

10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OHS CONTINUES TO GROW

An illustration of a school building with a red facade and a grey pediment. The building has two columns in the center and four windows on each side. The text "OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL" is written across the pediment. In front of the building are several steps.

OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL

OHS PRODUCES FIRST ADAPTATION OF "SHADOW OF THE SUN"

By Kendall Kipping

opinions editor

To start off the 2024 spring semester, the OHS Theatre decided to perform a new play, Shadow of the Son. The plot of the play revolves around Artemis, the Greek goddess of the moon and wilderness. Artemis is shown in the play struggling against unfortunate family ties, falling in love, and learning to cope with grief.

Senior Sam Lewis played Orion, one of Artemis' love interests who was tragically killed after Apollo tricked Artemis into shooting Orion with her bow and arrow. Lewis has been an active member of OHS Theatre in the past, in productions such as "CATS," "War Paint," and "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown." He spoke about the special dynamic of this plays' cast.

"I think this cast is especially close since we're the first group to ever stage this show," Lewis said. "There were a lot of doubts, and moments where we were concerned about the possible outcome, but sharing in those thoughts helped us all to become closer friends."

Senior Everhett Van Every was cast as Apollo, the Greek god of the sun and Artemis' fraternal twin. Van Every has been involved in the OHS theater throughout highschool in productions such as "CATS," "Clue," and "Rumors," and was happy to be cast in such a large role that allowed him to push himself as an actor on stage.

"I was pretty excited to be cast as Apollo," Van Every said. "I was able to go full out with my emotions on stage, since my character grew pretty upset during some scenes. I loved getting to do that since my previous roles don't give me room for that."

The play was written by playwright and artist Kate Leslie, an OHS alumni who graduated in 2003, and this was the first ever adaptation of "Shadow of the Son." In 2021, Leslie's play, "Shadow of the Son," was a finalist for the David Marc Cohen National Playwriting Award. Since the play has never been performed before, many of the actors struggled with understanding their characters.

"The hardest obstacle I had with this play was not having any kind of

reference for my character," Lewis said. "It was just difficult since it's the first time the show has ever been staged, and honestly it was scary being the first cast to ever perform this play."

Junior Alice Dabbs has been involved with the OHS theater throughout her high school career, and landed the lead role of Artemis. She has been involved in other school productions such as "Clue," "War Paint," and "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown." Dabbs spoke about her preparation for her large role in portraying the Greek goddess.

"I was so excited to play Artemis, and be a part of such a special show," Dabbs said. "Learning all of my lines was the hardest part for me, and I practiced everyday to make sure I had them memorized."

The cast for "Shadow of the Son" knew each other and were close friends before the play, something that influenced some of them to try out for it. Many of the actors and crew members were happy to be a part of a school activity that they could enjoy together.

"I chose to try out for "Shadow of the Son" because all of my closest friends were doing it so I thought it would be fun," Dabbs said. "It's always fun to be on stage with your friends, and this play was very special to us since some of the cast and crew will be graduating in May."

"Shadow of the Son" was an overall success, with all three nights of the show selling a large amount of tickets. Many OHS students who attended expressed their love for this play after seeing it.

"This is definitely one of the best high school productions I've seen," junior Elsie Dossett Bridgers said. "The cast's acting was incredible, the writing of the script was amazing, and it was just such an immersive and amazing experience."

"Shadow of the Son" was more than a play to some of the actors and crew that were a part of it. For many, it could potentially be their last highschool theatre production.

"I hope to do another production before I graduate," Lewis said. "Theatre has been a big part of my high school career."



RISE tackles mental health issues, partners with pickleball club

By Brody Denevan

co-news editor

Oxford High School's RISE Club, a club dedicated to create safe communities to discuss topics surrounding mental health, has recently been focusing how things like anxiety and stress can be recognized and how to handle it.

During this month, members of the club have been working on presentations to present to the rest of the club on stress and anxiety. These presentations are given by certified peer educators, which is a certification that is presented to members of the club that train to become one of these certified educators.

"In order for a RISE member to present inside class rooms they must become certified peer educators," junior member Harper Gray said. "This is a really cool program because out of 10,000 schools that offer this certification, three of them are high schools, and only one is a public school, and that's Oxford High School. Our former sponsor, Kakky Brown, has been kind enough to come train RISE members, once each semester, allowing us to continue this process. From there, presenters will meet as a group and practice the presenting our presentation to each other so they're confident in their material and delivery."

The purpose of the RISE Club is to create a safe space that opens up to conversations about topics such as mental health. The presentations help peer educators spark these conversations by educating and informing other members about the given topic.

"Presentations consist of material talking about anxiety, how to recognize it, and how to react to it," Gray said. "We include activities where students draw what they feel when they get anxious, offering a visual, and then another activity called 'Toolbox' where students create a toolbox featuring various healthy ways they cope with their anxiety. We also offer various opportunities for students to share what they may have written down or what they have learned."

Along with members of the club giving presentations on March 21-22, members of the RISE Club collaborated with members of the Pickleball Club to host a weekend event on March 23. This event consisted of pickleball games, a fun run, and yoga.

There are going to be three main events: the pickleball tournament, yoga sessions, and a color run through Avent park," senior member of the Pickleball Club Margaret Brown said. The tournament is set up to be less of a competition and more of a fun activity for everyone to participate in, so there is not a set bracket, players just get to play whoever is available to play."

Both the Pickleball Club and RISE decided that co-hosting an event would be beneficial and crucial to putting on an event of the size. Members from both clubs joined together to come up with plans and organize the event.

"I think just being able to put on such a big first event has been my favorite part. It's exciting to see our ideas come to life and to be a part of something that will last after we graduate. Having a big club like RISE be excited about the club has been such a blessing and I don't think we could have pulled off

such a big event without them," Brown said.

While there aren't any current set dates for future events, both RISE and the Pickleball Club have ideas in mind for more events further down the road. Having members contributing ideas is what makes these events possible.

"A lot of this year has been figuring things out as a team, and I don't think any of our leaders could do that without the others," junior RISE member Henry Jones said. "It's great to have this group to bounce ideas off of and create events like this for our students to enjoy."



Ella Wellinghoff • theCharger

Freshmen **John Wilson** and **Guy Fruge** playing doubles in the pickleball tournament on Mar. 23 at Avent Park. The proceeds of the event went to the Doors of Hope Transition Ministries.

Bilingual Book Club connects with elementary students, parents

By Banks Still

staff writer

The bilingual book club, started by two OHS seniors, Gabriel Miña-Reyes and Natalia Urbina, has helped bring joy and excitement to non-English speaking second grade kids and their parents each month. The club was created because the two students wanted to give back to the community by providing a monthly book club for children and their parents who can't speak English. The students are provided a number of books that they request from the Oxford School District to give to the kids at each meeting. At the end of each month, the students meet with the kids and their parents at Della Davidson Elementary and have pizza while discussing the books.

