

THE PROWLER

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

As the war pushes on, Ukraine gains help from an unlikely ally: the Grim Reaper

By *MAX HANDELMAN*
Staff Writer

Snow crunches underfoot as a small Russian unit traverses the ruined hellscape that was once the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. The falling gray soot and eye-stinging smoke suffocating reminders of the bitter conflict at hand. But the black smoke isn't just a sign of war, it serves as the perfect camouflage for a creature who would choose to lurk in the shadows.

As they continue to march into the heart of Ukraine, these soldiers are oblivious to the fact that they've been followed, tracked down by a ghostly figure whose footsteps are shrouded by the sound of gunfire and remains undetected in the surrounding chaos. This ominous phantom, cloaked in the robes of death itself, raises cold steel in the form of an M16 machine gun high into the air, and in one clean motion splatters red, the body dead before it even hits the ground. The Ukrainian Reaper has struck again.

At least, that's how the story's alleged to go.

As the Russo-Ukrainian conflict

persists, social media's lately been abuzz with a particular Ukrainian soldier who has supposedly killed 20 Russian soldiers on his own, thus earning him the moniker of "The Ukrainian Reaper."

On February 25, a picture of a Ukrainian soldier with his face blurred out was the top trending post on Twitter that gave this mysterious reaper a real life identity: a sniper named Volodymr Vist.

Due to their shared skills in stealth operations and levels of obscurity, many have drawn parallels between Vist and a Finnish sniper named Simo Haya. More notoriously known as "The White Death," Haya had killed an estimated 500 Soviet Union soldiers with his rifle during WWII, making him one of the most deadly individuals in the history modern warfare.

Vist's story has been considered by many to be the embodiment of courage. After all, this David-and-Goliath-like concept where one valorous soldier stands up and takes the fight to a much bigger, more powerful force is something straight

out of legend.

The problem, however, is just that: until further evidence is brought forth, this story is entirely fabricated..

While the name "Volodymr Vist," has spread far and wide across the internet, no official documentation has come forward that confirms the existence of a soldier with this name, and if they did exist, officials also have no evidence to determine whether or not they were single handedly responsible for the death of 20 Russian soldiers. Incidentally, it appears that the story of The Ukrainian Reaper is nothing more than an urban myth.

Yet, while he himself may be fake, what's very real is the hope and determination the legend of the Ukrainian Reaper brings to the people of Ukraine. Like the now-debunked phantasmal fighter pilot dubbed "The Ghost of Kyiv," who was said to have gunned down 5 Russian fighter jets on their own, The Ukrainian Reaper is greatly admired by Ukraine supporters around the world as a symbol of bravery much needed in such grave times.

These two ghostly characters,

along with scenes of dozens of civilians making makeshift Molotov cocktails, protesters blocking Russian convoys, and images of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky confidently strutting down the streets of Kyiv, are part of a much larger picture that reflects Ukrainian pride, a picture that illustrates the strength and fortitude of a people who are proudly prepared to lay down their lives in defense of the nation they love.

"We will not give up and we will not lose. We will fight until the end at sea, in the air. We will continue fighting for our land, whatever the cost," Zelensky said in a speech to the UK's House of Commons last Tuesday, March 8.

As it stands now, the Russo-Ukrainian war has no end in sight. Nevertheless, while the world continues to anxiously watch on as Russia continues to lay siege against Ukraine, from these sparks of hope one thing remains clear: regardless of whatever fiery destruction ensues, the spirit of Ukraine will push on as the flag of blue and yellow, no matter how torched, flies high for years to come.

Prowler investigation highlights complexities of QO sexual assault case

By *MADDY RUBERY*
Editor-in-Chief

One out of six women in the United States will fall victim to rape or attempted rape in their lifetimes, according to RAINN (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network). That is around four students in an average English class of 25 people.

Montgomery County Public Schools has had their fair share of controversies regarding sexual assault, with Damascus High School making national headlines for the hazing and rape of four JV football players in the school's locker room back in 2018. Two nearly identical civil lawsuits filed by the victims described how former staff of the school "discussed the developing situation via a text message group chat that evening. None of them, however, contacted the victims' parents to alert them to the serious, developing situation," according to an article from ABC7 News.

MCPS's history of abuse is not limited to only Damascus, though. Sexual misconduct can take on many

forms: the purposeful intoxication of another with the intent to take advantage, the lingering of an unwanted touch, manipulation disguised as comfort or support, and so much more.

The Prowler was made aware of one sexual assault claim that happened just this year, but an investigation into this claim illustrates the complex nature of such incidents.

One freshman attending Quince Orchard, who will be referred to by the pseudonym "Jane Doe" to protect her privacy, confided in her counselor about being sexually assaulted earlier this school year in the fall. Jane filed her report and was instructed to stay home for a few days.

And Doe isn't alone—in an article written by WUSA9 in December of 2021, MCPS had already reported 162 cases of students committing sexual misconduct, "just 59 days into the school year, putting it on pace for over 480 total cases."

According to MCPS's Title IV and Sexual Harassment/Assault Protocols, once a report is filed by an alleged targeted student, "a safety plan will be

implemented to ensure all students involved are safe to access educational programming at the school." A Student Safety Plan (SSP)'s goal is to interrupt contact between the alleged victim and alleged attacker, and designates trusted adults and points of contact for the students involved.

The Prowler spoke with Jane's mother, who said she was unable to find any written evidence of an SSP ever being obtained, despite its direct reference within the measures that should be taken after a report of sexual misconduct.

Administration could not discuss the specifics of any student safety plans due to privacy concerns, but The Prowler could confirm that any plan is developed between administration, counseling, the student, and their parents/guardians.

While The Prowler could not obtain any written safety plans, an investigation into the incident did occur and Jane obtained a flash pass to the counseling office for her to use.

Jane claims her alleged attacker began following her to her classes.

"He even came into my English

class a couple times and started talking to the kids at my table," she says, which felt like an attempt to "scare [her] into being quiet."

The Prowler talked to the English teacher in question, who claims they do not have recollection of an incident like this, but they also do not remember being informed of Jane's sexual assault claim by administration. According to the example safety plan on MCPS's website, "all school staff will be informed of this safety plan... staff that work immediately with the student will be made aware of the name of the alleged offender."

The Prowler also interviewed two tablemates of Jane Doe. Both of them said they were unable to recall an instance in which the alleged assaulter appeared in their class.

The plan states that "Montgomery County Public Schools provides a safe and secure learning environment that is free from harassment, intimidation or bullying." It is even stated within the SSP that "the student will not have face-to-face contact or online contact with the aggressor while this plan is in effect," and if there are any instances

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WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Ketanji Brown Jackson chosen as Supreme Court Justice nominee

By JAY MOTIWALA
Editor-in-Chief

After the retirement of former justice Stephen Breyer was announced a few months ago, President Joe Biden has nominated Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court, making her the first black woman to ever be selected for the position.

Judge Breyer is a liberal judge and is currently the oldest member on the Supreme Court. He was urged to retire now by liberal/left-leaning activists in order to prevent another conservative justice to be chosen in the future to replace him.

Breyer has had a long and illustrious career in public service, serving on the Supreme Court longer than any of the current justices.

In his letter of retirement written to President Biden on January 27, Breyer said, "I intend this decision to take effect when the Court rises for the summer recess this year (typically late June or early July)." This means that Breyer will still serve until the recess of the Supreme Court takes place during the allotted time frame. During recess, the Supreme Court does not hear any cases and instead study any previously argued and

forthcoming cases, while working on their opinions.

Jackson was chosen as Biden's nominee following a lengthy decision process, with the decision made almost a month after Justice Breyer announced his retirement.

The New York Times confirmed that on February 22, Biden had interviewed at least three potential candidates for the open justice position. Judge Jackson, along with judges Leandra R. Kruger and J. Michelle Childs, all spoke with Biden about the possibility of serving on the court. Three days later, he called Judge Jackson to relay the news of her nomination and congratulate her. Biden had promised on his campaign trail - and had reaffirmed his promise after Breyer's announcement - that he would nominate a black woman to the Supreme Court.

Ketanji Brown Jackson was born in Washington, D.C and raised in Miami, Florida. During her childhood, she

had prowess at speech and debate and was the student body president of Miami Palmetto Senior High School. After high school, she graduated from Harvard magna cum laude (meaning "with great distinction," usually denoting a high GPA) and went on to graduate from Harvard Law School cum laude



Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson (above)

("with distinction").

Jackson built up her resume before being selected as a SCOTUS (Supreme Court Of The United States) nominee. She served as a public defender, an attorney who

represents defendants who are

unable to pay for lawyers, and would be the first former public defender to serve on the Supreme Court.

Judge Jackson was nominated in 2009, and confirmed in 2010, as the Vice Chair of the U.S Sentencing

Commission and was nominated in 2012, and confirmed in 2013, to serve on the U.S District Court of the District of Columbia. She was nominated for both positions by former President Barack Obama.

President Biden also nominated Judge Jackson to the U.S Court of Appeals for the D.C Circuit in 2021, making Jackson one of Biden's first judicial nominees on any court.

Judge Jackson had a connection to the Supreme Court even before her nomination last month. She served as Justice Stephen Breyer's law clerk, and was able to see first-hand experience of working as a judge for the Supreme Court.

While a specific date is not set for the confirmation process, in which the Senate votes on whether they will confirm Jackson or not, Democratic leadership wishes for her to be confirmed as soon as possible.

Judge Jackson's nomination is a historic one, and her confirmation would allow for there to still be three left-leaning justices on the Supreme Court.

Given that Biden will not revoke his nomination, Jackson is likely to be confirmed to the Supreme Court, as the Senate hasn't rejected a Supreme Court nominee since 1987, and public opinion of her has not skewed to the negative.

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The Prowler gladly accepts comments, concerns, and letters to the editor. Letters may be emailed to QOHSproowler@gmail.com, mailed c/o The Prowler to the school address above, or dropped off directly to Ms. Cooley-Klein in Room 241. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.

