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Quince Orchard High School — 15800 Quince Orchard Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20878 — @qohs\_prowler

# Israel-Palestine Conflict: A brief history of its origins

BY ISADORA KAUFMAN  
*Editor-in-Chief*

*The purpose of this article is to provide a brief, objective explanation of the complex history leading up to the recent events in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Due to the word limit, the article is not able to include every event in detail, but should serve as a reliable source of information for those looking to educate themselves on the issue who are unfamiliar with the historical context and origins of the conflict dating back to the early 20th century.*

The origins of the Israeli-Palestine conflict date back to the early 1900s, when Palestine was still under the control of the Ottoman empire, as it had been for several centuries under the occupation of the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Empire was one of the Central Powers in World War I, meaning they were on the opposing side of the Allied Powers that included countries such as Great Britain. During the war, Great Britain made a commitment to the Arab Palestinians that they would help them to gain independence and self-determination in exchange for the Arab Palestinians being against the Ottoman Turks. Britannica states that the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, a series of letters between the emir of Mecca at the time and a British commissioner,

“effectively traded British support of an independent Arab state for Arab assistance in opposing the Ottoman Empire.”

However, the promises of Great Britain were not seen through, as Great Britain was utilizing Arab nationalism to win the war, but did not in fact plan on granting Palestine full freedom as a sovereign state.

Near the end of the war, as the Ottoman Empire was defeated and facing dissolution, the Sykes-Picot agreement served as a way for the Allied powers of Britain and France to divide “most of the Arab lands under the rule of the Ottoman Empire,” according to The History Channel. This directly contradicted the terms of the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, leaving Arab Palestinians frustrated that they were not given full independence.

As World War I ended, Great Britain was granted control over Palestine as a Mandatory Power in the Mandates system instituted by the League of Nations, the first intergovernmental organization whose goal was to establish peace and security at an international level.

In the British mandate, Palestine was given “provisional independence while still subject to Allied administrative control,” according to Britannica. The British mandate also included the desires of the 1917 Balfour Declaration, a public pledge by Britain that argued for Palestine to also serve as “a national home for the Jewish people.” And, as paraphrased

by the Economic Cooperation Foundation, the Declaration would also “ensur[e] that the rights and positions of other communities in Palestine, as well as holy places, be preserved.” Instead of becoming a sovereign state, Palestine became what is known as “internationalized.” The term internationalized refers to when a region is put under international control.

The desire for a “national home for the Jewish people,” as stated in the declaration, stemmed from the growing Jewish nationalist movement at the time, also known as Zionism. This was a result of Jews’ historical and religious connection to the land of Palestine, as it is considered the most religious site in the world for Jewish people. The area also includes Western Wall within it, and Jews have ancestors who lived in the land “two thousand years earlier before dispersing in the ‘Diaspora,’” according to the United Nations.

Jerusalem is also considered a holy land for Arab Palestinians, most of whom are Muslim. The city of Jerusalem is also of extreme religious importance to those who follow Islam because within it lies the “Al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in the world for Muslims,” according to the Washington Post.

From 1922 to 1947, Britain facilitated the migration of thousands of Jews to Palestine. A number of Jews also immigrated to flee Nazi persecution in the 1930s. According to Al Jazeera, “By 1936,

Jews from outside Palestine made up more than a third of the population in Palestine.” Tensions grew, particularly between Zionists and Arab Palestinians, as there were not only religious disagreements regarding the holy land, but growing competition for the ownership of land.

In 1936, the “first sustained violent uprising of Palestinian Arabs in more than a century” occurred, according to Britannica. This was a result of Arab resistance to both Jewish immigration and Palestinians’ continued desire for an independent state that had not been given to them. Many were frustrated with the fact the British government was making efforts to create a “national home for the Jewish people” within Palestine, while neglecting Palestinian’s desire to have a country or state to call their own. Several political parties united, forming the Arab Higher Committee, demanding “a general strike, nonpayment of taxes, and the closing of municipal governments...and demanded an end to Jewish immigration, a ban on land sales to Jews, and national independence,” according to Britannica.

*Due to the length of this article, the rest is on our online Prowler website.*

*Scan the QR code provided if you would like to keep reading!*



# The Power US News & World Report Holds Over Higher Ed.

BY CHRISTIAN LEE  
*Staff Writer*

U.S. News and World Report (USNWR) has recently released its latest college rankings, now accounting for metrics related to student diversity rather than alumni giving, which they have removed from their assessment of schools entirely. Although this change can be beneficial to schools that were previously lower on the list, some schools are continuing to revolt against the rankings by ending participation.

USNWR’s college rankings made their first appearance in 1983. They were initially based on opinion surveys given to academic leaders such as school presidents, asking them what they believed were the best colleges. The list eventually took into account other factors such as admissions tests, admission rates, graduate employment rates, expenditures for students, and class sizes. Since it was the first and biggest publication to rank every college in the United States, it was seen by many as an objective, almost scientific measure of a college’s worth. In a time when the application process was painstakingly completed for each college individually, many seniors wanted a quick and simple explanation to determine which

colleges were considered best, and USNWR became the gold standard. However, as the publication grew in popularity and became one of the main sources of college prestige, some schools took matters into their own hands in order to gain a higher ranking.

In some cases, schools hired companies to determine strategies for gaining a higher ranking, which heavily influenced their spending and admission decisions. Some colleges, such as Temple University, also provided inaccurate data to U.S. News — in November 2021, a former dean at Temple was convicted of fraud for submitting false information, which eventually lowered the school’s ranking.

If colleges ever received a high ranking, they would be able to pay U.S. News to advertise their rank on websites or billboards as a way of attracting students, according to Melissa Korn, who has written about higher education in The Wall Street Journal since 2014.

Additionally, the ranking’s mobility and return on investment measures mostly favored schools in high-income communities, reinforcing a system that favored wealth and prestige over the academic experience.

Some opponents of the rankings have proposed solutions to

correcting them. Steve Mintz in “Inside Higher Ed”, which provides the latest news and analysis on higher education, has proposed alternative ways to measure the academic experience, such as assessing the number of students who have worked one-on-one with a faculty member, taken on a supervised internship, and participated in an honors or research program.

Furthermore, in the midst of the competition, some schools have fought back against the rankings. Reed College, a private liberal arts college in Portland, Oregon, was one of the first schools to discontinue their sharing of data with U.S. News, in 1995. Their ranking dropped significantly afterwards, which sent a chilling reminder to other colleges that pulling out would negatively impact their ranking and therefore their application rates. Despite this, Yale and Harvard Law School, and soon thereafter many other law schools, pulled out of the rankings. Harvard Medical School was also the first medical school to stop cooperating, after which many other medical schools followed. Columbia University is the latest undergraduate school to follow this trend, in 2023.

The fact that one of the highest-ranked schools pulled out of the USNWR’s rankings does not indicate that they were dissatisfied

with their ranking — rather, it indicates that they were opposed to the overall system. In declaring their USNWR Boycott, Columbia University announced, “We are convinced that synthesizing data into a single U.S. News submission for its Best Colleges rankings does not adequately account for all of the factors that make our undergraduate programs exceptional.”

On the other hand, according to Koran, the CEO of USNWR, Eric Gertler, believes that schools are “shying away from accountability,” avoiding complete transparency about their values and evaluations. Gertler defends USNWR, saying they are “focused on helping students make the best decision for their education.”

Although it can be argued on either side if the rankings are a fair, accurate assessment of colleges and the academic experience, it is undeniable that USNWR still holds immense power over higher education.

However, as colleges are continuing to recognize the ranking’s limitations, it is also undeniable the USNWR is losing some power in their own game.





# SAG-AFTRA strike comes to an end

BY MAGGIE BRADY  
Staff Writer

2023 is the year of strikes with teacher unions, Starbucks workers, and writers all going on strike. While many of these groups reached an agreement with their employers within months, one group was still on the picket line well into October: SAG-AFTRA.

