

The Record

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Presidential debate sparks controversy at the school

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Writers*

This Tuesday, the first presidential debate between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald J. Trump took place. Many HM students were among the 67 million viewers nationwide.

Prior to the debate, many Americans were unfamiliar with Harris' policies, values, and character, history teacher Dr. Ellen Bales said. Thus, this debate was an invaluable opportunity for her to 'set the record straight' and show who she is as a person and a politician, she said. The debate was less valuable for Trump, who has already run two presidential campaigns in the past, Bales said.

Some issues that James Kapadia (12) hoped that Harris would address were immigration



and the economy, specifically high food prices. "Trump and other Republicans have honed in on these issues specifically as means of attack against Democrats," Kapadia said.

During the first presidential debate between Trump and President Joe Biden, both candidates' performances were horrible, Kapadia said. "The single worst debate from a single candidate I have seen was Biden in June. The second worst was Trump during the same debate," he said. Therefore, Kapadia believes that putting Harris on the stage, who is a very competent person, will expose Trump's ignorance.

After watching the debate, students like Trevor*, who said he chose to remain anonymous due to his concerns of potential backlash from students and even teachers, found that Harris spent too much time on "low blows" and personal attacks against Trump rather than actually outlining her policies. The responsibility was on Harris to outline her policies since this was Trump's third time on the ballot, yet the only policy of Harris that he learned about during the debate was that Harris would not ban fracking, Trevor* said. "I don't think Harris answered a single question."

Other students expressed similar views about the candidates avoiding questions about their policies. "Trump kept tying everything back

to immigration to avoid answering crucial questions posed by the moderators and Harris on topics such as whether he would veto a national ban on abortion," Nick Tong (9) said.

The constant back and forth with both candidates not answering every question made it hard for viewers to follow the debate, Sophie Lynett (12) said. In addition to clearer communication, Lynett also wishes that there was a larger discussion about LGBTQ+ rights, as about nine percent of voters identified as LGBTQ+ in the 2020 election.

Some memorable moments during the debate for Lynett were when Trump was talking about how immigrants ate pets, including cats and dogs, which was a completely false claim, as well as his tangent about transgender surgery for illegal immigrants in prison, she said.

Many students, critiqued the apparent bias in the ABC moderators' questions and style, Trevor* said. The moderators fact-checked Trump on numerous occasions, yet neglected to call out any misguided or false claims that Harris made, Trevor* said. For instance, they did not fact-check Harris' claim that Trump is associated with Project 2025, which he has publicly claimed he is not affiliated with, he said.

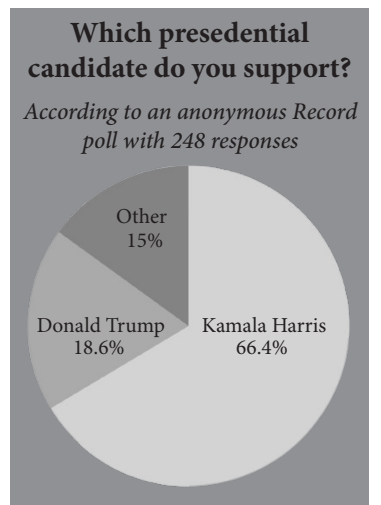
History teacher Melissa Morales believes that the moderators were

simply doing their job by fact checking egregious comments and did exceptionally well overall. "I did not see anything from the moderators directed solely at the former President and believe that they did a really strong job about asking questions about policy and ensuring each candidate had sufficient time to answer the questions," Morales said.

Despite the majority of students not being able to vote in the upcoming election, teachers still believe it is vital for them to engage in the political process, especially because many can vote in 2028, history teacher Dr. Daniel Link said. Students will also be impacted by the policies implemented by the future President, whomever wins. For example, Trump had discussed deporting millions of people who are undocumented, which would impact the lives of all Americans because it would harm the economy and overall be a very traumatic event, Link said. "We have not seen anything like that on the scale that he's threatening or talking about doing."

According to a Record poll, only 49% of 176 respondents answered that they would definitively watch the debate.

Bales believes that the debate is a crucial part of our democratic process and important for everybody to watch. "Watching these kinds of



debates and knowing about politics is really important because you can't have democracy without citizen investment and participation," Bales said. "At a deeper level, there's a kind of a civic duty here to understand and to think deeply about what's actually good for the nation."



Eliana Son Art Director

School implements food delivery ban to prioritize safety

ZACH HORNFIELD
Staff Writer

Whether for extra nutrition after an intense sports practice or to try a new delicacy, ordering food has become a staple of many Upper Division (UD) students' lives over the past few years. In August, Head of School Dr. Tom Kelly sent a division-wide email detailing a new ban on deliveries.

While the ban is now an official school policy, this is not the first time security has attempted to enforce it, Director of Public Safety Mike McCaw said. Last year, following the October 7th Hamas attack, the Public Safety department counted a shocking 79 robbery patterns involving e-bikes and mopeds in one day, McCaw said.

To avoid such instances at the school, Kelly suspended deliveries for two weeks last fall. While most drivers are legitimate, the school cannot easily verify every individual who enters campus grounds, especially last year when there were over 100 deliveries a day, Kelly said. "Drivers, in many cases, do not have license plates and are wearing masks as well as driving on sidewalks, creating additional accident-prone conditions."

With the uptick in traffic volume, public safety personnel were unable to focus their attention where it mattered most, Head of UD Dr. Jessica

Levenstein said. "Instead of being the doormen for deliveries, they now have more time and energy to keep students safe," she said. After the school implemented the delivery ban, Levenstein consulted other private schools around the city and was surprised to find none of them allowed food deliveries.

Besides potential security risks, Loewy Miller (11) found that ordering food last year became disruptive at times. "Knowing myself, I would be anticipating the fact that I had to go get it in a way that I'd be impeding my ability to get work done," he said.

According to an anonymous Record poll with 174 responses, 67% of students do not support the decision to ban ordering. Furthermore, 56% of students have ordered in the past, and 17% ordered at least once per month.

A frequent orderer last year, Tony Gao (10) was slightly disappointed by the school's decision, he said. Although he did not rely on food deliveries for his daily lunch, he enjoyed treating himself to bubble tea every so often, he said. Given the number of students who consistently ordered food in previous years, Gao hopes the school can create a solution that does not require completely shutting down ordering food. "An easy fix would be if we left deliveries outside, so students could pick them up themselves," Gao said. "That way, the school could reduce any risk and students could keep our food."

On the other hand, Matthew Brand (11) believes students have no reason to order so frequently. "With ordering, you need to wait for however long then go outside to find your driver," he said. "I'd rather just go to the cafeteria and pick up a fried ravioli on the way to wherever I'm going."

When Brand does choose options from outside of school, he usually goes down the hill with friends.

Although students may have had access to numerous food options online, the ban has brought about improvements to Mong Café in Lutnick Hall. This includes extending its hours to introducing new options. "Dr. Kelly heard a lot of us talk about how much students enjoyed the selection they could get from their food deliveries, and he's trying to meet some of that need in the café, especially after school hours," Levenstein said.

Even if it means missing out on a preferred meal, ordering food is secondary to ensuring the school's safety, Logan Scharlatt (12) said. "I wish I could keep ordering food, but if it's to keep Horace Mann campus safe, it makes perfect sense to me. I wish I could order food, but it's nowhere near the end of the world."

For as long as the school's existing security concerns persist, the ban will remain in place, McCaw said. However, the school is working on making exceptions for club meetings and other

special events, he said. "It's ultimately about the safety of our community. We want to do everything we can to keep the whole school safe for everyone."