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.

CORRECTIONS FROM LAST PRINT ISSUE

Pages 6-7: Carter G. Woodson was mistakenly referred to as Carter G. Wilson.
Page 9: The sentence from the *Euphoria* review should have said "cheating with Elliot" instead of "cheating on Elliot."

Are we returning to a pre-Covid-19 world?

MCPS makes masks optional in schools

By GRACE GNAMOA
Staff Writer

Last Tuesday, on March 8, Montgomery County Public Schools announced that students and staff could choose if they wanted to wear a mask in schools.

According to the newsletter that was sent to every student, parent and guardian, the decision to make masks optional "[was] revised [with the] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines that no longer recommend universal mask-wearing in schools."

With the news, MCPS created a slogan, "On or Off, It's Just Me. Be Kind and Respect My Mask Choice." By creating this slogan, MCPS hopes everyone will continue to "respect individual decisions about mask-wearing at this time. Our staff and students must model kindness, acceptance and inclusivity. MCPS will work with students, staff and families to promote a shared understanding of respecting each individual's decision as valid."

Principal Beth Thomas, who has made sure to implement all regulations made by MCPS, has shown her support for the new slogan. "The fact is that is an individual decision, and we need to respect everybody's decision and understand that if somebody doesn't feel comfortable around somebody not [wearing] a mask, we will do everything we can to ensure that they feel comfortable in this space," she

said.

Principal Thomas brought up concerns made by parents and made it clear that it is "policy that attendance is required at school... There is an expectation that students are attending school." Back in January, there was an option for students and parents to choose virtual learning if they felt uncomfortable coming back to the building, but that option was taken away. "There is [an] expectation that students attend school, all staff attend school, and they have a right to either wear a mask or not wear a mask," added Thomas.

To help alleviate the concerns of another outbreak, the school will continue to provide KN95 masks and rapid covid tests (which will be distributed during lunch) every three weeks. "If there was an uptick in the county, or the school, we would collaborate with school system officials and the Department of Health and Human Services to assess what needs to be done... That is an ongoing discussion," Thomas explained.

Students, staff and parents have access to links to get tested or have their questions answered, by clicking the links sent in the weekly newsletter sent by Principal Thomas. There are also triage rooms in the school in case a student or staff member presents symptoms of Covid-19 while in the building.

If anyone has any symptoms or feels as if they are presenting symptoms, "the nurses and health

techs will go through the signs and offer a rapid test on sight. Whether the test comes out positive or negative, the student [or staff] must go home for the day," Thomas said.

The past week, some teachers have recorded how many students were and weren't wearing a mask. On a two-day average, 64% of students were still wearing their masks.

"My friends and I don't trust that many people have the vaccine to establish herd immunity in the school, so for now, I'm going to continue to wear my mask," said senior Marjorie Martinez.

As everyone tries to adjust to these changes and get back to the lives we had pre Covid-19, there will always be information and supplies given out by MCPS and QO. Every couple of weeks, the school receives rapid Covid-19 tests and they are given out during lunch. The school will continue to document how many students ask for a test as well. If you need a test, don't hesitate to ask the secretary in the main office for one.

"My friends and I don't trust that many people have the vaccine to establish herd immunity in the school, so for now, I'm going to continue to wear my mask."

- Marjorie Martinez

VIEWPOINT

The rise of 'honor' killings in Iran has shocked the country

By AVA GARZAN
Staff Writer

At the age of 17, Mona Heydari was beheaded by her husband while attempting to free herself from domestic abuse. Two years prior, 14-year-old Romina Ashrafi was killed by her father as she went to elope with her boyfriend. This list could go on, yet these cases do still tend to stay on the low. The femicide in Iran has astounded the people, as a light has been shown on what's been named as "honor" killings. Despite "honor" killings going on for hundreds of years all around the world, they have now sparked the attention of the public after these brutal killings were circulated in the media.

The "honor" killings are brought upon women by their male relatives if they find their actions are deemed unethical. For Ashrafi, her fate was seemingly ignored by officials. According to Golnaz Esfandiari from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (a non-profit organization reporting news in Central Eurasia and the Middle East), after being detained for

running away with her boyfriend, the police "sent [Ashrafi] back to her family, even though she expressed fears for her life in citing her father's bad temperament." Her father is currently facing a sentence of up to 10 years for killing his daughter. Esfandiari said this murder "led to nationwide outrage" and activists blame "laws that fail to protect women against violence and allow girls as young as 13 to be married."

The lawyer Ebrahim Nikdel Ghadam represented

Ashrafi's case and suggested "that light sentences for those who kill their female relatives pave the way for more such killings." This tragically was proven true, as less than two years later, this past February, an appalling video of Sajjad Heydari was taken walking with his wife Mona Heydari's head in his hand. The NCRI Women Committee said "Mona was a victim of domestic violence," a law against which has yet to be implemented.

They go on to state that there are "60 unpunished honor killings in Khuzestan," a province in Iran.

The publication highlights the current "misogynist clerical regime" as the root of this femicide. With the patriarchy embedded into fundamentalist Islamic values, this has affected the lives of many women in

not be sentenced to death." Activists argue that people are able to find loopholes in the laws in order to proceed with such atrocities.

A bill— named Protection, Dignity and Security of Women Against Violence— is currently waiting to be approved by the Iranian Parliament that aims to take a step towards more rights for women. The Borgen Project, an organization fighting global poverty, says the bill's goal is to "implement educational courses for teachers, parents and students...implement legal support for women in abusive situations...[and] initiate training for medical workers to equip them on how to help women seek help in abusive situations."

March is Women's History month, so it is important to raise awareness to issues that women face all around the world at this day and age. Although this bill does not solve all of the issues that surround the lack of safety for women in Iran, it is a shift in the government's framework and allows for the voice of women to be heard. People in Iran are continuing to fight for women's rights and protection, as the constant battle for gender equality prevails across the globe.

March is Women's History month, so it is important to raise awareness to issues that women face all around the world at this day and age.

Iran since the Iranian Revolution in the 1970s.

Rezvan Moghadam from the Campaign to Stop Honor Killings told The Persian Independent, "Before the revolution, tribes and clans had the same beliefs, but because there was a law, people were educated... and there was a lower frequency of murders," stating that " [everyone] knows that the law protects them and they turn around to find an accomplice who will

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VIEWPOINT

Letter from Texas governor encourages transphobia

By E. LEATH
Staff Writer

In the past few months, we have seen an increase of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation all across the country. On February 22, for example, Texas Governor Greg Abbott sent out a letter directing the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to investigate any parents of transgender children that were receiving gender-affirming care. In this letter, Abbott labels this needed care for transgender children as abuse, and threatens the supportive parents of kids getting the care they need to live their lives as themselves.

Luckily, the law following this letter was blocked by a state judge on March 2, but investigations of parents have still been happening.

Sending investigators after families who are just trying to be supportive of their children is a violation of their rights and the Texas Administrative Procedures Act. And these investigations could prevent transgender people from getting the care they need. What was already a

tough process to go through just became more complex for them, and with a fear for their family now added to this, it could make people hesitant to seek medical help.

In Abbott's letter, he wrote: "I hereby direct your agency to conduct a prompt and thorough investigation of any reported instances of these abusive procedures in the State of Texas." The procedures he claims are 'abusive' are gender-affirming care practices given to transgender people to help them cope with their gender dysphoria, the feeling of discomfort that occurs when someone's gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth.

In a study done in SAGE Open Medicine, a peer-reviewed medical journal, it was found that "gender-affirming hormone therapy is an effective and safe short-term treatment." Hormone therapy and puberty blockers are safe to use and reversible, making Abbott's arguments flawed.

We see his argument further develop when he shares his concern that parents were letting their children get gender-related surgery,

but these surgeries are rarely done for people under the age of 18.

Attempting to criminalize healthcare for transgender youth while completely disregarding professional medical statements shows how these politicians' actions are not made with the best intentions for these children. Statements like Governor Abbott's come from a place of misinformation and misunderstanding that add to the discrimination against transgender people in medicine. The discrimination on the basis of gender is seen in many parts of life, and when

politicians spread harmful messages, it only fuels people's beliefs and gives them a safe space to spread hate.

What needs to be understood is that it is not required by law to have these investigations, and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services have even been told to stop their investigations. It is beneficial that the law was not passed to make this mandatory, but because investigators are still targeting families, changes need to be made to ensure the safety of transgender youth and their families.



WIKIMEDIA (TED EYTAN)

VIEWPOINT

U.S. Women's soccer team's successful lawsuit is a wake-up call to end the wage gap

By MIA KAUFFMAN
Staff Writer

For the past six years, there has been an intense conversation between the US women's soccer team and their bosses at U.S. Soccer about equitable treatment in regards to financial compensation, training facilities, and social acknowledgment. Players have continuously spoken up against the federation due to unequal treatment of the women's team and their male counterparts.

Finally, they put their words into legal action. In March of 2019, all 28 members of the US women's soccer team filed a lawsuit against U.S. Soccer. In the lawsuit, the players accused their employers, the federation, and the head of U.S. Soccer of gender discrimination. Not only was this lawsuit important for the female athletes, but it was a monumental step to push the conversation about equality in the workforce to the top of everyone's minds.

One of the main arguments in their case focuses on equal pay. Besides their overall paychecks, bonuses for players are drastically different by thousands of dollars for the men's team compared to the women's teams. According to the

Washington Post, the lawsuit illustrated the following scenario: "If both teams played 20 friendlies in a year, a top-tier women's national team player would earn \$164,320 less, or 38% of the compensation for a similarly situated MNT [Men's National Team] player." This was proved true within the previous collective-bargaining agreement that was concluded in December 2016.

The gender discrimination from U.S. Soccer is not only visible in the players paychecks but, according to an interview with star players Alex Morgan, Carli Loyd, and Megan Rapinoe in Women's Health, in "nearly every aspect of [their] work conditions,' including but not limited to, where and how often they played, the medical treatment and coaching received, and traveling condition."