"For me, I wanted to start the club because I moved here from Honduras when I was five and reading was a big help for me whenever I moved here so I wanted to provide that for other kids and parents as well," Urbina said.

However, the club isn't just for kids. They also give a copy of the book for parents to read with their child and to help them learn English along with their children.

"I got the idea for the club because I remember growing up and although I could read in English

and understand English, my parents couldn't understand it and most of my friends had the same problem," Miña-Reyes said.

Each month, the students go over the book that the club has been reading while enjoying some pizza, and they have a fun, interactive activity that goes along with whatever book they are reading. At the end of the meeting, the families receive an English and Spanish copy of the chosen book for the next month for them to read once they get home.

"Each month, we have different activities based on a book we're reading. Like if we're reading a Magic Treehouse book and it's on dinosaurs, then we will have an activity based on dinosaurs," Miña-Reyes said. "We had a Thanksgiving Magic Treehouse book that we did, so we had thanksgiving activities. It's sort of activities based on the books so that kids can see that reading is not only reading, but also fun."

The club isn't just a book club, however. The two students also often bring in speakers that will be interesting and helpful to the different families. They are also provided pizza by the Ole Miss Grisham-McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement.

"Occasionally, we bring in someone to speak about a topic or some-

thing that we think would be interesting to the families or the kids that could help them out," Miña-Reyes said. "Once, we had someone from The Salvation Army come to promote their Christmas special offering families who couldn't afford gifts a chance to buy them at a discounted price."

There are multiple ways for people to get involved in the club, but the students put up flyers and invite people they know to join the club. The club welcomes anyone that comes and hopes that more people will continue to join.

"What we did when the club was starting was we gave flyers to all

the teachers in Della since the club is for second graders," Miña-Reyes said. "All Spanish-speaking families should know about the club so that if they ever wanted to, they could just show up and they would be accepted."



Courtesy of Gabriel Reyes

Senior **Gabriel Reyes** is reading a book with a student to parents and students.



Courtesy of Gabriel Reyes

Seniors **Gabriel Reyes** and **Natalia Urbina** smile for a picture with the students and parents that came to participate in the bilingual book club. This is held in the Della Davidson library with food and drinks for those who come.

Berry named MSPA Journalist of the Year

By Annie Amidon
staff writer

Caroline Berry, current editor-in-chief of *The Charger*, has recently been named the MSPA Journalist of the Year. Berry will now compete at the national level of the Journalism Education Association's High School Journalist of the Year competition. This is now the second year in a row OHS has had a student receive this honor as Winnie Wilson received it last year.

"When I received the news I was named the MSPA Journalist of the Year, I felt deeply honored," Berry said. "I'm humbled to be recognized amidst such strong writers across our state. With so much work required behind the scenes, receiving this recognition helps me feel seen and celebrated."

Berry used to be the features editor of *The Charger*, but worked her way up to being the current editor-in-chief. Having that role has shown her a different side to being involved in journalism.

"The most challenging aspect of my editor-in-chiefship has been the more administrative side of the role," Berry said. "Managing project deadlines not only for myself, but for my entire staff has been a more intensive task than I initially presumed. Nonetheless, my staff is an incredibly motivated and talented group of writers who make being editor the most fun role in the world."

Being on *The Charger* staff has taught Berry a great deal about life and writing skills. She learned a lot throughout being involved in jour-

nalism getting her to the place she is now.

"Writing in Associated Press Style was completely new to me when I first joined the staff so there was definitely a learning curve in that regard," Berry said. "Journalism has challenged me to think about my audience not only in my writing but in all of my interactions. Every adjective, gerund, and preposition used in journalistic writing makes a world of difference in how the piece is interpreted by one's readers. I've found it's best to approach life with a similar intentionality to this."

The passion Berry has for writing started with her family and teachers. They have inspired and supported her throughout her entire journalism career.

"My parents and teachers have fostered this love and supported me immensely throughout my writing career," Berry said. "My family has always been incredibly supportive of my journalistic ambitions. They have always pushed me to go beyond the standard. My parents, additionally, instilled in me a love of reading from a young age and have taught me just how powerful writing can be."

Berry has greatly enjoyed her time so far on *The Charger* staff. She found herself not just loving the ability to write, but also the connections she was able to make with her staff.

"My favorite memories on staff most definitely come from distribution days," Berry said. "I love getting to ride around Oxford with my staff and help put our papers in newsstands and local businesses. It is a great bonding experience particularly

for our new members and it helps to strengthen the tight knit community we have at *The Charger*."

Writing has always been a big outlet for Berry. Being a part of *The Charger* gave her a chance to share her great love of writing with others.

"I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to spotlight others," Berry said. "I have always found that highlighting others at our school, in our community, and in our world is a way to promote the strengths and unique qualities of others. *The Charger* has provided me with an incredible platform to bring attention to the issues happening in our community and elevates the exposure of extraordinary circumstances."

Journalism will be a part of Berry's future one way or another. Writing has been an enjoyable part of Berry's life and she plans to continue with it either as just a hobby or a career.

"I am sure of the fact that I will be a lifelong writer whether I pursue journalism as a career or not," Berry said. "I plan to write for a college news publication in the future and hope my writing will continue to make an impact on others."

Berry has improved *The Charger*

in many different ways. She sets a great example for the rest of the staff every day.

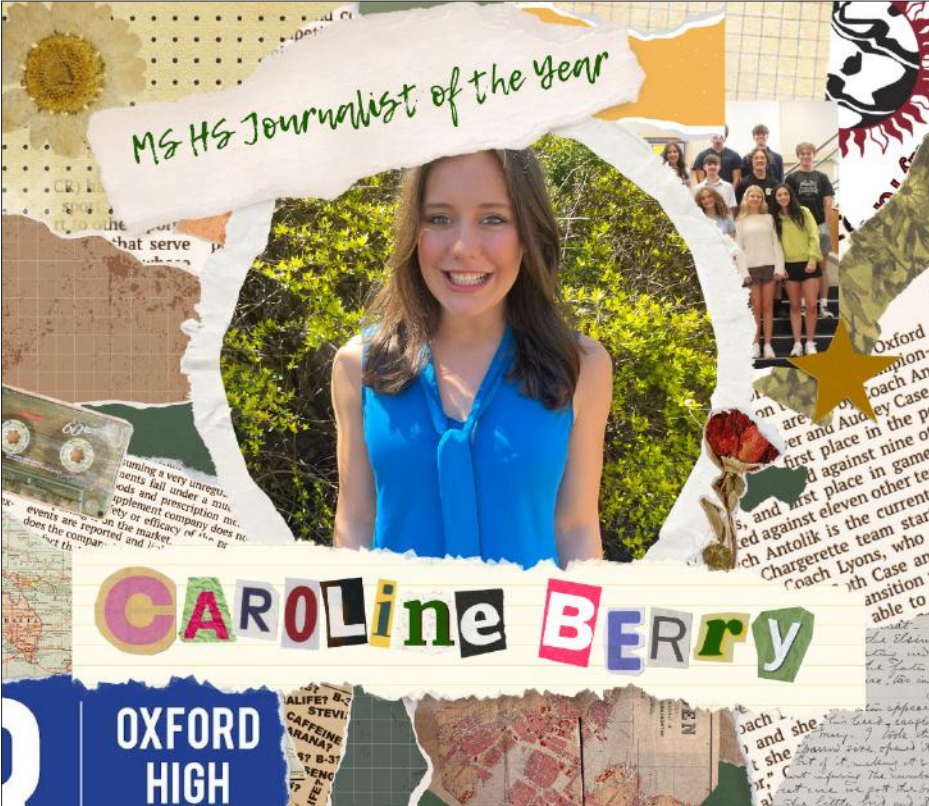
"Having Caroline on staff and as the editor-in-chief has been fantastic," Diala Chaney, *The Charger* advisor said. "She brings a new perspective and fresh ideas to the paper every month."