STARBUCKS TAKEOVER Photo by James Moore

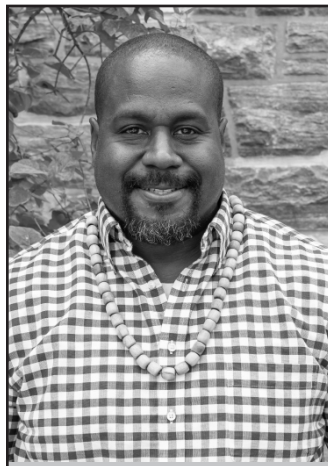
New UD faculty

ANNIKA BHANDARI
Staff Writer

Associate Director of College Counseling Dion Reid first served as one of two counselors at New Settlement Apartments College Access Center, a community-based organization in the Bronx. More recently, he worked at Rye Country Day as the Dean of Financial aid. "It was an awesome chance to support students and families in a different way," he said.

Reid's favorite part of College Counseling is the special feeling in senior spring when students reflect on their process and can take a deep breath, celebrate, and look forward to the journey ahead. "I want to be a part of the college process for as many students as I am able," Reid said.

Favorite Movie/TV show over the summer: Death Parade.



Dion Reid

Before joining the school, Associate Director of College Counseling Momoho Takao worked at Brown University's Office of College Admissions and served as a college counselor at the Birch Wathen Lenox School. Takao joined Horace Mann because he was impressed by how engaged the students were in everything they pursued. "I was specifically attracted to HM CoCo because of the talented team of counselors who not only support their students and families, but each other," Takao said.

Takao is energized by his encounters with students. "The college process can be such a valuable experience of growth and self-discovery, and helping students identify and understand those things that are most meaningful to them is extremely rewarding," he said.

Favorite Movie/TV show over the summer: Blown Away



Mo Takao

Before joining the school, Mathematics Teacher Lauren Prohovich consulted at a finance firm. Prohovich wanted to be a math teacher because she enjoys working with kids and finds math exciting. "I like to show kids that math can actually be fun and it's also just a very good thing to study," she said.

Prohovich is impressed by the abundance of resources that the school provides for students. "I think the school has a lot of really great opportunities for the kids. Growing up, I had a lot less clubs, a lot less arts involved in my high school, so I think that's really great that they're exposing the students to more than just the core subjects."

Favorite Movie/TV show over the summer: Grey's Anatomy.



Lauren Prohovich

Club Hub

WILL CHASIN
Staff Writer

Upper Division (UD) Dean of Students Michael Dalo discovered Club Hub, a platform that enables clubs and publications to manage registration, funding, communication, and other operations, at a professional development event for New York City Independent schools last spring. The administrators at other schools that were using Club Hub mentioned that the platform was working really well for them, he said.

The platform allows club logistics to be much more efficient, Dalo said. "Having everything in one place, on one platform, is huge," he said. Budgeting and communication will now be on the platform, which has always been a problem for clubs as they have never had access to their

current budget, he said. "It allows me to see everything all in one place instead of having to sort through thousands of emails that are going back and forth."

Similarly, current club leaders are very excited about the new platform. "The switch is super exciting, somewhat like the switch from first class to Gmail," Matthew Pruzan (12) said. "I think the previous club management system was all through Dalo and I thought it was very antiquated."

Since all club logistics will be integrated into one platform, administrators will be able to support student leaders more efficiently, President of Public Forum Debate Emma Chang (12) said. Club leaders' email inboxes are flooded with other priorities so separating club operations to an alternate platform will make budgeting and logistics much easier to track, Chang said. "The ability for students to sign up

for clubs' mailing lists from the platform stood out to me, as it alleviates pressure on underclassmen to frantically sign up for every club they might be interested in at the Clubs Fair."

Another unique feature of the app is that those outside the school community can see the different clubs and publications we have and what they do, Dalo said. "I think that this feature is great for prospective families who are coming to look at the school and want to see what co-curricular options are available for students."

Overall, the addition of Club Hub will greatly improve how clubs and publications operate. "Club Hub will generally make the club process more organized and hopefully lead to more students participating in clubs because Club Hub overall will make clubs more accessible and enjoyable," Pruzan said.

HM Athletics goes digital

EVIE STEINMAN
Staff Writer

"The horacemannlions Instagram account is such a fantastic way to bring together the athletics community and show some team spirit," Eva Onur (11) said. Created by Physical Education Teacher Andrea Garcia this September, the school's Varsity athletics Instagram account has quickly grown in popularity, gaining nearly 400 followers in under two weeks. The account posts game updates, interviews with athletes, and other content related to athletics at the school.

The school created horacemannlions to foster a greater sense of community for both students and athletes, Garcia said. "It was a combination of staying up to date in terms of technology, acknowledging that a lot of other schools have social media presence for athletics, and wanting to build more of a sense of pride among our school," she said.

Another reason why the school decided to start this account was to allow alumni to stay updated with athletics at the school, Garcia said.

"When I'm putting together pictures or wording or phrasing, I'm acknowledging that this account is more community-focused since parents and alumni are following this account, not just students," she said.

Since every team is centralized on the same account, it is easier for the community to keep track of the school's athletics, Asher Seifan (12) said. "Students can now see updates on every team's games instead of having to go on a bunch of individual sports accounts – it's more convenient for students," he said.

In addition to bringing together the school community, the department agreed that having a Lions Instagram account is beneficial because of how popular social media is with people of all ages, especially high schoolers, Garcia said. "People are chronically on social media, whether it's during a break or on the train or waiting for something," she said. "It's a lot easier to have information come passively, instead of you having to go out of your way to log onto a website and check the score of a game."

Thomas Benissan (12) views the account as a way for students to

stay updated on the school's athletic teams even if they are unable to attend any games or events. "I think the updates they give are super fun and interesting to keep up with how all teams are doing. It's a great way to feel connected to the entire athletics program, even if you don't attend the games."

Although the account is run by the school, Garcia collaborates with students to create a more interactive account, Director of Athletics Matthew Russo said. "For example, she posted a reel on the girls' and boys' soccer and did a predictions game with them before their games. She will do a good job of getting everybody involved," he said.

In the future, as the Instagram account gains more recognition, it will hopefully be able to help certain Horace Mann athletes with recruitment, Russo said. "I think the page is in its infancy stage, and like anything the room to grow is vast which will be very helpful to athletes in the future."

"We are thrilled with the initial rollout and are excited about the potential of growth in different areas," Russo said.

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The school's unsung heroes: A look into the Flik and maintenance teams

ADEN NATHOO &
EVELYN GROSS
Staff Writers

"Day-to-day life would be impossible without the Flik and maintenance teams; they make all of our lives so much easier, and the school would not function without them," Gray Gordon (11) said.

The Flik and maintenance team, comprised of 37 and 17 members respectively, are vital to the routine of the school community. The Flik team is in charge of food service across all divisions, while the maintenance team is responsible for everything from small repairs to completely resodding Alumni Field.

The Flik team starts preparing for the reopening of the school during mid to late July, Senior Director of Dining Service Brenda Cohn said. As part of her role, Cohn oversees the Flik team across all divisions at the school and also works to create menus, she said. "I usually work closely with the chefs to ensure that ordering is being placed correctly, safety sanitation is in its proper place, and train the staff."

To prepare the menus for the coming school year, Cohn studies production records from previous years to understand which dish is most popular amongst students, she said. "Besides taking dishes from past years, we sometimes try something new and exciting, which the students may love, and, in turn, the dish will make it onto the menu more frequently," she said. Cohn also considers recommendations from students, she said. "Students will say to me oftentimes, 'Mrs. Cohn, that lemon sauce with the salmon is my favorite. Can we please have that?' or 'We really want Mac n' Cheese!' So they shout things out to me, and I just make it happen for them."

Flik prepares their staff through training, mostly taking place over the summer, which helps to refresh staff on their standard protocols, including uniforms, etiquette in the kitchen, safety and sanitation, personal

hygiene, and Department of Health requirements, which are vital for anyone working in a kitchen, Cohn said. "Training includes everything to do with starting your prep to ending your prep, to the proper way to set up your station and serve," she said. Cohn also reviews the protocols for students with food allergies, ensuring that the staff understands safety and how to prevent cross-contamination, she said.