Almost three years later, after countless legal battles, protests, and chants from fans for change and reform in the stands at soccer games, U.S. Soccer and the Women's team settled their lawsuit.

Victorious, the Women's team was awarded \$24 million dollars in settlement. That money will be split up for different uses: \$22 million will be allocated among the players named in the class-action lawsuit. The gender discrimination from US Soccer is not only visible in the players paychecks

but, according to an interview with star players Alex Morgan, Carli Loyd, and Megan Rapinoe in Women's Health, in 'nearly every aspect of [their] work conditions,' including but not limited to, where and how often they played, the medical treatment and coaching reprieved, and traveling condition." "divided is unknown. The other two million will be donated and set aside for, according to Women's Health, "charities and 'post-career goals.' Each player may also apply for up to \$50,000 of this money."

There has been criticism against the athletes that as they are already wealthy people, they don't necessarily need all of that money. However, what is important is the precedent that the lawsuit establishes.

The wage gap is directly aligned with gender discrimination and has been a prevalent issue for centuries. It has been over half a century since the illegalization of the wage gap, yet it



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

still very much exists in society today. According to American Progress, in the most recent Census Bureau from 2018, "women of all races earned, on average, 82 cents for every \$1 earned by men of all races." Additionally, there have been arguments in the past regarding a wage gap in part-time vs full time employment. As stated by Pew Research Center, women made "84% of what men earned" in full time and part time jobs. No matter the hours worked, the age gap is still there.

This data is from roughly four years ago, so there has been progress since then: the U.S. The Women's Soccer team lawsuit is a clear representation of such progress in eliminating the wage gap in society.



Complexities of QO sexual assault case

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

in which this occurs, the student is obligated to “report any breach of this plan including on/off school grounds.”

Doe claimed she received a number of threats as a result of sharing her story, one of which involved another female student threatening to physically harm her, and that she discussed these with her

counselor. The QO administration says this was not reported, nor were any such screenshots shared with them.

According to the QO administration, there was also no recorded visual evidence of Doe's initial claim of sexual assault, since while there are cameras in the

hallways, there are none in the Media Center, where she claimed the assault occurred, because the Media Center is considered a ‘classroom.’

Administration also stated that an investigation found issues with the credibility of Jane's story, and that the case was investigated and then dismissed by the Special Victims

Division of Montgomery County.

Even after reporting her alleged assaulter, Doe felt that she was not thoroughly protected, so her parents had her placed into virtual learning.

- Maddy Rubery

The Ukraine / Russia conflict explained

By SAM SMITH
Staff Writer

The Russian invasion on Ukraine is definitely the most talked about headline in the world as of right now. The atrocities being committed by the Russian Army and Russian president Vladimir Putin has the entire world on notice. However, there are many parts to this conflict and details that the general public may not be aware of.

First of all, Russia and Ukraine have had major problems in the past with the Russian annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea. Even though this invasion was all the way back in 2014, this created extreme tensions between the two nations. There are two polar opposite points of view of this conflict. Ukraine and other nations believe this annexation was a major violation against Ukraine's sovereignty. However, Putin had a very positive outlook on his

nation's actions.

According to the Washington Post, Putin says the invasion is “to ensure proper conditions for the people of Crimea to be able to freely express their will.”

The fact that Putin is able to justify his invasion of Crimea with this excuse is what eventually set up this Ukrainian/Russian conflict.

Now the events of 2022 started on March 4 when Russia invaded the city of Zaporizhzhia, where the Russian forces seized a nuclear power plant. They then set off a fire that could have caused a nuclear disaster, but the fire was eventually put out after hours later.

These Russian military advances have had people questioning the humanitarian aspect of their invasions, and possible war crimes have been committed. For instance, it is widely believed that Vladimir Putin has started to target citizens. According to ABC News, they have

heard reports of Russia targeting and killing civilians through bombings.

If these accusations are true, then that would mean Putin could be subject to a war crime trial in Nuremberg.

There are also major accusations, including by the UK Ministry of Defense, of the Russian army using a vacuum bomb when invading certain parts of Ukraine. A vacuum has been classified as an illegal weapon that can cause a grotesque amount of damage. However, the main reason why global organizations such as NATO and the UN are so concerned is the fact that the vacuum bomb can completely suck the oxygen out of an entire area. The vacuum bomb has the strength to even suck the oxygen out of people, causing immediate suffocation. It is mainly used to disintegrate walls and break down buildings.

According to Oksana Marakova, the ambassador of Ukraine to the United States, Putin has been violating

countless war crimes left and right.

“Russia used the potent vacuum bomb during its invasion of Ukraine,” she said in an article in POLITICO.

Now just to reiterate, these are just accusations and will need to be fully proven in a court of law, but if these accusations are true, then Putin will really be showing his true colors.

Even though Russia has around 7.2% of Ukraine conquered, the Ukrainians have shown much strength and courage. This has propelled the world to give them supplies and weapons to battle off the Russian forces.

Ukraine has even gotten the likes of Switzerland to root for their cause, by sanctioning Russia, and Switzerland has an infamous history of neutrality in the midst of major conflicts. But their so-far unbreakable will has rallied most of the world in favor of Ukraine's defense.

Surveillance video shows hundreds of blackbirds diving to their death in Mexico

By XAVIER SUGGS
Staff Writer

Last month, surveillance channels in Chihuahua, Mexico caught an eerie scene: hundreds of birds flew straight down into the street below, killing some and injuring many more. The video was like something out of a Hitchcock movie and has amassed over millions of views on various social media platforms. This strange event has caused many theories to be thrown out across these platforms, from the unrealistic to the borderline absurd.

The birds were yellow-headed blackbirds and experts believed they were making their annual migration from the west and central United States and Canada in the summer to the southern United States and Mexico in winter. These blackbirds fly in irregular flocks and can be found to travel in groups of thousands, which explains why there are so many blackbirds in the video. Yellow-headed blackbirds are also known for having one of the worst songs in all of the animal kingdom, often being compared to the sound of a rusty door opening. In Celtic and some Native American cultures, blackbirds represent death or decay, which just adds to the video's ominous nature.

Mexican news outlet El Heraldo de Chihuahua conveyed the theories posited by local experts to explain this ominous event, which occurred on February 7. Some experts believed

that the birds had inhaled pollution or toxic gasses, which hampered their ability to fly. Others suggested that the birds had made contact with overloaded electrical lines. The newspaper even questioned if the cold weather had an effect on the bird's flight.

Local radio station La Ranchera de Cuauhtemoc theorized that the birds may have collided with each other mid-flight, causing them to barrel downwards. More outlandish theories persisted online: some blamed 5G tele-



communication technology, while others claimed the birds hit an invisible spaceship. One theory proposed a malfunction in the bird's system, as they posited birds are actually surveillance systems for the US government.

In an interview with The Guardian, ecologist Richard Broughton provided a more reasonable answer.

“This looks like a raptor like a peregrine or hawk has been chasing a flock, like they do with murmuring starlings, and they crashed as the flock were forced low,” Broughton said. He was 99% sure that the crash was caused by a predatory bird.

Raptors use a lot of techniques to hunt smaller birds, and one of the most effective techniques is stooping, the act of a predatory bird flying high up into the sky and diving back down at incredible speeds, stunning unsuspecting prey. This is the reason why smaller birds fly in such large flocks, a “defense in numbers” approach.

Despite the fact that flying in large flocks is supposed to protect smaller birds from predatory birds, when something goes awry, the birds can

become confused. Birds in flocks, like the flock that appears in the video,

follow the birds nearest to them rather than observing their surroundings. A predatory bird was probably able to direct a couple of birds downward and, in such tightly-packed flocks, when a couple birds go down, the rest of the flock will follow.

Although this seems to be a once-in-a-lifetime event, we can find examples of similar behavior in the recent past. In 2018, the Environment and Climate Change Canada's Wildlife Service attributed the deaths of 42 starlings in Delta, British Columbia to being chased by a larger bird. On October 7, 2019, birds flew into the University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire's windows, killing

themselves. After an investigation, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals determined that the birds were chased by a bird of prey and failed to see the glass. In December 2019, 225 starlings were killed as they dove into a tarmac. Just around a month ago, 200 more were found dead on a road in Pembrokeshire, Wales.

In an interview with the Washington Post, Kevin J. McGown, an ornithologist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, discounted other viral theories.

“Birds are light and fluffy, so they have a lot of wind resistance,” McGown said. “They don't fall straight down very quickly, like a baseball. And in this case, they went flying down.”

If the birds had hit an invisible spaceship or had been affected by pollution, they would have fallen unconsciously, but in the video the actions of the birds looked purposeful, and many were able to pop back up and fly away.

McGown also discredited the electrocution theory. “I mean with that many birds, they would've taken out the power line completely,” he said.

In the end, there's no definitive answer as to why the birds fell from the sky. The likely answer based on previous evidence and expert opinion is that they were chased by a bird of prey. Although it's fun to imagine the birds hitting an invisible spaceship, it's often that the most simple explanations are the truest.