The work Berry does is greatly admired by the people around her. The attitude and determination she has and puts towards *The Charger* does not go unnoticed.

"Caroline is a smart, strong, independent student," Chaney said. "She accomplishes everything she puts her mind to. She has been an invaluable staff member of the paper and an incredible leader for the staff as a whole."

This year is not the first time *The Charger* has had a staff member receive this honor. Winnie Wilson, former Editor-in-Chief, achieved the title of MSPA Journalist of the Year last year as well.

"It makes me feel a sense of accomplishment as a teacher when I have a student win this award," Chaney said. "Having Winnie Wilson win last year and now Caroline is historic for our journalism program."



MSPA posted the announcement of Caroline Berry's achievement on Instagram. Berry will now advance to the national level of the Journalism Education Association's High School Journalist of the Year competition.



821 N Lamar Blvd, Oxford, MS
(662)-380-5300
www.oxfordrx38655.com



DOES THE OHS CURRICULUM PREPARE YOU FOR COLLEGE?

OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS



WINNIE WILSON

“I am currently a freshman at the University of Virginia and I graduated in 2023. I think that in some ways the OHS curriculum prepared me for college, however in many ways I felt extremely unprepared throughout the first few months of classes. On the first day of class, I was assigned a 10 page research paper in my pre-modern art class to be submitted following the APA format. I had never had to write anything more than a 5 paragraph essay that closely followed the rubric of the AP exam at OHS. I felt extremely unprepared with the freedom and leniency of college professors and administrators. While the whole philosophy behind much of what OHS does is prepare students for their future endeavors, the discipline levels of college are so loose, and forcing students to put away phones, take structured notes, and become accustomed to having someone of authority tell them what to do at every moment provided for quite the shock in college. I feel like the requirements such as economics, government, CCR, and other courses aren’t given the same seriousness as other core classes like they should, which I think put me behind my peers. I think the biggest change needs to be within the policies passed through the school board regarding course scheduling, how long classes are, what classes are or aren’t a semester, and what the purpose of these classes are. I think the mindset needs to be shifted from achieving certain rankings by altering course curriculum and length of courses to preparing students to succeed after graduation.”



NOAH AMIDON

“I am a freshman at Dartmouth College and I graduated from OHS in 2023. I feel no less prepared than the other students from other schools. I feel like I am able to keep up with those students who went to private schools and other fancy high schools. I think I was most unprepared for the sheer amount of reading required in college. Also I think if there was more focus on independent studies forcing people to read more and prepare themselves for class it would be very beneficial.”



FIKIR BEYENE

“I graduated OHS in 2023 and I am currently a freshman at Princeton University. I think in some ways the curriculum definitely did, from AP Literature to AP Calculus, heavier homework assignments and more independent work helped me develop the skills I need. Content and pacing-wise, it’s definitely been an adjustment, but that’s a learning curve most students face as they enter college. I think more diversity in types of rigorous courses offered, as well as more of a focus on cultivating crucial skills like time management would be very beneficial to help better prepare students for college.”



KEERTHIN KARTHIKEYAN

“I graduated OHS in 2023 and am currently a freshman at the University of Mississippi. I took 9 AP classes at Oxford and an assortment of dual credit classes at Ole Miss. The OHS curriculum, particularly the AP classes, definitely prepared me because the content taught was more similar to the content of college classes than other classes, and the difficulty of those classes were also similar to university classes. Basically, AP classes were helpful because they acted as a bridge between high school and college curriculum. Even the AP classes, despite being more difficult than non-AP classes at OHS, still aren’t quite as time-consuming and difficult as most Ole Miss classes. While these classes are a bridge, they don’t quite portray college classes. There are some minor additions the school could add, such as the IB system, which may help bridge the minor gap between AP and college classes as they introduce work with peers that you’re not close with, often from different states and countries. Working with peers you’ve never met before and individuals who have completely different experiences than you is an often occurrence here at Ole Miss.”

The Stews play at The Lyric Theatre

By Howard Hyneman

staff writer

On Feb. 24, the southern rock and roll band, The Stews, performed at The Lyric Theatre on the Oxford Square. The band originated in Auburn Alabama, but have performed in Oxford many times in the past two years. They previously played at the 2023 Double Decker Arts Festival and opened for Moon Taxi in November of last year. The Stews became a band while enrolled at Auburn University, starting out by just playing fraternity parties and backyard parties in the Atlanta/Auburn area. Once they grew in popularity they then decided to start touring across the country and just started their 2024 "Hourglass" tour.

The band consists of bass Bennet Baugus, drummer Wyatt Griffith, guitarist Blake Dobbs, and lead singer Preston Hall. Baugus shared more on how they met and started the band.

"We officially met and started in Auburn, AL, but Wyatt, Blake, and I all went to school together in Atlanta, GA.," Baugus said. "We had a small band in high school called No Can Do and played events such as local battle of the bands and school events. When Wyatt moved to Auburn for college, he met Preston and the rest is history."

Their 2024 Hourglass Tour kicked off on Feb. 2nd with a stop in Oxford on Feb. 24th. The band is no stranger to Oxford and they have always drawn a crowd.

"The energy from the crowd is always great in Oxford," Griffith said. "We've played multiple frat shows, Proud Larry's, Double Decker fest, and The Lyric twice now and we can't wait to keep coming back."

The Stews' familiarity and previous shows in Oxford was a major factor for their return to the lyric.

"We played The Lyric last year in October with Moon Taxi, and before that we played Proud Larry's," Baugus said. "When we were planning this tour we knew we wanted to come back and headline The Lyric. It has also consistently been one of our favorite college towns to play in since we started playing outside of Alabama and Georgia."

Their tour has taken them all over the south from Oxford to Tampa Bay and Auburn playing in a new city practically every night. Baugus explains how they manage their busy tour schedule.

"It can be grueling, especially in the middle of a long tour when there is little time for rest and/or recovery," Baugus said. "Yet, the passion we have for our music and our live show is reciprocated every night by our fans and it drives us. It blows my mind that

we can show up to places we've never been and immediately feel the energy and hospitality."