This group combines two unions, the Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television Artists, and represents approximately 160,000 professionals in the film and television industry. The two groups officially merged on March 30, 2012 and are currently led by “The Nanny” actress Fran Drescher.

In June of this year, Drescher notified members that negotiations for TV, theatrical, and streaming contracts were about to begin. Prior to these meetings, members of the union voted to grant the National Board a strike authorization. This meant that if their demands were not met, the union would go on strike. “[T]his vote is a powerful signal to the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers that we’re ready for any

eventuality,” said Drescher.

The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, or AMPTP, represents companies such as Amazon/MGM, Apple, Disney/ABC/Fox, NBCUniversal, Netflix, Paramount/CBS, Sony, Warner Bros, and Discovery (HBO).

After over a month of negotiations, SAG-AFTRA and AMPTP were unable to construct a contract that both groups could agree on. SAG-AFTRA officially went on strike at 12:01 AM PT on Friday, July 14 with picketing beginning at 9 AM PT.

The main reason for the strike: survival of the profession. “We’re up against a system where those in charge of multibillion-dollar media conglomerates are rewarded for exploiting workers,” said the SAG-AFTRA TV/Theatrical Negotiating Committee in a statement on their website.

More specifically, the union was fighting for minimum earnings to keep up with inflation, protection of images and performances against AI, qualified hair and makeup artists who know how to work with all hair textures and skin tones, and

compensation for their work from streaming services, among many other requests.

Because of the strike, members were unable to participate in struck work, which includes any on-camera and background work, voice acting, or any promotional material for projects created with struck companies. However, members could still participate in a limited number of productions, including games shows, soap operas, commercials, and indie films.

For example, famous actors from across the industry showed their support for the strike with the cast of “Oppenheimer,” including the main stars Cillian Murphy and Emily Blunt, walking out of their movie’s premiere when the strike began over the summer. “Our union’s strength lies in our solidarity,” said Drescher.

The AMPTP and SAG-AFTRA began bargaining again in early October. However, after only a few days of negotiating, a decision could not be reached and the strike continued. “One day longer. One day stronger. As long as it takes,” said the Negotiating Committee in a message to members.

After 100 days of walking the picket line, official negotiations began again on October 24 and were still taking place through the beginning of November. Despite gaining momentum in

the negotiating process, SAG-AFTRA angered many, including their own members, when last month they prohibited members from dressing up as characters from struck series and movies for Halloween.

In a now deleted post, the union suggested members “choose costumes inspired by generalized characters and figures (ghost, zombie, spider, etc.),” and avoid “post[ing] photos of costumes inspired by struck content to social media,” according to Variety.

SAG-AFTRA has since clarified that their intentions were to prevent members from promoting struck productions.

In the days following Halloween, the union continued to negotiate with AMPTP. On November 1, the two groups met for over three hours discussing SAG-AFTRA’s proposal. They finally reached a tentative agreement on November 8, with SAG-AFTRA calling for the strike to end on November 9.

The tentative agreement includes an increase in minimum wages, protection against AI, and advance payment of residuals for all members.

SAG-AFTRA hopes that “[o]ur strike can become the catalyst for a historic culture change in all industries,” said the Negotiating Committee in a statement on their website.

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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 234. 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 school opened in the fall of 1988. To become a staff member, students should take Journalism A & B with Ms. Cooley-Klein, then fill out an application to join the Prowler staff for the following year.

# Crown High School scheduled to open August 2027

BY KAYLA PILLOFF  
Staff Writer

A new high school is going to be built in Montgomery County by 2027; the school is called Crown High School and will be located on Fields Road.

Crown High School will host around 2,200 students, according to Caitlyn Peetz, a reporter at Bethesda Beat, but can be increased to 2,700 students if needed. It will help combat overcrowding at our very own Quince Orchard High School, as well as at Gaithersburg, Northwest, Richard Montgomery, and Wootton.

Overcrowding is a large issue in Montgomery County Public Schools. At QO, “we are overcrowded by almost 350 students,” according to Principal Beth Thomas, and by the 2025-26 school year, it will be “[overcrowded by] over 470 students.” Crown High School will help relieve this issue for not only our school but the other four listed above.

“We are up to 15 relocatable classrooms right now, and that has an impact on the culture and climate,” said Thomas. The addition of a new high school will help minimize the need for the portables as well as solve issues like students having to park at Safeway and the amount of room in the cafeteria, also according to Thomas.

Plans for Crown High School have been in place since 2006, with a budget around \$180 million, according to the Mayor and City Council of Gaithersburg. The location of the school is on the opposite side of the Downtown Crown community, and the residential portion of Crown will be between the two areas. The layout of the school includes a five-story building and will use renewable

energy sources, according to a June 19 MCPS presentation.

Also, the school will, “include several courtyards and encompass approximately 65% of open space,” according to the construction company Keller. The building has a modern feel to it, matching the architectural style of the stores and residential areas in Downtown Crown. The exterior of the school will be built with two different brick colors as well as a big glass front entrance, allowing for a lot of natural light to come in.

It is no surprise that new construction tends to have a significant environmental impact, with copious amounts of trash and an extreme amount of energy use.

However, Crown High School plans to combat some of these issues with eco-friendly features. One example is the landscaping, which will consist of all native and drought-resistant plants that naturally filter out pollutants, minimizing runoff. The school will also have solar panels and use geothermal energy (natural heat from the earth). These alternative

energy sources will help to create renewable electricity and clean heating and cooling for the school. Also, the plumbing fixtures will be water conserving, according to an MCPS presentation.

One especially unique feature of the school is the main floor being a gymnasium that is open to the public as well as an amphitheater, according to Matt Jones, senior editor of Space4learning. While there is no official boundary study yet, it can be assumed that those living in the Crown area and neighboring areas will most likely go to Crown High School. New boundaries can definitely stir controversy, though. “Along the way there’s going to be conversations [among] communities,” said Thomas. “Their students will be going to a new school and that’s hard... Change is always hard at first.”

Ultimately, though, Crown High School will offer lots of new opportunities for all involved in the school system, including both teachers and students.



Shown above is the design plan for Crown High School, which is scheduled to open in the fall of 2027 and will combat overcrowding at QO and other area high schools.





# Democrats count more victories than Republicans in 2023 off-year election

BY PATRINA PUN  
Senior Staff Writer

This past Tuesday, November 7, was a big day for the Democrats, Republicans, and even our freshly-turned-18-year-old students here at Quince Orchard High School who were able to voice their opinions by participating in their first election. Election Day was held in at least 37 states in the United States, including Maryland. While not a presidential election year, Americans were able to cast their votes on everything from the governorship to local referenda. Notably, this election turned out to be a great success for the Democrats regarding the subjects of abortion and governor elections.

To start off, according to AP News, Democrats had guaranteed four wins by the end of Tuesday night in Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Clearly, President Joe Biden's recent struggle with an average approval rating below 40 percent has not taken that heavy a toll on the Democratic party, as Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear was re-elected in the state that Trump had previously won by 26 points. He attacked his Republican competitor, Attorney General Daniel Cameron, surrounding the subject of abortion and expressed

his disbelief towards Cameron's opposition to abortion in cases of rape or incest. In Ohio, a ballot measure preserving abortion rights was also passed in a state Trump had previously won by eight points back in 2020. In an attempt to derail the measure, Republicans called an August referendum to raise the difficulty of passing ballot measures. This was in fact wholeheartedly rejected by Ohio voters.

Later that day, Democrat Dan McCaffery won an open seat in Pennsylvania's Supreme Court after defending abortion rights.

