

THE PROWLER

Quince Orchard High School — 15800 Quince Orchard Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20878 —   @qohs_prowler

The original coronavirus vs. the Delta variant

By E. LEATH
Staff Writer

Since the Coronavirus is not going away anytime soon because of variants like the Delta variant popping up, it is important to know how this affects the world as a whole and how it can be detected and prevented from spreading further. The biggest difference between the Delta variant and the original covid virus is that the Delta variant is two times as contagious. Unlike the Delta variant, the original COVID-19 virus has a lower replication rate: this means the original virus did not make virus particles as quickly as the Delta, so it took longer to spread.

The Delta variant's higher replication rate leads to an increased viral load, which means there are more viral particles in your system if you get infected. This can be overwhelming for immune systems, which is one of the reasons why even some people who got the vaccine are getting COVID 'breakthrough cases' from the new variant.

"Delta is able to evade and get into our cells a lot faster, and it has a tighter affinity to human cells than the

original COVID, so it grabs on faster and tighter," said LuAnn Glaser, a Strategic Account Manager at Biosearch Technology.

Since the Delta variant is so prevalent, it is important to have increased testing. The different types of testing platforms for COVID are point of care kits, at-home tests, and centralized tests.

Point of care tests typically test one to eight people's samples at a time, and they are usually found in places like doctor's offices. At-home tests are individual and usually used for one person or a whole family. Centralized tests usually test from 4,000 to 100,000 samples in a day.

There are two main types of tests: the first one is a molecular test based on PCR technology.

"PCR tests are considered the most accurate available," Dr. Richard Martinello, MD says, "but because these tests are highly sensitive and specific, there is still a risk for a false positive."

The second type of tests are antigen tests. These are less expensive and less complicated, but if someone is in the early stages of COVID it might not be detected.

The current testing kits can show if you have COVID, but cannot clarify if someone has the Delta variant. After testing positive for COVID, sequencing can be used to figure out if it is the Delta variant.

"[Sequencing] statistically takes samples, and when it becomes obvious it is the prevalent variant in the population, one can basically deduce if one has [the Delta] variant or the original variant," said Glaser. It is important to sequence positive samples so new variants can be detected as they occur.

Although sequencing is an important part of testing, Glaser agreed that "PCR is the most reliable because of the availability."

There are many different vaccines that have been produced by different companies and they usually protect against the current strains in circulation. Our World in Data, a project of the Global Change Data Lab, collected vaccine information from 217 countries that showed that all of those countries had at least one vaccine that could work against the Delta variant. Although they have vaccines that work, there are not enough vaccines and it is difficult to

get vaccines administered to all of the people in these countries. Choosing the right vaccine and having a good logistical plan to deliver them is important.

"RNA vaccines work better against Delta, so whoever has access to the RNA vaccines definitely has an advantage," Glaser said, "That would not include rural areas and non-first world countries because of the need to keep the vaccines at ultra cold temperatures."

Helping all countries get vaccinated would help public health worldwide because it would decrease death rates and stop the virus from mutating further.

"The more the virus circulates in the population, the more chances it has to mutate into a variant that can evade the vaccines," said Glaser, "Also, if it mutates... the natural immunity for some people that have already had [COVID] will not help them either."

Again, the Delta variant is more contagious than the original variant, so until all people are vaccinated, simply having the vaccine will not be enough to keep people safe. People need to continue to wear masks, social distance, and wash their hands.

'Conte's Corner': The Neo-Nazi sub Retrospective on Greg Conte, QO's Neo-Nazi ex-substitute you probably didn't know about

By JAY MOTIWALA and
MADDY RUBERY
Editors-in-Chief

Many students have theories about the personalities of their teachers outside of the classroom, although them being a part-time Nazi is that last thing many would expect.

Gregory Conte, a former substitute teacher at our very own Quince Orchard High School, is in fact, a neo-Nazi. While Conte was not a full-time teacher, he still had a burgeoning presence throughout the school from when he taught, during 2013-2018. Not only did he work here as a substitute, but he graduated alongside the class of 2007, even obtaining the title of Editor-in-Chief of *The Prowler* his senior year.

Conte, operating under the alias 'Greg Ritter' online, was the director of operations at the National Policy Institute, led by vocal white supremacist Richard Spencer. His online presence was widely known on Twitter and Spencer's Altright.Com website. It is on that website in which Conte discussed his attendance at the infamous Unite the Right white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia back in August 2017, where a counter-protester was run over and

killed.

The Prowler previously ran a story about Conte in the February 2018 issue, when his affiliation with the alt-right first came out, and he was subsequently fired from his substitute teaching position at the Academy of Holy Cross. (He was no longer an active substitute in MCPS at this time.)

Many students and faculty members who interacted with Conte announced their surprise when the news came out, describing the likeable presence he held throughout his tenure. He even became a topic of parody for a skit at Putting On the Hits (POTH) while he was a substitute at QO.

Conte was a student at Quince Orchard as well, attending from 2003-2007. He was a member of *The Prowler* and assumed the position of Editor-in-Chief during the 2006-2007 school year. Conte was known for his recurring column, Conte's Corner, where he would give his opinion on political and social issues, ranging from complaining about cliques at school to criticizing decisions made by the national government. Conte had an infatuation regarding Russian politics and culture, even going so far as to attend classes and school events dressed in Soviet uniform. This

near-obsession can be recognized within his writing, with multiple articles divulging into his approval of the Russian government and how the United States should follow in their footsteps.

"He was a pretty radical guy," social studies teacher Penny Keune said. "It did not surprise me [that Conte went down an extremist path]." Keune interacted with Conte many times when he was a substitute at Quince Orchard, and she was even a teacher while Conte attended the high school as a student.

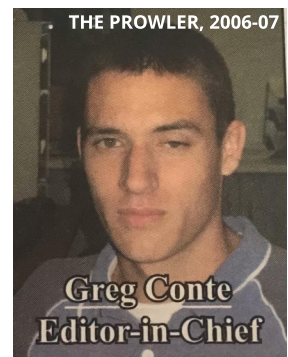
"He wasn't quiet about [his opinions], I mean these were things he believed," Keune added. She continued by saying that Conte "wasn't lying to people" about his admiration for Russian culture and his dismay towards the United States government throughout his time in high school, though Keune did remark that, to her knowledge, Conte never directly lambasted Jewish people or showed any signs of bigotry as a QO student.

Conte's radicalism did not stop in high school. When he was a college student at Georgetown University, he spray-painted a swastika onto university property, which got him kicked out of the ROTC program.

Even after the original scandal

broke, Conte found himself in more hot water. On March 5, 2018, Conte attended a rally led by Spencer at Michigan State University, where he clashed with protesters. At this rally, Conte was arrested and charged with resisting and obstructing police after being involved with a riot that formed. A few months later, in August of 2018, Conte announced he was leaving his position as Director of Operations at the National Policy Institute, leading to the organization as a whole becoming inactive.

Conte's foray into the alt-right has made him a topic of intrigue throughout Montgomery County and at QO. The current whereabouts of Conte have remained unknown since 2018, yet his unpleasant legacy continues to live on.



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President Biden faces backlash in fallout of Afghanistan withdrawal

By **MAX HANDELMAN**
Staff Writer

A presidential inauguration is a momentous occasion, the winds of change ushering the entire country to tune in to hear their next leader speak about the nation's future. However, when former Delaware senator Joe Biden was sworn in as the nation's president on January 20, this pivotal moment was heavily overshadowed by the sinister nature of events prior. It was only two weeks beforehand that insurrectionists stormed the US Capitol building on January 6 in both defense of former President Donald Trump and in defiance against Joe Biden's "stolen" election.

Still, this debacle was perhaps only a climax of America's story of division. Prior to the 2021 new year, the US was already severed in the wake of George Floyd's death and the surge in BLM protests back in the spring and summer of 2020, and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that continues to plague both this country's people and politics alike.

Needless to say, with such potent levels of polarization continuing to persist, President Biden has been under heavy scrutiny for every decision he has made up until this point, though it's nothing surprising

that a Democratic leader faces harsh opposition from Republican opponents. Such drama has carried on in our country for over a century now.