Several OHS students are big supporters of the band and attended the show. Juniors Elsie Bridgers and Ella Wellinghoff, OHS students, attended the show and shared their thoughts on the show.

"I had a very good experience at the show, it was a lot of fun," Bridgers said.

Wellinghoff had previously been to their Double Decker performance and gave insight on her experiences.

"Last time I didn't really know who they were and didn't really get to enjoy them fully," Wellinghoff said. "This time I had listened to them beforehand and I enjoyed the concert a lot more."

After seeing the band twice, Wellinghoff explains her favorite thing about the band.

"My favorite part has to be the atmosphere that the band creates," Wellinghoff said. "The atmosphere they create makes everybody have a good time and just enjoy each other and their music."



The Stews play for a large crowd at The Lyric on the Square, this being one of their many performances in Oxford. It's also their second time playing at The Lyric.

School Project? **ACE** it!



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Grande's "Eternal Sunshine" safe, unremarkable

By George Monroe
entertainment editor

After a three year long hiatus, pop superstar Ariana Grande is back with her new album "Eternal Sunshine". Grande first gave fans a taste of what her new album would offer when she released the debut single "Yes, And?", earlier this year. It was well received, containing club and dance production that was bound to have audiences on their feet. It was interesting to see Grande shift towards a more positive and upbeat sound.

Even without an official album release in a few years, the public still had lots to say about Grande's current relationship status. It was confirmed last year that she was dating actor Ethan Slater. This news gave fans more anticipation for Grande's new album, as she never shies away from being open and personal in her work.

Indeed, "Eternal Sunshine" might be her most personal work yet, but it tends to fall a bit short musically. Throughout the album, Grande reflects on both ending a relationship and forming a new one. The first full track on the album, "Bye", is a confident anthem describing Grande moving on from a former ex. Unfortunately, the high energy she shows on this track does not always continue throughout the album. For example, the title track is a slower ballad that needs to contain strong emotion vocally, but Grande fails to utilize her powerful voice.

Another disappointment this album brings is the lack of range Grande shows. Throughout her career, Grande has been known for her incredible voice and vocal capabilities. But this album only seems to bring out one side from Grande. She

doesn't fully unleash the grand singing ability that she is known for. It would've been fitting for Grande to use the full power of her vocals on such a positive album.

Although most tracks on this album sound nice enough and passable, Grande seems to lack originality in not only lyrics but production. The drum pattern in True Story is a copy of Beyonce's Don't Hurt Yourself, and the lyrics in this album seem cliché at times.

Although many of the songs on "Eternal Sunshine" sound repetitive, there are many great tracks that guarantee to have people out of their seats and on the dance floor. The track "The Boy is Mine" has already garnered plenty of Tiktok posts, and rightfully so. It is a lighthearted bop about finally winning over the person you want to be with. Songs like these capture the vision that Grande had for the entire album: a celebration of love and a positive reflection on past love. Although this vision wasn't always executed, it is good to see that Grande still has plenty of hits in her repertoire.

With so much buzz surrounding this album, the question of whether or not "Eternal Sunshine" is worth the wait has sparked plenty of debate. First and foremost, Grande feels comfortable with the lane she is in and the work she is putting out. But the style and story she was aiming for could've been expanded. With the album being only 35 minutes, there wasn't enough time to flesh out the ideas that she wanted to express. Nevertheless, there was still a good amount of strong tracks on the album, containing vocal performances that were mild for Ariana, but grand compared to what other artists are capable of. Longtime fans will be satisfied with the project they received, but the average listener

won't be amazed. Overall, this album sees Grande stepping into a new personality. After the past relationships she's been through, she has learned and become a happier person. Although not perfect, "Eternal Sunshine" properly encapsulates the feelings Grande now has.

"Eternal Sunshine" isn't any remarkable point in Grande's discography. The album is exactly what you expect from an older, more mature, Grande. Instead of finding the spotlight in the music industry, she finds her own inner peace through love and growth. The project can become musically bland, but it isn't offensive enough to taken away from the emotional vulnerability that Grande conveys in "Eternal Sunshine".



NEW RELEASE "KUNG FU PANDA 4" FUN FOR VIEWERS OF ALL AGES

By Liza O'Reilly
staff writer

"Everybody is Kung Fu Fighting...", except in the new movie "Kung Fu Panda 4". This song did not appear throughout the entire duration of this movie. The song "Kung Fu Fighting" has been an iconic theme song for the "Kung Fu Panda" series for years. The decision to not use this song in the fourth movie was because the lyrics became a controversial topic to some.

Even though the newly released "Kung Fu Panda 4", directed by Mike Mitchell, is geared towards a younger audience, an older demographic might notice some of these underlying themes such as strength, perseverance, trust, dishonesty, forgiveness and inner peace. These traits were shown by Kung Fu Panda not changing who he was. He did not feel as though it was time for him to pass down his reign as the dragon warrior quite yet.

Kung Fu Panda (also known as Po) showed his trust to the fox by letting her out of prison. He also showed his trust to her by letting her lead the way to find the chameleon. The fox also showed dishonesty to Po by leading him to the chameleon just for him to realize the fox was working for the chameleon the whole time and was just trying to capture Po.

But, because Po was known to be such a good person and friend he was forgiving when the fox came back to him and admitted she actually

wanted to be his friend.

Po taking the fox back as a friend ended up working in his favor toward the end of the movie. By the end of the movie and lots of meditating even found his inner peace which is a very



big thing for him and Master Shifu. Despite the fact that there is some controversy over the movie as a whole and if people enjoyed it or not, "Kung Fu Panda 4" has made its way up to the number one spot on the ranking of all movies across North America. This means that it has passed "Dune 2" which is another popular movie at this time. Also, "Kung Fu Panda 4" has exceeded \$30 million in box office sales in North America over its second weekend being shown, and it is predicted to make over \$50 million.

In my opinion, the newly released movie, "Kung Fu Panda 4", had many great underlying themes which really helped bring the movie all together. Although this movie was more so meant for children, I felt as if parts of the movie were very encouraging to all ages. It relates to how friendships can be great, but sometimes they can be difficult to navigate.

My thoughts about where I stand in figuring out if I really enjoyed the movie or not are pretty much in the middle because parts of the movie, to me, didn't really feel like they belonged and were just added in for time sake. The parts that persuaded me to enjoy the movie more were when they showed Po struggling with his friendships because that is a real life struggle for people of all ages.

TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY ON CHARGER LOOP

By Addison Franks
co-news editor

Ten years ago, Oxford High School moved into a bigger and more updated building to support their already large and growing student body. When the high school moved out of their old building, it turned into the middle school building. Throughout the decade in the new building on Charger Loop, there have been many changes.

Teachers and students began classes in the new building in January of 2014. They moved in over Christmas break that year. Rebecca Mann was a math teacher at Oxford High School for 15 years and still works in the district today, and shared her experiences on the transition to the new building over the break.

