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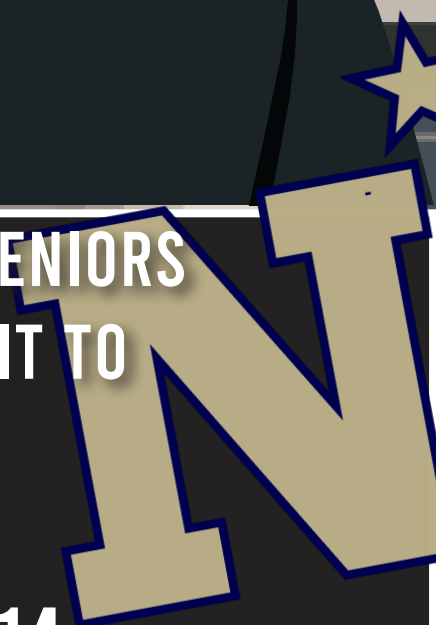
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OHS GRAD  
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PAGE 11

TWO SENIORS  
COMMIT TO  
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# Mississippi State Penitentiary

## As prison casualties increase, Parchman looks to make changes

By Karina Patel

news editor

The Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) has frequently been in the news for the past month and not for good reasons.

At the beginning of this month, a numerous deaths occurred at two state prisons, including Parchman and one regional prison.

In a news release by the MDOC earlier this month, former Corrections Commissioner Pelicia E. Hall said, "We are continuing to be vigilant and mindful of the situation. These are trying times for the Mississippi Department of Corrections. It is never a good feeling for a commissioner to receive a call that a life has been lost, especially over senseless acts of violence."

Videos and photos got out to the public and have caused some concern among citizens; gang-related violence was believed by many citizens to be the cause of these deaths.

According to the MDOC, gang-related violence was the cause of some of the major disturbances, but investigations are still ongoing to determine the source of the problem. After these incidents occurred, there was a statewide lockdown on all prisons in order to ensure the safety of the inmates, staff and the public.

"Movement of inmates [was] limited to only emergencies. All available resources are being used to address disturbances occurring around the state. The MDOC is being responsive in investigating the violence," according to the MDOC's statement about the lockdowns.

Since these statements have been released, there have been multiple deaths and escapes that have occurred but are believed to not be related to the major disturbance that occurred at the beginning of the month. In order to combat the wake of unrest among the inmates and others, around 375 inmates have been transferred to the Tallahatchie County Correctional Facility in Tutwiler, Miss..

"The Tutwiler facility was chosen because it is the only location that can immediately

take on this population," Hall said. "The facility is already operational and sufficiently staffed to manage close custody inmates. The department acted swiftly because of the violence at MSP and a lack of manpower to restore and maintain order. We also cannot staff any other facility."

However, the MDOC is still seeking housing more than around 625 maximum security inmates that are a part of Unit 29 at Parchman. While there is a vacant Correctional Facility in Leake County, the MDOC can't move the inmates to that location due to the lack of staff and resources needed to run the facility.

"The agency is experiencing critical understaffing at its three state prisons and needs at least 1,000 more officers for its current facilities. The number of officers has continued to dwindle as the agency's pay has not kept pace with industry salaries and other professions," according to a news release made by the MDOC on Jan. 13, 2020.

Before any of these incidents occurred, OHS's Law Related Education classes, lead by teacher Diala Chaney, had the opportunity to visit Parchman and see the conditions for themselves.

"It was very interesting and not at all what I expected. I felt weird watching them though, almost like they were on display," junior Cayden Luke said. "The building was in no standards nice, but I was expecting a lot worse. I was shocked to find out the inmates that were not in maximum security were in a singular shared living space, not cells."

While Luke said that the reality of the prison was not what she expected, she still had an odd feeling after her experience visiting Parchman.

"I cannot put my finger on what made me feel weird after the prison, but the rest of the day was kind of gloomy and eerie," Luke said.

While Hall had announced her resignation in December 2019 and Tommy Taylor has been named Interim Corrections Commissioner, after these incidents, the search for her successor has caught the attention of Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves. Reeves has

put together a group of diverse, experienced Mississippians to assist in the job of finding a new MDOC Commissioner.

In a news release by the Mississippi government on Jan. 16, 2020, Reeves said, "We cannot rush the critical job of finding a new Commissioner for the Department of Corrections. We must get this right for the people of Mississippi. I am turning to my fellow Mississippians to help me in this mission."

Following his announcement of the group of people tasked with searching for and picking a new Commissioner for the MDOC, Reeves personally took a visit to Parchman with Taylor and Vicksburg Mayor George Flagg.

"Governor Reeves briefed the media on the conditions that he observed and steps that have been taken in the new leadership's first week on the job to restore immediate order at Parchman, following a recent surge in violence that culminated in several deaths," a news release by the Mississippi government on Jan. 23, 2020 said.

These incidents have caught the attention of celebrities outside the state of Mississippi. Singers and Rappers Jay Z and Yo Gotti have filed a lawsuit against Pelicia E. Hall as the Commissioner of the MDOC and Marshal Turner as the Superintendent of the Mississippi State Penitentiary on behalf of 29 Parchman inmates.

In the lawsuit's Preliminary Statement, it states "Plaintiffs' lives are in peril. Individuals held in Mississippi's prisons are dying because Mississippi has failed to fund its prisons, resulting in prisons where violence reigns because prisons are understaffed...These deaths are a direct result of Mississippi's utter disregard for the people it has incarcerated and their constitutional rights."

As this situation develops, changes are being made in order to prevent a disturbance of this caliber in the future.

"While the department has challenges, keeping staff and the inmates safe is always our priority," Hall said. "We do not want to see any more loss of life."



Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Corrections

Oxford's Law Related Education classes take picture outside of Parchman after their visit inside the Penitentiary. Three different sections of the class got the opportunity to visit Parchman over the course of the semester.

# School of Applied Technology faces changes with new agreement

By Ada Grace Perry

staff writer

The Oxford-Lafayette School of Applied Technology, also referred to as the BNI or the “Tech” is going to face some changes this upcoming year.

The BNI opened in the 1970s and has been run the same way with the same number of programs since then.

“The Oxford-Lafayette School of Applied Technology used to be named the Oxford-Lafayette Business and Industrial Complex. Back in the 1970s, there may not have been 800 students between the two high schools. Today, there are over 2100 students being served at the two,” Career and Technical Educational (CTE) Director Steven Hurdle said.

Its purpose is to provide students with classes to help with the needed academic, occupational, technical and social skills to be successful. The BNI offers classes such as Allied Health, Welding and Computer programming to Oxford and Lafayette students.