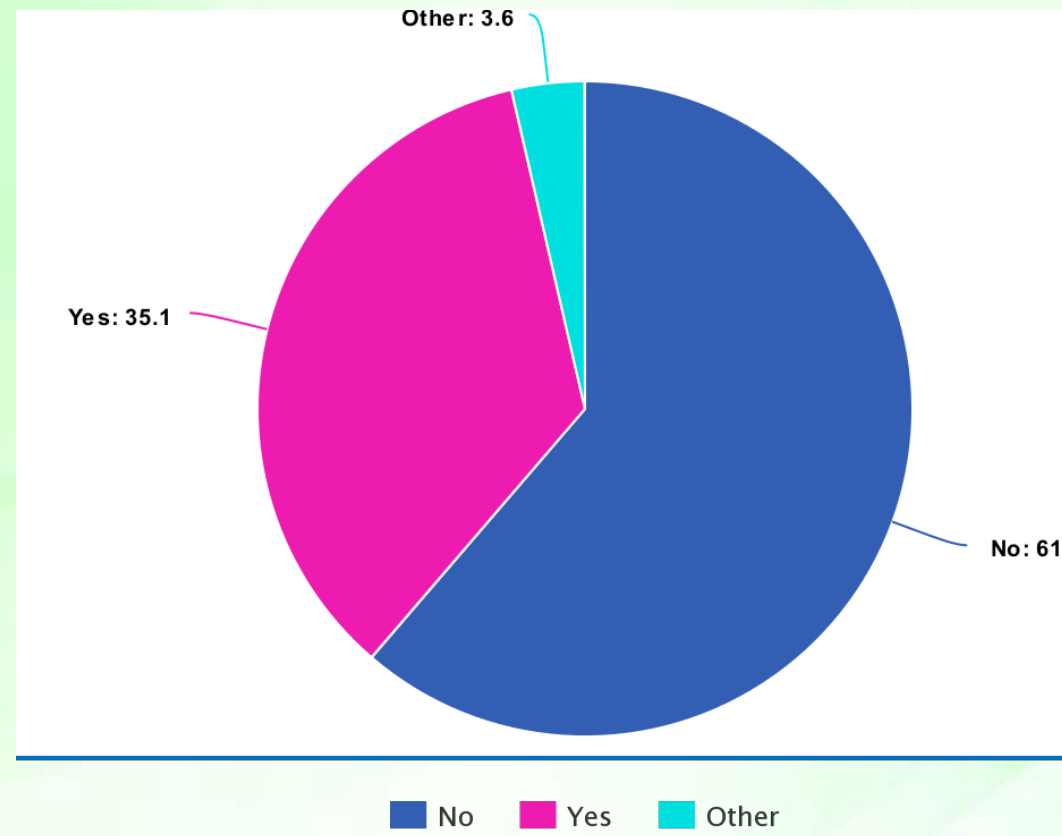
Debate Questions: Hot Takes

By HAILEY BAKER
Staff Writer

What are the opinions of QO students on popular debate topics?

362 QO students responded to this survey (178 freshmen, 94 sophomores, 48 juniors, and 40 seniors).

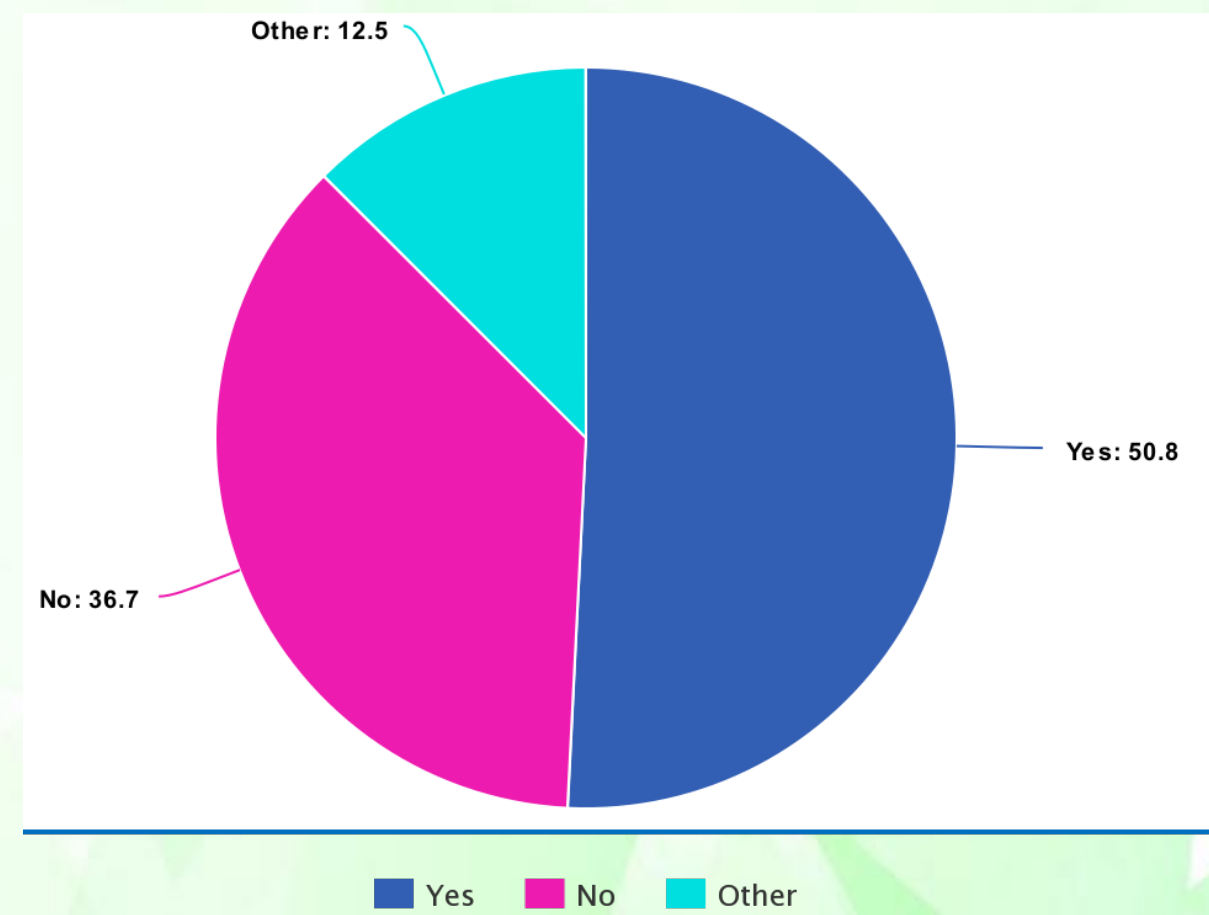
Does pineapple belong on pizza?



Yes, because "the sweetness of the pineapple compliments the savory pizza flavor."
- Senior Ela Green

No, because "it's gross. Fruit and cheese do not match."
- Freshman Maren Weavling

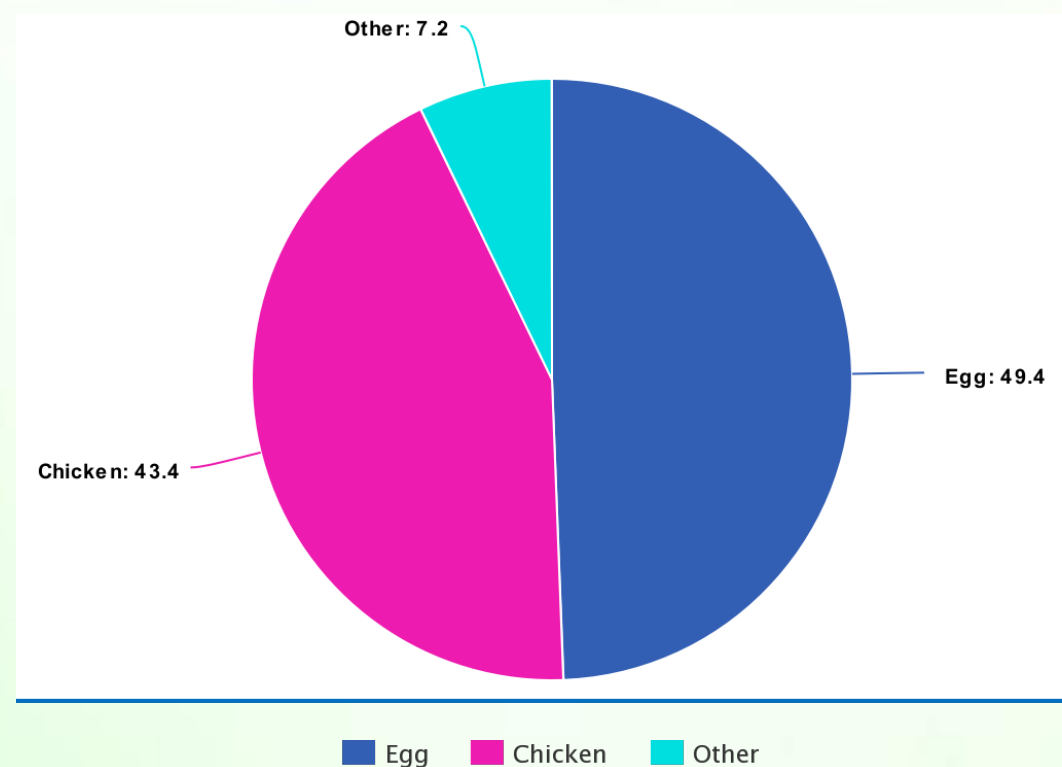
Are hot dogs sandwiches?