"Since we moved over Christmas break, I can remember just throwing our things in boxes so maintenance could move us," Mann said. "There really wasn't much time to go through your things to determine what you actually needed to take with you."

The first few months in the new building were full of time adjusting to being in a new location and tweaking things to make sure everything was running smoothly.

"At first, the district was very adamant about teachers all using the same furniture that was set up in the classrooms," Mann said. "This caused a great deal of panic among the faculty because teachers liked their stuff and wanted more storage."

Teachers couldn't have extra shelving, cabinets, mini fridges and microwaves in their classrooms. There was also no eating allowed in classrooms to preserve the cleanliness of the new

building, so teachers had to eat lunch in the cafeteria or workrooms.

"These rules seem so crazy now, but as you can tell, we have completely shifted that mindset," Mann said. "As years went on, these rules became more relaxed and furniture and small appliances started trickling their way into more and more classrooms."

This is just one example of a small change that has occurred in the last ten years at Oxford High School. There was also a brief period of time where students and staff received an hour-long lunch break called "Power Hour."

"After moving into the building we saw several different administrators trying different things and many additions and changes were made as we worked to adjust to the new space," Mann said.

Oxford High School's current administrator, Dr. Dana Bullard has also seen changes in just the last two years that she has been head principal. When Bullard first began at OHS she noticed that students were leaving campus a lot and didn't seem invested in the culture at the high school.

"The parking lot would be full and then empty, people were coming back and forth," Bullard said. "It was like a commuter campus of a community college, where people just come and go."

Bullard sat down with teachers, administrators, and counselors to find a solution for this issue that she had observed. They all joined together to propose ideas on how to make this campus more meaningful to students so that students could have a real high school experience.

"We've tried to make a concerted effort to make sure that people are enjoying what we do specifically and the bonds that we form instead

of just looking forward to when they can leave campus," Bullard said. "I don't know if it's been successful or not, but it seems to me that there are more people staying on campus."

The number of early graduates in the years leading up to this year compared to the early graduates this year has been clear evidence of the success Bullard has had with this idea. In past years there has been an average of 50 or 60 students out of each class that graduate in December because they are ready to finish high school. This year there were only 28 students who graduated in December.

"That's a huge sign to me that people have started to enjoy being at school and want to participate in their senior year," Bullard said. "It also makes the school more enjoyable for the underclassmen because when our seniors leave early, they take their leadership and their institutional knowledge with them. The seniors traditions and things like that make the school special."

While this emotional connection to school was a big change, there were smaller changes like the furniture in the commons, the umbrellas on the picnic tables and even naming the "Charger Yard" that helped form Oxford High School's own individual culture over the years.

"It's just logistics and sociology type stuff that I haven't used in a while, but it was fun to lead through this process to create a fun environment for students," Bullard said.

The last decade in the building has been full of constant improvement for current students and staff, but there has also been some thinking into the future involved as well. The Oxford School District grows at about three percent each year, so finding spaces for

teachers while also keeping the individuality of each teacher's room has been a bit of a struggle.

"Unlike in a college setting, high school teachers need a classroom that reflects his or her authenticity as a teacher, and their relationship to students," Bullard said. "They need a space with things on the wall that have something to do with their history, their aspirations, and their culture."

Last year, some classes were moved to the OECC and some special education classrooms were rearranged and shared for resource purposes. There was a bond passed that is allowing the high school to make more expansions so they can better prepare for the increase in future students.

"We are building a new building that will be done in the fall of 2025 that will help us with our space issue and we have plans to reconfigure where JROTC is as well," Bullard said.

The most recent renovation to the school was an intercom system that reaches every building on campus. This system was installed over spring break and makes communicating through the campus more efficient.

"The most important reason for the new intercom system is just safety," Bullard said. "Before the system, we would have to use walkie talkies to communicate with the buildings separated from the main building and they were very hit or miss."

The last ten years at OHS has been a trial and error process of trying to create a safe, enjoyable and opportunity filled campus.

"This district is already light years ahead of other districts where I've worked and seen," Bullard said. "So I think that this is a good start to the next ten years."

TEN YEARS OF GROWTH AT OHS

40.4% GROWTH
IN STUDENT ENROLLMENT

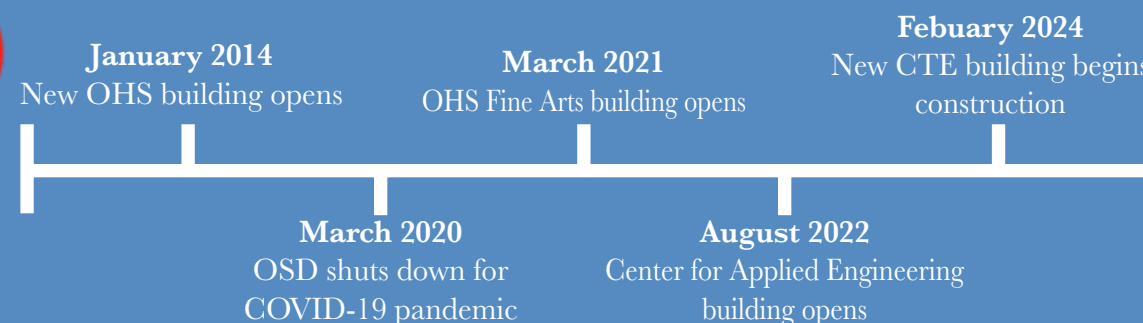
2013-14: **958** 2023-24: **1,345**

TEACHERS & STAFF GROWTH

2013-14: **87** 2023-24: **117**
34.5% GROWTH

OHS SQUARE FOOTAGE GROWTH

Main Building: **220,000 FT²**
+
Fine Arts Building: **42,134 FT²**
+
Center for Applied Engineering: **13,000 FT²**
Total: 275,134 FT²





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New weight-loss drug causes scandal, negative body image

By Caroline Berry
editor-in-chief

Recent scandals have emerged regarding the popular drug Ozempic, with claims that it is causing negative side effects in users. This injectable medication is primarily used to help lower blood sugar levels in people with type 2 diabetes but has surged in popularity as a weight-loss drug. Reports of adverse reactions have led to concerns about the safety and effectiveness of Ozempic.

One of the most concerning aspects of Ozempic is its potential side effects. Many users have reported experiencing nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, and abdominal pain after taking the drug. These symptoms can make it difficult for people to adhere to their treatment regimen. In some cases, these side effects can be severe enough to require medical intervention or even hospitalization.

Furthermore, there have been reports of more serious side effects associated with Ozempic, including pancreatitis and thyroid cancer. While these are rare occurrences, they are still cause for concern among healthcare providers and patients alike. Pancreatitis can be a life-threatening condition that requires immediate medical attention, while thyroid cancer can have long-term consequences for a person's health and wellbeing.