“This school exists to serve both Oxford High and Lafayette High with

classes known as Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. The programs and the property are jointly owned by Oxford and Lafayette,” Hurdle said. “Traditionally, CTE classes are designed to give students real-world and hands-on opportunities to learn about fields connected to careers.”

Oxford is continuing to negotiate with Lafayette about how to continue going forward. The Oxford School Board passed a resolution in June of 2019 stating the district’s plan to change the relationship with Lafayette and how the School of Applied Technology would be operated.

“The reason for this change was to be able to expand the course offerings at Oxford High School to fit our district’s priorities. With over 1300 students at the high school and changes in career opportunities, the district believes we must offer students more options toward career exploration and career development,” Hurdle said. “Currently, we have two CTE classes at Oxford High. TV and Broadcast Journalism and Business Fundamentals are being offered, but they are technically under the oversight of the School of Applied Technology. This arrange-

ment is not effective or efficient when trying to start and manage programs at OHS. My role as CTE director for the Oxford School District is to develop and implement new CTE classes at Oxford High and work with Lafayette to maintain all of the offerings currently at the School of Applied Technology.”

The major change with the management of the School of Applied Technology would be that a certain number of programs would be owned by Lafayette and a certain number would be owned by Oxford, instead of the two districts sharing all programs. This division allows Oxford and Lafayette to expand their CTE programs in a way that is acceptable for their respective schools.

“For the 2020-2021 school year, we intend for students from Oxford and Lafayette to be able to attend any class at the School of Applied Technology that they desire. The course offerings will likely be the same or similar next year as they are this year. This is all contingent on the final details of the agreement with Lafayette,” Hurdle said. “In future years, it could be a possibility for Lafayette students to come to the Oxford High campus to take

courses we offer that are not offered at LHS.”

Along with current classes being offered to Oxford students, this upcoming 2020-2021 school year Oxford students will be able to take the same classes through the School of Applied Technology along with new classes being offered at Oxford High School.

“Our intent and belief is that Oxford students will continue to be able to take any class offered at the School of Applied Technology,” Hurdle said. “Oxford students will also have the opportunity to choose from a new selection of classes being offered at Oxford High.

The details for the new agreement are still being discussed, but Hurdle is confident that students will have the opportunity to participate in any program they wish to.

“No determination has been made about which classes will belong to which district, but it is our intent to for each district to have control of two skilled trade programs and the respective shops and equipment,” Hurdle said. “Again, our plan is for students from both districts to be able to attend the other district’s programs.”

# Despite mounting tensions with Iran, no U.S. draft will occur

By Hayden Walker

staff writer

After the assassination of Iranian general Qasem Soleimani on Jan. 3 by a US-authorized missile strike, World War III memes started to trend all across social media. In response to Soleimani’s death, Iran launched missiles at U.S. military bases in Iraq on Jan. 7. As tensions between the U.S. and Iran increased, young people began to wonder if they were about to be drafted into the military. According to Senior Marine Instructor Captain Gary Baxter, the reinstatement of the draft would require massive action by the government.

“In order for conscription [the draft] to be reinstated, it would require both houses of Congress and the President,” Baxter said. “There would just have to be a tremendous amount of political and national will for something like that to happen, and there’s just not.”

After Soleimani’s assassination, people flooded the Selective Service System’s website, causing it to crash due to the panic. The Selective Service requires men ages 18-25 to register. Refusing to sign up can bring a hefty fine of up to \$250,000 and ineligibility for federal student aid for college. However, Baxter points out that signing up for the Selective Service doesn’t mean that men will be drafted.

“There shouldn’t be any confusion between registering for the Selective Service and the

draft,” Baxter said. “The purpose of the Selective Service is an accounting of the individuals in our country, the fighting age males, and knowing how many there are. That’s what it’s about. Selective Service and the draft are completely different.”

In response to the fear over the draft, the Selective Service tweeted out a message saying that it was conducting “business as usual” and that “there is no military draft.” History teacher Daniel Parrish believes that social media is responsible for exaggerating the situation.

“I know why people are concerned right now,” Parrish said. “This whole thing blew up on social media, and that’s really where I think people’s consternation about the possibility of joining Selective Service again came from. But there has been no indication by the federal government that [the draft] is going to occur.”

The draft was abolished in 1973, during the Vietnam War. Since then, the military has been entirely volunteer-based. Parrish believes that the odds of a draft in the future are extremely low.

“If you look back through the history of war, most wars are fought with boots on the ground. For a good chunk of history, wars are: if we have more people than you, we have an advantage. And so, there was a need for a draft,” Parrish said. “Today, there’s a couple reasons why that’s no longer the case. Number one: we have a standing army right now of about 12 million soldiers. The

second reason why the draft is not, or probably not, going to be needed in the future is because wars are fought differently now. We have smart weapons, we have technology, we have the ability to use drones against an enemy. It just lends itself to not needing a big standing army.”

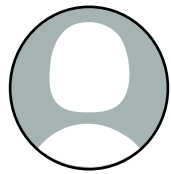
Every military draft in the past has been met with opposition by the public. According to Parrish, a polarizing event like a draft in today’s divided political environment could lead to widespread dissent.

“I do believe that in our current climate, that if the draft is brought back, you would see some protests in that,” Parrish said. “If we look back historically speaking, there have always been protests against drafts.”

Even though there is not going to be a draft any time soon, Parrish urges students to be aware of current events.

“Have an understanding of what’s going on in the world. Not just in the U.S. or with our interests around the world, read what’s going on in other countries,” Parrish said. “I don’t think we’re in a situation here where we’re getting close to a World War III or anything of that magnitude, but I think that there’s no doubt that the killing of Soleimani heightened tensions in the region. It’s certainly going to have a ripple effect. Keep up with current events because you never know when the next tiny event is going to set off larger ramifications around the world.”





**Lauren Bial**  
Opinions Editor



## No, you're not getting drafted. Let's focus on those who are actually suffering from the American-Iranian conflict.

Any time I see something alarming in the news, my next move is pretty typical. Check Twitter. I did just that once I woke up to the news that America had killed Qasem Soleimani, an Iranian general. After briefing myself on the gravity of the situation from multiple news articles and a few Twitter threads, I noticed a second hashtag trending: #WW3. At first, it felt reassuring to see other people my age trying to comfort themselves with the possibility of impending war with humor. Then came everyone's fear of the draft.