However, in the waning months of this past summer, President Biden completed a plan that had heads turning when it was first announced last April, and that ultimately caused allies to split and made foes into friends.

On August 20, President Biden fully withdrew all US troops, equipment, and personnel from Afghanistan, ending the two-decade-long war between the countries.

"I was not going to extend this forever war," President Biden said in a speech on September 1, defending his decision, "and I was not extending a forever exit."

Though President Biden has chosen to stand by his choice, recent polls and testimonies have proven that the majority of the country has not shared the same sentiment.

According to a national survey recently released by ABC News,

Biden's handling of the Afghanistan situation is facing widespread criticism with 66% of all Americans disapproving of his decision to withdraw from the country. The report also found that citizens were most critical of Biden's apathy towards national security, with about half the country believing that the US will become less safe due to a possible influx of Afghan refugees. Moreover, this opinion is only a fraction of the overall hate towards the conflict in Afghanistan as a whole. Another poll from the Pew Research Center found that 69% of the general public believes that the US failed to accomplish anything in Afghanistan all together.

The criticism doesn't stop with the citizens either. ABC News also found that the US withdrawal from Afghanistan has also led to bipartisan condemnation in Congress as well. The report found that Republican support for Biden's decision was just a mere 26%, and also that support from Democratic officials was barely half.

Among such Democratic opponents include Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez, who said, "We are now witnessing the horrifying results of many years of policy and intelligence failures," in response to the evacuation.

Additionally, the situation worsened when the Pentagon came out with the horrifying news that a drone strike executed on August 29 killed ten civilians, including seven children, in what the Pentagon deemed was a "tragic mistake." To make matters more grim, these deaths were a small fraction of the total civilian casualties that have occurred from US drone strikes. The most recent update from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism found that an estimated 2,200 civilians have died from drone warfare, 454 of which were children.

Overall, the withdrawal from Afghanistan and the recent drone strike disaster have raised very serious concerns regarding US methodology for counter terrorism and military protection, and with the Biden administration remaining silent apart from launching a "thorough investigation" into what went wrong, experts believe that Biden's approval ratings will continue to plummet in the weeks to come.

"I was not going to extend this forever war and I was not extending a forever exit."

- President Joe Biden

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ABOUT

The Prowler is published six times a year by the students of Quince Orchard High School, and it has been continuously published since the 1988-89 school year. To become a staff member, students should take Journalism A & B with Ms. Cooley-Klein to qualify for the Newspaper Production class.

A Homecoming deferred

By **XAVIER SUGGS**
Staff Writer

The rain of red chalk, the heartbeat of the band, the stomping on the bleachers, and the excitement that vibrates throughout the stadium.

At QO, Homecoming Week is more than a football game or a dance. It's a chance for students to express themselves with their outfits, their class hallways, and their moves on the dance floor. It's a chance for students to wind down from the beginning of the school year, ignore drama, and just have fun with their friends. It's also a chance for alumni to come back to the school and embrace the community. But last year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, homecoming was canceled.

This year, with vaccine rollouts, mask-wearing, and easing of social distancing restrictions, Homecoming was cleared to go ahead.

Although the prospect of a homecoming back to normal sounded enticing, the threat of the virus still loomed over the celebration. The SGA had to make many concessions to account for the situation.

Jocelyn Wong, the SGA senior class president, described some of the modifications that were made. The biggest change to homecoming was that it

would be held outside on the tennis courts and in the aux gym instead of in the main gym.

QO has had its own problems with covid earlier this year. In August, 26 students on the football team tested positive for Covid-19 and on September 23 a student who attended school tested positive.

Another change from last Homecoming was the absence of a Homecoming

Wednesday, while Thursday's and Friday's themes were predetermined.

The week started off with Pajama Day on Monday and Tropical Day on Tuesday. Wednesday's theme was Jersey/Culture day.

The theme for Thursday was Disney, which was also the inspiration for the Homecoming hallway

homecoming court and the various fall sports teams competed in an egg relay race.

The egg relay race was contested between all fall sports teams divided by gender in a bracket format. On the boy's side the football team made it through, although controversially, as Principal Bev Thomas had to constantly remind the team to use the spoon to carry the egg, not their hands. On the other side of the bracket the girl's soccer team swept the competition. In the finals the girl's soccer team pulled off the upset just barely beating the boy's football team to the line.

The game between QO and Seneca Valley was a lights out game, so the Red Army turned into a sea of black as the football team rolled past Seneca 35-0.

The week concluded with the Homecoming dance on Saturday. The theme of the dance was 'A Night Under the Lights'. The decision of the theme wasn't too complicated.

The SGA "decided it late," Wong said. "Keep it simple."

Some students spent Homecoming dancing the night away under a crescent moon, while others spent the night as wallflowers too scared to ask their crush for a dance, and still others left after 30 minutes.

"Keep it simple."

-Jocelyn Wong

parade. Wong said that the exclusion of the parade was due to a lack of participation in previous years. Homecoming also had a limit on how many students could attend. Wong wasn't concerned about that limit being reached because "no upperclassmen really go," she said.

Each school has their own homecoming traditions, which make the celebration unique. Some of these festivities include powder puff games, 5k runs, and talent shows. For QO, spirit week is a staple before the homecoming dance. The SGA used polls on Instagram to decide the themes for spirit week on Monday through

decorations. The class of 2025 based their design on "Monsters Inc.", the class of 2024 used "Alice in Wonderland" as inspiration, and the class of 2022 decided on a theme centered around the movie "Up." The class of 2023 won the competition as they washed the green hallway away with a "Little Mermaid"-inspired design.

Friday was the big day and the theme for the day, as usual, was class colors: freshmen were instructed to wear gray, sophomores white, juniors black, and seniors red. The school day itself ended with the pep rally where students packed into the Cougar Dome to get hyped for the game. The SGA announced the

Longtime member of MCPS Board of Ed. passes away

By JAY MOTIWALA
Editor-in-Chief

On September 14, MCPS Board of Education member Patricia O'Neill passed away. She was 71 at the time of her death, and is survived by her husband and two daughters. The cause of O'Neill's death has yet to be revealed. O'Neill represented District 3 on the board of education, and started her tenure in 1998. She was in her sixth four-year term, and was the longest serving member of the board.

In a statement, board president Brenda Wolff said that "we have lost an impassioned advocate for children, students and our community."

Before her death, O'Neill was the chairperson for the Board of Education's Policy Management Committee, vice chair of the Montgomery County Public Schools Educational Foundation, and a member of the Fiscal Management Committee. She previously served as the president of the board five times prior, and vice president six times prior.

When asked what inspired her to become an education advocate, O'Neill said, "I wanted to ensure all children received the same high-quality that my children received."

"To honor [O'Neill's] legacy, we need to continue the work she dedicated her life to," Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich said in

a statement.

The news is especially disheartening as her death was regarded as sudden and unexpected.

O'Neill had been a Montgomery County resident for many years, as she graduated from Walter Johnson High School. Before serving on the board, O'Neill was involved in PTA activism with the Walt Whitman cluster. Her two daughters are both MCPS graduates as well.

O'Neill graduated from Southern Methodist University with a degree in Social Science. From then, she went on to serve in many public service positions. O'Neill was the past president of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) and past co-chair of the Washington Area Boards of Education. She also served in multiple advisory committees, including the Maryland Blue Ribbon Panel on Teen Pregnancy and the Maryland Comparable HSA Task Force.



In an interview with WTOP News, MCPS interim superintendent Dr. Monifa McKnight said, "Pat O'Neill was a fierce champion for staff, students and families and the impact of her work will live on for generations."

Fellow students throughout the county remember the contributions O'Neill has made fondly.

"She was a great part of the board team and she will be missed," senior Josie Bedore said.

Junior Dakota Delcamp added, "Even though I did not know [O'Neill] face to face, [her death] still has a saddening effect because she made

decisions that affected our daily lives at school. My prayers are out to her and her family."

In 2015, O'Neill was named one of the 100 most powerful women by the Washingtonian magazine.

In a video posted by MCPS before her death, O'Neill stated that, "When I'm not involved with MCPS, my favorite activity is spending time with my grandkids."

Her death left a big hole in the board of education, though her impact throughout Montgomery County has been anything but silent. She will be forever remembered as a wonderful public servant to MCPS.