Yes, because "if a hotdog isn't a sandwich, then a sub isn't a sandwich either."
- Sophomore McKenzie Phelan

No, because "a hot dog is a salad. The three food groups are soups, salads, and sandwiches. It does not meet the qualifications for sandwiches because there is one piece of bread. A hotdog is a taco, and a taco is a salad. I will die on this hill."
- Junior Hayden Polsky

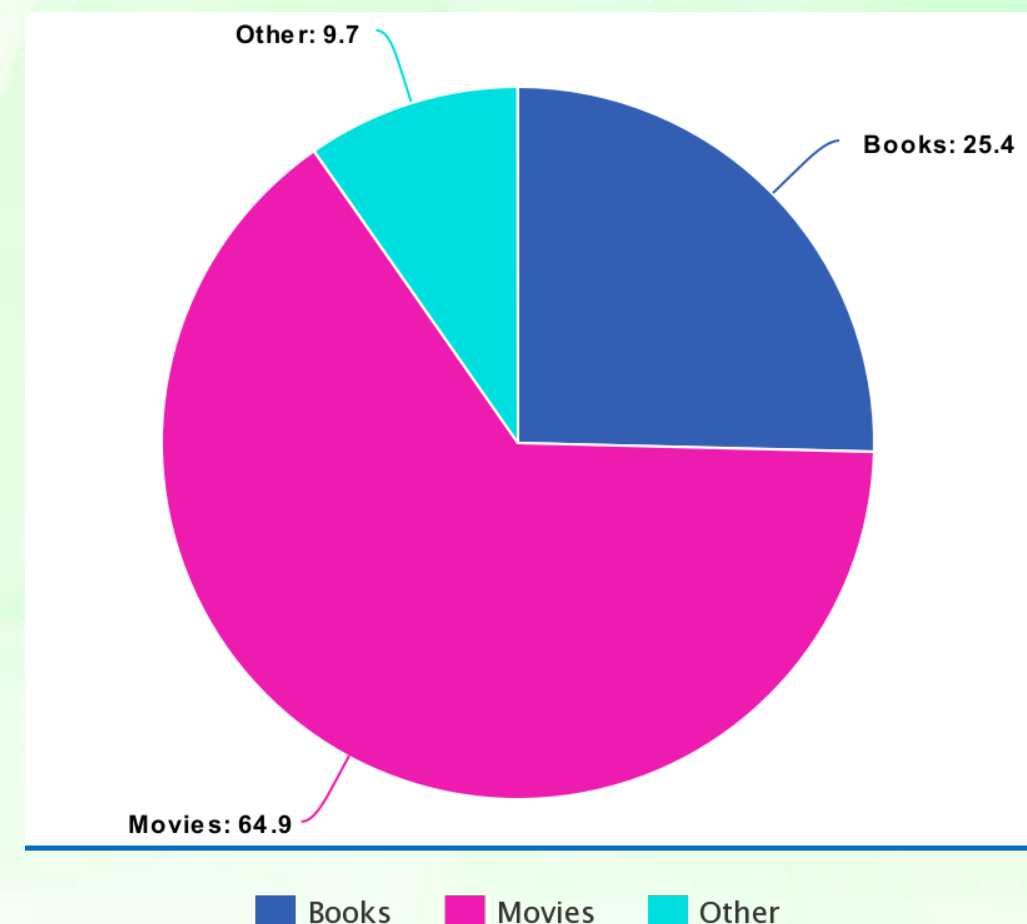
Which came first: the chicken or the egg?



The chicken, because "in order to have eggs you need a chicken."
- Freshman Harrison Spadoni

The egg, because it "probably came from another animal and evolved into a chicken."
- Senior Christian Taylor

Are books or movies better?



Movies because "you can see what's actually happening."
- Sophomore Naomi Offutt

Books because they "can include details that movies can't."
- Junior Abby Wilmoth



The inaccessibility of student advocacy: A look at the RM-to-SMOB pipeline

By *FIONA FEINGOLD*
Senior Staff Writer

Every April, the SMOB, or Student Member of the Board of Education, is elected by all MCPS middle and high school students. In return for their service, they receive a \$5,000 college scholarship, SSL hours, and a social studies credit. The SMOB has full voting rights, excluding issues of negative personnel, and serves for the duration of the school year.

Running for SMOB is no easy task. In January, any sophomore or junior in MCPS is eligible to file for the position. After completing the appropriate paperwork and meeting with the Special Elections Committee, candidates attend the Nominating Convention (also known as Nom Con), at which delegates from each middle and high school determine the two nominees. The position is decided by a direct student vote in April.

Since 1978, 41 different SMOBs have represented the students of Montgomery County, with three SMOBs serving two consecutive terms. However, not all schools have been equally represented in this process. Approximately 47% of SMOBs have attended one of three MCPS high schools: Richard Montgomery, Springbrook, or Walt Whitman, with Richard Montgomery being the home school for nearly 20%

of SMOBs.

RM's grip on SMOB seems to only be growing stronger. In the past four years, three SMOBs hailed from RM. Additionally, both of last year's candidates were RM students. This trend is often referred to as the "RM-to-SMOB pipeline."

Many believe that RM's success with SMOB is largely due to its International Baccalaureate Program. Although this likely plays a role, it is worth noting that the county's other magnet schools have not achieved such success with SMOB representation. For instance, only one SMOB has attended Pooleville High School. Montgomery Blair has slightly better numbers than Pooleville, but still pales in comparison to RM, with three SMOBs.

Another possible factor is the school's location. RM is located in Rockville, the county's seat of government. The school is a mere 1.6 miles away from the Carver Educational Services Center, where MCPS Board of Education meetings are held. The building also hosts MCR (short for Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association) and MCJC (or the Montgomery County Junior Council) meetings.

Students who live further away from Rockville will no doubt have a harder time engaging with MCR, although the accessibility of MCR's meetings has improved since the

COVID-19 pandemic. Meetings are currently virtual and open to all students.

MCR and MCJC are where many SMOBs get their start in advocacy. Current SMOB Hana O'Looney served as president of MCJC and participated in MCR before joining the Board of Education.

"Many students at RM get involved with MCJC...meaning that they come into high school already involved in county-wide advocacy and thus join MCR, contributing to what is really the MCR-to-SMOB pipeline, even more so than the RM-to-SMOB pipeline," senior Noah Pinson said. Pinson is one of MCR's Educational Policy Directors and one of two QO students to serve in MCR directorial positions (the second being senior Pelin Altintas, a MCR Public Relations Director).

While it is not necessary to be involved in MCR before running for SMOB, it is helpful. The organization connects members with fellow student leaders and allows students to gain experience in navigating the logistics of local government.

Six MCPS high schools (Blake, Gaithersburg, Paint Branch, QO, Rockville, and Wheaton) have never had a student serve as SMOB. When compared to RM, these schools usually have a lower rate of MCR membership. About 4% of MCR members attend QO, while 13% of members attend RM (these statistics only include members of MCR's

Executive Board and not any of the Special Issues task forces).

Considering the complexities of the SMOB election process, it's no surprise that the position attracts students with experience in advocacy. However, students have mixed feelings regarding MCR's influence on SMOB. Although many members of MCR are clearly qualified for the position, some wonder if it is fair for their experience to overrule everything else.

Students from underrepresented schools tend to be less knowledgeable about ways to participate in county government. They might not learn about MCR or other local advocacy groups until later in high school, making it difficult to compete with students who have been involved since sixth grade.

"I personally didn't become aware of MCR until my sophomore year," Pinson said.

In order to combat these inequities, many students are currently trying to make advocacy more accessible through targeted outreach, ensuring that future SMOBs will encompass the diversity of all MCPS students. "This past year, MCR held meetings with many underrepresented schools to increase knowledge and representation of MCR," added Pinson.

Essay: My trip to Alabama: grappling with Jews and the Civil Rights Movement

By *HAYLEY ASAI*
Staff Writer

On a gloomy Thursday, I boarded a plane bound for Georgia with 28 other Jewish teens from my synagogue to learn about the Civil Rights Movement.

The trip was one my synagogue organized yearly; it is a common tradition for high school seniors and juniors to attend and is considered a part of our religious education to learn the context in which people faced oppression during the 20th century.

When we first arrived, we were put into the meeting room of a hotel and introduced to our tour guide. He told us the story of Leo Frank, a Jewish man from the north, who was lynched after being wrongly accused of murder. The story provided some context for the roles that Jews held during the 20th century struggle for civil rights, but I wanted to dive deeper.

The next morning we woke up early and headed to Birmingham to meet one of the men at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement, Bishop Calvin Woods. Across the street from the 16th Street Baptist Church, in the park where the Children's Crusade of 1963 took place, Bishop Woods told us his story. One of the last living leaders from the civil rights movement, he told us that God had spared him so that he could continue to teach about the civil rights movement. He remembered the Children's Crusade:

the police and their dogs, knocking the kids over, snarling and barking, and the fire hoses with enough pressure to tear the bark off of trees. He said that they would take two hoses and attach them to one spigot, so that the water was strong enough to push over a line of people with their arms linked.

At around noon, we left for Montgomery. A city of 200,000, Montgomery was significantly smaller than the city of Birmingham and filled with mostly government buildings. During our time there, we visited the Rosa Parks Museum.

Although most people were aware of the story of Parks and how she refused to move from her bus seat, what surprised us was that behind the scenes, a group of activists had been planning the movement and had been waiting for the right person to become the face of the movement. The visit to the Rosa Parks Museum served as the first challenge to our group's preconceived notions about the Civil Rights Movement, with many to follow.

On Saturday morning, we left Montgomery to head to Selma. The city was virtually empty, with only a handful of shops left open on the downtown blocks. The rest of the shops were boarded up or just left without doors and windows. Surrounding the main street were blocks and blocks of run-down houses.

Since its heyday during the Civil Rights Movement, the town has shrunk from 45,000 to 20,000,

leaving it economically devastated. After the Civil Rights movement, it seems that the country had forgotten about Selma.

While there, we met with someone who had grown up in Selma and had walked the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday. She took us to the Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in the middle of the Selma projects, where she had grown up. She explained that the large lawn had once been the very parking lot where the late John Lewis had started his march to Birmingham. We each picked up a rock from the ground while she asked us to promise to do better in the future, and to make sure things such as the violence and terror of the KKK and police brutality never happened again.

She told us her own story about how when she was a little girl she didn't understand why the people around her were marching for freedom until she was told she couldn't eat at a segregated lunch counter. She would skip school to protest and got arrested a few times before. When she marched on Bloody Sunday, and walked over the crest of the bridge, all she saw was a sea of blue waiting at the end of the bridge. She remembered the blood and the screams, and the sound of a woman being trampled by a police horse and crying out in pain. But perhaps most



shocking to our group of all, she remembered that some of the worst discrimination she had faced was at the hands of the Jewish shop owners in Selma.

The most difficult part of the trip for much of the group was confronting their own roles as oppressors during the Civil Rights Movement. Although not news to me personally, I think that it is a common belief of Jews that our role during the Movement was to help and stand by those that needed it, but this is not entirely the truth. While Jews living in the South faced their own discrimination, and many Jews came to the assistance of the African American community during the Civil Rights Movement, many didn't. Some Jewish people actively withstood change or turned a blind eye. It challenged our beliefs and served as a reminder that we must actively seek to better the world.