The draft, which has not been used since the Vietnam War in 1972, is the worst type of lottery. It is the kind of lottery that drags you into a war you most likely don't agree with and don't want to fight. The amount of women suddenly flinging themselves into stereotypical housewife roles to show that they needed to stay on the homefront was annoying, but not attention grabbing jokes. It was the jokes from young American men and their concerns of getting drafted. While some seemed to understand that they weren't getting drafted, I struggled with those who believed their livelihood was in danger.

These tweets quickly turned into memes and were spread everywhere and even into classrooms, but this very obliviousness still bothered me considering real people would suffer from America's carelessness: innocent Iranians. Not only Iranians, but also Iranian-Americans and anyone of Middle Eastern descent, mainly because of the blind hate they might

receive from bigots in the States looking for someone to blame.

Then a plane was shot down. 176 innocent people were killed because of a conflict they had no say in. However, Americans were not worried about that. They were concerned with the impending doom of a draft that would take an act of Congress to reinstate.

It is not to say that these anxieties are laughable and unjustified. As a young person in a turbulent political world, it truly is hard to know and understand everything that is going on. However, this does not exempt us from being socially and politically unaware of the things that we joke about. This is not about being sensitive and avoiding hurting people's feelings. This is about Iranian-Americans being detained at America's border despite being American citizens. It is about the innocent people on a passenger plane who were shot down by a missile while we sat comfortably, oceans away behind our phone screen tweeting about a danger that we will never face.

Trump seems determined to create a conflict that was better left unprovoked, most likely to distract us from his impeachment charges, but the attack itself has created a new question of his judgment. Was the danger posed from Iran as imminent as Trump said? Several officials in the C.I.A. did not go so far as to call the attack "imminent," and even Secretary of Defense Mark Esper could not firmly say the attack was going after our embassies, like Trump

had announced. To make matters worse, Trump even threatened over Twitter the destruction of culturally and religiously important Iranian monuments, which would be a war crime since they hold no military value. To have someone so unstable in his decision-making with this much power is frightening, and the fact that some people still rally behind him is worse.

Trump parading around Twitter proclaiming American glory is insulting the deaths resulting from this conflict and those still around grieving from the aftermath. Iran is left divided over a plane crash, wondering if they can trust their government and their ability to take responsibility for shooting down a Boeing 737. Others are left grieving the loss of their general, whether Americans agree with this or not. Us, safe in America, worrying about a draft that will not happen makes us guilty for feeding into this insulting Twitter parade. We are ignoring the death and suffering that has resulted from our actions and escalated tensions to make ourselves victims. Trump's intentions with Iran are to start a war to distract from his impeachment charges, and the lives of Iranians are not being taken into consideration because of this.

Although Twitter can provide us comfort in these confusing situations, it is important to take a step back and realize the gravity of the situations we are dealing with. There are two sides to this conflict, and we cannot be blind to the other side.

## Staff Editorial: Impeachment trial not impartial

Almost a month after his impeachment from the House of Representatives, President Donald Trump's trial began in the Senate. The trial has only just begun, but it seems like the outcome of this trial is clear. Whether we agree with the Senate's choice or not, the Senate is majority Republican, so removing Trump from office is not the expected outcome. However, we believe this impeachment trial is important to our nation's future and is a testament to the dangers of partisan political parties.

President Trump was impeached on charges of abuse of power and obstruction of justice from a majority Democratic House of Representatives. President Trump is a very polarizing character for the Republican party, which

makes it much harder for Democrats to not be as equally polarizing. This has dug us into the deep hole of partisanship. Neither party is willing to back down or compromise because they have demonized their opponent. The "impartial justice" that the senators swore to seems less and less meaningful as the trial goes on. The trial has already begun to bore some, with Senators passing notes through Senate pages or visibly yawning during the trial.

Former National Security Adviser John Bolton falls in the middle of most of this with his book he plans to publish revealing information about Trump and his wrong-doings. Bolton has been a long time conservative, so his criticism of Trump is much more striking than someone like Speak-

er of the House Nancy Pelosi. Despite Bolton not showing up for his voluntary testimony back in November for the House, Bolton has made it clear that he will testify if subpoenaed by the Senate. We believe that his testimony is crucial for the Senate to bring Trump to justice. While many Republicans would like to turn a blind eye and hurry the trial along, some have shown interest in the truth, which gives us hope for American democracy. If we do not hear from Bolton, then it will be clear that the Senate trial's purpose was not to come to "impartial justice," but to see political redemption for the Republican party.

If Bolton was given the chance to testify before the Senate, the Trump defense would have to address the truth, which they have so

carefully avoided. The fact that Republicans are willing to "witness exchange" shows that this trial has no true impartiality, just a political agenda in mind. This is an upsetting use of our country's checks and balances, put in place centuries ago in the U.S. Constitution. The partisanship in our country has grown grossly out of hand, to the point where justice can no longer be found without traces of corruption and egotism. Whether we all agree if Trump should be removed from office or not, we can agree that this trial has not been solely based on evidence. Both sides have brought in their own political agenda and seem adamant on sticking to it. No matter the outcome, this trial has shown a bleak outlook for U.S. democracy.

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# Thinking About Graduating Early?

Alumna Lindsey Webster graduated this past December and is due to walk the stage this May. She is currently attending Northwest with a major in elementary education. Here are a few things to consider to make your decision easier.

## Go For It!

### **You get a jump start on your college studies/future career.**

"I'm hoping that I can get done with Northwest early. I'm trying to take as many classes as I can, so I can go to Ole Miss sooner."

### **You get a feel for what you like and don't like sooner.**

"For me, it was a really easy decision because I've always loved the idea of going to college early. My first decision was to do nursing, so it was kind of easy because I wanted to have that head start. But, I then changed my major, and I still wanted to do it, and I'm happy I did."

### **Your scholarships are not affected when going to a community college.**

"So, for Northwest, I still got free tuition because I was an Oxford graduate, so I actually ended up getting another scholarship for the ACT that I didn't even know that I had until I went to Northwest."