In sixth grade, when Mischa Abend (10) switched to a gluten-free diet, member of the Flik staff Evelyn Robinson helped guide her to suitable meal options. "Navigating food options at such a young age was overwhelming, and I remember feeling really stressed about whether the cafeteria could meet my dietary needs," she said. "I'm so thankful for Evelyn's help, and now, whenever I go to the cafeteria, I always make sure to say hello to her, often taking a few minutes to catch up."

Cohn emphasizes the importance of treating students and faculty with kindness and respect when they come to the cafeteria, she said. "The most important piece to the summer training is the hospitality," Cohn said, "We have platinum service that we practice, which is to make eye

"We have platinum service that we practice, which is to make eye contact, smile, make suggestions, and give a greeting."

- Senior Director of Dining Service Brenda Cohn

contact, smile, make suggestions, and give a greeting."

Timmy Lipsey (10) appreciates how thoughtful the Flik staff is, he said. "They are always very happy and have a smile on their faces," he said. Lipsey has also had memorable interactions with members of the staff. "The lady who makes my omelet in the morning always knows my order, so I don't even have to tell her when I go there. I don't know how she

does it," he said.

One time during preseason, Emory Rainey (9) was hungry, but the cafeteria food was reserved for the football team. "Luckily, Valentina, [a member of the Flik staff] stepped in and told us that we were also welcome to help ourselves to the food, and even gave us cupcakes," she said. "I was tired and hungry, and having the food and cupcakes really made a difference."

Beyond their daily interactions with students, the Flik staff also focuses on continuously improving cafeteria safety and operations. Throughout the school year, the team meets at least once every three weeks to review current topics or address issues they have observed, Cohn said. "For instance, we might discuss something like someone forgetting to put up a sign when there's a spill, which is essential to ensure the safety of anyone walking by."

During these meetings, Cohn and the staff also schedule visits from the companies responsible for maintaining the vending machines to ensure they are adequately serviced and fully functional. "We have the soda machines serviced, and every machine checked to ensure that no parts are broken and everything is

operating as it should," she said.

The vending machines in Lutnick have come in handy for Gordon, a member of the Boys Varsity Tennis Team, as he sometimes stops by and grabs a snack or drink before his matches, he said. "Having the option to grab a bar or a Gatorade right before my match was a game changer for me last year, especially if I didn't have a lunch period that day."

While the Flik staff works around



SMILES WITH MAINTENANCE

Courtesy of Barry Mason

the clock in both the cafeteria and in training, one of their most important tasks is to shut down the kitchen at the end of the school year, Cohn said. "We want to take inventory of all the products we have and haven't used in the past year so that we don't have expiring products sitting on shelves when school is closed." Oftentimes, the cafeteria will distribute extra food to members of the Flik staff before it expires. To reduce waste, the Flik team finds creative solutions. "For example, when we had a large quantity of Rice Crispy cereal nearing its expiration, we turned it into Rice Crispy treats for everyone to enjoy."

The school's maintenance team works tirelessly to keep the school in shape, Director of Facilities Management Gordon Jensen said. Since the team is busy throughout the school year, many of its large projects are carried out over the summer, he said. "All the projects that are put in place—we talk about as early as January, especially major projects which require outside help, which are called 'Capital Projects,'" he said. Capital Project proposals are sent in by Division Heads to the Board of Trustees, who vote in a board meeting on whether or not to allocate funds for these projects, he said.

After the Capital Projects are approved, Jensen organizes which team member will address each task. "Dan [Maintenance Supervisor Dan DeCecco] and I discuss, and I give him direction on what needs to be taken care of after meeting with Division Heads, and using a work order system, we assign jobs to the different staff members," Jensen said.

In late July, during the three-week period between the end of Summer-on-the-Hill and the start of fall sports preseason when the campus is empty, the maintenance team completes their larger projects, such as adding major drainage systems around the school, Jensen said. "There's not much time during the summer when no one's on campus, and those three weeks are key, although we will still work on other buildings that people aren't in from the end of June through all of July."

Some projects from this past summer included implementing

additional fencing surrounding Tillinghast, continuing past years' work on fencing by Fisher, automating the gates around the school, putting in Bollards on the corner of 246th and Tibbett, revamping the Lower Division (LD) Cafeteria, and even rebuilding the parapet of the Nursery Division (ND) in Manhattan, Jensen said.

Normal shifts for the maintenance team during the school year and start of the summer are 8.5 hours, either from 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m., or 6 a.m.-2:30 p.m., although during the busy periods of the summer, the hours are increased, DeCecco said. "We'll all go until 5 o'clock, which sometimes carries into the first week or two of school just to catch up."

Over the summer, the maintenance team also aimed to target issues that occurred on campus over the past few years including the floods in Lutnick Hall, Alumni Field, and Fisher Hall. "The most significant thing we did was install a very large trench drain at the foot of the parking lot at the Lower School before you enter the building, and it has helped big time in preventing floods so far," DeCecco said.

Another one of the maintenance team's recent large projects was reorganizing the fitness center by removing the center console and installing new machines, following a request from the athletic department. "We were assigned with removing certain pieces of equipment and reconfiguring the space to accommodate the new setup," DeCecco said. "The athletic department wanted to introduce more functional equipment in place of the communal machines that were previously there."

Gordon expressed his appreciation for the maintenance and Flik teams. "As students, we may not notice the amount of effort that goes into making our school environment run so smoothly, but the Flik and Maintenance teams are always working tirelessly behind the scenes. They genuinely make the HM community the tightly-knit and strong group that it is."



FLIK STAFF KICKS OFF THE YEAR

Courtesy of Barry Mason

Pierce Zhao (10) on the ineffectiveness of the new cell phone policy



Pierce Zhao

The school's new phone policy requiring each student to hand in their phone at the start of each class is largely ineffective.

Firstly, I believe the phone ban is inefficient because of how phones were treated before the ban. Before, students were not allowed to use their phones in class regardless, and it was noticeable when a student would pull out their phone. I think most people have seen multiple students getting their phones taken away for committing this offense. This means that, for most students, the phone ban doesn't change anything, because putting your phone away throughout the class is basically the same thing as putting it in the phone rack. Many administrators argue that if a student really wanted to, they could use their phone during class last year without

the teacher noticing, which I have admittedly seen before.

However, the phone ban doesn't truly stop students from using phones during class times, as there are also multiple ways around it, such as lying about not having your phone, bringing a fake phone, etc. As Anusha Goel said in Issue 1 of The Record, "I feel like it's really easy just to say 'I didn't bring my phone today,' What are the teachers going to do about that?" In fact, in just this first week of school, I have already witnessed multiple students ignoring the phone ban, both in class and in the bathrooms, who were not caught by the teachers, showcasing how easily the phone ban can be avoided. Furthermore, the phone ban could also give a false sense of security to teachers, making it easier for students to get away with using their phones in class, since the teachers believe all phones have been put away. The point is, people who couldn't be stopped before will still most likely continue to find a way around the new policy.

Additionally, the school, unlike most other schools that are adopting the phone ban, still allows students to use phones during any time of the day that they don't have class. This is a problem because, for most people, these were the main times that they

would use their phone anyways, defeating the overall purpose of the phone ban, which was to encourage students to be more present with their peers. If students weren't present during lunch and free time discussions with their friends, then that problem evidently still remains.



Furthermore, each person's phone addiction is easily fulfilled by free periods, time between classes, and breaks. Dr. Levenstein stated in Issue 1 that she believed recognition of a phone addiction should come from the students themselves. However,

just like any other addiction, it is incredibly hard to recognize and fix it on your own without outside help. Besides, most of these students don't have an incentive to fix their phone addiction, which means that as long as students are still allowed to use their phones during their free time, the inherent problem between students and their phones will remain unchanged.

On the other hand, there are multiple issues that exist with the phone ban. For one, many students use their phone to study right before a test, which now becomes more difficult with having to pull out your entire laptop. Personally, I use Quizlet on my phone to study for multiple subjects, such as Japanese or Science. Another potential problem is when you need to take a picture of the whiteboard, to specifically get the teacher's wording, or a formula that she wrote down, you won't be able to until the end of class. By then, the teacher most likely would have erased it. While I don't believe the goal of the Upper Division was to make it harder to study and succeed in our classes, this is an unfortunate byproduct that many students are

already experiencing.

