Penn Badgley accidentally lets slip that psychotic stalker Joe Goldberg WILL return for a third season of hit Netflix show**

▶ **Mark Wahlberg's wife Rhea sizzles in a thong swimsuit while chiseled actor displays his washboard abs on holiday in Barbados**

EXCLUSIVE **Meghan and Harry's \$14m holiday hideaway revealed: Royals spent first Christmas with baby Archie at Canadian waterfront mansion**

▶ **Jenna Dewan flaunts her burgeoning baby bump and gets flirty in animal print to promote her new show**
The 39-year-old beauty rocked the bright outfit

▶ **Rooney Mara teases potential involvement in film adaptation of The Silent Patient as she carries a copy of the popular book in Los Angeles**

▶ **Anthony Joshua shows off his sporting prowess as he goes jet skiing off the shores of Barbados during festive break... weeks after huge boxing victory**

▶ **Vanessa Hudgens is a candid cutie as she enjoys the holidays in Switzerland... after announcing 2020**

**TODAY'S
TOP VIDEOS**

▶ **Christmas together...**
amid claims her fashion
empire is battling huge
debt

▶ **James Packer and
girlfriend Kylie Lim**
trudge through the
snow in Aspen as they
enjoy a quiet Christmas
with friends
Mariah Carey's ex

▶ **Suki Waterhouse is in
high spirits as she**
steps out **WITHOUT** an
engagement ring after
Robert Pattinson
proposal rumors

▶ **Disney actor Stoney
Westmoreland, 49, who**
is accused of trying to
have sex with a 13-year-
old boy, claims the
judge in his case has a
bias against gay people

▶ **Magician Criss Angel**
posts heartbreaking
photos of his five-year-
old son Johnny in
chemotherapy and
reveals his cancer has
relapsed

▶ **'I don't want to fall
apart in public': James
May, 56, admits he**
could quit The Grand
Tour because he's
'developing nervous
disorders and aches'

▶ **Revealed: Prince
William gave his
children Charlotte and
George a 'dress
rehearsal' ahead of
successful
Sandringham walkabout**

▶ **Cara Delevingne and
girlfriend Ashley
Benson look loved-up**
as they pose in Pluto
and Goofy hats during
festive family trip to
Disneyland

▶ **Florence Pugh, 23,**
claps back at an



**TODAY'S
TOP VIDEOS**

▶ Victoria Beckham is 'told to ditch her chauffeur and offers to cut her salary' in a bid to help struggling fashion empire after it plunges \$50m in debt

▶ Kourtney Kardashian and her kids Mason and Reign are joined by Blink-182's Travis Barker as they visit Kanye West's warehouse

▶ Charlize Theron gets hyped over the next season of The Bachelor as she poses beside poster of hunky leading man Peter Weber: 'Turbulence I like'

▶ Cristiano Ronaldo wears \$825k of bling on ONE hand: Soccer star dons \$500k Rolex watch, \$260k diamond ring, and a \$65k band on his wedding finger

▶ Real Housewives of Atlanta stars NeNe Leakes and Kandi Burruss attend World Lightweight Boxing event in Atlanta

▶ Strike a pose! Victoria's Secret model Georgia Fowler serves face with a sultry expression while enjoying a getaway in Sydney

▶ Kylie Jenner means business in sleek pinstripe suit with gold hoop earrings as she enjoys dinner in Malibu with her stylish father Caitlyn

▶ Bindi Irwin shares a sweet tribute to her mum Terri after spending the holidays making gingerbread houses with her fiancé Chandler Powell

▶ Anthony Joshua displays his ripped physique as he goes shirtless on the beach during festive Barbados trip

**TODAY'S
TOP VIDEOS**