Another issue with Ozempic is the way it has been tested and approved for use. The drug was initially approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) based on the results of clinical trials that were conducted by the manufacturer, Novo Nordisk. This raises questions about the reliability and accuracy of the data used to support the drug's approval. Independent studies have not been conducted to verify the safety and effectiveness of

Ozempic, leaving many healthcare providers and patients in the dark about its potential risks. Additionally, the testing of

Ozempic may not accurately reflect its real-world effects. Clinical trials often have strict inclusion criteria that exclude certain populations, such as elderly people or those with certain medical conditions. This means that the results of these trials may not generalize to the broader population of individuals who will ultimately be prescribed the drug. As a result, the full extent of Ozempic's side effects may not be known until it has been used by a wider range of people.

Another extreme risk of taking Ozempic is an increased risk of malnutrition. Some doctors say it is important that people are given clear guidance on proper diet and nutrition while on the medication. People who experience extreme outcomes from the medication may need to stop taking it altogether.

"Some people taking Ozempic can experience such an intense lack of appetite that they do become malnourished," Dr. Andrew Kraftson, a clinical associate professor in the division of endocrinology and diabetes at Michigan Medicine said.

Ozempic works, in part, by blocking the brain's hunger signals, suppressing appetite; it also causes the stomach to empty more slowly, leading people to feel full for longer.

When people are on a drug like Ozempic, doctors need to monitor them closely with regular check-ins. Typically a daily caloric intake between 1,000 and 1,500 calories (individualized based on a person's starting weight and estimated metabolism) is recommended.

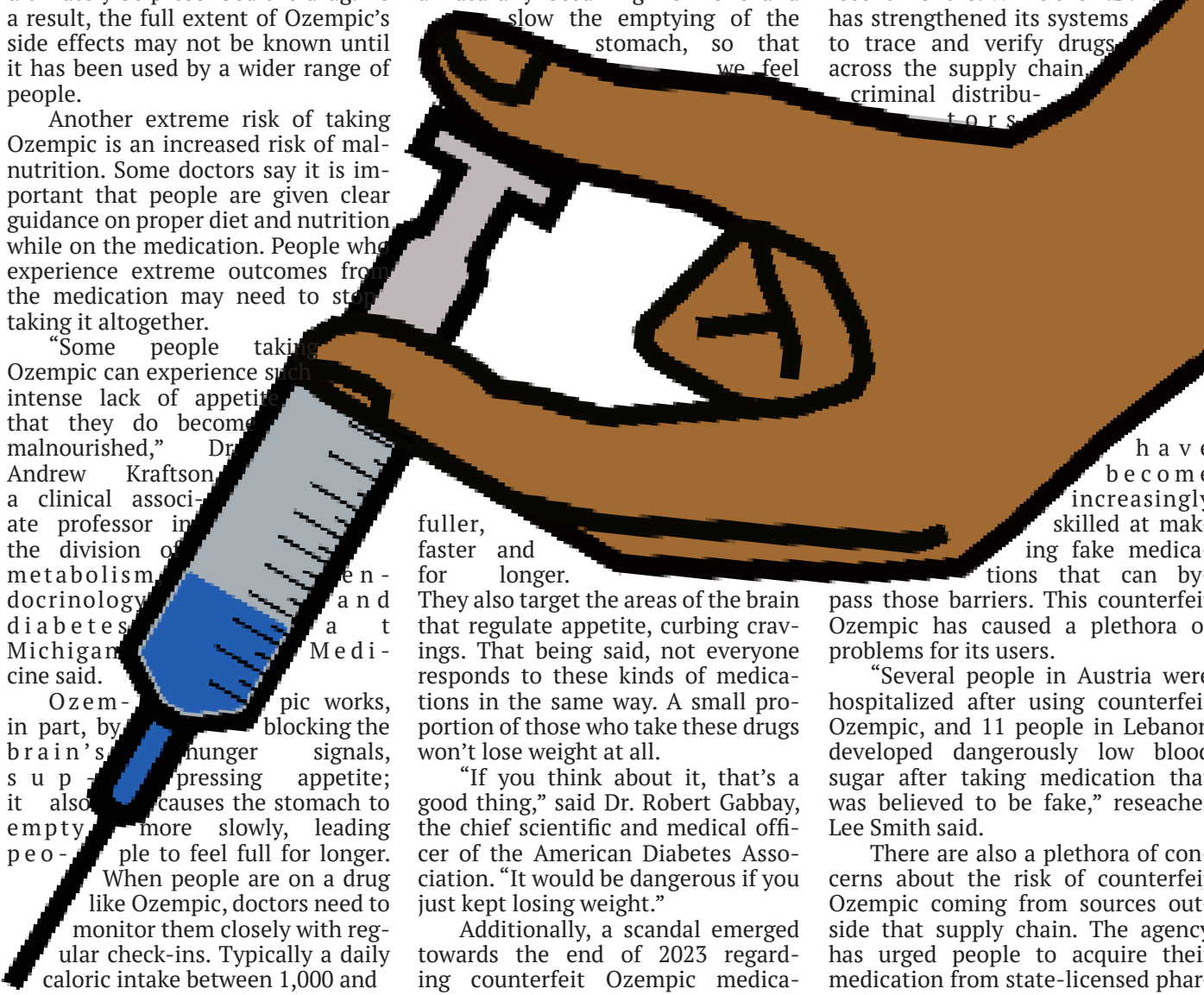
In addition to the potential health risks associated with Ozempic, there is also a negative effect on body image that can result from taking this medication. Many Ozempic-users struggle to manage their body image due to the inconsistent and erratic results that the drug provides. This result many negative impacts to users' mental health including feelings of shame, guilt, and inadequacy. By equating weight loss with success and health, Ozempic contributes to unrealistic and unhealthy body standards that can harm people's self-esteem.

Many Ozempic-users have found themselves frustrated with the result of their weight loss plateauing after a

certain amount of time on Ozempic. This often prevents people who are on Ozempic to try and lose weight from meeting their goal.

"Most people taking these medications will hit a plateau around the 18-month mark after starting treatment," Kraftson said.

Medications like Ozempic mimic a naturally occurring hormone that slow the emptying of the stomach, so that we feel



fuller, faster and for longer.

They also target the areas of the brain that regulate appetite, curbing cravings. That being said, not everyone responds to these kinds of medications in the same way. A small proportion of those who take these drugs won't lose weight at all.

"If you think about it, that's a good thing," said Dr. Robert Gabbay, the chief scientific and medical officer of the American Diabetes Association. "It would be dangerous if you just kept losing weight."

Additionally, a scandal emerged towards the end of 2023 regarding counterfeit Ozempic medications being put on the market. The Food and Drug Administration (F.D.A.) said that it had seized thousands of units of counterfeit Ozempic on Dec. 21, 2023. Some fraudulent Ozempic products may still be on the market, according to the agency. The agency has also confirmed that the needles accompanying these injectable medications are counterfeit and may not be sterile. The labels, the packaging and the accompanying information for patients and health care providers are also all fraudulent. The F.D.A. shared photos of the fake injectors and encouraged patients to check their medication for signs that it could be counterfeit. For example, a real Ozempic needle should be covered by a paper tab that reads "NovoFine Plus," while the counterfeit needles found so far simply say "NovoFine." Consumers can also compare the lot and serial number

of the medication with those of the counterfeit drugs, or ask a pharmacist for help identifying that information.