Cheers (sláinte), it's St. Patrick's Day... Wait, why do we celebrate again?

Take a look beyond the rainbow and dig through the pot of gold to understand why people celebrate St. Patrick's Day



PIXABAY

By **MADISON SHERMAN**
Staff Writer

Do you think Leprechauns are real, or that shamrocks bring good luck? Do you own a “kiss me I’m Irish” shirt? Have you witnessed the green dye in the Chicago River?

Why do we do this? What is the point of pinching those who don’t wear green or attempting to catch leprechauns to receive a pot of gold (two things associated with Irish culture and St. Patrick’s Day)? The holiday all began with the death of St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland.

Story of St. Patrick

St. Patrick was kidnapped into slavery from Roman Britain and brought at age 16 to Ireland, where he escaped and later returned to spread the Christian faith. Following St. Patrick’s death, believed to be March 17, 461, his life became synonymous with Irish culture. Perhaps one of his most prominent legacies was his explanation of the holy trinity (father, son, and holy spirit) using a three-leafed native Irish clover, which became known as the shamrock.

Origins

St. Patrick’s Day falls during the Christian season of Lent and since the ninth or 10th century, the Irish have celebrated it as a religious holiday. Irish families would attend church in

the morning and celebrate the Roman Catholic feast day in the afternoon, consuming traditional Irish bacon and cabbage. Believe it or not, because of this religious occasion, Irish laws up until the 1970s mandated that pubs be closed on March 17. This ban on pub life is in total contrast with America, where March 17 marks one of the most popular days at the bars.

Parades and Irish Pride

It’s also important to note that the famous Irish parades started in America, not Ireland. The first documentation of a St. Patrick’s Day parade was in St. Augustine, Florida in 1607, reported by the History Channel.

The influx of Irish immigrants from the 1840 Potato Famine to cities like New York and Boston make them home to the largest St. Patrick’s Day parades today. Rising Irish patriotism from these immigrants sparked the creation of “Irish-aid” societies. Each of these societies holds annual parades featuring bagpipes and drums. The merging of several Irish Aid societies in 1848 created the oldest and largest parade in the United States: The New York City St. Patrick’s Day Parade. Nearly 3 million people crowd around to watch the 5-hour parade each year, according to the History Channel.

The late 19th century is when popularity for St. Patrick’s Day flourished. At the time, many

Americans believed the Irish to be violent and accused them of stealing their jobs, since they were willing to work for lower wages. Therefore, in the face of discrimination from Americans, Irish Catholics decided to start the tradition of throwing huge parties to showcase their heritage. It was this strong Irish pride that drives the festive activities that occur on St. Patrick’s Day today.

Leprechauns

We can thank the Irish for inspiring many popular items in America, such as the sugary breakfast cereal, Lucky Charms. Lucky the Leprechaun, although not backed by Irish influence, is a symbol of Irish culture.

Have you ever wondered how the leprechaun came to be? These mischievous little creatures that like to store their coins in a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow can be traced back to eighth-century water spirits, known as ‘luchorpan’, similar to the word leprechaun. As the tale goes, spirits were mixed with the household fairy and developed the leprechaun, a creature with heavy drinking issues and an incentive to trick humans. Now, in popular culture, the leprechaun draws many American tourists to Ireland, represents the American football team Notre Dame as their mascot, and serves as the main

symbol of St. Patrick’s Day.

Although the popularity of the little creature has taken center stage, some Irish people are annoyed with the ethnic stereotypes associated with leprechauns, as they scheme against humans that desire their pot of gold.

A Global Holiday

Not only does America and Ireland celebrate the holiday; countries all around the world take part, including Russia, which holds a week-long celebration in Moscow to commemorate Irish culture. Another hotspot is in Japan. Japan and Ireland share a history and have long maintained a friendly relationship, establishing diplomatic relations in 1957. With these strong relations, Japan accepts Irish culture and hosts an “I Love Ireland” Festival. Tokyo also takes part in embracing Irish traditions and hosts its own St. Patrick’s Day parade with up to 180,000 participants, according to the Oprah Daily.

As you can see, Irish heritage is prevalent in America and all over the world, so while wearing green and attending rowdy parades, take a moment to thank the Irish for the immense diffusion of their culture that has ultimately led to the holiday we love.

Kanye West’s ‘Runaway’ from reality

Rapper and producer’s battle with bipolar disorder causes debacle

By **REESE OWENS**
Staff Writer

“I hate being bipolar, it’s awesome,” is what Kanye West said after his diagnosis of bipolar depression in 2016. After the release of his album *Ye*, Kanye became much more open about his mental illness and embraced it, calling it his “superpower” according to an article in *bphope* in 2019. A number of other celebrities have shared their experiences with this mental health disorder, including Mariah Carey, Demi Lovato, Halsey, and many more. While the stigma around mental health in general has seemed to decrease in today’s society, the understanding of certain illnesses is something society still hasn’t fully grasped. This is apparent in the heavy disintegration now surrounding Kanye West’s reputation.

Although it is very hard to keep up with, recent posts from Kanye have raised some eyebrows. The first Instagram post of his downward spiraling social media frenzy was on February 4th, it read: “SINCE THIS IS MY FIRST DIVORCE I NEED TO KNOW WHAT I SHOULD DO ABOUT MY DAUGHTER BEING PUT ON TIK TOK AGAINST MY WILL?”

Shortly after this tweet, Kanye posted a screenshot of the TikTok user guidelines, which states that users under age 13 may not use the platform without supervision.

Addressing his daughter’s open TikTok account that Kanye strongly urged to keep private or non-existent, he uses all caps. Every one of Kanye’s posts have been in all caps, but he claims he is “working on his communication,” and did not realize “that using all caps makes people feel like I’m screaming at them,” according to a *HipHopDX* article. Most of his Instagram comments, tweets, and posts have since been deleted.

Even though Kanye has been repeatedly called out for his inappropriate communication, such as his interruption of Taylor Swift during her 2009 VMA acceptance speech, his recent outbursts have caused concern. Ever since Kanye West and Kim Kardashian’s divorce, the road to a healthy relationship with his children and peers has been rocky.

This drastic change in Kanye’s life could definitely and most potentially be the cause of his recent public outbursts, many wondering if it is connected to his mental disorder. With bipolar disorder, patients experience two distinct types of episodes—manic and depressive. The manic side of bipolar can be classified through impaired judgment and a decrease in patience and racing thoughts (among many more). These signs are evident in Kanye West’s behaviors as posting dozens of his unfiltered and unreserved thoughts online for billions to view was a choice he made with poor judgment.

In just a span of two weeks, Kanye posted over 5 tweets and/or Instagram captions dissing Pete Davidson, Kim Kardashian’s current boyfriend—even dissing him in his lyrics from his new song “Easy.” Kanye raps, “God saved me from this crash / Just so I could beat Pete Davidson’s ass.”

Although we can all assume Kanye West just misses his former wife, Kim K, his increased irritability, racing thoughts, and lack of insight into the backlash and other consequences he will receive from these posts are all a part of the distinct behaviors of bipolar disorder.

Kanye has also been previously known for his great deal of confidence, and his generally proud attitude towards his music and persona. Although, in these recent past weeks Kanye has largely displayed a new sense of arrogance along with a conceited mindset. Among Kanye’s social media spirals, he posted a picture of the Captain America: Civil War poster, but with a twist: celebrities’ faces, including Pete Davidson, Kid Cudi, Drake, Billie Eilish, Kim Kardashian, and others, had all been photoshopped onto the image by Kanye. The image also included the number of celebrities either on Kanye or Pete’s side, and in addition it was captioned, “THE INTERNET HAS STILL NOT FOUND A DECENT PICTURE OF SKETE”, according to the *U.S. Sun*. Shortly after taking a dig at one of his

former best friends, Kid Cudi, for being friends with Pete Davidson, Kanye revealed that “Cudi will not be on Donda” then going on to post a picture with Cudi’s face crossed out.

Kanye’s selfish and possessive behavior towards his former friends exhibits another symptom of Kanye’s bipolar disorder. “Feeling like you are unusually important, talented, or powerful” is a symptom of a manic episode, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. The term “grandiosity” can also be ascribed to Kanye’s attitude: it’s defined as “an unrealistic sense of superiority in which you consider yourself unique and better than others.” One of Kanye’s most popular quotes is “I just told you who I thought I was: A God. I just told you. That’s who I think I am.” His constant boasting and talking about himself creates the mindset that he can do no wrong. All in all, despite the heavy coverage and beaming spotlight on Kanye’s next move—is anyone really keeping an eye on his mental state? Lots of times in show business and the music industry, the mental health of musicians and actors becomes overlooked or misinterpreted. The large focus on his manic behavior would draw lots of fans to believe he is just plain crazy, but Kanye could and probably is hiding the depressive episodes from the media, and even his close friends and children. Kanye West could silently be asking for help.