Another problem with the phone ban is how easy it is to forget in your classroom. If your teacher ends class late, and you need to rush to your next class, you will most likely forget your phone in the rack. At that point, the teacher is forced to bring the phone to security. Furthermore, if you only realize your phone is missing multiple classes later, or even at the end of the day, you have to go through the process of emailing each of your teachers to ask if they've seen it. Although, I believe that this problem will get better over the course of the year.

However, I think the main problem with the phone ban is that it doesn't actually change the student's perspectives of their phones. Because so many of us are attached to our phones, simply taking it away will not cure our need for them. A solution could be teaching us specifically about why spending too much time on our phones is bad for our health. However, that doesn't guarantee that students will actually believe and adopt these arguments. It's also hard to solve for phone addictions because of the benefits a phone can provide. Perhaps one of the only solutions is to teach kids about the dangers of phones as young as possible, so that they are prepared before actually getting devices. However, this begs the question: is it truly possible to stem off phones in a world that is more and more reliant on technology everyday?

Game, seat, match: US Open's new entry rule hinders players' abilities



Henry Peck

The US Open's revolutionary changes to spectator access were finally showcased over the two-week tournament; however, fan entry turned into a chaotic pandemonium, resembling the atmosphere of a football game and disturbing the players.

Tennis matches consist of 3-5 sets for men and 2-3 sets for women, each set being first to 6 games. To win a game, a player must be the first to win 4 points (win by two).

The 2024 US Open implemented a new rule that allowed fans to move freely from the stadium exits to their seats after every game in a set. Before this rule, fans could move only after odd games. In these times, players could sit down for two minutes before switching sides of the court. During changeovers, fans can easily find their seats because they have sufficient time.

However, under the new rule, spectators are running to their seats during the short 90-second break between even games. Since it often takes viewers longer than 90 seconds to get to their seats, get fully settled with their beverages and snacks, confirm their phone is silenced, and greet their seatmates, they may still be moving and making noise as the server begins bouncing the ball and winding up to serve. The serve requires rhythm and focus, which gets disturbed by noise from the crowd. Additionally, those who have paid to spectate deserve an unobstructed view. For the benefit of players, spectators, and the game, this new rule change must be undone.

Tennis is an individual sport. Unlike team sports such as football, basketball, and baseball, which may

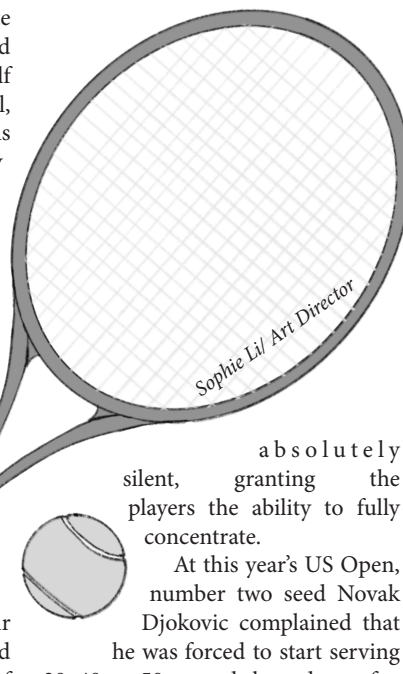
thrive off of chaotic and unruly atmospheres, tennis, like golf, requires crowd noise to be minimized.

Golf, one of the oldest official sports, has had a strict etiquette governing applause, movement, and noise for over a century. Thus, golf has gained a reputation as a formal, proper individual sport. Tennis requires more physical mobility and endurance than golf, and the players can only play their best when they play in an ideal playing environment.

Because professional tennis also requires a controlled environment, granting fans more freedom to speak and move around leads fans to believe that they, not the players or umpires, should dictate the environment. Even though fans may enjoy not having to wait a few more minutes to find their seats, it isn't fair to prioritize the crowd and the business of tennis over the players and the sport.

Unlike at the US Open, at Wimbledon, a much more prestigious tennis tournament, fans wear formal,

business-like attire, and are admitted into the stadium only during odd games. During the serve windup and motion, fans are



absolutely silent, granting the players the ability to fully concentrate.

At this year's US Open, number two seed Novak Djokovic complained that he was forced to start serving 30, 40, or 50 seconds later due to fan distractions. As a result, the matches were dragging on longer than they would have without the new rule change. Additionally, number five seed Daniil Medvedev voiced his

distaste for the new rule, claiming it was difficult for him to serve with fans standing up and moving all around him. German player David Goffin claimed the US Open crowd was turning tennis into a football game.

Some may argue that blocking out noise, or thriving on it, is something that professional athletes must learn to do. Others could say that if an opponent's loud grunting and screaming is allowed, then crowd cheering and booing should also be permitted. However, I maintain that silence from the fans, or as close as can be achieved as possible, is best for the quality of a proper tennis match.

Indeed, tennis fans themselves may enjoy their US Open viewing experiences more with stricter rules. Even though they may have to wait longer to settle into their spots around the court, the tennis spectacle in front of them will unfold in a quieter, more elevated manner.

The US Open would no longer be characterized as the chaotic, casual and "American" Grand Slam, but rather will begin to resemble a prestigious and esteemed event, similar to other Grand Slams.

Inside the school's exciting new Dance & Theatre season

CIANA TZUO
Staff Writer

"I encourage people who may be able to dance or are very good singers to put themselves out there and try their best because it's a good environment to try new things," Noah Benson (11), who participated in the theatre last year and plans to perform in both the play and musical this year, he said.

Last week, Theatre and Dance Department announced their shows for the season. Upper Division (UD) students can participate in a November play, Marian, or the True Tale of Robin Hood, the yearly Middle Division (MD)/UD Dance Concert in January, and the spring musical, Chicago, in May.

The announcement has been met with excitement in the department and among students, including Alex Felberbaum (11), who has participated in multiple productions. "The lineup for this year is really spectacular, and I think that this probably will be one of the most engaging years we will have," he said.

The fall play, Winter Dance Concert, and Spring Musical are annual events for the department. Because of their significance, much thought and discussion goes into organizing and choosing the shows, Theatre and Dance Department Chair Benjamin Posner said.

For the upcoming play, Manager of the Department of Theatre and Dance Studies Jonathan Nye had some plays in mind going into the

selection and directing process, he said. After his first choice was discussed by the department and thought to not be suitable for the year, he chose to spend a few weekends at The Drama Book Shop on West 29th Street and stumbled upon the play Marian, or the True Tale of Robin Hood displayed on one of the tables, he said.

There were various considerations that convinced Nye to choose this play, he said. "I decided to go less heavy and dramatic and find a contemporary play that was lighter in tone, and this play has a lot of humor and twists along the way," Nye said, "It also has an interesting focus on gender discussions and what it means to be your true self that will hopefully be interesting for our actors to explore," he said.

For the Winter Dance Concert, Dance Teacher and Choreographer Angela Patmon anticipates that four classes and a voluntary after-school group will perform. Instead of choreographing all dances herself, she plans to invite her friend Jessica McRoberts to help plan and choreograph the numbers, she said. McRoberts assisted in the last dance concert, has been on Broadway, and is a former Rockette, Patmon said.

Alongside the help of McRoberts and Patmon, the dance concert will also incorporate student-choreographed pieces, Patmon said. Students who wish to perform will submit a form detailing music, number of dances, and style they plan on doing. The department then

figures out how many numbers they can include and which submissions are best suited for the concert, Patmon said.

For the past few years, the school has chosen more modern, less well-known musicals, but it decided to go the opposite direction this year. "Chicago definitely is not the sound of contemporary Broadway, giving it a different style and feel that was appealing to us," Posner said.

The music is great fun and the whole show is subversive and an interesting commentary on society, Posner said. "It speaks to our time and

the cult of personality. The American idea that everything is Showbiz," he said.