## Think Again...

### **You won't feel the same excitement when graduating.**

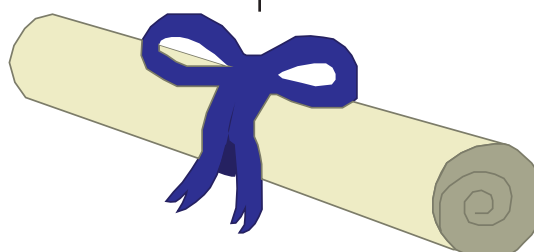
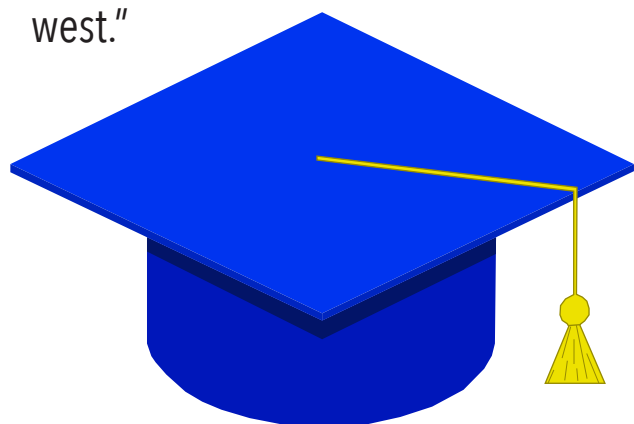
"I feel like for me, graduating in December, but not walking until 2020 is not going to feel the same for me as it is for everybody else because I've already done a whole semester of college. It's going to feel different than if I had waited and graduated with everybody else. I'm excited for it though."

### **You miss out on many senior privileges and social interactions.**

"I don't see my friends as much. I have a lot of teachers I miss. I missed formal. I'm going to miss senior prom. Senior skip day. [Senior] parade."

### **You don't receive your diploma until you walk.**

"I have my transcript, and Northwest has that, and that was the thing I was kind of confused about because I won't get my diploma until I actually walk."





# Winter Formal 2020



Heath Stevens • theCharger  
Sophomore **Grace Freeman** and senior **JJ Pegues** dance the night away during the dance.



Heath Stevens • theCharger  
Seniors **Briunna Ducksworth** and **AJ Toliver** smile for the camera.



Heath Stevens • theCharger  
Seniors **Kiyon Williams** and **Asia Luster** pose for a picture.



Heath Stevens • theCharger  
Seniors **Claire Wooten** and **Saniah Campbell** smile for a picture.



Heath Stevens • theCharger  
Seniors **Carson Gentry** and **Cofield Collins** dance together with **LaDorian Vaughn**.



Heath Stevens • theCharger  
Sophomores **Avery Langley**, **Hattie Busby**, and **Catherine Bianco** smile and pose for a picture.



Heath Stevens • theCharger  
Students have fun and dance on the dance floor.



# Best Desserts in Oxford

## The Oxford Creamery

What we recommend: Milk and Cookies on a waffle cone  
 Why we picked it: Its convenient location, speedy service and delicious ice cream put it at the top of the list.



Karina Patel • theCharger

## City Hall Cheesecake

What we recommend: Triple Chocolate Cheesecake  
 Why we picked it: Its large range of flavors are sure to satisfy anyone's sweet tooth.



Karina Patel • theCharger

## Insomnia Cookies

What we recommend: Classic Chocolate Chip with M&Ms  
 Why we picked it: Cookies are brought right to your doorstep, always warm and delicious.

## The Cakery

What we recommend: Chocolate Cupcake with chocolate Frosting  
 Why we picked it: The bakery's large array of treats has something for everyone.

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## CHICAGO

starring Emma Pittman

*OHS alumna lands lead in Broadway musical*

By Ellis Farese

entertainment editor

Talent produced from Oxford High School has proven to range throughout academic achievements, athletic opportunities, and artistic endeavors. A new, very notable accomplishment of an OHS alumna can now be added to the list as Emma Pittman will be the new "Roxie Hart" in the renowned Broadway show "Chicago." Many closely kept track of Pittman's progress through social media as she was chosen and competed for the coveted role, and on Jan. 10, Pittman's friends, family and many Oxfordians rejoiced as it was confirmed that she would be the next Roxie Hart on Broadway.

Pittman's four years of experience within Mr. Davenport's theater program at Oxford established a theatrical backbone that adequately prepared her to be competitive in her future endeavors and helped develop diverse aspects to her performances. After graduating from OHS, Pittman continued her education and theater career at Wagner College in New York City. Wagner's esteemed performing arts department has cultivated a prestigious name for itself through its unconventional curriculum, outstanding shows and noteworthy alumni, making it sought after for those pursuing theatrical careers.

Prior to high school, Pittman took dance lessons, but during her freshman year, she decided to try out theater. Pittman's first role ever was in the "The Jitterbug" number. Her love for theater grew through her high school experi-

one of her favorite moments was going to the Fringe Festival in 2014 in Scotland, where OHS performed a twisted version of "The Wizard of Oz." Pittman got to choreograph "The Jitterbug" number (a very 'full-circle' moment) and take on one of the most challenging roles of her high school career, all while making lasting memories with friends.

"OHS was the perfect launchpad for me as a performer. Davenport is a genius in the way he has laid out the program. It calls for the students to be incredibly well rounded in the theatre world, as well as very involved," Pittman said. "I loved having the chance to dip my toe in directing, acting, choreography and set building in the productions class before going to college. Getting into Wagner was truly a testament to all I learned in Oxford."

At Wagner, Pittman found an experience similar to that of Mr. Davenport's program which both emphasized the importance of maintaining a well-rounded theatrical palate while also giving students the opportunity to study things of their interest. Some of the classes Pittman at Wagner took were Directing, Acting on Film, Choreography, Acting, Dancing and Singing. Having this surplus of information available at Wagner grew Pittman's knowledge and allowed her to flourish as a performer.

Pittman chose a path in life that is dependent on passion and commitment and cannot be achieved through test scores or a desk job. Encouragement, motivation and support are crucial for success in this field, and Pittman was privileged with a family and friends that believe in her and have stayed by her side every step of the way.

"My mother, number one, without a doubt. I'm grate-

to have a family that has always supported my not so conventional dreams, and that's not the case for many actors, so for that I'm thankful," Pittman said. "My best friend, Kolten Bell, who always keeps me in check, inspires me to keep learning and always spreads positivity to people around him. My teachers at Wagner, and of course Mr. Davenport, without their faith in me, I would not have made it to where I am today."

One of Pittman's former professors from Wagner emailed her the link to submit a video audition to "The Search For Roxie," which was open to anyone online. Pittman was humbled to have someone she greatly respected think of her for the role, so she decided to submit an audition. The "Chicago" casting team and one of the current Roxie's (Charlotte d'Amboise) looked through the hundreds of videos submitted and chose the top ten. After the top ten were selected, the public voted online to select the top three who flew to New York City for a live audition. When Pittman submitted her audition she was excited that the creative team behind "Chicago" would see her at all, not expecting to ultimately be cast. Since Pittman is not in the Actor's Equity Union, it is more difficult for her to be seen and chosen for a show, but this opportunity allowed for Pittman to not only be seen but landed her her first Broadway role as a legendary lead.