AFC West to AFC Best

Division headlines busy week in the NFL

By JAKE ZAIDERMAN
Senior Staff Writer

The NCAA tournament isn't the only madness happening in March. The NFL offseason is already in full swing and with free agency opening on Wednesday. Last week was filled with blockbuster trades and quarterbacks announcing their next move. Let's dive into them:

Other notable news:

- EDGE Khalil Mack to LAC
- WR Amari Cooper to CLE
- LB Bobby Wagner is a FA
- QB Deshaun Watson won't face criminal charges
- WR Calvin Ridley suspended for betting
- G Brandon Scherff intends to sign with the Jacksonville Jaguars
- DT Larry Ogunjobi intends to sign with Chicago
- Packers releasing LB Za'Darius Smith
- Buccaneers are giving center Ryan Jensen a three-year, \$39 million contract
- Vikings gave Kirk Cousins a one-year, fully-guaranteed \$35 million extension
- WR Michael Gallup is resigning with the Cowboys, a five-year, \$62.5M deal



Denver gets the QB they've been looking for since Peyton

Seahawks receive: QB Drew Lock, TE Noah Fant, DL Shelby Harris, two first-round picks (2022 -- No. 9 overall -- and 2023), two second-round picks (2022 -- No. 40 overall -- and 2023) and a 2022 fifth-round selection

Broncos receive: QB Russell Wilson and a 2022 fourth-round pick

Russell Wilson has been rumored to be having some frustrations with the Seattle Seahawks organization since the last offseason. He and head coach Pete Carroll have different visions of how the offense is run. Carroll is notoriously known as a run-first kind of guy, whereas Wilson obviously wants to be the focal point in a pass-first system. Peyton Manning led the Broncos to two Super Bowls and won one, but since his retirement in 2016, they have started ELEVEN quarterbacks, tied for the most in the NFL over that span. Denver hopes that adding Wilson to an up-and-coming offense, combined with their elite defense, creates a playoff contender in the AFC West.



2 legendary quarterbacks come back for the 2022-23 season

Aaron Rodgers announced on the 8th during his weekly appearance on The Pat McAfee Show that he was indeed returning to the Green Bay Packers for his 18th season after some questions over the past two seasons. It has been reported that Rodgers accepted a contract worth \$200 million over 4 years, but he has come out saying the reports are inaccurate and that there is no deal in place. The Packers also franchise-tagged All-Pro WR Davante Adams, keeping the deathly QB-WR duo together for at least one more season.

Tom Brady was retired for a grand total of 39 days. On Sunday night, The Goat announced he is coming back for his 23rd season at age 45. Brady will continue his Hall of Fame career with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers looking to avenge last year's loss in the Divisional round to the eventual Super Bowl champion Los Angeles Rams. With Tom's unretirement, the Bucs' Super Bowl odds have gone from 20-1 to 10-1.



Commander Carson: Washington gets their QB

Commanders receive: QB Carson Wentz, 2022 second-round pick, 2022 seventh-round pick.

Colts receive: 2022 third-round pick, 2022 second-round pick, 2023 conditional third-round pick (converts to a second-round pick if Wentz plays more than 70 percent of snaps)

The Commanders said at the beginning of the offseason that they were going to make a play for a big-name quarterback. Wentz may not have been the man they were looking for, but that's who they ended up with. They acquired Wentz from Indianapolis for three draft picks. Washington also takes on his whole contract. Wentz threw for 27 touchdowns and only 7 interceptions last season. This is also Wentz's third team in three years, along with being traded in back-to-back offseasons, as he was traded from the Philadelphia Eagles to the Colts last offseason.



VIEWPOINT

The US isn't as much of an Olympic powerhouse as you think

By JULIA DIETRICH
Contributing Writer

If you watched any of the athletic events during the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, you probably noticed the large number of American athletes not just participating in the games, but winning medals as well. The US sent the most athletes to the winter games and returned as the fourth most decorated country with 25 medals. Six months earlier, the United States finished the 2020 Tokyo Olympics with the most medals. It sent the highest number of athletes to those games as well.

With only this information, it could be easy to believe that Americans are simply better at sports than other countries, but it's much more complicated than that.

American culture is centered around participation in youth sports. Almost all American adults can remember being on a youth soccer or basketball team at one point in their lives and most children have cleats or a tennis racket tucked away in their closets.

According to Statista, 57% of US high school students and 71.8% of elementary and middle school students participated in sports in the past year. There are so many children in the US who are on sports teams, it's considered odd for a child to not try a

sport at least once in their life. Therefore, since almost every child in America will try at least one sport in their life, the US has every opportunity to find and hone its most talented children into gold medalists.

Another reason Americans and other wealthy countries do so well in the Olympics is that their citizens have enough money to fund their children's athletic aspirations. According to WinterGreen Research, the average Canadian family spends \$1,300 a year in order for their child to play on a hockey team. The average American family spends \$700 dollars a year per child per sport they play.

The wealthier a country is, the more likely children are going to play sports. Fifty percent of American school-aged children that are 200% above the poverty line participate in sports, compared to 28% of children who are below the poverty line.

If a two-parent, one-child household is 200% above the poverty line, they will make \$46,000 dollars a year. That is 20,000 less than the average US household income. If a person in India—which despite being more populous than the United States, only sent one athlete, Arif Khan who placed the highest an Indian has ever placed with 45th out of 89 competitors in Giant Slalom, to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics—were to make \$46,000 a year, they would be in the top .04% of earners. Even being



below the poverty line in America would put you in the top .09% of earners in India.

Even if you adjust for the higher cost of living in the US, there is still an obvious wealth gap between the two countries. Combined with India's non-sportcentric culture, this creates a much stronger explanation for the United States's success in the Olympics, rather than an innate American ability to perform at athletic competitions on a global scale.

India isn't the only proof of this concept. Despite having the largest population in the world, it wasn't until 1984 that China won its first Olympic medal. Since the 1980s, China has had the fastest growing economy in the world. It has also used its state-led sports system to incorporate sports

participation into Chinese culture. As a result, China has been able to go from a mediocre participant to a powerhouse, winning 635 medals in the 38 years since their first.

It's easy to see that a country's culture and wealth are as important to athletic competition as the skill of its athletes. Like many aspects of world competition and comparison, just because one country may appear to be significantly stronger than another country doesn't necessarily mean it actually is.

So next time you find yourself cheering for the US or other wealthy, sport-centric countries as they dominate the Olympics, remember that it could have been a very different story had all athletes been competing on an even playing field.



Spring Sports Season Previews

Girls' Softball

By SAMMY KRIMSTEIN
Staff Writer

After missing their entire 2020 season to the pandemic, the Quince Orchard softball team was thrilled to take the field once again last year. After a successful ____ regular season, and a thrilling upset victory over #1-seeded Urbana in the region semi-finals, their 2021 campaign met its end at the hands of QO's archrival, Northwest, in the region finals.

Now, as they head into the 2022 spring season, the Cougars are looking to build off of last year, and remain a competitive team in their region.

Although some of Quince Orchard's key players from last year graduated, head coach Colleen Adams believes that their strong core of pitchers and high softball intangibles should be enough to make QO one of the top teams in the county.

Adams, who has coached softball at QO for 19 years and played at QO herself, has also put an emphasis on team chemistry, something she sees as a strength of this year's team.



PHOTO COURTESY OF COLLEEN ADAMS

"I would say that the team prides itself on building relationships," she said. "We really consider ourselves not just the QO Softball Program, but the QO Softball Family."

Through years of training, practicing, and playing together, the bonds between softball players and coaches are very strong. Senior pitcher Asha Miller, who is committed to play softball at Delaware Valley University, cherishes the people she has met through QO softball.

"My favorite part of the softball team is the bonds we form throughout the years and the family setting we create in the program," Miller said.

With practices for the upcoming season underway, the team has been working hard on improving their game, including their communication skills, in an effort to become confident and comfortable on the field come opening day.

Coach Adams has also preached a message of perseverance to her team. Whether coming back from a bad inning or a rough at-bat, the persistence that Adams preaches may help the Cougars reach their full potential, which she believes is quite high.

"The talent and work ethic that we have are going to carry us far this year," Adams said.

The team will open up their season at home against Poolesville on Monday March 21.

Boys' Lacrosse

By SAMMY KRIMSTEIN
Staff Writer

Just days away from the start of the 2022 regular season, the Quince Orchard boys' lacrosse team is looking to build upon their success from last season.

In 2021, the team seemed to be on their way to their first region title in program history. After a 7-1 regular season, good enough to earn them the #1 seed in the region, they were favorites heading into the region finals against Northwest. The Cougars had dominated the all-time series between their rivals—they had never lost against Northwest. Playing at the Cougar Dome, all of the odds seemed to be in QO's favor.

However, it was not meant to be. Northwest stunned the Cougars, taking the region championship with a 15-9 win, and ending QO's season.

Now, with the 2022 season set to begin, the frustration and letdown from last year's loss to Northwest is still fresh in the minds of the Cougars. Having talent in key positions, and raw athletes all over the field, the Cougars are looking to get back to that region final game for another chance at finally winning that championship they almost had last year. To do that, they have been working in practice to adjust and improve from last season.

"In order to be successful, we need to be fundamentally sound, be aggressive yet smart," said head coach David Gonzalez. "Be team-oriented on and off the field, and be disciplined in our decisions and

actions."

While they are looking to replicate their success from last year's regular season, the hope is that the adjustments they make now will put them over the edge come playoff time.

QO will open their season at home against Richard Montgomery on Tuesday, March 22.

Upcoming Schedule



vs Richard Montgomery
March 22
7:15



@ Northwest
March 25
7:15



vs Gaithersburg
March 29
7:15



vs Montgomery Blair
March 31
7:15

Girls' Lacrosse

By JAKE REVZAN
Staff Writer

The girls varsity lacrosse team is prepared to make a revenge tour after a tough loss to Urbana in the 2021 playoffs. Given that the team has made significant coaching and roster changes in the offseason, the girls look ready to make a deep run in the playoffs this year.

Team chemistry is a strong point of the team. The majority of the girls are friends outside of the lacrosse season, which has helped the team stay connected. The team participated in the indoor winter league at the St. James Sports, Wellness & Entertainment Complex in Springfield, VA, where they continued to bond as a group. The



"GLAX TO STATES LFGGG" -Izzy Romano

girls also participated in workouts twice a week leading up to tryouts.

Girls lacrosse is a family, and a huge part of it was graduated senior Emma Christensen '21, who is now playing D1 lacrosse at Virginia Tech. Although she was an incredible player and the heart of the offense, Christensen was luckily the only senior to leave.

"We have a very strong group of attacking players returning to the team, and although I don't think one person will fill her place, I do believe we will come together and do great without her," senior captain Irina Bookman says. Christensen's loss will be felt, but with a strong core of experienced players, the offense will continue to be dominant.