As a well-known musical, Chicago can also bring new people into the theater community, including those who don't know much about it and want to learn more, Felberbaum said. "It could be a great opportunity for expanding

the theater community at the school since most people do know Chicago, and it's a rather well-known show as compared to many shows we've done in the past," he said.

Since Chicago is currently on Broadway, Posner hopes to put the school's own unique spin on it. The version on Broadway right now is from the 90s, giving it a very particular style that is

the schedule back, so I hope we have more time to prepare," Catherine Mong (12), said.

As auditions for the fall play were held this week, Nye was engaged in the process and excited to see the amount of talent that showed up and looked forward to working with the cast, he said. Nye observes many different interpretations from the auditioners and sometimes will ask the actors to make adjustments or run the scene again to see how flexible and open to suggestions the actors are, he said. Looking to the future, Nye is eager to work with the set designers and the costumers to create a whole new world in the Black Box, he said.

Patmon, who has already

been working with her classes, is excited to start the more formal rehearsal process. "I love the energy that all the dancers bring when rehearsal starts," Patmon said. "It becomes electric in the rehearsal room."

The dance concert builds communities between people who may not have known each other to create a beautiful art experience together, Patmon said.

Book reviews of school-assigned books

All The Light We Cannot See

SEBI SAITA
Contributing Writer

As German forces push further into France during the midst of World War II, the blind Marie-Laure Leblanc attempts to escape the war-torn city of Paris along with her father, while boy genius Werner Pfennig gets roped into a Nazi soldier academy as a desperate attempt to escape his life as an orphan. Unbeknownst to both of the characters, their stories will combine in an intriguing and monumental finale, where they will both fight for their lives. Although *All The Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr is an intense read, it has left a longstanding mark on me, and to this day, it remains as one of my all-time favorite books.

Doerr is well known for implementing his captivating and beautifully descriptive writing style into his history-filled books. *All The Light We Cannot See* has both of those characteristics. Upon hearing that we were reading *All The Light* last year in 8th grade, I recognized his name and immediately became excited to start reading. Written over ten years and published in 2014, Doerr put tremendous thought and effort into writing this Pulitzer Prize Winner for Fiction. Doerr manages to create a story that pulls the reader into the extreme depth of its words. Taking place from 1934-1945, Doerr tells the stories of Marie-Laure and Werner from their

childhoods through to their late teenage years towards the end of the war.

Although many great books are based around World War II, Doerr goes to the lengths of essentially creating his own sub-genre. He uses a structure of short chapters, each with their own theme, in order to emphasize each page he writes. He uses figurative language in ways that I've never seen before, managing to entice the reader with complex words and sentences, all while tying them together in a way similar to poetry.

If I were to have a main grievance with the book, it would be that at times, it can become extremely heavy, and even a bit slow. There were many times where I wanted to put the book down. For such a long book that covers a span of eleven years, along with an epilogue, *All The Light We Cannot See* is a book you must commit to. There are times when the characters seem like they have no hope, and times where they manage to escape a terrible fate, only to fall into another trap. There is a separation of family that affects both characters, which, in turn, becomes just as heart-wrenching for the reader as for the characters.

Despite its occasional flaws, *All The Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr is a masterfully worked tale of suspense, emotional depth, plot twists, and history, and it is a novel that I would recommend to anyone in need of a good read.

The House in the Cerulean Sea

ALLISON KIM
Contributing Writer

Imagine you get sent to a mysterious island for a month with a special orphanage to care for problematic children. The only directions you get are to "beware."

Written by TJ Klune, *The House in the Cerulean Sea* is a thrilling, heartfelt, and love story fantasy that will capture your heart.

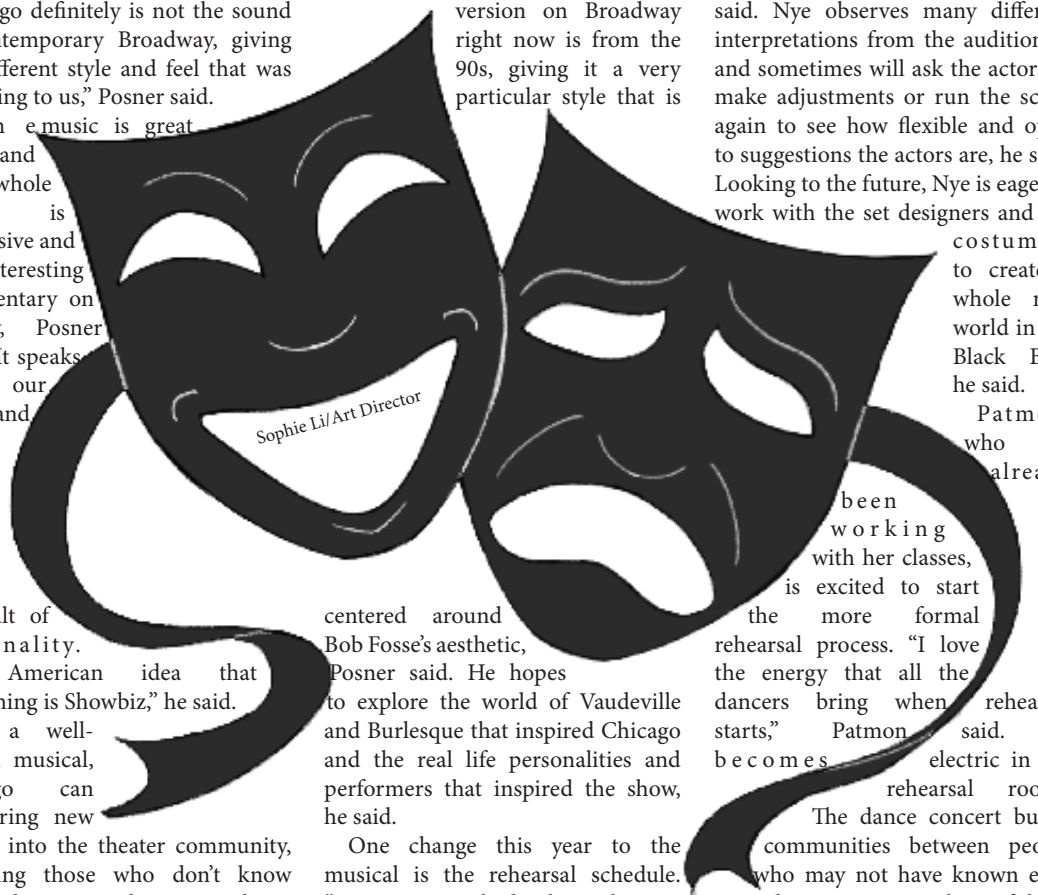
Linus Baker is a strict adherent to rules, living a solitary life with only his cat and music to keep him company. He's a case worker at the Department in Charge of Magical Youth (DICOMY) whose job is to inspect unusual orphanages with magical children. Everyday consists of the same routine for Linus: he goes to work, fills out a couple of papers, then returns to his cat at home. That is until one day, Linus finds himself being called to the Extremely Upper Management Office for a special, unknown case. In a blink of an eye, Linus finds himself unwillingly being sent to the island of Marsayas for a month - to oversee an orphanage that's "different than anything else [he's] seen before."

Arriving at the orphanage, Linus's only focus is to follow through with his abnormal mission, avoid any personal connections with the children, and leave the orphanage as soon as possible. Throughout his

journey, Linus is assigned to report back to DICOMY about each character and the orphanage's condition. As the book progresses, Linus's relationships with each character flourishes as he gets to know them on his own.

With the relentless cliffhangers and captivating plot twists, Klune kept us on the edge of our seats, waiting to see what will happen next. Yet what sets this book apart is the depth Klune puts into creating each of his characters. The characters contain far more complexity than their "labels" made by society suggest, allowing us readers to find layers of personality and our own connections with them. Each sentence presented in the book was clearly articulated to make it a magical experience for the reader to uncover. The sophisticated take on the characters makes it such an interesting read, as you can find themes of family and acceptance of others.