Closer to home, Democrats held the State Senate and flipped control of the Virginia House of Delegates from the GOP. Lastly, according to CNN, Republican Governor Glenn Youngkin was met with an attitude from Virginian voters who denied the governor and his party the legislative majorities he wanted. This meant there will be no 15-week abortion ban Youngkin so passionately argued for.

Some candidates also broke both racial and gender barriers in their state. According to CNN, the projected winner of Rhode Island's special congressional election is Democrat Gabe Amo, the first Black person to represent the state in Congress. In Philadelphia, former city councilmember Cherelle Parker will be the city's fourth Black mayor and first woman to lead the city of Brotherly Love.



NEW YORK TIMES

Though Democrats held a large majority of wins in this year's election, the Republicans did score a win. According to ABC News, Republican Governor Tate Reeves will likely win re-election in Mississippi against Democrat Brandon Presley this year. Though by a smaller margin compared to 2019, the state will still fully remain in Republican hands.

While things may look particularly favorable for the Democrats, it is also important to note that this 2023 election is not the 2024 electorate. According to ABC News, when the presidential election takes place in 2024, there are strong predictions that the populations of Americans

who casted ballots in today's races will not necessarily be the same population that will vote next year. In addition, people and opinions are constantly changing and adjusting to the actions of others. It is still far too early to predict a winning party.

However, this election is still an excellent time for American citizens to begin considering their vote in the 2024 election and stance on certain issues. Various news sources like NBC have predicted that key topics such as abortion will most definitely return in the 2024 debate and be one of the big divisors in the nation.

So mark your calendars because Tuesday, November 5, 2024 will be the actual presidential date!

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# YouTube mom charged with six felony counts of child abuse

BY NADIA AUNG  
Staff Writer

What started off as a family-friendly YouTube channel—one that posted vlogs of their day-to-day life—made a dark turn to cases of child abuse and neglect.

Ruby Franke, the 41-year-old mother to six behind the family vlogging channel 8 Passengers, which counted 2.2 million subscribers, was arrested in August for child abuse. She was charged with six felony counts, each charge carrying a penalty up to 15 years in prison.

Franke's 12-year old son was reported to have open wounds, duct tape around his wrists and ankles when he climbed out of a window to a neighbor's house to seek help. "I just had a 12-year old boy show up here at my house. He's emaciated, he's got tape around his legs, he's hungry and he is thirsty," said the neighbor. They noticed how severely malnourished the child looked and immediately called the police. According to Salt Lake City News, the child informed police and medical personnel that he was tied with rope to the ground and that the wounds were dressed with cayenne pepper and honey by "Jodi."

When Franke wasn't working on the YouTube channel, she was a part of a mental health counseling service called ConneXions, alongside business partner Jodi Hildebrandt, who was also arrested and charged with the same six felony counts of child abuse, according to NPR. The group faced criticism for its questionable parenting advice, including shame-based learning, and shunning people who don't have the same values as them.

After the first child was found and taken to the hospital, police discovered another child at a nearby home, also in the same malnourished condition. Authorities then located the two middle children miles away at the home of Pam Bodtcher, a friend of Franke and Hildebrandt and the president of ConneXions. Four minors were taken into the care of the Department of Child and Family Services. Franke's eldest daughter, Shari Franke, went to Instagram to post about her mother's arrest. She posted an Instagram story writing, "Hi all. Today has been a big day. Me and my family are so glad justice is being served. We've been trying to tell the police and CPS for years about this, and so glad they finally decided to step up. Kids are safe, but

there's a long road ahead. Please keep them in your prayers and also respect their privacy." This wasn't the first time Franke's strict parenting concerned the public.

In a past video, their then-15-year-old son said that he had slept on a bean bag for several months. Other incidents similar to this included Ruby refusing to pack lunch for her then pre-schooler, denying her children food, destroying their belongings, and forcing them to stay home and clean the floor.

*Her 12-year old son was reported to have open wounds, duct tape around his wrists and ankles when he climbed out of a window.*

ABC News recently released Shari's 9-1-1 call from September 2022, concerned for her siblings being left home alone for days. "Hi, my name is Shari Franke," she said. "My four younger siblings are living in Springville and my neighbors have been telling me that they have been left home alone for about four or five days."

As of early October, Utah County judge Suchada P. Bazzelle ordered the child welfare case to be sealed from the public to protect the privacy of the minors involved. This decision was announced after a member of the press had gained "unannounced" access to a hearing in which sensitive information about Franke's children was discussed. "Media representatives took photographs of individuals involved in the case while in the hallway outside of the courtroom, which is prohibited," said Bazzelle. We may not know much more about the case for a while. In Shari's most recent Instagram post, thousands of people in the comments sent support and prayers to Shari and her family. "I think about you and your family every single day. You've gone through so much. I'm praying for a great outcome!" said user katiestevens\_.

## KEEPING UP WITH THE KOUGARS

BY PATRINA PUN  
Senior Staff Writer

Welcome back, Cougars! Featured here is our column highlighting important events and the inside scoop at QO, so that you can Keep Up With the Kougars!

### Student Highlight Of The Month:

As young children, we were often introduced to various instrumental toys like a four-function key piano or the violin. Some may have even taken it a step further and pursued the instrument throughout their adolescent years until they realized it was just not their "thing."

However, Joey Hsieh, a senior here at Quince Orchard High School, most certainly did not give up on his instrument and is now taking it another step further and pursuing a career in music.

For the past 13 years, Hsieh has shown the utmost dedication to the cello beyond the classroom. From 2018 to 2022, Hsieh was nominated and accepted into the Maryland All-State Orchestra. In 2019, he was accepted into the National Symphony Orchestra Youth Fellowship, a full scholarship program designed to help high school students prepare for a career in music. He has also been appointed as the principal cellist of the Maryland Classic Youth Orchestra's top orchestra, the Philharmonic, for the past two years.

Recently, he won the grand prize in the Young Musician Inspiring Change International Competition with the La Vida String Quartet, which includes a performance at Carnegie Hall. In addition, he was also a prize winner in the Londontowne Symphony Orchestra Young Artist Competition, which included

a solo performance. Just this past year, he has also participated in the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition in South Bend, Indiana as a quarterfinalist.

Balancing such a rewarding yet rigorous itinerary regarding his up-and-coming instrumental career can be quite challenging with academics as a senior. Currently, Hsieh is enrolled in several AP courses including AP Environmental Science, Statistics, Economics, and English Literature.

On top of this demanding schedule, Hsieh continues to go above and beyond and applied to numerous respected colleges including Northwestern University, Bienen School of Music, New England Conservatory and Tufts Dual Degree Program, Rice University, Shepard School of Music, and University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance.

With a busy schedule like Hsieh's, time management can become one of the greatest difficulties in preventing him from efficiently getting his work done. However, Hsieh claims that "creating a schedule and organizing my day" had proven to be the most efficient method to ensure an equal balance between music and academics. With much excitement and anticipation, we wish Hsieh the best of luck in his musical endeavors!

### EARLY ACTION/ DECISION COLLEGE SUBMISSIONS:

With most early action and decision submission deadlines having just passed—the most common being October 15 and November 1—the pressure on seniors here at Quince Orchard High School has begun to weigh and the reality for many has set in. For seniors coming back to school after a thrilling summer, they were quick to make an adjustment from fun to not-so-fun. Senior Rush

Mathai, for instance, applied to a variety of colleges for early action and rolling admission including the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Maryland, the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Virginia Commonwealth University, Pennsylvania State University, and the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He claims the most time-consuming part of the process was the essay portion for Penn State University; he wrote a total of 14 pieces for their honors college and Millennium Scholars Program. To cope with this stress, Mathai recommends to always "take breaks and manage your time wisely." Dealing with extracurricular activities along with classes on top of college applications can get quite hectic, so he advises current juniors to "start the process as early as you can."