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VIEWPOINT

New Texas abortion law threatens reproductive rights in America

By *MIA KAUFFMAN*
Staff Writer

The year was 1970. A woman under the alias 'Jane Roe' sued the District Attorney of Dallas County, Henry Wade. Roe argued that a Texas law that made abortions illegal — making exceptions for a doctor's order to save a woman's life — abridged her right to privacy protected by the First, Fourth, Fifth, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments. The case was appealed from court to court until it reached the Supreme Court, which agreed to hear the case and faced the question on whether the woman's right to terminate her pregnancy by abortion is recognized by the Constitution or not. With a 7-2 majority, the court sided with Roe, recognizing that terminating a pregnancy is a constitutional right under the Due Process Clause in the Fourteenth Amendment.

The year is 2021. The Texas Legislature has passed the Heartbeat Act, setting a woman's right to choose back 50 years. With one of the strictest abortion laws in the United States in half a century, some women in Texas see this as an infringement on their constitutional right established 50 years ago.

As stated by the law, if a woman in Texas wanted an abortion, they would have to discover that they're pregnant, make the decision to terminate the pregnancy, and actively get the abortion, all before a fetal heartbeat is present. A fetal heartbeat generally forms around six weeks. For some women, that's only a few days late on their period.

The law also gives private citizens the right to sue abortion providers in Texas, along with anyone who assists or encourages a woman to receive the procedure. It also reaches past Texas state lines. If a resident of another state helps a Texan, they're capable of getting sued as well.

The ideological makeup of the Supreme Court has changed since the Roe v. Wade decision. With the addition of former President Trump's appointees, Justices Brett Kavanaugh, Neil Gorsuch, and Amy Coney Barrett, the court leans more conservative in its ideology. When the Court was presented with the Heartbeat Act, it would be expected that the court would hear the case and follow past precedent in the ruling. Precedent clearly states that women have the constitutional right to receive an abortion without excessive government interference.

However, Justices Gorsuch,

Samuel Alito, Kavanaugh, Clarence Thomas, and Barrett, the main conservative-leaning judges on the bench, voted as the majority of a 5-4 vote to not block the law outright.

Liberal-leaning Justices Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor were joined by conservative-leaning Chief Justice John Roberts in dissent. The Justices voting in the majority explained that they would allow the new Texas law to stay in place.

From what I can tell, this means the justices believe that the law does not threaten the constitutional rights of citizens. This is baffling to me as a very similar situation was faced with Roe v. Wade, except the final decision was taken in an entirely different direction. Moreover, back in 2018, North Dakota established a law banning abortions as soon as a fetal heartbeat was viable. The law was extremely similar, if not the same as, the new Texas law. The Supreme Court declined to review the ruling that overturned the law by due to the



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precedent set in Roe v. Wade. So what makes this case eight years later any different? My guess: the new additions to the bench.

Not only do the new additions to the Supreme Court complicate abortion issues, but if other states follow Texas's lead then the fact that a woman has the right to choose is in danger of being forgotten. I am a firm believer in the women's right to choose and that abortion should be accessible to anyone seeking one.

Following precedent is one of the key attributes of the Supreme Court's legitimacy. Therefore, these events propose a question: will this trend of avoiding precedent due to the new ideological buildup threaten the public's opinion of the court?

VIEWPOINT

The vicious battle for equality for women around the world is still raging on

By *AVA GARZAN*
Staff Writer

Today, there are numerous technological advancements that were ostensibly impossible just 30 years ago. Though, we may stop and wonder where social advancements went — particularly for women outside the U.S. With each stab wound, each argument, each act of violence powered by the prevailing patriarchy, people seem to forget that their hearts beat because of a woman. The number of killings due to one's sex is beyond incomprehensible.

2020 was clearly not the year for anyone. Yet, behind all of the chaos that filled each nook and cranny, the increasing femicide in Mexico seemed to be veiled behind it all.

Hidden by "systematic in place racism," said Women's Studies teacher Jessica Burdette, "we tend to focus on white issues." Many were unaware that every day, driven by hate, violence against women increased and murders alongside it with "10 killings per day," in 2019, said Kirk Semple and Pauline Villegas from the New York Times. Though, there has been a lack of mainstream coverage for the matter.

According to Linnea Sandin from the CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies), a research policy institute or 'think tank' based in Washington, D.C., "77 percent of Mexican women report not feeling safe." These women are constantly in



JUAN CARLOS FONSECA

fear for their lives on a daily basis while the male dominated government seemingly looks past all the straightforward trends for these personal killings.

Sandin also reported "more than 40 percent of femicide victims in Mexico knew their killer," implying that these killings were not spur of the moment actions. They were planned with intent. The women in Mexico finally had enough of living in fear, so protests ramped up in March of 2020. They all gathered, with hopes to shine a light on the lack of justice for the victims. Reform was supposedly enforced, though since the protests,

the whole movement has been quiet. All we can be certain of is that the femicide is an ongoing battle, suffocating women in Mexico.

Flash forward to 2021, fly over the domestic violence and sexual harassment flooding every country in between, and we make it to Afghanistan. After the withdrawal of U.S. troops, no one is certain what the future of the Taliban's takeover entails, specifically for women. Muslim women have treaded through an immense amount of turmoil in order to get to where they are today. Right now there are questions about whether their path towards equality is

going to make a sharp u-turn.

Heather Barr from the Human Rights Watch said, in Afghanistan, "women [were] forced to leave their jobs" after Taliban forces rose.

The occupations they have wrought for now slipping through their fingers, but this could just be the start. It's "10-15 years of headway gone," said Burdette.

The literal bloodshed has also escalated. In May, there was an "unclaimed attack on a girls' school in Kabul, killing 84 girls," said Saman Rizwan, from the news publication The Diplomat. Many speculate it's an attack on "the future of Afghanistan" for women.

Seeing is believing, right? So believe that justice is not being served, no matter where you step foot on earth.

Sexism is not a foreign term and it was designed for a reason. Engraved into religious, social, and general belief, it's apparent women are just not enough. It can be easy to forget that many issues like the femicide and lack of women's rights are ongoing because they don't occur in our personal lives. The world is large and it's hard to get lost in it every day, but taking the time to watch the news and donating to trusted organizations can truly make an impact. Drawing attention to it all is the first step anyone can take for a millimeter of change — let's start with that millimeter.



Pumpkin spice and everything nice

Enjoy this season with the inside scoop on how to embrace your fall experience

By **MADISON SHERMAN**
Staff Writer

Fall is finally here. The crisp autumn air is distinct yet familiar. Colorful leaves begin to fall off trees as getting lost in corn mazes and chomping on warm apple cider donuts become the norm. Festivities begin, and pumpkin patch season arises, along with the long list of specialties that accompany the cozy fall season. When Thanksgiving rolls around the corner, the sense of community is among us, and the world finds itself content with fall spirit.

The fall aesthetic, where pumpkin spice makes a comeback and dressing up for Halloween is a must, finds people anxious to end summer and begin the fall season — mostly for the delicious food. Junior Brandon Linchuck likes “to bake these super delicious gingerbread cookies” with his friends, and finds them to be his favorite fall treat.

In this article, you will find the highlights and unique qualities of this joyous time of year.

One key attribute of the fall aesthetic is fashion. When people visualize fall fashion, they picture sweater weather; however, fall fashion can be much more sophisticated. Fall fashion is by far the most superior

with dressing in warm-toned sweaters and boots. Trending this fall are bold leather and oversized jackets, colorful sweaters, retro graphics, and upcycled patchworks. The trending fall patterns include plaid, stripes, and dark florals. Fall fashion can also demonstrate simplicity. Senior Tatum Goozh describes her typical fall look to school as “leggings with some sort of top and sneakers or UGGs.”

Along with the refreshing vibes and distinct fashion, the fall contains unique experiences unlike any season. Around Montgomery County and the QO area, there is plenty of fall entertainment to celebrate the comfortable and free-spirited season. Butler’s Orchard in Germantown, Maryland is fantastic for apple picking and fresh produce.

Junior Samantha Harris has spent countless years there. “I’ve gone pumpkin picking with my family ever since I was little. There is so much to do and I am embarrassed by the amount of caramel apples I’ve probably eaten there over the years,” said Harris.