Overall this book provides a blanket of comfort and reassurance, and gives a chance for the reader to escape reality. It's a reminder to the readers that everyone has a place that they belong in the world. It is 100 percent a must read book for those who love fantasy or just want a book they won't be able to put down after starting.



Back on home turf: MLB star Pedro Álvarez '05 returns to HM as Director of Wellness

JULIA LOURENCO
Staff Writer

"Like every other little kid, all I wanted was to be a professional baseball player, but my love for it never fizzled out," Director of Wellness and retired Major League Baseball player Pedro Álvarez '05 said. After a successful MLB career playing for the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Baltimore Orioles, Álvarez returned to the school this year to help reinvent the fitness program.

Growing up in Washington Heights as an immigrant from the Dominican Republic, Álvarez is grateful he was able to attend the school, because it exposed him to new perspectives and allowed him to have the support to pursue his career in baseball, he said. "Horace Mann introduced me to people from different cultures, but also music, plays, and literature that I wouldn't have gotten to learn about if I hadn't gone here."

Álvarez always admired how he was able to have lively debates with his classmates while still keeping the discussion respectful, he said. "Especially in my Religion in History class, which was essentially a debate class, it was amazing how we could

PEDRO ÁLVAREZ IN 2005



disagree with one another, share our diverse opinions, but still end the day as people with nothing but respect for one another."

Because of his baseball practices every day after school, Álvarez did not participate in any clubs in the Upper Division (UD). Still, he encourages current students to participate in clubs, he said. "I tell everyone 'go make yourself uncomfortable and take a risk,'" Álvarez said. "You have infinite resources to join or start any club you want, so you really should do whatever interests you."

Álvarez's most important relationship at the school was with Director of Athletics Matthew Russo, who acted like a guardian to him during the college recruitment process, he said. "I owe a lot to Coach Russo because he was the one that would always make the calls and help me with the recruitment process," Álvarez said. "My parents were always there for me, but there was the language barrier when they had to reach out for camps or to coaches, which is what Coach Russo helped with."

Russo, who was new to the school at the time, feels honored to have been a part of Álvarez's journey, he said. "Getting the chance to join him in his journey was a lifetime experience I will never forget," Russo said. "I was so young in my career, that it provided me with invaluable work experience that I am forever grateful for."

Declining a draft offer from the Boston Red Sox straight out of high school to pursue his education, Álvarez played for the Vanderbilt University Commodores while majoring in Medicine, Health, and Society.

While baseball was always Álvarez's ultimate goal, school was

equally important to him during both college and high school, he said. "Even though school doesn't come easy to me, my parents always made it clear that if [my] grades weren't up to par, I couldn't do any extracurriculars," Álvarez said. "HM prepared me to be a student-athlete in college in that sense because I was already used to balancing a lot of schoolwork with sports."

As a first round pick in the 2008 MLB draft, Álvarez joined the Pittsburgh Pirates after graduating from Vanderbilt. "Playing for [the Pirates] was an incredible experience because it was my first time on a professional team and I met most of my closest friends in that organization," Álvarez said.

While with the Pirates, Álvarez participated in the MLB's annual Home Run Derby and was selected to play on the National League All-Star Team in 2013. "That was probably the best year in my career, statistically, but what was most exciting was that the Derby and the All Star Game was at Citi Field," Álvarez said. "It was really cool to come back home after a couple of years and be able to play in front of family and friends in the place I grew up."

Álvarez left the Pirates in 2015 and joined the Baltimore Orioles for three years. He then returned to Vanderbilt to study psychology, child development and cognitive science. In 2021, the Milwaukee Brewers hired Álvarez as a special assistant to player development and baseball operations for the Brewers. Álvarez advised players on strategies for better mental and physical wellbeing, which he hopes to continue doing in his new role at the school, he said.

Álvarez's wife, who is studying mental health counseling, introduced him to the wellness field, he said.

"I was able to learn a lot from her, and it inspired me to go back to [Vanderbilt] and take a few classes about mental and physical wellness."

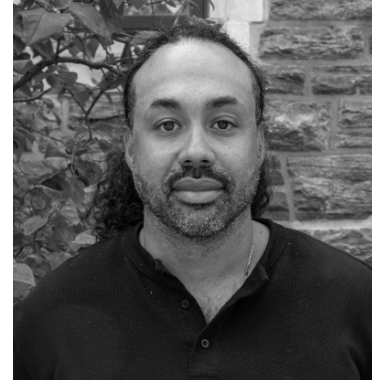
When Álvarez visited the school with New York Mets player Harrison Bader '12 last spring, he felt inspired to return through the Athletics Department, he said. "It was amazing to be back on campus, which was so full of life and energy, so when the opportunity came around to work here, it just made too much sense not to pursue it."

As the first-ever Director of Wellness at the school, Álvarez hopes to encourage students to move their bodies, not just for physical benefits, but also for mental benefits, he said. To do so, Álvarez, in collaboration with Assistant Coach Alejandra Teran-Eligio, is redesigning the fitness curriculum at the school to make it accessible to everyone, he said. "A lot of kids don't take advantage of the Simon Family Fitness Center because they're a little intimidated, or don't know what to do, so we're trying to remove those obstacles by offering to make everyone personalized exercise programs."

One of Álvarez's goals is to prove that the fitness center can be fun and isn't reserved for athletes, he said. "Going to the gym doesn't mean that you have to lift for an hour if that isn't something you want to do—we can figure out what works for you together." Especially because of the school's stressful environment, Álvarez wants students to see the fitness center as a place to decompress after a long day.

Since Álvarez will focus on building the Athletic Development program, it is unlikely that he will become a full-time coach for the Varsity Baseball team, he said. "Even if I don't coach, there's no way that

PEDRO ÁLVAREZ IN 2024



I can't help out," Álvarez said. "The inner child in me never lets me walk away when I see someone catching a ball or swinging a bat, so I will definitely be there to help guide the team."

Álvarez continues to admire Russo as a coach, and hopes to have the same connection with his students as Russo had with him, he said. "It seems like everyone here knows Coach Russo's name and he knows theirs, and I'm trying to get to the point where I can do the same," Álvarez said. "What better place to do that than in the fitness center, where I can get to know everyone and show that working out can be fun?"

In his past few weeks at the school, Álvarez has been inspired by the motivation and ambition of the student body, he said. "It's been really fulfilling to get to know all these kids, and I hope I can help them all out in their fitness journeys in one way or another over their time here."

Excited for students to benefit from Álvarez's expertise, Russo feels Álvarez's return is a full circle moment, he said. "Seeing him walk these halls again is surreal, but still puts a smile on my face each day."

Introducing the 2024 MD musical: Seussical Jr.

ISABELLA BARTOLETTI
Contributing Writers

"[Seussical's] about believing in people and humanity. But it's also about thinking differently and being proud of thinking differently and having fun with your own originality and mind," said Theatre Teacher Haila VanHentenryck. From characters like the Cat and the Hat to the Grinch, Middle Division (MD) students acted, danced, and sang during auditions for the Theatre Department's first MD production of the year: Seussical, the musical, which will premiere on December 6th at 7 p.m. in Gross Theater.

The production, directed by VanHentenryck, choreographed by Dance Teacher Shuwanda Gardner, and music directed by Music Teacher Carmen Keels, will feature a variety of characters and storylines that intertwine the

different works of Dr. Seuss. The diversity of gender roles in the cast is part of the reason VanHentenryck and her casting team were so drawn to Seussical in the first place, she said. "The storyline, the characters, the music, and the ability to cast multiple people in multiple different roles made the [musical] more free."

A total of 48 MD students began the auditioning process on Monday, which began with acting and dancing. During auditions, students were judged on which role would best fit them, and what they would bring to the table, VanHentenryck said.

The directors had students act out "sides," or excerpts from the script, which helped them decide roles, Araxi Kuhn (8) said. Students would then be called inside the studio individually, where they would be judged on the quality of their acting and their engagement, she said.