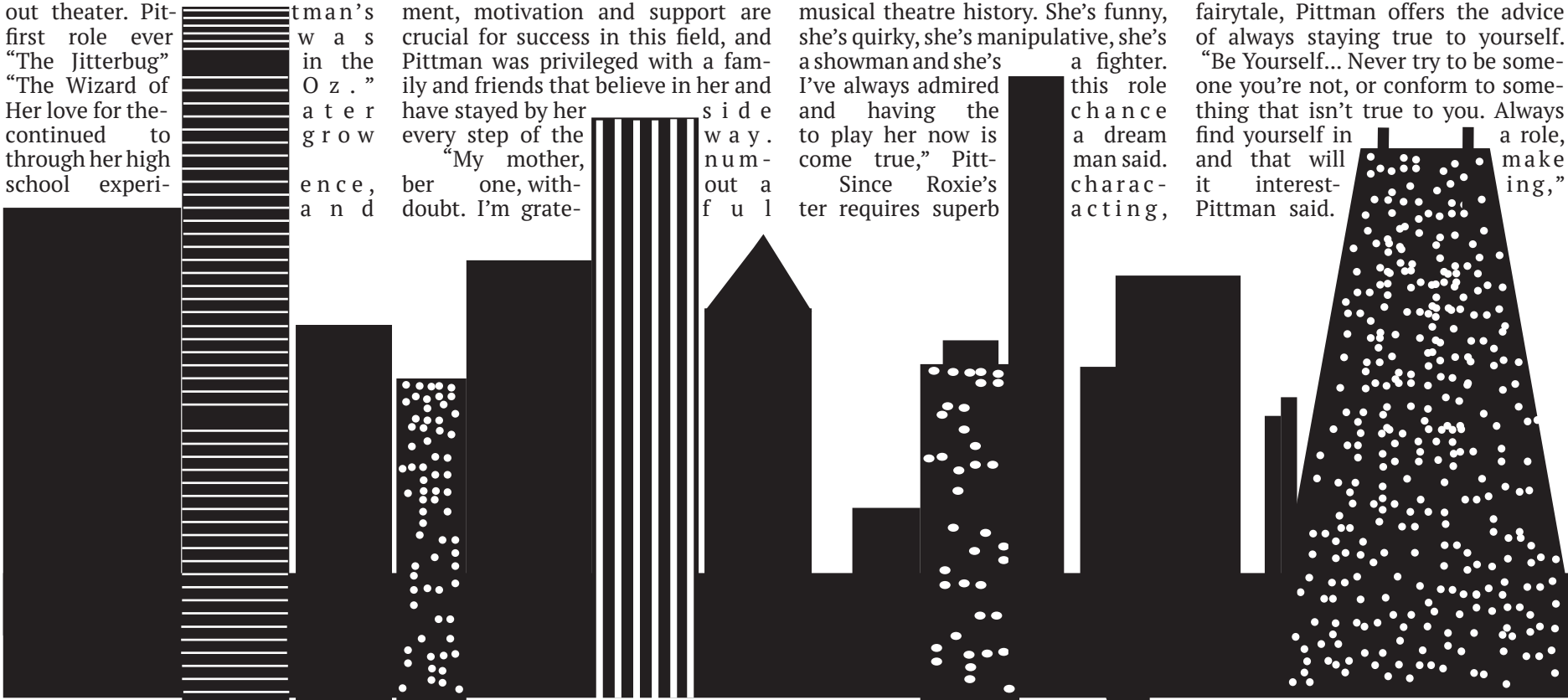
"Roxie is an iconic character in musical theatre history. She's funny, she's quirky, she's manipulative, she's a showman and she's a fighter. I've always admired this role and having the chance to play her now is a dream come true," Pittman said. Since Roxie's character requires superb

singing and dancing, Pittman credits her success to her dance training, which the other two contestants struggled with. Remaining well-rounded had been important in Pittman's career since high school theatre, but she did have improvements to make throughout college. Consistent, handwork fine-tuned Pittman's skills and made her perfect for diverse roles like Roxie Hart.

"I think what is difficult is strengthening the areas that are your weaker card. When I went to college I knew I could dance, but my singing was nowhere near as strong. So, I worked incredibly hard to bring that up to speed with my dancing, and I'm still doing it today!" Pittman said. "It's all about consistency in practice, especially in the areas you're insecure about."

Pittman is in New York City full time ahead of her Broadway Debut, which the date is currently undecided for. Yoga, dance classes, singing practice and reading up on "Chicago" is how Pittman will be preparing for the show and developing her character. Pittman hopes to pay homage to those "Roxie's" before her and inspire the young generation of actors to continue chasing their dreams. Being a part of Broadway's authenticity and magnificence has always been a goal of Pittman's, but her ultimate intention has always been to be a working actress. And as advice to young performers who see their dreams as a far-fetched fairytale, Pittman offers the advice of always staying true to yourself.

"Be Yourself... Never try to be someone you're not, or conform to something that isn't true to you. Always find yourself in a role, and that will make it interesting," Pittman said.





# JUST MERCY

Combining impactful storyline, simplistic layout, “Just Mercy” fulfills expectations

**Heath Stevens**

staff writer

The thought-provoking legal drama “Just Mercy” follows the story of two African-American men, along with the help of Eva Ansley (Brie Larson), battling a racist and unjust legal system in Alabama. Following the true story of Walter “Johnny D.” McMillian, played by Jamie Foxx, the story revolves around an Alabama man wrongly convicted of murdering Ronda Morrison in 1986. “Just Mercy” is an impactful film that didn’t leave many watching with dry eyes. McMillian, even with countless evidence proving he was innocent, was convicted based on the false testimony of Ralph Myers, which was forced out of Myers, just to convict someone of the murder and have the case closed. This made McMillian an easy choice because, as an African-American, the racist Justice System in Alabama could do almost anything they wanted with him.

“Just Mercy” begins in 1987 as Walter McMillian is returning home from work as a pulpwood worker, when he is pulled over and arrested for the murder of Ronda Morrison. McMillian

claims his innocence because on the day of the murder he was at a church fish fry all day, with many people being able to back up this alibi including a police officer, but none came forward for fear of being arrested. Because of this, McMillian was sent to death row before even receiving a trial. He was then convicted, after nearly a year of waiting on death row, of murder based on the testimony of only one witness, Myers (Tim Nelson.)