Unfortunately, shortages can drive pharmacies to buy from distributors they may not be familiar with, putting them at risk of buying counterfeits. Ozempic and similar drugs have faced supply challenges over recent months. While the F.D.A. has strengthened its systems to trace and verify drugs across the supply chain, criminal distributors

have become increasingly skilled at making fake medications that can bypass those barriers. This counterfeit Ozempic has caused a plethora of problems for its users.

"Several people in Austria were hospitalized after using counterfeit Ozempic, and 11 people in Lebanon developed dangerously low blood sugar after taking medication that was believed to be fake," researcher Lee Smith said.

There are also a plethora of concerns about the risk of counterfeit Ozempic coming from sources outside that supply chain. The agency has urged people to acquire their medication from state-licensed pharmacies. In general, the F.D.A. advises the public to always obtain Ozempic with a prescription and to be wary of drugs claiming to be Ozempic for sale at a far lower cost than the roughly \$900 list price of the brand-name version.

Overall, the negative effects of Ozempic cannot be ignored. From the potentially dangerous side effects to the questionable testing and approval process to the counterfeit scandal to the harmful impact on body image, this drug raises serious concerns about its safety and effectiveness. Healthcare providers and patients should exercise caution when considering the use of the Ozempic drug and carefully weigh the potential benefits against the known risks. Ultimately, the health and well-being of individuals should be the top priority when it comes to managing type 2 diabetes and weight loss.

THE OUTRAGE OVER OZEMPIC

The buzz on caffeine: a harmful drug for students

By Sarah Ross Latimer
staff writer

Caffeine, the beloved stimulant of many high school students, can be both a blessing and a curse. While the drug may provide a much-needed energy boost to get through long study sessions and early morning classes, it also has negative effects on student's bodies and minds. There are many positive and negative effects of caffeine on high school students and it's important for students to be aware of their intake. The caffeine-filled energy drinks students drink almost daily can do more harm than good when looking at the poor effect it can have on high schoolers.

Caffeine is a vital stimulant for high school students, offering numerous benefits to enhance their mental performance. It improves focus, concentration, and reaction time. This makes it an essential tool for students to navigate their busy academic schedules, and push through long days. When students wake up from a short night's sleep, caffeine is often their go-to solution to stay alert and awake throughout the day. In fact, a staggering 75% of high school students are said to rely on caffeine to stay awake and alert, according to a National Sleep Foundation study.

Beyond its cognitive benefits, caffeine has social advantages, fostering connections and friendship among students who share a love for coffee and energy drinks. Social interactions over coffee or energy drinks can even increase feelings of friendship

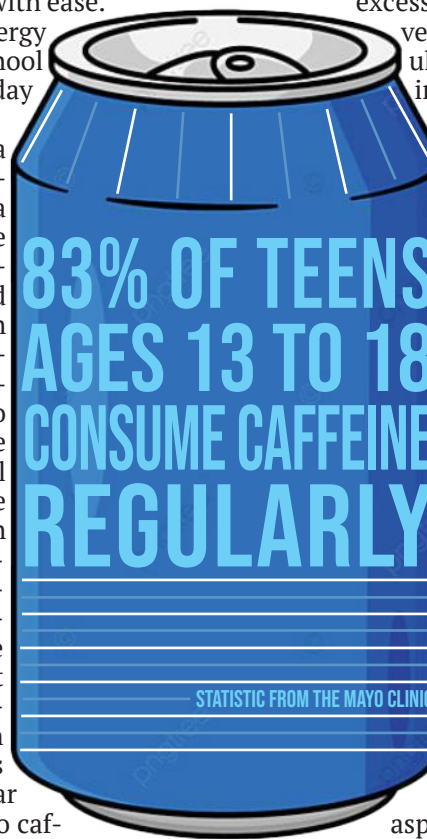
and social bonding, as shown in a Journal of Social Psychology study. Moreover, caffeine boosts motivation and productivity, empowering students to tackle tasks and meet deadlines with ease.

By providing a much-needed energy boost, caffeine helps high school students power through their day with confidence and success.

While caffeine can provide a temporary energy boost, excessive consumption can lead to a range of negative effects. These effects include addiction, anxiety, jitteriness, and an increased heart rate. Excessive intake can also result in dehydration, headaches, and fatigue, while disrupting sleep patterns and leading to sleep deprivation and negative effects on physical and mental health. Furthermore, excessive caffeine consumption can even lead to negative impacts on mental and emotional well-being, including increased stress and anxiety. For students who need take medication, caffeine can interact negatively with certain medications, and potentially resulting in cardiovascular problems, such as high blood pressure and irregular heartbeat. Individual tolerance to caf-

feine can vary greatly, and some people may experience negative effects at much lower doses. Moreover, caffeine sensitivity can increase with age, and excessive consumption can have more severe consequences in vulnerable populations, such as young adults. It is important to be mindful of caffeine intake and to consume it in moderation to avoid these negative effects that can be so detrimental to young, high school students.

While caffeine may have some benefits, its negative effects are too profound to disregard. Caffeine has potential to seriously hurt students, so they must be careful. For high school students, it is crucial to be mindful of caffeine intake and to limit it. Rather than relying on caffeine to stay awake and alert, students should prioritize getting a good amount of sleep, fueling their bodies with a balanced diet, and engaging in regular physical activity to boost energy levels naturally. By being aware of the impacts of caffeine and taking proactive steps to moderate intake, students can maintain a healthy balance and set themselves up for success in all aspects of their lives.



NEW ALBUM "VULTURES" DISAPPOINTING

By Rishi Patel
staff writer

Kanye West's highly anticipated "VULTURES 1" album has finally been released. The album contains 16 songs which were released on Feb. 9, 2024, along with one single. The single and the 11th song on the album, called "VULTURES" was released on Nov. 18, 2023. The "VULTURES 1" album has received mixed reviews from fans. The album has many very appealing songs, but some of them are just not West's usual style, which could be described as comforting and motivational.

West's new album is distinctive in the way that he has been through adversity since the release of another album, "Donda". This album was a way of showing the music world that West is still making music at a high level and will continue to make more music even though people have began to lose faith in him.

One of the most played songs on the new album, "CARNIVAL," has been a hit with features from rappers Playboi Carti, Ty Dolla \$ign, and Rich the Kid. An easy-going song called "BURN" has been called the 'song of the summer' due to its relaxed manner and catchy chorus.