The students then split into groups to learn parts of the dance choreography; by splitting into groups, Gardner observed each student's dance and saw how engaged they were, Kuhn said. Finally, on Wednesday, students completed their singing auditions, a crucial factor in determining roles since refining your voice takes so much practice, she said.

During singing auditions, Keels led the students through vocal warm ups and short songs to hear how they sounded as a group and listened to each student individually, Keels said. "We want to see who is comfortable singing alone or in a group [and] who is comfortable acting and thinking about the characters they are reading for in their auditions," she said. "Do they try to create a character in that moment or make choices besides just reading the lines?" Although every student

who auditioned received a role, certain students were aiming for a particular role, VanHentenryck said.

Izzy Rivera (8) auditioned for both roles of Mrs. Mayor and the Grinch since the characters play smaller roles in the musical, and would not be a major time commitment, she said. Although Rivera has starred in previous MD productions, like last year's Shrek, she worried that she was awkward during the acting and dancing auditions, and nervous during her singing performance. "I think I was singing too much outside, drank too little water, and the bottled vanilla Starbucks frappuccino I had chugged while being outside was finally getting to me," she said. "I'm a little scared to see which role I ended up getting."

HELPED FROM
DANIELLE BARR

Boys Varsity Soccer begins title defense tour

TYLER DENG
Staff Writer

"We're off to a bit of a slow start, but I believe in the group," Boys Varsity Soccer (BVS) Captain Asher Seifan (12) said. The BVS team, reigning NYSAIS and Ivy Prep League Boys Soccer Champions, had a rocky start to the season, beginning with an unexpected 2-6 loss to Riverdale last Friday, a 1-1 draw against Hackley this Monday, and a 2-0 win on Wednesday against Poly Prep.

Due to a handful of injuries and several key seniors graduating, the team struggled to find a formation effective enough to take down Riverdale, conceding goals through insufficient corner defense and lacking intensity in critical moments of the game, Ethan Sprie (10) said.

After BVS' loss to Riverdale, the team experimented with new formations that offered an improved defense and a swift counterattack that utilized their speed. These thorough adjustments and preparations yielded improvement against Hackley, where even though the team drew, the players felt many improvements and the momentum shifting in the right direction, Boys Varsity Soccer Head Coach Gregg Quilty said.

New defensive formation fixes like a

front-post back-post defense, involving two players standing at the goal posts during a corner kick to block and the rest defending man-to-man, allowed for greater corner defense, which prevented the team from conceding goals off Hackley's corners, Kofi Asante-Abedi (10) said.

To improve their offense, the team practiced skill work from finishing to counter-attacking, honing both individual and positional skills, and utilized different tactics every day in full field scrimmages, Quilty said.

The team practiced through-ball drills, where the midfielders sent precise long balls to the strikers who ran and finished in the net.

By building on both technical fundamentals and team bonding, the team was able to generate a fluid offense which culminated in a beautifully slotted through-ball pass from Alban Maurel (11) to Thomas Bennisan (12) for their goal against Hackley, Sprie said.

A standout from the Hackley game was Benjamin Mandigo (9), who had a defining start to the season, Maurel said. "I have to shout out Ben, because

with our formation switch he ended up playing all game and he had a phenomenal game," he said. "Our whole offense was able to gel together and provide a better performance."

Kai Seifan (9) appreciated Mandigo's contributions. "Mandigo started at center back, and he had a great performance. To step into that role as a freshman is hard, and he was up for the challenge," Seifan said.

In the two games so far, the bleachers of Alumni Field have been filled with the team's alumni, parents, teachers, and administrators. The team has feeded off their presence for much needed motivation and positivity. "They bring some great energy to the field," Maurel said.

With the first two games and the Alumni Field fans behind them, the team now sets their sights forward as the season unravels. Despite the unfavorable start, repeating as champions is an expectation the team has for themselves, Seifan said.

Sprie believes the members must stay calm, keep fighting hard to hone specific details, and maintain high intensity throughout games and practice to be able to attack effectively in critical moments of each match. "It's a tall ask, but the team is improving every day, and with the passionate camaraderie of the team and the motivation from the fans, BVS is ready for another run at the championship, K," Seifan said. "It's a brotherhood."

Photo by Pietro Arcoria

GVS open season with 2-0 win

EDWARD CHAN
Staff Writer

"We were taught that you don't always need the most skill, but it's about how much you want it," Elizabeth Strasser (11) said. In their first game of the season, the Girls Varsity Soccer Team (GVS) landed a promising 2-0 victory against rivals Riverdale 2-0. "It feels great starting the season off with a win," Strasser said.

As the reigning

helped them a lot in the game, Olivia Choi (10) said.

During practices, GVS Coach Tim Sullivan stressed the importance of effort, Strasser said.

In preparation for the game, the team practiced different types of drills. "We work on individual skills, but also focus on building our attack with teamwork," Sullivan said.

According to Sullivan, strong chemistry between the players was a difference maker for GVS in the game.

Addi-

Choi said. "We were confident in our skills, but we were still nervous playing in front of a big crowd."

During halftime, the team discussed as a group before Coach Sullivan gave a speech, Gordon said. "He reminded us that the outcome of the game would come down to our mentality," she said. "We are a very young team so we focused on going out there and playing our hardest."

The team started the second half replenished, and Maddie Offit (12) scored the first goal

of the game, causing a shift in momentum for the team, Choi said. "The goal brought excitement to the whole team and encouraged us to finish the game strong," Choi said.

With little time left in the game, Strasser scored a final buffer goal to cement the victory. While winning the first game is a great way to start the season, Sullivan believes it is equally important to stay ready for future games. "We focus on the process rather than the outcome," Sullivan said. "We know there will be bumps in the road this season, how we handle those moments will determine our success."

Courtesy of Clara Medeiros

tionally, the team's upperclassmen were especially helpful to newer members, Sullivan said. "Our players work very hard in practice and care greatly about each other," he said. "We are working to combine our excellent returning players with a strong young group."

Despite their preparations, the team found itself struggling to score in the beginning of the game, as the score was tied at 0-0 going into halftime. Though talented, many players were nervous laying the first game of the season,



NYSAIS champions, GVS felt confident going into the match, and well prepared by their practices, Alexis Gordon (12) said. "We did lots of scrimmages, and we always practiced as if we were in the game." The team also got ready for the season by watching replays from prior years. Even so, it was difficult to predict what would happen, she said. "You still never know what will happen; there are a million different scenarios."

In practices, the team also worked on free kicks and corner defense, which

SPORTS COLUMN Peck's opinion on the new NFL kickoff rules

by Henry Peck

The National Football League's (NFL) revolutionary kickoff rules were finally put into action; unfortunately, they fell flat, so a return to dry and imperfect kickoffs seems inevitable.

In response to the lowest kickoff return rate during the 2023 season (22 percent) and a plethora of injuries, the NFL administration devised changes for this season (NFL Operations).

The new kickoffs align both teams' players (except the kicker) five yards apart, rather than 20 yards apart. The kicking team cannot run after the returner until the ball lands, and the returner must return any ball that lands between their endzone and the 20-yard line. The changes prevent the kickoff team from running at the returner with as much momentum (because they won't have a running start) and prevent the returner from calling a fair catch (choosing not to run back with the ball) unless the ball lands in the endzone.

Immediately after the change, fans joined in outrage, demanding a return to old rules and claiming the end of entertaining football is near. For context, over the past 10 years, the NFL passed many cautionary measures to reduce violent contact in the interest of safety, causing fan favorite highlights - huge hits, quarterback sacks, and on-field fights - to decrease and the number of penalty flags to skyrocket. Nevertheless, the number of injuries has still increased over the years.

The new rules are another sign that player safety is now the top priority of the league. However, few view football as a gentleman's game. Body slams and heated rivalries are inherent to the nature of the game, so why change the rules to make football a nicer sport? To decrease injuries without ruining the sport, more protective padding and helmets and increased medical care off the field seem like effective alternatives.