The movie picks back up in 1989 with Bryan Stevenson, portrayed by Michael B. Jordan, moving to Montgomery, Alabama to form the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) with Eva Ansley, played by Brie Larson. The action of the movie really starts once Stevenson meets with inmates on death row at Holman State prison.

Stevenson meets with a number of inmates, but McMillian’s case is one that really catches his attention. Stevenson, a recent Harvard graduate with an unrealistic viewpoint on the prejudice towards African Americans in the south, is unaware of the injustices that were occurring in the Alabama court systems. The reality of this only starts to set in when Stevenson is

forced to complete a strip search for the sole purpose of humiliating him.

The film also follows two of McMillian’s close friends Herbert Richardson (Rob Morgan) and Anthony Hinton (O’Shea Jackson Jr.) both on death row for murder. These two characters do not get nearly as much screen time as Stevenson, but their stories, in many ways, feel even more emotional and impactful than the main storyline.

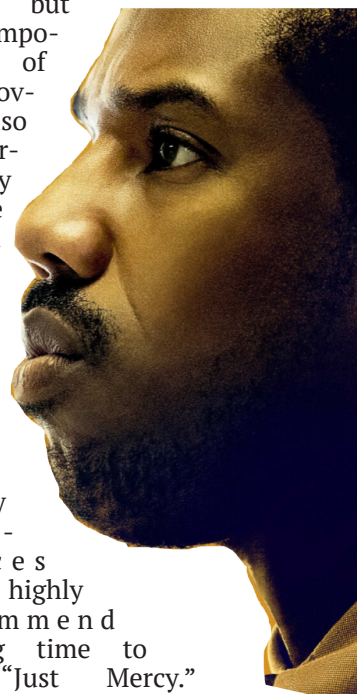
One of the standouts of this film’s production is the score by Joel P. West. It is not one most would go out their way to listen to, but the way it blends with the visuals of this film and the messages it sends keeps you interested in the film. The soundtrack truly shines in some of the more melancholy moments in the film. Every defeat feels more profound when the talking stops and the music takes over.

The cinematography in “Just Mercy” is certainly not over the top in any way, but it remains pleasing throughout and never detracts from the story at all. It isn’t perfect, but it doesn’t need to be. The story of Walter McMillian remains so interesting and engaging through-

out that extravagant visuals aren’t needed and wouldn’t have been able to be truly appreciated by the viewer.

“Just Mercy” is definitely a movie everyone should go see. It not only provides a wonderful message and great story that almost anyone will enjoy, but

the composition of this movie is also wonderfully done with beautiful visuals and a score that perfectly enhances it. I highly recommend making time to see “Just Mercy.”



## THE LYRIC'S SPRING CONCERT LINEUP

Ashley McBryde  
Robert Earl Keen  
Jon Langston  
Liquid Stranger  
Mitchell Tenpenny  
Jon Langston  
Jordan Davis  
Yung Gravy  
The Revivalists  
Jameson Rodgers

Jan. 31  
Feb. 7  
Feb. 13  
Feb. 27  
Feb. 28  
March 6  
March 26  
April 13  
April 22  
April 24



# FAMILY TRADITIONS

## Freeman family has legacy of athletes in Oxford programs

By Grace Logan  
sports editor

Oxford is the home of many athletes and has had many families play for the Chargers. One family in particular is the Freeman family. Father Brad, senior Luke and sophomore Grace have all worn the Oxford jersey in some form or another.

"I spent my entirety of my high school career in athletics," Brad said. "In the fall it was football, in the winter it was basketball, and spring it would be baseball. It had a huge effect on my life and how I grew up. I grew up in Oxford athletics."

Brad, now an NFL referee, played sports for the majority of his childhood and was a highly scouted baseball player. He was drafted as an eighteen year old right out of high school for the MLB.

"It was a very tough decision. I mean I was eighteen. I thought the amount of money offered was like the most amount of money in the world. Looking back it wasn't even that

much but it was a dream of mine to play in the minors and eventually in the majors," Brad said.

The "tough decision" ultimately lead Brad to his commitment to Mississippi State University to play baseball.

"Weighing all the options, it was the best decision I made to go to Mississippi State," Brad said. "We went to two college world series and I was a part of a great baseball team."

Despite their father being an all star baseball player at Oxford, both Luke and Grace have been starting players for the Oxford soccer teams, with Grace playing since eighth grade.

"[Brad] told me a bunch of stories about how he played varsity in eighth grade and I played soccer in eighth grade," Grace said.

With the different sports, Brad says there is not necessarily a parallel in that sense. However, he sees similarities in their work ethic.

"What I do see is that they are both very good athletes, extremely fast and athletic and play with great

effort. And that is something I tried to do at Oxford High," Brad said.

Going into his senior year, Luke decided to follow in his father's footsteps and try out for the high school baseball team.

"It had a huge effect on my life and how I grew up. I grew up in Oxford athletics."

**Brad Freeman**  
Oxford alumnus

Brad, sharing the experience of playing baseball in high school creates a full circle.

"Luke has never really been a baseball player, he tried it when he was little and when he told me he was going to go out for it this year, I told him like I've told him for everything he's done if you want to do it, go out and do your best and give it your best effort," Brad said. "I am looking for-

ward to seeing him stealing several bases and breaking the base stealing record."

With his father as an alumnus, Luke has heard many stories about Brad's time at OHS.

"Those stories have shaped me by giving me examples of what to do and what not to do," Luke said.

Similarly, Tatum Freeman played collegiate soccer at West Virginia. But despite their parents being athletes, Tatum and Brad allowed their kids to decide their interests and their sports avenues.

"My family never put pressure on me to play sports," Grace said. "They were really big on letting me decide my own future."

According to Brad, one thing he hopes his kids learn is that sports don't always have the outcome you expect.

"I hope my kids learn is that just because things don't go the way you think they will on the field but you continue to try and give your best effort," Brad said.



Courtesy of Luke Freeman



Courtesy of Luke Freeman



Courtesy of Luke Freeman

Top Left: **Brad Freeman** calls a play during an NFL game with the New York Giants. He has also refereed the Kansas City Chiefs and Houston Texans game this season. Bottom Left: **Grace**, Tatum, Grace and **Luke Freeman** pose for a family picture in Wyoming during the holidays. All four Right: Senior **Luke Freeman** and his dad Brad pose for a photo at one of the NFL games that Brad referees. Brad is an official referee for the NFL and Luke accompanies him on occasion for the games.



# Pegues, Tannehill committed to play SEC football

By Jake Kamman

sports writer

Oxford's Jeremiah "JJ" Pegues and Jack Tannehill have both committed to continue their football careers in the prolific Southeastern Conference (SEC). Pegues committed to play tight end at the University of Auburn, and Tannehill committed to play kicker at the University of Mississippi.