Butler’s Orchard is continuing their fall festival for the 41st year in a row. Dates for this festival range from September 15 to October 31. Reservations online are encouraged over tickets sold at the gate. The festival includes hayrides, picking pumpkins, the legendary giant slides,



MADISON SHERMAN

and several other activities.

In addition to the enjoyable autumn adventures, the scenery of fall is beautiful. Fall foliage, where the green leaves turn to autumn colors, can be seen anywhere in this season. Although, around Montgomery County there are several recommended locations to view the array of reds, oranges, and yellows. Black Hill Regional Park, located north of Germantown in Boyds, is an excellent spot to take pictures, or simply watch the colorful

environment, with its 4.3-mile bike trail, dock to the lake, and picnic shelters.

In combination with the chic atmosphere, gorgeous scenery, and spirited festivities, the fall season is iconic. As winter approaches, fall days will be cherished. Fall will continue to be one of the most loved and appreciated seasons. Just remember: as fall transitions into winter, pumpkin pie won’t be able to fix everything!

Incidents involving underclassmen cause open lunch to be restricted

By **HAYLEY ASAI**
Staff Writer

Last year during online school, students got to enjoy a 75-minute lunch. Students enjoyed plenty of time to cook their own lunch, go out to eat, or just relax.

This year, though, students have been given a wake-up call with the traditional 40-minute lunch. However, unlike previous years, everyone initially had the chance to enjoy a beloved privilege: off-campus lunch. The privilege is traditionally reserved for just juniors and seniors, but this year freshmen and sophomores were given a taste of the same lunchtime freedom.

Off-campus lunch started well initially, but as the first couple of weeks went on, several incidents where students displayed inappropriate behavior occurred.

Ninth grade co-administrator Joshua Neuman-Sunshine reported that the incidents were primarily caused by underclassmen.

Rumors began to spread, particularly concerning one incident, which took place at the McDonald’s in The Shops at Potomac Valley. The violent incident took place on September 15 inside the McDonald’s. A video of the incident was then spread around the student body.

Following the event at McDonald’s and several other incidents, freshmen and sophomores were banned from going off the school campus during

lunch. This change resulted in a range of reactions, from outrage to excitement.

Junior Danielle Garcia frequently goes off campus for lunch. Her go-to spots are typically McDonald’s and Starbucks. Garcia stated, “I like that we have the option to go off campus for lunch.” She mentioned that she ate at home every day during quarantine and that the ability to go off campus was a nice break from school.

When asked what she thought about the ban, Garcia said, “It makes a lot of sense that the underclassmen were banned because that’s the way it’s always been.” She added that the privilege was “something the underclassmen look forward to when becoming upperclassmen, so it doesn’t really seem right that they had those privileges right away.”

Freshman and sophomores, on the other hand, were disappointed at the decision to take away open lunch for them. Sophomore Chase Pasekoff said, “I was a little upset that we got banned from open lunch, especially since we were only a few weeks into the school year.”

Pasekoff didn’t know much about the incidents that happened off campus, but he said, “I feel like the different trends going around the school and some other incidents were probably the main reason lunch got banned.”

Looking towards the future,



HAYLEY ASAI

Students eat at the McDonald’s on Darnestown Road, where the violent incident took place.

Pasekoff stated that he hopes, “lowerclassmen get lunch privileges back in the future.”

Neuman-Sunshine said he was partially responsible for the decision to remove open lunch, stating that it was “an administrative decision.”

Neuman-Sunshine would like to remind students that “open lunch is a privilege for everyone, and can be taken away.” In addition, he stated that, “There is a possibility that students will be allowed to go back,” but that students will have to “earn the

right to have it back.” In closing, he would also like to encourage students to “act with respect and dignity towards everyone.”

Dear QO: The Student Perspective on the Dress Code

By MADDY RUBERY and
JAY MOTIWALA
Editors-in-Chief

An Open Letter from Students in Women's Studies:

Dear Quince Orchard staff and faculty,

With special thanks to Bella Neal

While we don't condone the violation of teachers' privacy, the images shown on social media and Tuesday's announcement about the dress code are evidence of the systemic sexism and racism at QO. The inequitable treatment of women, directed especially towards minorities, in our school community as it pertains to the dress code is a significant and glaring issue that needs to be addressed.

You tell us that our clothing defines our respect for ourselves and the respect that we get in return, but it should be defined as the feeling of admiration and achievement towards one's self. By this definition, the very idea of telling girls how to respect themselves is inherently disrespectful towards us and our bodies. Stating that students do not have self-respect when they wear a crop top creates an environment where girls feel they should be ashamed instead of proud in their own skin, body types, and way that they dress. In addition to the humiliation and degradation of being dress coded, being called out by our teachers in front of the class detracts from our education. We then have to miss class to change and girls who feel embarrassed are much less likely to actively participate.

Why is it that females with curvy body types and darker skin, get in trouble for their "crop tops" and "spaghetti-strap tank tops," but other women don't? From our personal experiences, women whose bodies are more developed are dress coded more often. This is something that is out of our control; we are born like this and have every right to feel confident with our body type. We believe this disparity is because of the stereotypes and fetishization surrounding some of our races/ethnicities (Asian, Black, and Hispanic) which is uncomfortable and unacceptable. If we are going to have a dress code, it must be enforced uniformly for every student, regardless of race, gender, and body type.

Oftentimes, women at QO are shamed on what they choose to wear, but when male students wear something deemed as revealing, teachers and staff don't say anything, even going as far to praise them. A prime example of this is that during the day after the announcement, when students were protesting, a white male student at QO wore a revealing crop top and was praised by a teacher for breaking traditional masculinity stereotypes. Later that day, the same teacher sent multiple female students to the office for breaking the dress code. QO should be able to teach students of all genders to respect others rather than force the women to "cover up" as a result of men's discomfort. Women should be able to wear what they want without having to cater to the male discomfort at this school. Or without the fear of whether their outfit will get them into trouble.

As a community, we need to place more emphasis on the issue of sexualizing our female students and their outfits. The male gaze has turned our bodies into sexualized objects for men. Our bodies are historically sexualized and we shouldn't be policed for the way we dress just to make others feel more comfortable. Women's bodies are not overtly sexual, but they are being sexualized by students and staff members at QO. While we understand that there will always be concern of false allegations of sexual misconduct, we believe that female students should not be policed, sexualized, or feared by male staff members. The best way to solve the problem of oversexualizing women at QO and in life is to educate all men to understand what respecting women looks like in today's society.

Lastly, we want everyone reading this to remember that it is not to treat others the way you want to be treated, it is to treat others the way they want to be treated. So, no more policies that benefit men. Start treating your female students as students that matter. As students who have voices, opinions, ideas and value. And especially, as students who have self-respect.

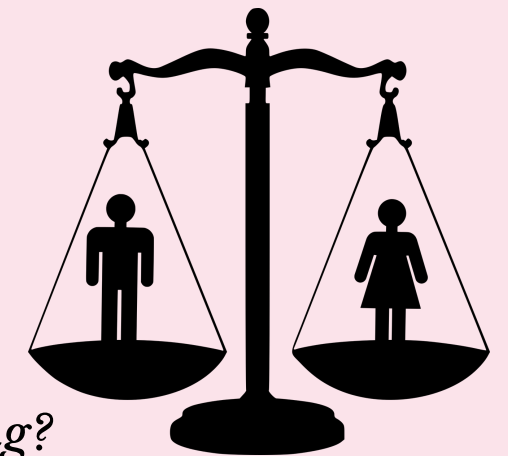
Sincerely,
The Women's Studies Classes

Clarifications:

It should be noted that all quotes taken from the QO4Change Instagram account reflect only the opinions of the individual students. Mrs. Thomas held an open discussion Friday 10/8/21 during lunch in which she expressed her regrets regarding the speech made in the October 5th morning announcements.

"This school is hiding under a great facade of being the greatest school ever when in reality the QO community is racist and sexist, and it seems like no one in charge is trying to make any difference."

- Anonymous Student



*"[How] does wearing my clothes that I bought and paid for distracting?
How is wearing my clothes disrespecting myself?"*

I take pride in my body, I am proud of my looks.