Additionally, senior Kelly Adams applied early decision to Brown University along with early action to Northeastern University, James Madison University, the University of Connecticut, the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, the University of Maryland, the University of Florida, and the University of Virginia. Adams highlighted that dealing with the essays took a lot more effort and time than expected: she started with "1400 words and had to get down to 650," she said. She recommends starting your Common App in the summer as people begin to "burn out this time of year." To say the least, the college application process is strenuous and nothing like anything seniors have done before. However, we are all in this together. Best of luck to all the seniors out there participating in the college process. We got this!

### ADJUSTMENTS REGARDING FOOD AND SAFETY:

The new school year has brought

new implementation of rules regarding students' safety and order.

To begin, students who leave campus and return after the school day will be considered absent and will not be permitted to use MCPS transportation anymore. Also, Principal Beth Thomas reiterated that students who drive to school are not allowed to leave campus during lunch hours or any time during the school day to ensure a "secure and focused learning environment." Thomas emphasizes that with every parking pass, there was an agreement on the rules and indication of having the privilege to park on school grounds. She announced that the administration will begin to use a progressive disciplinary action that could result in the removal of a student parking pass.

Furthermore, to maintain a ready and focused environment for children to learn, students will be prohibited from entering the school if they arrive late to Period 6 with outside food.

### QUINCE ORCHARD NEW THEATRICAL PLAY:

Quince Orchard Theatre has recently presented us with a new fall play, "Peter and the Starcatcher" by Rick Elice. The play features a young orphan, Peter, along with two other orphans and a girl named Molly on a wild adventure. Together, they encounter sailors, bands of pirates, mermaids, and much more! "This production has been incredibly challenging, but it is a beautiful piece of theatre that everyone should see," said Jessica Vogel, English teacher and the artistic director of QO Theatre.

The first showing will take place on November 11 and the last showing on November 18 at 2 PM and 7 PM in the auditorium. Tickets are \$8 for Quince Orchard students, \$12 for adults, and \$10 for everyone else.



# Student runs clothing business "Left Paris"

BY ELISHA SENGA  
Staff Writer

Senior Neheid "Tay" Balala, is the creator of the logo brand "Left Paris," a unisex line that sells a variety of hoodies, pants, shorts, backpacks, and t-shirts online.

Balala started this business as a way to prove his individuality. The name "Left Paris" means leaving your bad past behind, whether it's drugs or alcohol. The "Left" symbolizes a period of growth and "Paris" alludes to the well-known high-fashion city.

Managing your own business can be hard, and aspiring beginners should keep in mind that they should be ready to "fail," says Balala. With the help of his parents, who were willing to take risks, Balala was able to get the support he needed to jump-start his business.

Tay's prices range based on the time spent on making the garment and its quality, so a lot of effort is put into items to make sure his customers get what they pay for.

Students at Quince Orchard have been seen wearing his apparel, and with the temperature getting colder, junior Seinn Phu says, "Left Paris hoodie keeps me warm in and out of school."

Loyal customers also receive deals such as 30% off orders. "Left Paris" is also extremely inclusive, with sizes ranging from S to 2XL. Balala anticipates more sales because of the cold weather. "The school was so hot, but I had my left Paris shirt, so I wasn't as warm as everyone else," said junior Lauriana Douanla.

The "whole kit" includes an affordable top or bottom of your choice. The backpack is spacious, and if you struggle with too many papers or folders, the "Left Paris" backpack may be for you.

Minimalist fashion is growing in the industry, Customers can find Leftparis @Tayleft on Instagram.



A few pieces from "Left Paris"  
@Tayleft ON INSTAGRAM

# Sophomores reflect on expectations and recap the first quarter

BY BROOKE LYONS  
Staff Writer

Sophomore year of high school—while this may be the time many start to drive and take their PSATs, for many it is also a time of exploration and self-discovery before the whirlwind that is junior year.

According to We Go Public, a non-profit organization focused on public education, sophomore year is the time when many students should start prioritizing later plans and goals. This includes possible glances at college, as the next year will be more focused more on SATs, ACTs, and extracurriculars.

While the sophomore class is often overlooked by other classes that seem more memorable, the class of '26 dealt with mishaps, slipups, and mental challenges of the first quarter. We also achieved many positive outcomes and surprises.

Many students had an accomplished start to the year. For example, sophomore Ayla Sarano stated, "I think my first quarter went really well with my grades and I did well managing my time."

For a number of students, this quarter has been a period of improvement. However, for others, managing the trilogy of school, sports and other activities can be a bit of a challenge.

"It's pretty hard going from school to practice, and that doesn't leave a lot of time to do work, but I handled it pretty well," added Sarano. This is true since athletic practices can range from 30 minutes to two or more hours.

Nevertheless, managing all of the pressure put on by classes and extracurriculars isn't easy. "Getting high grades and back into the rhythm of school all day were one of the more difficult factors of the quarter,"

said sophomore Chris Szilagyi, since the ten-week summer break often leaves for more flexibility than the rigidity of our current schedules.

There are things sophomores wish they could've done this quarter, as every quarter offers improvement. "I'd study more and get my assignments in on time," Szilagyi said.

*"Having an agenda book on my phone, taking notes, and making sure I completed school tasks helped me adjust to more work over time."*

- Chris Szilagyi

However, there is a way Szilagyi dealt with these hardships. He shared, "Having an agenda book on my phone, taking notes, and making sure I completed school tasks helped me adjust to more work over time," he said.

With an ending, there are always new beginnings. "I think the next quarter will go the same," said sophomore Serra Ozer, "but I'm worried about the fourth quarter because that's when we'll take all of the AP tests and end-of-the-year tests." Most of the Advanced Placement exams take place May sixth to May 17th.

There may be opinions on how

students need to improve for the next quarter. Ozer stated, "I want to see better grades." Improving your GPA over time could be a goal many students strive to work towards as the second quarter arrives.

Undeniably, we're already 25% finished with the school year! As the first quarter ends, it signifies the legacy of many achievements and events for all students. These include events such as Spirit Week,

Homecoming, Friday Night Football games and more. This ending also includes fall sports ending their seasons and winter sports beginning to emerge.

There is still plenty of work to be done from the class of '26 including bright accomplishments we achieved and hardships we overcame. With a positive outlook and hard work, we can achieve what we put our minds to.



Elizabeth Carvallo (left) and Halle Williams, both sophomores, chatting at lunch in Room 234.

BROOKE LYONS



# SWEATER WEATHER

As seen at QO: The staples you need in your closet this fall

BY SOPHIA LEE & MADDIE KING



PHOTO BY UGG

The “UGG obsession” is back, but this time a little shorter. They retail for \$150, but they are definitely worth the splurge!

Already in your closet: wide leg jeans. The jeans of the season can be mixed and matched to the max! They can be paired with any top, sweater, jacket, or shoes. They are suitable for anything this fall may bring you, such as a trip to the pumpkin patch or a nice hayride!

PHOTO BY ZARA



Stay warm in style: puffer vests are all the rage. You can find them in any color and length of your preference, so you can face the change in season while staying warm and trendy.

PHOTO BY ARITZIA

A trend as old as time: the classic flannel is back in action just in time for the windy weather. It is a perfect layering option for any outfit that can keep everyone warm. They come in a wide variety of colors and sell at many different price points — perfect for spicing up any outfit!



PHOTO BY AMAZON

CARGO EVERYTHING: the latest trend that’s taking over everyone’s feeds. Whether it’s a pair of pants or skirt in any color, cargos have become the ultimate staple in closets this fall. This military-inspired look is ready for any battle the colder weather may throw at you.



PHOTO BY ARITZIA AND LEWKIN







# Turkeys, Traditions, and Travels Galore

## What do you do for Thanksgiving?

BY MOLLY RUBMAN  
Staff Writer

Red and orange leaves fly past you, a brisk chill of wind flows through the holes of your sweater, the noise of small talk fills the room, and the smell of turkey and mashed potatoes wafts past you: Thanksgiving has almost arrived. In five days, QO will go on a three-day Thanksgiving break.