First-year head coach Taylor Blenckstone will help the offense reach new heights: she was Longwood College's leading goal scorer and will bring her knowledge of the game to QO.

"Coach Taylor is amazing and will teach us so much this season," senior Izzy Romano says. "She's really pushed us so we can be the best team this season."

The girls are super excited for what this season has to bring and are ready to give it their all.

Baseball

By JAKE REVZAN
Staff Writer

Quince Orchard Boys Baseball is in a similar position to Girls' Lacrosse. Both have a new head coach and will look to make the necessary changes for a new beginning.

PE teacher Jason Gasaway was the coach of the team for a long time (16 years), but now he will not be coaching the team this year and is passing the torch to guidance counselor Michael McMillen.

"McMillen is very qualified for this position and understands the importance of team bonding," senior Dean Arnold says. With McMillen's immense knowledge of the sport, boys varsity will hope to improve from their 5-6 record from last year.

The boys have always been close with each other outside of the season, and with McMillen in charge, they are growing even closer as a group. He is growing a very positive culture within the program.

The team has worked extremely hard during the off-season. Three days a week, Baseball lifted

after school with Boys' Lacrosse and the team also had in-school conditioning.

"It has been a year-long commitment and I'm most excited about playing a full season with a great group of guys," Arnold says.

With their eyes on states, the baseball boys look to make a deep run into the playoffs. The roster is extremely talented and a majority of the team (9 players) are experienced seniors.



Seniors Dean Arnold, Bennett Moore, and Jordan Ventura having some fun during the off-season.

PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT



Men's March Madness Preview

By ADAM GOTKIN
Editor-In-Chief

There is no better time of the year than March. The Cinderella stories, the buzzer-beaters—all of it is the best entertainment of the year.

As a strong follower of college basketball, I've put together my preview of this year's big dance, region by region.

West

Starting at the top of the bracket, I think that Gonzaga has the easiest run to the Elite Eight out of any team (as they should, as the #1 overall seed.) Memphis maybe has a chance to beat them in the round of 32, with the star power of Jalen Duran and company, but they'd have to get past a tough Boise State team, something that I don't see happening. Watch out for the Mountain West. I think UCONN will have no trouble with NMSU.

Then, my Cinderella team of the tournament: the Vermont Catamounts. Everything feels right about this Vermont team. They dominated the American East, led by a senior guard from Burlington, Ben Shungu. Ryan Davis is also a star who almost took the team to upset wins over Maryland and Providence. I have Vermont then beating UConn in the Round of 32. Their Cinderella run ends in the Sweet Sixteen to Gonzaga.

The bottom half of the West features two "blue bloods" and two "new bloods." I have the winner of Rutgers/Notre Dame beating Alabama, then Texas Tech destroying Montana State in the Round of 64. I think that Michigan State transfer Foster Loyer, one of the top three-point shooters in the nation, will catch fire as he leads Davidson to a victory over his old team. Then, as much as it hurts to say, Duke will not be upset in the first round, as they were twice in the previous decade.

I then have Texas Tech blowing out the winner of Rutgers-Notre Dame in the Round of 32 (their defense is just too good), then Duke beating Davidson. I think Texas Tech will give Coach K his final loss ever in the Sweet 16. I don't trust the freshman core of Duke, and again, the Texas Tech defense is just too good. That sets up an Elite Eight match-up of Gonzaga vs. Texas Tech, which I will get to more later.

East

The top of the east will be chalk for me, with Baylor, UNC and UCLA all cruising to victory in the first round. I don't think Shaka Smart in his first year at Marquette has what it takes just yet to win a tournament game, though watch out for this program in future years.

My one upset here is the winner of Wyoming/Indiana beating Saint Mary's. I think the WCC was good enough to test Gonzaga this year, but not good enough for any other team to make a run this year. Then, Baylor, the reigning national champs, will end Hubert Davis's first year at UNC, and UCLA will squash any hopes of a Cinderella run for either WY or IU. Then, more chalk with Baylor beating UCLA to make it to the Elite Eight. This Baylor team is just so good, with so much experience, it is hard to pick against them.

The bottom half of the East is full of teams that I think are good but don't have what it takes to win it all. Starting with Texas and Virginia Tech, I don't like either team too much but I think VT matches up well with the Longhorns.

Next, I think Purdue blows out Yale by 20+ points. Next is the 5+ seed that I have going furthest in the tournament. I love Murray State this year and think they'll stroll to an easy victory in the first round against WCC team San Francisco. Murray State has

all that you look for in a Cinderella team. A veteran guard in Tevin Brown, who was around when Ja Morant was lighting up OVC with the Racers back in the 2019 season. They'll crash the offensive glass and, while they aren't the most efficient defensive team, they'll stifle you into committing countless turnovers.

Kentucky will have no issues in the first round with Saint Peter's.

Then in the Round of 32, Purdue with Jaden Ivey will beat VT with ease. Next, is the game that I struggle with the most. I LOVE this Kentucky team with Oscar Tshibwe and I think that TyTy Washington is a star, but he is young and still not 100%. I think the Racers take advantage of that and pull off the upset. They'll then continue the run and beat Purdue in the Sweet Sixteen to set up a match-up with Baylor in the Elite Eight.

South

The South region is the one that I think is the worst, but also has the potential to be one of the best. There are many good teams but none that I think can end up winning the title.

Starting at the top, Arizona will face a scare against Peter Kiss and Bryant, who I have winning their First Four game vs. Wright State. Then, TCU will *just* pull out a victory against Seton Hall in a classic 8-9 match-up, in which neither team really stands out.

Later on, I have my second 5-12 upset of the year with UAB knocking off Houston. I just don't trust Houston, one of the Final Four teams last year. UAB, on the other hand, is led by Jordan "Jelly" Walker, who is going to put on a show with a number of deep threes. Jelly is the type of player you think of when you mention an upset team. I don't think Illinois will have any trouble with Chattanooga in their first-round game. I think they have the best chance to make a run out of any Big 10 team. With Kofi Cockburn and Andre Curbelo leading the charge, they'll end UAB's hopes of a Cinderella run. Illinois will continue their revenge tour and beat Arizona to make it to the Elite Eight.

As mentioned earlier, I love the Mountain West this year and I think they'll beat the Juwan Howard Michigan team that has underperformed all year. Tennessee, on the other hand, is a team that I have liked all year and to many is underseeded. They won't have an issue against Longwood in the first round.

Loyola Chicago will continue the Sister Jean magic and knock off EJ Lidell and Ohio State, setting up a match-up with Villanova. The Wildcats are an Elite Eight lock, in my opinion: they'll easily beat Loyola Chicago and Colorado State, who will upset Tennessee, something that will break many brackets. That sets up Illinois vs. Villanova in the Elite Eight.

Midwest

The Midwest this year is full of teams that could make a run. And it all starts at the top with Kansas. Senior guard Ochai Agbaji has a stellar supporting cast that makes the Jayhawks favorites to many. Neither SDSU or Creighton sticks out to me (I have Creighton winning)—either team will get destroyed by Kansas.

Iowa has been so good recently, you have to expect Jordan Bohannon will at least take his team to the second round. Then Providence—the team that no one trusts, top ten in the AP but not even top 40 in KenPom—will win their first-round game vs. SDST. Iowa, though, will end their dream season in the Round of 32 before losing to Kansas in the Sweet Sixteen, a game that I think could be a blowout.

The bottom of the bracket is all teams thought of by many as "frauds." LSU had a strong start to the season

but struggled towards the end. Wisconsin had a great year, but even then no one seems to trust them. USC just hasn't been able to put it all together this year and then Auburn, who has been so good, just doesn't have the guards to make a deep run. I have chalk here, other than Iowa State beating LSU. None of these teams stick out to me as true contenders. Auburn will make the Elite Eight and will play Kansas.

Elite Eight

In the first Elite Eight matchup, Gonzaga vs. Texas Tech, I think the Red Raiders' defense is still just simply too good for anyone else. This Gonzaga team may be a better fit for a title than last year's team, but even then, I just don't think they'll be able to play good enough defense to stay in the game. When these teams played earlier in the year, Gonzaga won 69-55, but TTU was without TJ Shannon.

In the East, I have Murray States' run ending to Baylor, who will make it to their second Final Four in as many years with Scott Drew proving himself as one of the nation's top coaches.

In the South, I think that Villanova is just too good of a team to be beaten here. Collin Gillespie has been here before. If this 'Nova team can stay out of foul trouble, Jay Wright will take them to another Final Four.

Then, in the Midwest, my other 1-2 matchup, I have Kansas beating Auburn. This Kansas team just has too many playmakers and too good of guard play for Auburn to win.

Final Four

In the first Final Four game, it's a battle of the Big 12 teams, Texas Tech and Baylor. Mark Adams in his first year as the head coach of the Red Raiders will take his alma mater to their second national championship in four years. Texas Tech beat Baylor in both of their regular-season matchups and, while it's hard to beat a

team three times, I think Texas Tech has what it takes.

The second Final Four game: a battle of the blue bloods, Kansas and Villanova. This isn't the first time these teams have met in the Final Four. Gillespie, a freshman at the time, helped lead the Wildcats to a 16-point win over the Jayhawks. The lack of depth will finally catch up to Villanova as Gillespie will get into foul trouble early on and Kansas will make it to their first championship game since 2012.

National Championship

For the fourth time this season, Kansas and Texas Tech will play, but this time for all the marbles.

Kansas leads the season series 2-1, winning the last match-up in the Big 12 title game. All three games were within ten points, including a double-overtime thriller in which Kansas came out on top back in January. Texas Tech's one win against Kansas this year was without two of their top players, Terrance Shannon and Kevin McCullar.

The Red Raiders won that game with their defense, and they'll win this one the same way. Offensively, all of their starters have what it takes to take over a game themselves, and even a few of their guys off the bench can be difference makers. As the old saying goes, "Defense wins championships," and this year that will hold true with the top defensive team in the nation winning the title.



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