You can't make me think otherwise."

- Anonymous Student



"As a 12th grade female student, and a survivor of sexual assault, the reasoning behind a dress code is pointless. No matter the clothing, rape will happen[:] you should approach this very differently [than] through women's clothes.

Stop blaming the victim."

- Anonymous Student





VIEWPOINT

The Invisible 12th Player

Student athletes' mental health deserves more attention

By REESE OWENS
Staff Writer

As you walk onto the field, you look around and see 10 other players, your teammates. You love your teammates, you trust your teammates, and most of the time your teammates don't tear you down.

But then there's a 12th player that nobody sees—only you can see them and involuntarily listen to their constant commentary in your head. They follow you around like a shadow no matter how fast you sprint, how sharp you cut, or how high you jump, they'll always be there—they're stubborn. This 12th player is the most complex part of your body—the brain.

You may see your mind as the opponent, but there's a way you can make them another encouraging teammate. Many athletes just haven't found that way yet. There's a stigma suffocating student athletes' mental health, the idea that "If they're physically tough, they have to be mentally tough too," which is false. According to the NCAA website, student athletes experience a variety of mental health disorders including depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, personality disorders, eating disorders, body dysmorphic disorders and a handful more. But we're

supposed to just sweep it under the rug, right?

Mental health issues among student athletes have been an exponentially growing plague over the last three years, sometimes outweighing the physical struggle of sports itself. According to an NCAA survey, 37,000 college athletes found that "the rates of mental health concerns were 150% to 250% higher than those historically reported."

Now that all of us are back in person, for student athletes there's no time to relax. For example, according to junior Lizzie Gelman, the amount of time to balance school and soccer is slim, and could inhibit performance in school. "If I have a big test the day after a game, I do worry about the quality study time I will have that night," she said.

With six hours of school to a two hour high school practice to club practice, and then back home with no energy, it's impossible for a serious student athlete to live a normal teenage life. The down time, self care time, time for other interests — all dissolved in the air of school and club sports. Student athletes should have an equivalent amount of time to take care of their mind as they do to take care of their bodies, perhaps even more.

Along with the mental health stigma for athletes, the underplaying of performance anxiety as "pre-game

jitters" is also detrimental. Sure, everyone gets a little nervous before games (some even get excited) but performance anxiety is more than nerves, and many athletes don't show this level of stress on the surface. According to an NIH article on sleep deprivation published in 2006, loss of sleep leads to anxiety, depressed mood which then leads to poor appetite, loss of sleep, and increase in the chance of injury. Due to insomnia, student athletes can get less than the 7 hours of sleep recommended. Due to a poor appetite, athletes can lose the opportunity to get nutrients which inhibits healthy blood flow before their performance, which overall leads to the chances of tight muscles, migraines, and lack of focus (Sleep Disorders and Sleep Deprivation: An Unmet Public Health Problem 2006).

This concerning theme among the group isn't something all athletes can fix overnight with no help, and this is where the demands for sports psychologists come into play.

The lines between a sports psychologist and a regular counselor or therapist are often blurred, which is the root of problems with athletes' finding a mental health resource. Sports psychologists perform work on both the body and the mind to help an athlete reach their full potential, while a regular counselor would just address the issue and might not be able to apply the proper solution for

that specific athlete. Sports psychologists give tips, practices, acronyms, and reminders all athletes can use before they step onto the field. This is what athletes need, this individual attention to focus on the mental health side of sports, rather than a coach, a player, or a parent to "rant" to.

Luckily, this career field is continuing to take off. Twenty-six out of 30 MLB teams have hired sports psychologists in the past 15 years. The NBA has launched a Mental Health and Awareness Program. On top of that, the NCAA released a 38 page long, "Inter-association Consensus Document" called Mental Health Best Practices, which outlines the steps colleges and universities should take to better promote student athletes' mental health.

By taking the right steps towards increasing the number of sports psychologists and recognizing the signs of declining mental health, the time it'll take to improve the minds of millions of student athletes will be cut short.



WIKIMEDIA/HASHIM AL-HASHIM

Has thrifting become gentrified?

By GRACE GNAMO
Staff Writer

Thrifting has always been a great opportunity for low-income families to afford name brands such as Levi's or, if they're lucky, Coach. As the population starts to become aware of how our actions are destroying the planet, many are starting to rely on secondhand shopping for their new clothes. TikTok, a popular video sharing app, has made thrifting a normalized thing. As time passed,

many started to realize the damages the new crowd of thrifters were causing.

In theory, thrifting helps reduce the amount of clothes thrown away each year. According to RoadRunner's article about textile waste, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that "17 million tons of textile waste ended up in landfills..." in 2018. Giving these clothes a new home could cut down these high numbers in half. Sadly, thrifting has been abused by people who have the means to buy new items from high-end brands such

as True Religion or Prada.

Low-income neighborhoods have been known for relying on thrift stores such as Goodwill or The Salvation Army. Based on this chart provided by Imperfect Idealist, a business suit could be bought for \$12 in 2010. By 2020, however, the price of a nice business suit had gone up by \$18, making a two-piece suit \$30.

Apps such as Poshmark, Depop & ThredUp have all benefited tremendously from resell culture. As seen on apps such as YouTube or TikTok, these 'influencers' travel,

sometimes to different states, and buy large amounts of clothes, inspiring their viewers to do the same, to achieve an unlimited closet. The reselling business has made some resellers so money-hungry that they go to the extent of scamming buyers by calling stained, ripped up items 'vintage.'

Prices of thrifted clothes may only decrease once this new crowd of thrifters does as well.

Goodwill 2010 vs. 2020 Valuation Guide

Clothing and Accessories	
Business Suit	\$12
Coat/Jacket	\$8
Dress	\$7
Jeans	\$6
Shoes	\$6
Pants/Skirts	\$5
Sweater	\$5
Purse	\$5
Shirt/Blouse	\$4
Accessories	\$2
Houseware	
Bike	\$10
6 Piece Dish Set	\$6
Framed Art Work	\$4
Figurines	\$3
Assorted Sporting Goods	\$2
Pot/Pan	\$2

Clothing and Accessories			
	Women's	Men's	Children's
Tops			
Shirts/blouses	\$2-12	\$2-8	\$1-6
Sweaters	\$5-15	\$5-15	\$1-6
T-shirts	\$1-6	\$1-6	\$0.50-3
Tanks	\$1-6	\$1-6	\$0.50-3
Vests	\$3-9	\$3-9	\$1-3
Bottoms			
Casual	\$2-10	\$2-10	\$1-6
Dress	\$2-10	\$2-15	\$1-6
Shorts	\$1-9	\$1-9	\$0.50-6
Skirts	\$2-12		\$1-6
Jeans	\$4-21	\$4-21	\$2-10
Dresses			
Everyday	\$3-17		\$2-6
Evening wear	\$10-30		
Suits			
Two-piece	\$5-30	\$10-30	
Sweats			
Top	\$2-12	\$2-12	\$1-6
Bottom	\$2-12	\$2-12	\$1-6
Sleepwear			
Pajama	\$2-10	\$2-10	\$1-6
Nightgown	\$2-10		\$1-6
Robe	\$2-10	\$2-10	\$1-6

GOODWILL/IMPERFECT IDEALIST



QO community excited that Broadway is back!

By HAILEY BAKER
Staff Writer

After a long year and a half of closed curtains, Broadway is opening its doors to the public again. Crowds of thousands burst with energy as *The Lion King*, *Hamilton*, *Wicked*, and *Chicago* opened their doors to audiences on September 24, for the first time since March 12, 2020. Since then, more shows including *Come From Away*, *Six: The Musical*, *Moulin Rouge*, and more have returned, and even more are returning frequently.

This isn't Broadway's first time shutting down. For instance, theaters were closed down for 48 hours following the 9/11 attacks, a few shut down for 19 days during the stagehand strike of 2003, and for 25 days in the midst of a musicians strike in 2007. Each of these circumstances were relatively short-lived and followed by a quick return. Since there was a lot of uncertainty regarding the coronavirus pandemic, though, for months on end there was no clear sign of Broadway returning.

Along with the Broadway theatre industry shutting down, the entire national tour industry, and many local theaters shut down as well. Nearly all performers, and people

working in theatre-related jobs, were affected by the shutdown.