This year, Monday and Tuesday will be half-days and Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday will be completely off. This allows time for students, staff, and their families to travel if needed. For science resource teacher Jennifer Yeck, this extended break is beneficial. "My brother's wife's family is in Pittsburgh (three hours away), so it's a big extended day," Yeck said.

While traveling is common, many choose to stay local and allow the festivities to commence in the comfort of their own home. For many, watching football is a staple during Thanksgiving season.

For senior Michael Taliano, it is just that, as his favorite thing to do on Thanksgiving is to watch football. "It's a fun thing to watch with my family," he said.

Others have more active traditions they participate in each year, like junior Gabbie Spano. "[My family and I] get up very early and then we go to the 'turkey trot,' which is usually a 5k," Spano said. She has been doing this since she was ten years old and says it "brings [her] family together."

It goes without saying, however, that Thanksgiving is not Thanksgiving without food! The main dish that everyone waits for is usually turkey, which is commonly associated with the holiday itself. But for some families, they choose other foods to be the main dish.

"Me and a few other members of my family realize that turkey is really overrated and not worthy of being the centerpiece of the holiday," social studies teacher Joshua Schuman said, and then added, "Why would we use our 11th best protein as the main dish?"



WANNAPIK, VECTOR PORTAL, FREERANGE

Seemingly passionate that turkey is not the way to go, Schuman provides other meats that he has made instead. "I've taken to making something like a rib roast, duck, or a brisket," he said.

Moving on from just the meat part of the feast is all the side dishes. When asked what her favorite Thanksgiving food was, Yeck said it was a tough call. "The combination of cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, and stuffing with some gravy," she said. There are also all the infamous desserts such as pumpkin pie, pecan pie, apple pie, ice cream, and cake.

Aside from all the fun and food, Thanksgiving is really a time for families to come together and celebrate what they are thankful for. "My family and I always go around the table and say one thing we are thankful for about each person," junior Lyla Holstein said.

Other families may indulge in activities together such as board games or watching movies instead to show their gratitude and appreciation for each other. Though, no matter what a family decides to do, being all together is just enough.

# The First Milestone

## Seniors' outlook on their upcoming future decisions after high school

BY DAVID GUEVARA  
Staff Writer

It's that time of year when the holiday season is kicking off, with Thanksgiving only a week away and Christmas a few more after. However, besides the holiday excitement, it's also that time of year when seniors begin to take their biggest step in their lives: the decision of their futures. Whether they are applying for colleges, or taking a gap year and getting a job, the holiday season is one of the most stressful times of the year for seniors with their futures in hand.

With students sending in their applications to a number of schools, some may wonder how their time in school has built up for this moment. They may wonder whether the school system has prepared them for their next chapter, or if their prior decisions were worth the time and stress they may have posed. These questions can be answered in a multitude of different ways depending on the student—and sometimes the questions have yet to have an answer.

Regarding whether the school system has prepared seniors for the college experience, Kembola, among many seniors,

*"For the most part, but in life, you always have to expect the unexpected, and you can't prepare for everything"*  
-Cherubin Kembola

has the mindset that school has prepared him, but to only a certain extent. He and many others find that it can only help so much, but it is a necessary stepping stone to their futures.

Among the many questions surrounding college for seniors is the destination of the school. Could it be states away? Or only a few miles? In regards to his current status of applications, senior Aaron Dean explains how he "didn't apply to any [four-year] universities" and his "plan is to go to Montgomery College and transfer to UMD."

Other seniors, like Daniel Merilos, applied to colleges much further from Maryland, like the University of California, San Diego; San Francisco State University; and California Maritime Academy. Senior Dahlia Altalib also branched outside of the state, applying to George Mason University in Virginia.

Ultimately, one of the biggest questions involved in seniors' future-planning process is determining the timing. Many seniors debate whether they need a break or not after high school, or a "gap year" as it is called by many. But if decided it's important to plan ahead before the time comes, giving students the opportunity to better prepare themselves for college during that time. Altalib, for instance, stated that she "[isn't] really sure what [she] would do during a gap year."

In the end, there are a lot of questions that loom for the seniors, and most of these questions will all be answered later in the school year. Overall, these next few months will be crucial stepping stones and beginnings to a variety of careers for these young adults.



Aaron Dean, Cherubin Kembola, and Dahlia Altalib are among the QO seniors who are in the process of deciding their futures.



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## VIEWPOINT

# What happened to the pop star?

BY CHASE PASEKOFF  
Editor-in-Chief

In recent years, the concept of a “pop star” has changed greatly. A “pop star” was someone who dominated pop music and served as a musical icon to a dedicated audience. While there certainly still are a fair share of these musical figures in the current pop culture sphere (Taylor Swift, Harry Styles, Drake, and Adele for example), they are few and far between compared to the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, when there was an array of artists that essentially “owned” the music scene.

These artists all had a certain *je ne sais quoi* and were difficult to come by. They were figures that had these larger-than-life personalities and seemed so far removed from general society. As of late, however, these qualities that once were in many ways viewed as a requirement for being a pop star have become obsolete.

With the rise of social media outlets, musicians have become much more accessible to the general public. Fans are now able to directly communicate with their favorite stars, an ability that other fandoms didn't have several decades ago. In many ways, this has added a more personal touch to the artists, as they are able to share more about themselves and their lives with their fans directly. Consequently, this has led to a decline in the mysterious allure that many musicians and celebrities used to have. As recently

as 15 years ago, the only way to hear about celebrity gossip, drama, and their personal lives was through tabloid magazines. With social media intertwining into our lives so heavily, the disconnect between artists and fans has become less and less pronounced.

It is interesting to observe how, as a result, this connectivity has changed the perception of pop stars in our current society. While celebrities continue to live in a separate world from people who are viewed as “normal,” the concept of relatability has taken over the central focus of many celebrities' approach to fame. The desire to appear to be an everyday person, as opposed to a pop culture icon, has seemed to be the route many artists have taken to appeal to their fanbases.

Similarly, this change in perspective has had an effect on the view that fans have on their favorite celebrities as well. While fans have always felt a deep connection and love towards artists, this new level of relatability that celebrities have attempted to portray has led many fans to feel even more connected than they would otherwise. Those who once had an unattainable lifestyle are now appearing to be “just like you.” With all of this being said, the question still remains: will pop stars continue to evolve as relatable figures, or will they eventually revert to their icon-like image?

## VIEWPOINT

# Modern Jazz and its Outstanding Comeback

BY MAMS JAGHA  
Editor-in-Chief

With the recent release of Icelandic singer-songwriter Laufey's second studio album “Bewitched,” many are beginning to fall back into the hypnotic charm of jazz.

In the past 20 years, artists like Esperanza Spalding, Samara Joy, Kamasi Washington, and Nubya Garcia have utilized multi-instrumental sounds to create a sense of comfort and an ageless appeal to their modern twist on jazz. Their lyrical themes and flip on classical styles have made jazz more “accessible” to younger audiences and redefined its place within the jazz genre.

Originating in African-American communities of New Orleans, the broad style incorporating syncopated rhythms, improvisation, and intriguing harmonies spread like wildfire and hasn't stopped since. Recognized as a major form of musical expression, jazz music created a sense of identity and a way for African Americans to express their liberation from the confines of slavery in the early 20th century. The constantly evolving and expanding sound that emerged from ragtime and other musical influences such as blues became an unexpected hit around the United States and beyond.

Early Jazz mixed elements of ragtime and then instruments like banjos, trumpets, saxophones, and tubas. Early jazz musicians like Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker, and Mary Lou Williams implemented expressive vocals, unrestricted improvisations, scat singing, and purity of tone to not just develop an individual voice but also to open up the different possibilities of what Jazz could be.