The kickoff rules were finally put on display on the first NFL week. Unfortunately, they failed to live up to even the expectations of the NFL as the percentage of kickoff returns remained almost as low as last season. Another issue was that the average return for kickoffs was over 26 yards, clearing the old average return of around 23 yards (Pro Reference).

Consequently, return teams are often starting drives at at least the 30-yard line. Considering the difficulty of playing physical defense in the modern NFL and how quickly offenses move down the field, offensive touchdowns will climb, leading offenses to become more powerful than defenses. Fearing long run-backs, kickers are choosing to turn the play into no more than a perfunctory touchback by simply booming the ball into the endzone, resembling boring kickoffs from last season (The Wall Street Journal).

In last week's matchup between the Arizona Cardinals and the Buffalo Bills, DeeJay Dallas returned a kickoff 96 yards for a touchdown. However, Dallas's early return success may cost him future chances of running back the football. As Dallas awaits a return, kickers may automatically kick the ball into the endzone, disabling him from running the ball back to potentially generate big plays (The Wall Street Journal).

Instead of revitalizing an iconic NFL play, they should simply revert to old kickoffs with players spaced farther apart. However, touchbacks should be placed at the 20 yard line, not 25 or 30. This way, kickers will kick the ball into the endzone, so there will be no issue of returns being too easy. Returners, knowing a run-back will likely reach the twenty yard line, will be almost forced to return the kick. Thus, the issue of a low kickoff return percentage will be solved.

As the distance increases between the touchback line and the opposite end zone, scoring offensively will become more difficult. Therefore, defensive stops will become slightly easier, and the balance between offense and defense can finally be restored.

Record Sports LIONS' DEN

SEPTEMBER 13TH, 2024

8

Football opens with overtime win

TEDDY SPENCER
Staff Writer

Coming up just short last year in the MIFL finals to Hackley, the Varsity Football had something to prove. "Since we had so many seniors who graduated, when the other schools see us on the schedule they think that we are an easy win because we lost some of our best players. A big part of our season is showing people who we are," Jai Srinivasan (11) said. The team followed through, proving the league wrong coming off an electric start to the season with a 15-8 win against Fieldston.

Leading up to their debut game, the Lions worked vigorously during their preseason practices. "The defense focuses on game plan-specific formations. Every team runs their offense differently, so a huge part of our defense practice is figuring out how to identify what kind of offense they're running," Srinivasan said.

Last year, the team lost ten starting offensive players, so they had to switch their offensive tactics. "Starting on the first day of pre-season we worked really hard installing a new offensive scheme that focused on running more plays and controlling tempo," said Coach Ron Beller.

With all of the team's preparation during preseason and practices, the Lions were ready for their first game of the season. "The hardest part of the game was really just the beginning because even though we were confident going in, it's always at least slightly nerve-racking before the first game of the season. But after the first hit you take, your adrenaline starts pumping, and it gets much easier after that," Captain Odirin Ayanrouh (12) said.

The game started slowly, with both defenses making consistent stop, until late in the second quarter when Harrison Rudufer (10) caught a 25-yard pass, which followed a short one-yard QB sneak (when the quarterback, instead of throwing the ball, runs the ball) for a touchdown from Cooper Winter (11), Winter said. "As a team, we really feed off of the crowds' energy, especially on big plays like our first touchdown," Cooper Winter (11) said.

Without another point in the second quarter, the game took an unexpected turn in the middle of the 3rd quarter – a rain delay. "I think we got the bigger advantage during the rain delay as it stopped their defensive momentum as they had just gotten three consecutive stops in a row," Srinivasan said.

Even though the delay stopped Fieldston's momentum, the team stayed ready. "We kept our kids as focused and relaxed as can be

during the delay. It was important for us to stay positive and focused on the task at hand. Our players came out determined and motivated to play every play like it was their last," Beller said.

Although Fieldston scored a touchdown in the late third quarter, the team maintained focus, Guyer said. "When they scored that touchdown, we had to be mentally tough. We have to take it one play at a time, take a deep breath, reset, and focus on how we can make the next play as successful as possible," Captain Oliver Guyer (12) said.

A tie at the end of regulation forced the game into overtime. Both teams went back and forth until Cooper Winter scored on another QB sneak. With the clock winding down, Fieldston was coming closer to scoring, being only 5 yards from the endzone, and with only a few seconds left to play on the last throw, Nate Ogiste (12) made an interception, Guyer said. It was an athletic play from [Dylan Proges (11)], he tipped the pass into [Nate Ogiste] who caught the ball for an interception to end the game," Guyer said. "They stepped up in a moment where it mattered. They were able to focus on the play and do their absolute best to focus and execute."

The team's success running the ball wasn't only a testament to the quarterback and running back, Guyer said. "You can think of it as a running back or quarterback stat, but there should be an equal amount of appreciation to the offensive line when it comes to doing run plays," Guyer said. "A reflection of us running the ball 90% time and

of the game is not a reflection of me as a running back or Cooper as a runner. It's a reflection of the O-line's ability to give us great blocks."

GVT starts season strong with four wins

AHANA GADIYARAM
Staff Writer

told us to be strong with our calls if we believed there was a score dispute, and to not get intimidated by the Riverdale players."

Going forward, GVT hopes to further develop their confidence. "I think all of us get really nervous before we play, so one thing to improve would be to kill those nerves so that we can really reach our full potential," Hayden said. "We could reduce nerves with team talks before matches, pressure-moment practice points, and support from teammates off of the courts."

Although GVT still has improvement goals, they've grown a lot as a team since last season and created a healthy competitive environment in which players can thrive.

"I played in the last match, so everyone was sitting on the court and cheering for me," said Tessa Siegel (10). "I think that shows the good team spirit that we have."

Part of the reason for this positive atmosphere is the encouragement of the team captains—Emma Chang (12), Diya Chawla (12), and Hayden. "Our captains are really the pinnacle of team support. We have a team cheer that we do at the beginning of games, and one of our captains, Diya, gave a speech before the Riverdale game," Eva Onur (11) said. "She reminded us of how strong we are as a team and told us that we've got this."

As Riverdale GVT's first league game, the team knew they had to win to kick the season off on a strong note. "We knew Riverdale was going to be a tough match. Although we beat them last year with the same score, we knew that their team had some really strong players," Hayden said.

Despite strong contributions from all members, Emmy Odell (11) had a standout performance, winning her singles match. "I was determined to win because it was our first league match," Odell said. "Hitting an ace down the T is much harder than out wide, so I was really happy about it."

Although they reached the Ivy Prep League semifinals last year, the team is confident they can have greater success this year, especially with their newly acquired skills and improvements, Rangarajan said. "We were a little stressed out last year because we felt lots of pressure to represent HM, but I think this year, we're concentrating on ourselves and focusing on the work we put in rather than the result," Rangarajan said. "I believe we can go all the way and win the Ivy League Championship."



You bail you fail: New PE attendance policy

MINZ VORA
Staff Writer

At the start of the school year, the Athletics Department implemented a new policy regarding attendance and participation for Upper Division (UD) Physical Education (PE) classes: students must attend at least 80 percent of PE classes, or they will fail.

Although Associate Director of PE and Health Doug McDonald has only been at

the school for a year, he has already noticed an inconsistency in students' PE attendance, especially in A and H period classes, whether excused or not, he said. The new policy is designed to ensure consistency and equality throughout the department. "We're just trying to keep it even across the board," McDonald said. "We're asking students to be participatory in class."

Despite enforcing harsher consequences

for missing PE classes, the policy is still semi-flexible, McDonald said. Students can miss up to five classes before they fail, so if they choose to be absent from class, they can still do so without failing PE. However, this is not an opportunity to cut class without consequences, as students will still receive unexcused absences.

The policy, however, is void in certain scenarios, such as for students who are out of

school due to a long-term illness or injury and have a doctor's note, McDonald said. In addition, school-sanctioned events that require a student to miss class, such as a field trip or a theater show, will not count toward a student's absence tally. Still, absences for a short-term illness and with no doctor's note, an appointment, or a college visit will still count towards the five allowed per season, even if excused by a parent or guardian.