"Aside from rich singers that can afford to make music in their homes, in small studios, the entire arts industry was affected. My parents were furloughed for a very long time and couldn't get unemployment since so many people were trying to," junior Noah Mayfield said. Both of his parents work for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts — his mother, Ashley Stonebraker, as the Manager of the Washington National Opera Orchestra, and his stepfather, David Stensrud, as the Manager of Data Systems and Analysis.

"My mom was telling me that when she got back, a lot of her coworkers had moved away when everything shut down and stopped working for the Kennedy Center," said Mayfield. They could not afford to work for a place that they were not getting paid by.

"Those performers and artists and the people working backstage and people playing instruments and the ushers and the house staff and everyone involved in productions hadn't worked in almost two years at that point, and it had really affected the industry. People were worried for their lives, basically," Junior Hayden Polsky, the Vice President of

Publicity for QO Theatre, said. "I was just so happy to hear that their livelihoods were coming back and they were going to be able to sustain themselves again."

Polsky, ecstatic to get back into the audience of a show again, saw *Six: The Musical* on Broadway the night after previews resumed, and the musical *Wicked* four days after it reopened.

"I really wanted to be there and feel what the energy was going to be like as soon as everything opened again, because not only had the people that worked for the shows not been in the theaters for two years, neither had the audience," Polsky said. "Everyone in the audience was so excited to be in the theater and share the space, and experience the show and the energy together."

Mayfield, who saw *Come From Away* on Broadway just four days after it reopened, agreed that the energy was through the roof.

"You could just feel the excitement in the room. Everybody that was coming to Broadway right after it reopened are people that are invested in Broadway and care about musical theatre," said Mayfield. "You could just kind of hear that in the applause and feel that with the energy in the room. To have that experience, where you could just feel

as excited as everyone else, is really special."

"I've always been appreciative of theatre, but I think I'm even more appreciative of it now that I've experienced what life is like without it," Polsky said. "I don't think that we're going to take theatre for granted anymore. I think that we're going to appreciate every show we go to a little bit more, and we're going to appreciate everyone working on the show more."



Officer Lowery: A reflection on his time at QO

By FIONA FEINGOLD
Senior Staff Writer

Growing up in post-Civil Rights Era Detroit, Officer Joseph Lowery — who recently retired after serving as QO's School Resource Officer — saw many of his friends being harassed by police officers. "We did not like the police. They were not kind to us," he said. While Lowery admitted that some of his friends got into trouble, he also said that "the punishment didn't always fit the crime."

Over time, his view of the police improved. When he was in high school, his friend asked him if he wanted to join a local baseball team: the PAL. When he attended tryouts, he realized what PAL stood for (the Police Athletic League).

"That was the first time that I had ever had any positive contact with the police. A couple of our coaches were police officers, and they were good people," Lowery said.

Lowery left Detroit in 1983 when he enrolled at Howard University. However, Lowery still had no ambitions of pursuing a career in law enforcement. He was originally interested in the sciences and planned on pursuing chemistry, biology, or research professionally. Lowery spent most of his college years working as a lab tech at NIH. The staff there would frequently hold gatherings for college students to get to know professionals in their desired field. At one of these gatherings, he ended up meeting an officer from the Montgomery County Police Department.

"We just hit it off, and he was like 'You know, you should come and do a ride-along with me, 'cause our agency's always trying to diversify...' I

decided just to go and I just had such a blast with him...watching him interact with the people," Lowery said. "He was the first person of color I'd ever met — besides the coaches — who was a police officer."

A month later, while riding around Silver Spring on his scooter, Lowery witnessed a car accident. "I parked my scooter and got off just to make sure people were okay...and then two police officers on motorcycles came up. Well, they were both African American," he said. Lowery was then asked to come to court as a witness, where he ran into two more Black police officers.

Soon after the accident, Lowery's scooter was stolen. He called the police, and a Black female officer showed up at his house. "It was so weird. I kept on having all these encounters with, you know, not just African American officers but nice people — completely different from what I was used to," Lowery explained. After attending another ride-along with an officer, Lowery made the decision in 1988 to join the force.

In his decades-long career, Lowery has worked all kinds of assignments. "I tell people I've done everything except I've never worked with [dogs] and I've never ridden a motorcycle (as a police officer)," he said.

As a young officer, he spent most of his time patrolling. He eventually started doing more specialized work, such as surveillance and DUI enforcement. He was even part of the team that tracked down the infamous D.C. sniper. But how did he get his start working in schools?

While working patrol, Lowery and another officer were called into the police captain's office. They were then

asked to spend time talking to kids in the ESOL program at Wheaton High School.

"I had been pretty active [as a] high schooler mentoring other kids...so I didn't know what to expect, but I at least had that background. So I went in, and we had the most fascinating, awesome conversation with these kids from other countries," Lowery said. From then on, he was asked to talk to the kids every semester until he changed assignments.

He continued working in various aspects of policing until he was recommended to partake in the EFO (Educational Facilities Officer, later replaced by the SRO) program. Lowery went around asking for other officers' opinions until he was told, "You need to just try it." He started working a temporary assignment at Rockville High School and enjoyed connecting with students. After some more experience working in schools, he realized that he wanted to cover a school permanently. He first worked at Blake High School and Magruder High School, until an opening at QO arose.

"I was originally only going to stay for four years. I was going to come in...and follow a ninth grade class 'til the end...I did four years here and I was gonna leave and do something

"I did four years here and I was gonna leave and do something else, but...I had a great relationship with the next senior class, and the next senior class."

- Joseph Lowery

else, but...I had a great relationship with the next senior class, and the next senior class," Lowery said.

So, what would a typical day look like for Lowery in non-COVID years? "If nothing was pending, I would usually start off doing traffic control. After that, I would walk around nearby restaurants and ensure that kids who might be poking around got to school," he said. On Monday mornings, Lowery would then attend meetings with administration and talk about the week's upcoming events. After that, he would often spend time talking to parents about their kids and what was going on in the neighborhood.

Aside from that, his routine would vary depending on the week. However, some would be surprised to learn that he spent some of his time at QO teaching. "I taught drug and alcohol awareness to health classes and did a block of search/seizure for the NSL classes. The child development teacher would also have me do a presentation on signs of abuse and neglect," Lowery explained. The time he spent teaching is when most students had the chance to get to know him on a deeper level.

Lowery is not the only person in his family passionate about helping others. His grandfather, Joseph Lowery Sr., did a lot to advance racial equality (and even received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Obama).

One thing he learned from his grandfather? "I remember him saying... 'The measure of a person isn't in what people think of you when they know you're doing something right. It's really when you know you're doing something good and nobody will ever know.'"



MCPS winter/spring sports vaccine mandates: What do the athletes think?

By **SAMMY KRIMSTEIN**
Staff Writer

The wait is finally over. Quince Orchard athletics have returned to a sense of normalcy. Players are retaking the field, and fans are filling the bleachers yet again, as the fall 2021 sports season is underway.

The road back wasn't easy. With the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic keeping athletes off the field for over a year, it wouldn't be until March of 2021 when athletes could return to play at all, for drastically abbreviated seasons. Now, MCPS athletics are back in full swing, with full length seasons and no restrictions on fans. However, as excitement about the start of fall sports circulated throughout the county, so did the Delta variant, a new and more dangerous strain of the novel disease that cancelled sports seasons in the first place.

The entire nation, including Montgomery County, saw a troubling surge in COVID cases this summer, something that could act as a threat to future sports seasons. To protect athletes, and hopefully avoid any potential outbreaks, MCPS decided to

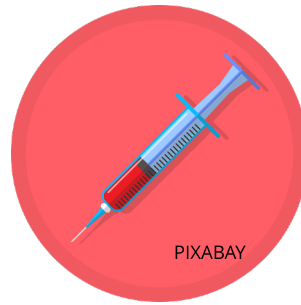
act. On September 10, the MCPS Board of Education issued a new COVID-19 vaccine mandate for winter and spring athletes. Beginning November 15, the county required that all student-athletes will need proof of full vaccination to play and practice (exemptions only allowed for medical reasons). With the winter season fast approaching, MCPS believed this mandate to be necessary in protecting players across the county. Quince Orchard athletic director Jeffrey Rabberman agrees, and feels the new mandate is the best way to keep athletes on the field safely.