Currently, modern Jazz artists fuse together other world music, unique bass, and electronic elements to preserve the standard style but also add a new mix to it.

For example, in Esperanza Spalding's “Lest We Forget (Blood)” (2018), the mix of piano, guitars, and bass seamlessly blend into her dynamic voice and demonstrates her ability to compose a rich Jazz Performance.

Nubya Garcia's “Together is a Beautiful Place To Be” (2020) blends muted drums, light keys, and a smooth saxophone to create an intense sense of ambiance in her sound.

While these artists add their own special elements to their music, they always seem to keep the original conversational tone of Jazz.

Some may say that Jazz is “dead,” or that it is an ancient art form that could only be performed by its legends; however, any true artist knows that music is a form of expression that can never be tamed or erased. In hopes of building a bridge between generations, artists like Laufey, Cherise, Ezra Collective, and Venna have transformed and expanded what they love about their favorite genre, while also keeping the original elements of the art form, to create an unforgettable sound.



PIXIST



CARTOON BY AMADI PINKNEY

An October strike by women in Iceland to protest the pay gap and gender-based violence was joined by the Prime Minister herself, Katrín Jakobsdóttir. In this strike, women who participated did not engage in paid or unpaid work to highlight their importance to society. Iceland had a similar strike in 1975 that caused the passing of an equal pay law, but the current strikers say more work needs to be done to achieve full equality.

# Drake's new album underwhelming

BY SOPHIE FAWKNER and KATE BELMAN  
Senior Staff Writers

Drake could be considered one of the most influential artists of the current generation.

With five Grammy Awards, 34 Billboard Music Awards, and recognition as the Billboard's Artist of the 2010s Decade winner, Drake is adored by his fanbase. Whenever one thinks of Drake, one tends to think of his most famous songs such as “One Dance” and “God's Plan”, to name a few.

Whether you're familiar with his full discography or not, Drake has had a plethora of hits: on a commercial scale, Drake has had 13 number-one hits on the Billboard Hot 100 throughout his career, the fifth most of any artist.

Recently, Drake supplied his fandom with yet another body of work, releasing his album *For All the Dogs* on October 6.

The Weeknd, 21 Savage, J. Cole, Yeat, SZA, Bad Bunny, and Travis Scott are all artists that have features within the album.

With this heavy emphasis on collaborations, some fans assume that Drake is attempting to broaden his reach by encouraging different fandoms to listen to his new releases.

While Drake's fandom is dedicated and loyal, some were disappointed in his newest album. One who was slightly disappointed with the album's quality was sophomore Ayla Sarano, who thought there was “a lack of creativity and some of the songs shared the same beat.” Sarano claims that there were only a few songs that she liked out of the whole album.

“Rich Baby Daddy” is pretty much the only song I would listen to again,” she said.

Another Drake fan, sophomore Maddie Knarr, also shared some of

her disappointment towards the album.

“It was pretty decent, other than the random barking in some parts. Each song had some weird beats and weren't anything special,” said Knarr.

This is coming from a fan who loves all of Drake's hits and previous albums.

Sophomore Devin Day also believes that Drake's new album is overrated.

“It was honestly terrible and I expected way more. Youngboy's album is much better,” said Day.

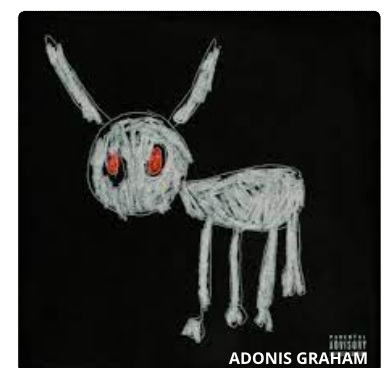
Day isn't necessarily a superfan of Drake, but still expected something more out of an artist who is so hyped up.

Just because Sarano and Knarr were disappointed with this album, however, it doesn't mean that they wouldn't listen to any more albums.

“I still love and support Drake. I just hope he comes out with a better album soon,” said Sarano.

As for Knarr, she agreed, saying, “I am still an avid listener of Drake and hope to see a better album in the future.”

Overall, despite Drake having a bit of a “lack of creativity” according to Sarano in his music and albums nowadays, his loving fans will continue to support and listen to his music. Both Drake and his music will always be seen as legendary and timeless, nonetheless.



ADONIS GRAHAM

Album cover for “For All the Dogs”





# Athlete of the Month

BY OLIVIA MAYTIN  
Senior Staff Writer

## CHEERLEADING - SENIOR MEGAN HUGHES

Varsity coach Nakeya Fleming chose Hughes because “she is a powerhouse. She works hard to improve every day and doesn’t settle for anything less than her best. She is supportive and encouraging to her teammates and is a great leader.”

### Q. What hobbies or interests do you have outside of sports?

A. I like to go to a competitive cheer gym to work on tumbling. When I’m not doing that, I like to hang out with friends or go to other sporting events.

### Q. How do you balance being a student-athlete?

A. I prioritize my education first, and a way I do that is to get all my homework done I can in classes when I have free time, or whenever I’m home before practice I get work done. That way, after practice I can get studying done and not stress over late work.

### Q. When did you start playing this sport and why did you start?

A. In 3rd grade, my sister transferred to a different gym called Shockwave, where I was welcomed with open arms. I was at one of my sister’s practices, and one of the coaches saw I was trying to do a back walk-over and was so sweet and helped me do it. Then I wanted to learn more skills and be a part of a team, so I joined during the next tryout clinic.

### Q. What is the team atmosphere like at QO?

A. Our team atmosphere is definitely crazy at times during competition season because there’s so much pressure. But our team always finds the positives by making jokes and keeping practice entertaining.

### Q. What are some of the goals you have for the team?

A. One of the main goals I have is to place at least third at regionals and at least get to go to the state competition. I also want the girls who don’t have a back tuck to do one successfully, because most people on the team are so close to getting the skill and I believe they can get it.

### Q. What’s your favorite team tradition?

A. My favorite team tradition is our team sleepover because we get so close to one another and get to learn so much about each other.

## CROSS COUNTRY - FRESHMAN ALIYA ARGUBIE

Varsity Coach Seann Pelkey chose Argubie because she is the girl’s team leader in the 5K, finishing in 22:28 minutes. She is the team’s top finisher in every meet this year and she finished 46th at the MCPS Championships.

### Q. What hobbies or interests do you have outside of sports?

A. Besides sports, I enjoy traveling, cooking, and music.

### Q. How do you balance being a student-athlete?

A. I prioritize my tasks and stay organized.

### Q. When did you start playing this sport and why did you start?

A. Back in middle school, I got into running because my sisters were involved in a sport and they took me along.

### Q. What is the team atmosphere like at QO?

A. The team dynamic at QO is incredible—the atmosphere is supportive with lots of encouragement while placing importance on effective communication and collaboration. This kind of environment really fosters great teamwork by encouraging individual passion and supportiveness.

### Q. What are some of the goals you have for the team?

A. We aim to consistently improve our race times so we can rank among the top teams at meets regularly; qualifying for regional and national championships is also an objective as well as enhancing overall fitness levels and endurance within the whole team!

### Q. What’s your favorite team tradition?

A. All those awesome outings we have together!

## FIELD HOCKEY - SENIOR LILA MONCAK

Moncak is a two-year varsity field hockey player and both seasons has been named a captain. So far this season, she has scored 6 goals and has 6 assists. She has stepped into a leadership role this season and has excelled tremendously. She leads by example on and off the field and pushes her teammates to continuously work hard and be better versions of themselves. She is extremely coachable.

### Q. What hobbies or interests do you have outside of sports?

A. Outside of sports, I enjoy fishing, skiing, and hanging out with my friends.

### Q. How do you balance being a student-athlete?

A. I balance being a student-athlete by working around my games and practices and getting my work done in the short time I have.