"It was super easy to choose Ole Miss because they are a big school that is in the SEC West, which is the best division in college football," Tannehill said. "I'm from Oxford and have dreamed of playing sports here my entire life, and I would be able

to do what I wanted on the education side of things."

J.J. is rated as a 4-star athlete and 300th rated player in his class on ESPN while Tannehill is rated as a 5-star kicker on [nationalkickingrankings.com](http://nationalkickingrankings.com). They both have high expectations for themselves when they hit the field.

"Some of the goals I have for my Auburn career is to have a successful career and to win a national championship and hopefully one day win the Heisman trophy," Pegues said.

Tannehill committed early in his high school career, getting the recruiting process out of the way while Pegues waited until his high school career was over, after winning a state championship, to commit.

"It is a huge weight off of my shoulders to know where I'm going to school," Tannehill said. "Football recruiting is a game in itself and having an opportunity to play football at such a high level before I had even finished my sophomore year of high school is a blessing."

According to both Tannehill and Pegues, Ole Miss and Auburn both felt at home and have great coaching staffs to commend the players, showing lots of love for their recruits.

"I would say the coaching was a big part of my decision," Pegues said. "The tight end coach, Larry Porter, was actually my dad's coach at Arkansas State, so my dad was very excited to see him and knew that he would take good care of me like I'm one of his."

Auburn and Ole Miss are both in the SEC West, which is widely considered one of the best conferences in the NCAA. They play against each other every year, and both have a very storied history in the SEC.

"In my time at Ole Miss I want us to go back to a New Years Six Bowl and win," Tannehill said. "As a fan, that is one of my most exciting Ole Miss memories."

Both players look to find a good education as well as a great football team to make friends and get better as players and as a team during their tenures with the two schools.

"My goal as a team at Auburn is to build relationships and a brotherhood and play for each other and not for ourselves and also to win a natty," Pegues said. "The coaches and the atmosphere at Auburn were a big impact as well as the academic side of it was a big reason also."



Senior J.J. Pegues signs with Auburn on Dec. 18 surrounded by family. Pegues chose Auburn over Ole Miss and Alabama.

# Cromwell, Meagher to continue football careers at Navy

By Edward Brown

editor-in-chief

Following their historic state championship season, senior quarterback John Meagher and senior tight end Clay Cromwell are both set to attend and play football at the United States Naval Academy. For Cromwell, choosing Navy had multiple benefits.

"I chose the Naval Academy because it offered me a chance to play in Division I football," Cromwell said. "It also allows me to pursue a career in the military, which I have always considered an option anyway."

For Meagher, the Naval Academy has long been connected to and involved with his family. His father, Pat Meagher, played football at Navy and graduated in 1991. Meagher's older brother, Conrey Meagher, followed their father's footsteps as well and attended the Naval Academy. Conrey was even awarded the First Lieuten-

ant Ron Winchester Award in 2018, an award presented to a senior recognized as an overachiever and role model on the team.

"Growing up with dad going to the Naval Academy was really cool because of all the experiences he had while going to the academy," Meagher said. "I'm definitely thrilled to be able to follow in their footsteps."

In addition to his family ties, Meagher feels as though the Naval Academy is the best opportunity to complete goals he has for his life.

"The Naval Academy provided me with the best opportunity to accomplish the goals that I had for my future," Meagher said. "I've always wanted to serve my country, and the Naval Academy was the perfect place to go be able to do that. I've always wanted to be a pilot. I've always wanted to play college football so Navy provided me with the best place to do all of these things."

Cromwell also has a military background in his family which influenced his childhood and his upbringing.

"I believe I'll fit in just fine," Cromwell said. "I grew up around the world on military bases and have been immersed in the military lifestyle and culture my entire life, so that isn't foreign to me."

The culture of the Midshipmen's football program was something else that stuck out to Cromwell when deciding on his future.

"At Navy, it is more than being a part of the 'team,'" Cromwell said. "It's actually called the football 'Brotherhood' there, so I think I will really enjoy it."

As a pair, the two often connected on the field since Meagher was the quarterback throwing to Cromwell. The first touchdown of the Charger's season was a pass from Meagher to Cromwell against Northwest Rankin, which Cromwell caught one-handed. While Cromwell didn't put up huge numbers in receiving yards from Meagher, he regularly blocked for the quarterback.

"As a tight end, my job a lot of times was blocking for John and protecting him," Cromwell said. "So I feel like that is a special sort of bond between a quarterback and his linemen."

Their connection, through Meagher's point of view, was built off of being able to trust Cromwell while on the field.

"With Clay only playing two

years of varsity football, I think we had a great connection," Meagher said. "Clay is always a good option to throw the ball to or run behind because I know he's going to get the job done."

Lots of high school students attend the same in-state schools and go to college together. But, it's not everyday that two senior football players get to play Division I football together, with this being the case for these two seniors.

"I know it's rare to have two people from the same school, that are the same age and are both playing football, to be at the Academy together. That doesn't happen a lot, so it'll be nice to have someone I'll know," Cromwell said.



Courtesy of John Meagher

Pat, Conrey and senior John Meagher pose after a Naval Academy football game in late 2017. The Midshipmen beat Virginia 49-7.



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# Stories featured in this month's issue, now in Spanish

## A pesar de las crecientes tensiones con Irán, no se producirá draft de los Estados Unidos

**Por Pope Mallette, William Carrington, Katie Cook Riley, Mary Marshall Waller, Sam Shelton y Caroline McCready**

escritores colaboradores

Después de que Los Estados Unidos matan a Quasem Soleimani, un general de Irán, por un ataque de misiles el 3 de enero, memes de Guerra Mundial Tres difundió por las redes sociales. En respuesta a Los Estados Unidos, Irán lanzó misiles a la base de EEUU en Iraq el 7 de enero. Los jóvenes en EEUU se preguntaban si serían reclutados.

Según Baxter, el reclutamiento militar no sucederá; es muy improbable. Ambas casas de Congreso y el Presidente tendrían que aprobarlo.

La matanza de Soleimani causó que el sitio web del Sistema de Servicio Selectivo se rompiera. El Servicio Selectivo requiere que los hombres de entre 18 a 25 años se registren. Esto no significa

que los hombres serán reclutados. Sin embargo, si uno no se registra, se cobrará una multa de \$250,000 y no recibirá ayuda federal para estudiantes para la universidad.