"Vaccinations play a critical role in supporting a safe environment for our student-athletes, both in the classroom and the realm of competition," he said. "In addition to protecting individuals and teams, vaccinations minimize interruptions to in-person learning and program activities."

Although many Montgomery County residents in the 12 and older category are already fully vaccinated, this mandate affects every student athlete in the county. An outbreak between unvaccinated players could potentially shut down an entire season, for multiple teams.

After losing his entire volleyball season in 2020, junior volleyball player Noor Deify is all for the new mandate.

"The new vaccine mandate for winter and spring sports in MCPS is a big important step towards defeating the COVID-19 pandemic," he said. "It's the only way our school, the fans and the athletes can enjoy the fun that we've lost for the past year and a half."



Last year, restrictions during spring sports not only shortened the season, but also kept athletic teams from competing against schools they would play in a normal year. Instead, MCPS athletic teams were grouped into regions, only playing the teams within their own region. Roberto Terrell, a junior and member of Quince Orchard's track and field team, missed out on traveling to

schools across the entire county last year.

"The fun in track is being able to compete with everyone," he said. "Not being able to compete with several athletes from different schools made it less exciting."

After everything athletes have missed, it is no surprise that many athletes have already had the COVID-19 vaccine shot. County residents as a whole have felt the necessity of the vaccine as well, as according to the CDC a whopping 99.1% of eligible Montgomery County residents 12 and over have received at least one dose of the vaccine, and 89.1% of eligible people are fully vaccinated. Although Montgomery County residents have been more than willing to roll up their sleeves, people across the nation have been more hesitant, as just over 76.4% of Americans as a whole have had one dose.

Similarly to most QO athletes, junior swimmer Sophia Marks is strongly in favor of the new vaccine mandate.

"I think it's important for everyone to get vaccinated," she said, "and requiring it for athletes is the bare minimum."

The Maryland Bobcats, Montgomery County's professional soccer club

By **JAKE REVZAN**
Staff Writer

Did you know a professional men's soccer team plays 10 minutes away from QO?

The Maryland Bobcats are Montgomery County's professional soccer team and they play their home games at the Maryland Soccerplex. In July 2020, the organization took a huge jump to success as the Bobcats announced they applied and were accepted into the National Independent Soccer Association, better known as NISA. This announcement was a huge deal for local soccer. The Bobcats are the first men's pro team in the state since Crystal Palace Baltimore, a team that hasn't existed for over 11 years.

Evan Raimist, Bobcats Vice President and Director of Operations, has been a part of the impressive journey the club has taken throughout the years.

The club started from the bottom. "What started as a way for former

college friends to keep in touch after school by playing soccer continued to evolve and grow until around 4 years ago when the players and coaches realized the talent they were starting to accumulate," says Raimist.

The club was experimental at first as the team went through numerous name and league changes. Wanting to test themselves, in the spring of 2019 the club joined the United Premier Soccer League (UPSL). The team defied all expectations and placed in the top 8 out of more than 350 teams nationwide. Then in the fall of 2019, the team went undefeated in league play and won their first trophy, bringing the UPSL National Championship trophy home to Maryland.

This phenomenal play boosted the club's chances to go pro and join the NISA. "The process of joining NISA didn't happen overnight nor was it taken lightly. No matter how good you think you are on the field, no matter how organized and prepared you are to think you are off the field, making the jump from an amateur

team to a professional team is a huge leap," Raimist says.

When the club was accepted into NISA, the Bobcats were born. Raimist believes "the team is ready to change how soccer is thought about and run in this county."

Just like the club's brand, the team has consisted of many roster changes throughout their brief 10-year history, but some things have stayed consistent. The team has had the same core group of players playing for the team for about 5 years. This is the main reason for their success on and off the field. Team chemistry cannot be built overnight and it takes time. Chemistry is arguably the most important part of a successful sports team, even more than physical skill. No club is complete without the mental side of the game.

Thankfully, this is not an issue for the club as many of the players are friends off of the field. Feeling welcomed to the team is a huge part of the club and managers strive to make everyone feel included. When making the step to a professional play,

"We wanted to make sure that from top to bottom, on the field to off, we felt like we were actually ready to bring that level of soccer to our players and staff. We had to make sure that the league fit what our morals and ethos were and that we felt it would be a good fit for us to continue to grow our club," says Raimist.

Today, the Bobcats are sitting at a 2-3-7 professional record, but the season is far from over. The team is adapting to the professional setting and has high hopes for what is to come. This is a learning year for the team and winning games isn't everything. "For me, a successful season is also showing people what fun professional soccer can be at this level and that the players at this level have so much skill. Drive, enthusiasm for the game," Raimist says.

If you love soccer, come out and support the team at one of their home games. The tickets are cheap and the games are fun to watch. You will be surprised by the extremely high level the team plays at.



The Maryland Bobcats 2021 professional team starting line up





VIEWPOINT

The Ugly Side of the Beautiful Game

By SAM SMITH
Staff Writer

This article is about football (and no, I am not talking about American football), I am talking about the de facto national sport of 226 countries. I am talking about the sport that can turn a little Brazilian boy, born in the Favelas, into a multi-millionaire professional footballer that is now the face of that nation. I am talking about the sport that has the power to unite an entire country and dismantle it at the same time. Arguably, the biggest force in soccer are the fans, who can get quite emotional and passionate when things don't go their way.

It has been proven time and time again that when fans cannot accept a loss, they target the ethnicities of players. A perfect example of this inherent racism is the reaction of the English fans after their loss to Italy in the European Championship final in July of 2021.

Both of these teams proved their dominance throughout group and knockout stages, but even their winning records could not completely convince their fans to fully support the players. As the game crept on, there was a very eerie feeling in the Wembley stadium as if something was afoot, as fans peered at the 1-1 scoreline. When it came down to penalties, three African American under-25 footballers were chosen to take the most important kicks of the ball for England in over 55 years. Unfortunately Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho, and Bukayo Saka all missed their penalties, and you could see the

devastation on their faces.

English international Bukayo Saka being warmly embraced by English national team manager Gareth Southgate after a devastating penalty miss. Via The Telegraph

However, the sadness was not just due to the championship loss: Bukayo knew the imminent abuse he was about to receive. Just like clockwork, his most recent Instagram post was riddled with monkey emojis and the n-word being spammed throughout. Also, while there were messages of comfort, those were overshadowed by pure, all-too-normal hatred and ignorance.

On the other hand, Bukayo was not the only player being targeted with this racism: fellow teammate Rashford was ruthlessly harassed as well. A mural located in Manchester, England depicting a black and white portrait of Rashford was severely vandalized post-defeat to Italy. The bottom line is: if you were a person of color on the England national team after the final, the chances are you were racially abused in some sort of way.

A mural depicting Marcus Rashford was forced to be covered up after being vandalized in Withington, Manchester. Via Fox News

Since soccer is such a global sport, that means the racism that comes with it has branched out to all nations. The United States has never been known for their men's national team, but in recent times they have seen success with their 3-2 win against Mexico in the CONCACAF Nations League final in June 2021. Even though the United States won, hate still crept into the

hearts of the fans, who ended up showing their true colors when harassing African-American central defender, Mark McKenzie. After a sub-par performance in the final with an early mistake leading to Mexico's first goal, the so-called "fans" took to social media to let him know their displeasure. There was constructive criticism of course, but far too many ignorant comments focused on McKenzie's African American heritage and appearance.

There are far too many stories that are identical to Saka's, Sancho's, Rashford's, and McKenzie's experiences, which is the major issue with soccer in recent times. Black soccer players are so often racially discriminated against that they are aware that when they have a bad performance, they know the types of comments they will be getting on their next tweet or post. As easy as it is to focus on the hate in all of these situations, I would much rather end this piece on a more uplifting note.