### Q. When did you start playing this sport and why did you start?

A. I started sophomore year because it was my first year at QO, and I heard it was very fun and I was excited to meet new people.

### Q. What is the team atmosphere like at QO?

A. The team atmosphere is very fun. We are all really close, so the team always looks forward to being at practice together!

### Q. What are some of the goals you have for the team?

A. A goal I have for the team is to continue working hard to beat the harder teams!

### Q. What’s your favorite team tradition?

A. My favorite tradition is having a team sleepover at the end of our season.

Look out for the next issue for the winter sports!



# QONW Hockey

BY DYLAN FLAIM  
Staff Writer

Typically, we see Northwest and Quince Orchard battling it out on a football field, soccer pitch, basketball court, or wherever as rivals. But that is not the case on the ice.

The once-titled Quince Orchard club ice hockey team is now known as the Quince Orchard-Northwest (QONW) club ice hockey team. Yes, you read that correctly: Quince Orchard and Northwest have combined into one team on the ice. The merger is due to Quince Orchard only having four returning players on the team.

You may be wondering how the chemistry works, as these teams have combined on short notice with only one practice a week. Well, according to senior Fletcher Shupe, the team chemistry has actually gotten better. “Combining with Northwest has actually made us closer. I feel like our chemistry has improved since combining with them,” said Shupe.

Now the question arises: Why are there only four Quince Orchard students on the hockey team? There’s a variety of answers. One of them is that QO hockey doesn’t get much recognition.

“We don’t get any recognition from [QO] at all. Last year we got a page in the yearbook, and that was about it.”  
-Fletcher Shupe

Another answer is that hockey is a difficult sport to get into. Most people believe that you have to be an elite skater in order to play hockey.

“I don’t think you have to be a great skater to play. I think your teammates can really teach you a lot,” said senior Ryan Stillwell.

Stillwell, who plays the goalie position, goes on to talk about how playing goalie in hockey differs from playing goalie in other sports. “It’s really different because you have skates on,” he said. “The footwork is different since you have to be constantly moving side to side.”

Even though everyone on the team lacks the experience of playing with each other, QONW has started the season relatively well, with a 2-1 record as of the end of October.

Despite the strong start, senior Matthew Mills despises the combination. “I wish we could play QO Hockey again. But not enough people from QO decided to play hockey, which we can’t control,” he said.

Unfortunately, the complete end of QO hockey may be upcoming, whether combined with Northwest or not. Currently, every single QO player is a senior. This means that unless current 8th graders going to QO next year play hockey, or newbies come out to play, there will be no one on the hockey team next year.

If you’re interested in coming out to a QONW hockey game, they typically play on Friday nights at the Rockville Ice Rink. Their next game is tonight against Rockville-Magruder at 10:00 PM.



# JV Football

BY MADELEINE BURKE  
Editor-In-Chief

Our JV football team had major goals for their 2023-24 season after being undefeated last year. However, their mission of going undefeated once again was interrupted during their first game of the season. QO fell to Stone Bridge in a hard-fought battle of 6-28. But was this loss exactly what they needed to create an even better season than what they imagined?

The team played their last game on October 28 and won against Sherwood 34-12, ending with an overall season record of 7-1. After their first loss, the team was able to reset themselves to make positive changes to their game. Their confidence was a particularly important factor to the team due to the players being predominantly freshmen. Coach Ryan Dimmick explained how the team “really started to believe in themselves” more and more after each game.

Dimmick and Alex Twine, both head coaches and teachers at QO, have large influences on and off the field for the boys. They are

significant mentors to the underclassmen as they motivate them to work hard to improve their skills. Coach Dimmick pointed out that they are “trying to promote positive behaviors”, as QO teams are an extension of the classroom.

Coaches Twine and Dimmick are perfect role models for these athletes. Sophomore wide receiver and defensive back Myles Stander looks up to both coaches because, he says, they “teach me important life lessons like perseverance and leadership.”

In order to create such a successful varsity team, it all begins at the JV level. Coach Twine emphasizes how “to have a strong [varsity] program, the JV has to be strong” because “the kids that are coming up have to be motivated and developed.” And this is all true. Especially in football at QO, JV is where the players learn the skills and discipline that they will continue to use in their varsity career.

So they may have not gone undefeated this season, but the boys learned the importance of determination and hard work. Arguably, this is more important than your typical perfect season.



Myles Stander (far left) and other members of the JV football team stand on the field.

INSTAGRAM / ALEX TWINE





# Season Updates

## Boys Basketball

BY MADELEINE BURKE  
*Editor-In-Chief*

As all fall sports come to an end, winter sports athletes are preparing for their upcoming seasons. One team in particular is QO's boys basketball.

Head coach Mac Mintrum only joined the team last year, but he has made significant improvements to the program. Mintrum has been in the Montgomery County area as he coached for Seneca Valley in the past. The boys played an incredibly competitive season last year and are predicted to come back even stronger this season. They play one of their toughest games at home on December 21 against Seneca Valley.

After losing in the first round of playoffs last season to Urbana, the team is looking to advance further this year and win the regional

championship. They have been practicing together for multiple weeks to enhance their chances of doing just that. The boys have played into two tournaments together, and only improved after each game. Senior Cristian While said that during the first tournament, the team "built the chemistry," and by the second, "we were communicating better."

Along with tournaments, the team also holds workouts three times a week, which involve lots of cardio, a necessary component to the sport.

With all of this time spent together, the team has a close bond. "Everyone gets along," said While.

The team can't wait for fans to pack the stadium and cheer them on to victory. Come support the team during the season opener, away at Damascus High School on Dec. 5.



INSTAGRAM @QOHOOPS

## Girls Volleyball

BY MOTAZ DEIFY  
*Senior Staff Writer*

The weather may have begun to cool down outside, but the courts have still been warm and ready for the Quince Orchard girls volleyball team.

For the past three months, the Cougars worked nonstop in order to achieve their main goal of the season—playing together to win. This propelled the team into advancing far into the postseason. However, on November 8, their season came to a close after an upset in the region finals.

When the regular season came to a conclusion on October 26, the Cougars had a record of 7-7, evidence that they pushed through many ups and downs along the way. Regardless of who they played, they "play[ed] them like it's the best team we're up against," says senior outside-hitter Nadine Kaufman.

Starting on September 5, the Cougars set the stage with a 3-0 win against Poolesville. Progressing into later games, QO faced powerhouses within the 4A Region such as B-CC, Wootton and Churchill.

One of the Cougars' best victories this season was "our playoff games," said head coach Allison Smorse, who is also a special education teacher at Mill Creek Towne Elementary School.

The Cougars were able to keep consistent and "kept the other teams getting runs at a minimum," Smorse said. Their performance for the rest of the season was reflected in their performance during playoffs, as the Cougars were able to secure a spot in the regional championship from a victory of 3-2, winning a 5th set against B-CC 15-12 in the regional semifinals.

During the regular season, QO faced upsets from teams such as Wootton, in which QO took a set from Wootton, resulting in a final

score of 3-1. Despite the loss, Smorse believes that "[we] played a great match against them."

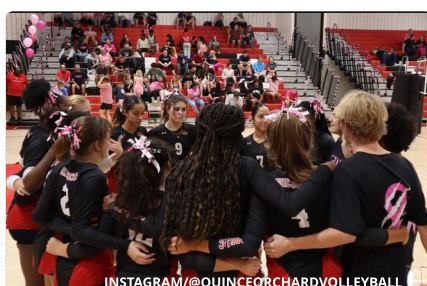
Not only does the volleyball team play to win, they also play for a good cause. To honor Breast Cancer Awareness Month, on October 5, the team hosted their annual Dig Pink game against Watkins Mill. Many events occurred during the game such as bake sales, silent auctions, and t-shirt sales, in order to raise money for The Side-Out Foundation—a non-profit breast cancer charity.