Baxter dijo que no debería haber confusión entre registrarse para el Servicio Selectivo y el reclutamiento. El propósito de El Servicio Selectivo es mantener una lista de hombres que pueden luchar. Para responder al miedo a un reclutamiento, el Servicio Secreto envió un mensaje con Twitter que dijo que no hay reclutamiento. Daniel Parrish, profesor de historia, cree que las redes sociales son responsables de exagerar la situación. Parrish dijo que ya sabe por qué la gente está asustada ahora. Él explicó que todo el ruido se originó en las redes sociales, y eso es de donde vienen las preocupaciones de la posibilidad de tener El Servicio Selectivo otra vez. Pero ya no hay una indicación desde el gobierno federal que vamos a tener otro reclutamiento obligatorio.

El reclutamiento obligatorio se abolió en 1973, durante de la guerra de Vietnam. Desde entonces, el militar ha sido totalmente basado en voluntarios. Parrish cree que la probabilidad de un reclutamiento obligatorio en el futuro es muy pequeña.

Parrish dijo que durante la mayor parte de la historia, la gente caminó durante las guerras y fue mejor tener un gran número de personas. Por eso había un reclutamiento. Ya no hay los reclutamientos porque hay un ejército permanente y las guerras se luchan de manera diferente. Hay nueva tecnología y armas más inteligentes.

Aunque la gente no se verá obligada a participar en la guerra, Parrish quiere que los estudiantes sepan sobre eventos extranjeros. Dice que los estudiantes necesitan saber lo que está pasando en otros países, no sólo en los Estados Unidos. No cree que la Tercera Guerra Mundial vaya a suceder, pero una persona nunca sabrá cuándo un pequeño evento tendrá un gran efecto en el mundo.

## Pegues, Tannehill se comprometen a jugar al fútbol de la SEC

**Por Olivia Nelson, Ann Caroline McIntosh, AC Rester, Stone Tosh y Alaina Addy**

escritores colaboradores

Jeremiah "JJ" Pegues y Jack Tannehill de Oxford se han comprometido a continuar sus carreras de fútbol americano en la universidad. Pegues jugará en la Universidad de Auburn y Tannehill en la Universidad de Mississippi.

Tannehill dijo que era fácil elegir Ole Miss porque es una gran escuela en la mejor división del fútbol americano llamado "SEC West". Ole miss es la mejor opción porque Tannehill es de Oxford y ha soñado con jugar aquí. También podrá continuar su educación en la universidad.

Pegues está clasificado como un atleta de cuatro estrellas, mientras que Tannehill es considerado un atleta de cinco estrellas. Ambos tienen esperanzas altas para ellos mismos.

Pegues dijo que algunas metas que tiene en Auburn son tener una carrera exitosa, ganar el campeonato nacional, y tal vez ganar el trofeo Heisman.

Tannehill cometió muy temprano, terminando el proceso de reclutamiento, mientras que Pegues esperó cometer hasta el fin de su última temporada.

Tannehill dijo que es un gran peso quitado de sus hombros saber dónde asistirá a la universidad. El reclutamiento de fútbol americano es un juego en sí y tener la oportunidad de jugar a un alto nivel antes de su año sophomore es una bendición.

Según Tannehill y Pegues, se sentían como en casa en ambos Ole Miss y Auburn y tienen buenos entrenadores. Los dos muestran mucho amor por los reclutas.

Pegues dijo que los entrenadores le ayudaron a decidir. Uno de los entrenadores, Larry Porter, era el entrenador de su padre en Arkansas State.

Auburn y Ole Miss son parte de una de las mejores conferencias de la NCAA. Ambos equipos se juegan uno contra el otro cada año.

Tannehill quiere que Ole Miss gane "New Years Six Bowl" y como un aficionado, fue su memoria más emocionante.

Ambos jugadores quieren una buena educación y los equipos fantásticos para hacer amigos y mejorarse como jugadores.

Pegues dice que su meta es construir relaciones y hermandades y ganar el campeonato nacional. Los entrenadores y el ambiente del Auburn son sus razones principales para ir al Auburn.

## Cromwell, Meagher continuará sus carreras futbolísticas en la Marina

**Por Fawaz Ahmad, Edmund Doerksen, Abigail Gunn, Albert Pham y Hannah Spillers**

escritores colaboradores

Después de su histórico campeonato del estado, dos de los "seniors" llamados John Meagher y Clay Cromwell asistirán a la Naval de los Estados Unidos y jugarán al fútbol allí. Cromwell dijo que eligió esta escuela porque le ofrecería jugar al fútbol de la división uno y a perseguir una carrera en el ejército.

Para Meagher, la Academia Naval había sido una parte de su familia por mucho tiempo. Su padre, Pat Meagher, jugó al fútbol americano en la Academia Naval y se graduó en 1991. El hermano de Meagher, Conrey Meagher, siguió los pasos de su padre y también asistió a la Academia. Meagher dijo que tener un padre que fue a la academia naval fue realmente genial debido a las experiencias que tuvo mientras asistía a la academia. También dijo que él está muy emocionado de poder seguir sus pasos.

Además de sus conexiones familiares, Meagher piensa que la academia naval es la mejor oportunidad de completar algunas de sus metas que ha tenido toda la vida. Dijo que siempre ha querido servir a su país, ser piloto, y jugar al fútbol americano universitario y la academia naval es el mejor lugar para

hacer esto.

También, Cromwell tiene antecedentes familiares militares que han influido su crianza. Cromwell cree que él encajará bien. Él creció en las bases militares, y ha sido inmerso en el estilo de vida militar toda su vida. A causa de esto, la vida militar no es extraño para él.

La cultura del equipo "Naval" fue algo que ayudó a Cromwell a decidir ir a la universidad allí. En el campo Meagher y Cromwell se conectaron mucho porque Meagher es el quarterback y Cromwell juega la posición de tight end. Cromwell capturó el primer touchdown de la temporada en 2019 de Meagher. Cromwell también tuvo que proteger a Meagher y esto ha hecho una fuerte hermandad entre Cromwell y Meagher.

Meagher dice que el vínculo entre ellos viene de la habilidad de confiar en Cromwell en la cancha. A pesar de que Cromwell solo tenía dos años de fútbol varsity, Meagher and Cromwell tenían un fuerte vínculo.

No es común que dos estudiantes se gradúen y jueguen al fútbol de División 1 juntos en una escuela como la Academia Naval. Cromwell dice que es excepcional que los dos estudiantes de la misma escuela de la misma edad jueguen al fútbol en la academia naval pero será bueno conocer a alguien allí.





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