Some people may choose to stand by and watch, but the people that cause the most change are the people that speak with their actions. Just like the lone woman who covered up the vandalism on the Marcus Rashford mural and turned it into a viral masterpiece. Or maybe each and every comment of support under Bukayo Saka's latest Instagram post, even while the rest were riddled with abuse. The bottom line is, hate is running rampant in our world whether we like it or not, and it is even affecting the simplest of games such as soccer. But while hatred is rising, so is unity, so is comradery, and so is

hope for better times. These better times come from those who act on the hope they possess and stimulate real change in society, just like the brave woman who refurbished the mural. While racism and hatred are at all-time high nowadays, it just makes the people that actively fight against it shine that much brighter.

"It is not good enough for us all to sit silently on the sidelines when we see or read racist remarks or behavior. Inaction has a consequence. We must call it out. We must not tolerate it."
- Marcus Rashford

The new voice of Quince Orchard football

By JAKE ZAIDERMAN
Senior Staff Writer

After more than 25 years as the voice of Quince Orchard, the great Lee Faris decided it was finally time to put down the microphone. In steps Teddy Gelman '14, the new voice of Cougar football.

Gelman has worked numerous jobs behind the scenes and on the microphone in the radio and television industry, including being the producer for WTOP's Morning Drive.

After graduating from the University of Delaware in 2018 with a major in sports broadcasting and sports journalism, Gelman moved back to Gaithersburg looking for a job, eventually hooking up with WTOP. He was also slowly being reintroduced to the QO athletics scene, meeting up with head track and cross country coach Seann Pelkey, who gave him the opportunity to serve as the public address (PA) announcer for the big Cougar Relays track meet that takes place each spring.

Gelman was introduced to Athletic Director Jeff Rabberman after volunteering for Pelkey during the 2019 cross country season. Faris informed Rabberman that 2019 would be his last season doing PA for the Cougar football team. This is where Gelman saw an opportunity.

"I told Coach Pelkey and AD Rabberman that I was interested in

the football PA job," said Gelman. "We had a few conversations about it before he offered me the job over the summer [of 2020]."

Due to the cancellation of the 2020 season, Gelman instead made his debut during a scrimmage against Sherwood last spring. "I remember feeling a bit overwhelmed during that game, but I made it through and was good enough that they let me come back this fall," he said.

Teddy has had experience with PA even before working with Quince Orchard. "I called more than 20 Delaware football games on radio play-by-play while in college. This really helped me grow as an in-game announcer while also learning to appreciate the 'production' of the game," he said. Gelman added that knowing "how much time you have to talk before the next play" allows breaks between quarters and halftime to be filled with important information for the spectators.

Gelman applies the same strategies in the newsroom to the press box. He wants to make the overall experience enjoyable for the fans in attendance. From reading advertisements to playing music and everything in between, he knows he's got to stay focused on the task at hand.

Gelman also knows he has some big shoes to fill. Faris is being inducted into the Quince Orchard Athletics Hall of Fame with the Class of 2021. Gelman wants to have the

same effect on QO fans that Faris had. "I remember standing in the Red Army as a student and feeling very enamored with the atmosphere, and I think Lee had a lot to do with that," he said. "I'm sure my own announcing style will continue to develop over time, but hopefully, I can contribute in a way that makes people feel similar to how I did when I was part of the Red Army."

Gelman also wants to incorporate the elements that make QO different

from the rest — "the team, the Red Army, the community."

He admits he messed up a few names his first go-around and was thankful for people going up and correcting him. "Accuracy and authenticity are very important to me," he said.

Gelman has a long career ahead of him in the press box. If Gelman succeeds in filling Faris's role, then he will have a long career in the booth.



Teddy Gelman before the Quince Orchard vs. Seneca Valley football game



QO Athletics: Season Updates

Girls Varsity Soccer

By ADAM GOTKIN
Editor-in-Chief

Outside of football, there is no more dominant team at Quince Orchard than Girls Soccer. Led by long-time head coach Peg Keiller, the Cougars have been a force in Montgomery County since the turn of the century. This year has been no different. The Cougars have started off their year with a record of 5-1-1 and have outscored their opponents by a score of 35-6. The team's success has come from a mixture of young and old players. Four-year varsity players Rachel Swartz and Carli

Sullenger, among others, have brought in the new generation and nurtured them to become the next stars.

After a short regular season of only a month and 11 days, ending on October 20, playoffs will start soon for the Cougars. And the time for Quince Orchard to exorcise demons will come with it. It has been 14 years since our girl's soccer team has won a state title. They hope that this is finally the year that the streak can come to end, and that they'll be the ones hoisting the trophy over their heads in the end.

Boys Varsity Soccer

By JAKE REVZAN
Staff Writer

Following a 1-4 record during the shortened pandemic spring season, boys soccer is looking for revenge. With 12 returning seniors, now is the time to win. Seniors and team captains Brendan Fox, Liam Keiller, and Ken Kouassi are ready to lead the team and challenge for the Maryland 4A state championship. "I think our team's chemistry and how close we are with each other will be the main reason we win games," Bobby Farone said.

The boys started the season red hot with a 3-game unbeaten streak including a 5-0 blowout win against

Rockville. The team is now sitting at a 6-1-1 record, 1st place in the region! With the second half of the season still to be played, Farone and the team will look to continue dominating the region.

Thursday, September 7, Quince Orchard played against Northwest. After a slow first half, the Cougars were down 1-0. But, the boys came out of halftime with high intensity and scored 2 quick goals to take the lead. Midfielder Kevin Zacarias chipped the goalie with a banger from 25 yards out to seal the game. The packed crowd loved and the highly anticipated rivalry game did not disappoint.

Varsity Field Hockey

By SAMMY KRIMSTEIN
Staff Writer

After an appearance in the state semifinals in 2019, and a shortened season last year, the 2021 Quince Orchard varsity field hockey team has one objective: winning a state championship. With that goal in mind, the team has adopted a "do whatever it takes" mindset, hoping to leave everything out on the field. Head Coach Alicia Vincenty credits much of the team's success to the leadership and experience of the team's seniors.

"All six of our seniors are great role models both on and off the field," she said. "They hold the team to high standards and are extremely hardworking."

Leadership from seniors has sparked a powerful team chemistry, which has had a great impact on games. Everyone on the team gets along well, and is committed to whatever is best for the good of the group. With just two games remaining in the season, it is clear that the mentality and chemistry of QO's field hockey team has paid off. Out-scoring opponents 33-7, the team's record stands at a very successful 6-2. Some of the most consistent players on the team have been seniors Izzy Romano (defender), Kayla Young (forward), and Sophie Sharp (forward).

With the state finals in their sights, the Cougars field hockey team is more than ready for the fast approaching state playoffs.

Girls Varsity Volleyball

By JAKE ZAIDERMAN
Senior Staff Writer

The Quince Orchard girls volleyball team is off to their best start in over a decade with a 7-1 record. Led by senior captains Pelin Altintas and Bianca Gutierrez, they have used their experience to dominate the competition. They've outscored their opponents 22 sets to 5 while sweeping 5 matches as well.

Their sole loss of the season came against rival Northwest in a back-and-forth match. While this match may have ended in a loss, the fact that the Cougars competed with the Jags and had a chance shows this program is on the right track.

At the time of writing, the Cougars have six matches remaining, including one against the top team in the county: the Sherwood Warriors. The final game of the regular season is October 27 at home against Walter Johnson.



Varsity Football

By ADAM GOTKIN
Editor-in-Chief

2020 was supposed to be "the year" for the Quince Orchard Varsity Football team. The defense was supposed to be one of the best ever, with almost every starter on the defense holding a D-1 scholarship offer. The offense would be on the

same level, led by quarterback Brian Plummer, the first QO quarterback to ever go to an FBS school. All of these stars in the 2021 class meant that the guys behind them were less experienced, something that has been seen at the start of this year.

The Cougars have steadily beat every opponent so far, though some games are closer than they would have

liked. QO beat Paint Branch by only seven, the closest margin against the Panthers in over a decade. Quince Orchard only led WJ by seven at halftime and Seneca Valley by 13 at halftime. Uncharacteristic penalties have brought back a number of Cougar touchdowns. The team has done its job, staying undefeated through five games, but their

standards are higher.

The team hopes that as the season goes on, penalties can be cleaned up and things will start to roll. Tonight the Cougars head to Gaithersburg to take on the Trojans, then next week, they'll take on their undefeated rivals Northwest.



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