On October 23, the girls volleyball team hosted their senior night game against the Rockville Rams, honoring three seniors who've made significant contributions to the program: Sarah Manion, Gabby Hardy and Nadine Kaufman. The Cougars beat Rockville in three consecutive sets.

Kaufman has been a member of the varsity team for two years, but part of the program for most of her high school career. One of her favorite memories from QO Volleyball is "our spirit days," she says. "Everyone knows it's a game day, so it helps our fans to come out and support us."

Over time, the team has strengthened their trust and consistency. "We have built a sense of trust with each other and that has really helped our success on the court," Smorse says. She notes the team struggled with consistency, but improving on that front "makes a difference for our team."

Smorse wants the seniors to remember the valuable lessons they learned that shaped them to be who they are today. "Good things...come from hard work," she says.



INSTAGRAM @QUINCEORCHARDVOLLEYBALL

## Cheer

BY PRITI MADHAVAN  
*Staff Writer*

The QOHS cheerleading team, as described by sophomore Sadie Asai, has had a season marked by resilience and triumph despite encountering obstacles this year. Asai candidly acknowledges the team's ups and downs due to injuries and sickness, yet remained optimistic for the future, affirming that "for the most part, it's [the season] pretty good."

The team's journey through competitions, or "comps" as they are more fondly known to cheerleaders, unfolds as a success story, with Asai saying, "We did good at all our competitions." The Cougars' gradual improvement is noticeable, starting from the local stage at counties and growing all the way to regionals. The peak of their achievements was placing 3rd at regionals, a testament to the team's dedication and skill.

Asai's cheerleading days began in 1st grade, a life-changing decision looking back. Reflecting on her athletic career, Asai says, "I used to do gymnastics when I was 3-6 years old, but then I quit and started doing cheer in 1st grade and I've done it ever since." This transition has proven lucky, with cheerleading becoming a constant and passionate pursuit in Asai's life. Beyond the trophies and victories, Asai finds major fulfillment in the bonds found and created within the QO cheer family. Her sentiment resonates with her when

she thinks about what she likes most about QO cheer. "What I like most about being on QO cheer is becoming close and creating bonds with everyone on the team," she said. The team is not only a collection of talented and hardworking athletes but a tight-knit community where friendships are formed and flourish.

Acknowledging the challenges embedded in "comp" season as well as their wins, Asai reflects: "During competition season, everyone has to put their all into practice and routines, and it can get very tiring." The demands of perfecting routines and performances are crucial to the team's commitment to excellence.

Many students debate on whether cheerleading counts as a "real" sport or not. Asai and her teammates have proven that cheer is not only more than a valid sport but is a full-time commitment that tests your physical strength as well as your ability to keep the rest of your life running smoothly. "My least favorite part [about Cheer] is probably trying to balance cheer, schoolwork, and everything else all at the same time," Asai says. The daily practices, coupled with academics and social responsibilities, create a juggling act that can become overwhelming, highlighting the challenges these athletes navigate.

With the 2023 season now over, Asai's answers illuminate a team that rose above procrastination, excelled in competition, worked hard to be where they are, and tackled the intricate dance of balancing commitments with grace.

## Cross Country

BY LILY KAPLAN  
*Senior Staff Writer*

You've probably seen students running along the sidewalk of Darnestown Road in a large group. Chances are, this is the Quince Orchard Cross Country team. Since the last season ended, they have made sure to commit to being the best team they can be.

Back in September, the Cross Country team participated in their first meet of the season, running against Northwood and Paint Branch high schools. Held at Northwood, the boys' team finished in second place, and the girls' team finished in first. This was a positive start to the season. Senior Zack Jackson has been running cross country for all four years of high school, and he believes that the team has "improved a lot from previous years."

The MPSSAA West Regional Championships were held at Watkins Mill High School this year, and according to sophomore Aliyah Beard, it was the most significant meet.

With this meet closing out the season, Beard said, "It was a harder course than we were used to." The work that the team did not only set a positive tone for the last meet but also helped them "place a little better than we thought we would." The team would not be the same without social studies teacher and head coach Seann Pelkey, who has been coaching for the past 25 years. Having run for Quince Orchard during his own high school experience, Pelkey says he enjoys the "unity and oneness of cross country." At first, though, he played basketball in high school and was ultimately convinced to start running cross country and track. At Quince Orchard, Pelkey says, "There's inspiration all over the place here. Seeing these athletes from every team working hard, you get a chance to see everyone practice every day, and there's definitely inspiration there."

Although the season has come to an end, many members of the cross country team will be part of indoor track this winter.



COURTESY OF MOTAZ DEIFY



# Girls Soccer: One Team, One Dream

BY NOAH KRAVITZ  
Staff Writer

It's almost like a tradition at this point. If you're wondering what tradition I'm referring to, it's definitely not losing. It's actually the complete opposite of losing. And no, I am not talking about Quince Orchard football: I am talking about the masterpiece of our varsity girls soccer team this season. This team has once again put together a season built on the backs of team chemistry, as well as the many hard moments of adversity the team has fought through.

It might seem like any undefeated team never goes through moments of adversity because they always win, and never experience losing. But no. In coach Peg Keiller's words, "We never go into a game thinking we're going to win. We have confidence in every game that we can win, but every game we play, our opponents challenge us in their own ways."

There's no doubt that Keiller has assembled an incredibly talented team of soccer players who have exceeded the highest expectations. No question she's been an incredible leader for this team throughout this season. But it's not just one person: everybody is a leader. Even if that person is at the end of the pack, everybody leads.

Having an undefeated season doesn't just click right off the bat. There's a lot that goes into that. It takes hard work and discipline, as well as dedication to making a season as memorable as this one.

"You know we just take it one game at a time, and one step at a time. That's just how it's been all season long," said Keiller.

Taking it one game at a time might seem like such a common phrase that's used in any kind of sport. But in the sport of soccer, it's so important to always keep your focus on what's in front of you.

Back on October 10, QO defeated Clarksburg 6-0. This would ensure that the Cougars clinched the 4A West Region Division yet again.

This was definitely a big step for the team heading down the road into the playoffs. Junior Evie McMaster, one of the defenders on the team certainly agrees. She's been a big part of this team for almost two years, saying team chemistry is a very important part of being on a team.

"It's so important," said McMaster. "Our team has some of the best chemistry and we really love each other. It just makes everything more enjoyable when we're all together bonding. It's what makes a team a team."

Case in point: that game on October 10 was more than just a game. Quince Orchard and Clarksburg's girls' teams raised awareness for pancreatic cancer and colon cancer. Coach Keiller herself battled Stage 4 Colon cancer back in 2021.

Just before heading to the playoffs, QO played their final regular season game against Sherwood, a team that came in on a hot streak just before finalizing their season against the Cougars back on October 19.



The team celebrates after winning against Churchill in the region semifinals.

QO destroyed the Warriors 5-0, led by a hat trick from senior captain Annie Farone, and a pair of goals from the junior twins Ellie and Erin Hodge.

The Cougars ended their regular season on a high note, finishing undefeated, which is something that not many teams have accomplished.

Their next few competitions brought the Cougars victories in both matchups, defeating Montgomery Blair in the County Championship 2-0 and defeating the Churchill Bulldogs 4-1, led by a hat trick from the team's leading goal scorer Ellie Hodge.

This would be a big momentum boost heading into what would be a tough game against Whitman in the Regional Finals. QO would put up a tough fight, but they fell short and lost the game 2-0.

From a player's perspective, it is very tough to endure this loss.

However, there is no doubt that this team is state championship bound in the coming years.

But the Cougars this year proved the doubters wrong. They went undefeated in the regular season. That's not something to be taken lightly.

In Evie McMaster's words, she describes the team in four words: "One team, one dream."



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