"VULTURES 1" didn't meet the expectations that West's fanbase had for this album. It is as if past albums such as "ye" and "Graduation" were much

better listens because they felt more on topic with West's flow and style of music. "VULTURES 1" seems like a whole new type of music from Kanye and it feels unnatural. Even though some of the songs with his new approach were enjoyable, it would have been better to hear songs that displayed Kanye's old music style.

This album has been long-awaited and has received many different reviews and opinions. Overall, the album was mediocre and does not even compare to some of his amazing work from early in West's career. West has completely strayed away from his old style of songwriting. This album shows what type of new work West has worked on and that albums in the future could be the same way, but the album as a whole was disappointing and underwhelming.



The original album cover for "VULTURES". The album cover was later changed to feature Kanye West and his wife, Bianca Censori.

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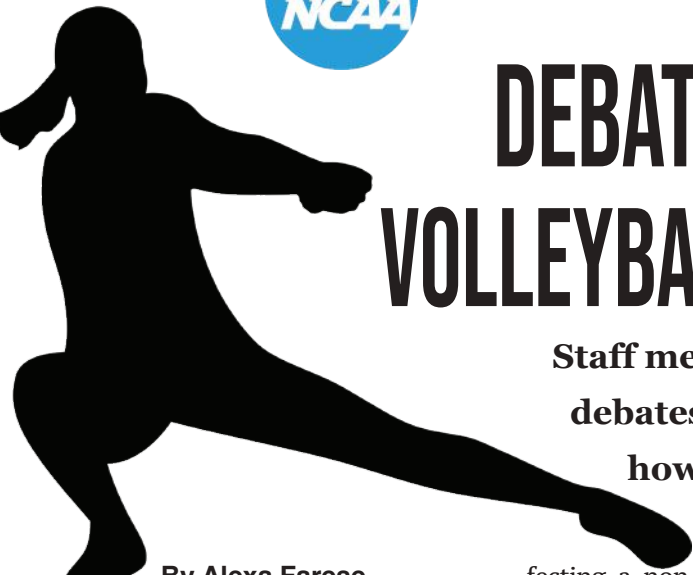
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DEBATE OVER NEW WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL DOUBLE CONTACT RULE

Staff member and volleyball player Alexa Farese debates the merits of the NCAA's new rule and how it will affect the future of volleyball

By Alexa Farese
staff writer

On Feb. 20, 2024 the NCAA made a few changes to the rules of volleyball. One of these changes is an extremely controversial decision to allow double contacts for setters which was proposed on Jan. 5, 2024 and then put into place along with a small number of minor changes.

These changes will only affect college level play, but could make a difference in many aspects of the game.

"The NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel approved allowing women's volleyball players to contact the ball more than once with any part of the body in a single attempt on a team's second contact when the ball is played to a teammate," states the official NCAA website.

This rule change is sparking debate in the volleyball community for a few reasons, one of them being that it gets rid of one of the main requirements that the setter position has to follow.

The setter's purpose is to set up the hitters on the team for the final contact and they must do this without having a double contact. Even the slightest spin on the ball from the setter can lead to a double being called since it signifies one hand touching the ball before the other in a set.

Eliminating the rule against it makes the hard work that setters have put into per-

fecting a non-spinning set irrelevant, allowing just about anyone to be a setter without learning a main technical aspect of the position.

"Out of all of the positions, I think setters spend the most time perfecting their craft in the gym," said Ashley Martin, head coach for the oxford high school volleyball team, "They spend hours and hours and hours practicing and training to get their technique down pat. There are many parts of setting that make the position unique and challenging and having the ability to make a clean set with no doubles is a key characteristic a setter needs to have."

While the change may be disheartening for setters, overall the rule change will make the game more constant with the variability of what referees qualify as a double.

For a referee, it is completely up to interpretation on whether or not a set would qualify as a double, and often one referee will call a double on something another referee would categorize as clean.

"I do think that with the unpredictabilities with referees through out the country from college, to high school, and even to 12 or 13 year olds playing club volleyball the elimination of doubles will make the game more consistent across the board," said Martin, "I take our team to different places all around so that we can see the officiating in each part of the state. Our setter can watch film, see the calls made by the referee

and what they did to have the call made, and fix it in the gym. By the time playoffs come we have seen what we need to do to avoid those calls."

Another good thing about the change, is that it will change the speed of the game. In the recent ten years the game of volleyball has gained a great deal of popularity. This surge of interest in the sport is accredited to the increasing speed of play, especially in college. Rallies are longer, faster, and more entertaining.

When doubles are called it stops the game and slows it down. Also, trying not to double slows down the sets in general because of the careful manner setters have to use to make sure they have a perfect, non-spinning set, so therefore without the worry of having a double called on them, the setter will be able to speed up their sets and the pace of the game.

"In 2023, women's college volleyball experienced a massive surge in ratings and attendance, and the faster play likely had a lot to do with it," said USA Today.

Overall, while there is a drawback to the rule change of removing the double contact rule, being that it may make the technique of setting slightly less tedious, the rule change will be a positive thing for the volleyball community.

It will help keep the inconsistency of officials down and keep the speed of the game up.

Oxford High School
101 Charger Loop
Oxford, MS 38655
Phone: (662) 234-1562
Fax: (662) 236-7941

Editor-in-Chief:
Caroline Berry
Associate Editor:
Henry Haley
News Editors:
Brody Denevan
Addison Franks
Features Editor:
Ellie Jones
Entertainment Editor:
George Monroe
Opinions Editor:
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Kyiah Mathis
Elizabeth McLellan
Liza O'Reilly
Banks Still
Brady Stinnett
Rishi Patel
Madison Pegues
Adviser: Diala Chaney
dhchaney@oxfordsd.org

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CHAMPION: HOUSTON COUGERS

It has been an outstanding season for the Cougars with Head Coach Kelvin Simpson, finishing the regular season with a 30-4 record. Houston has one of the better all-around teams in the tournament. The Cougars will be headed into the dance with a Big 12 regular season title and the #1 ranked defense. The six foot senior guard, Jamal Shead, has been an amazing piece for the Cougars, earning the award Big 12 Player of the Year. Shead is the only student-athlete in the nation to rank among the Top-20 individual leaders in assists per game, steals per game, and assist-turnover ratio. In conference games, Shead ranked sixth in scoring, sixth in field goal percentage, second in assists, third in steals, and first in assist/TO ratio. Shead was also a two-time Big 12 Player of the Week selection, and brings a lockdown man to man defense while being able to be a huge part of the offense as well. Head Coach Kelvin Simpson, who has led the Cougars to a Big 12 regular season title and Tournament Championship, finished with a 15-3 conference record and was named Big 12 Coach of the Year. He brings a smart defensive mind to the table, and it will be hard to out-coach him on the defensive side of the ball in the tournament. Baylor transfer L.J. Cryer is leading the team in points per game, averaging 15.3 points, and was named All-Big 12 Second Team. The Cougars are the team to beat, but it won't be easy with Cryer and Shead on the court. Houston finished last season with a 33-4 record, losing to No. 5 seed Miami in the Sweet 16. With Big 12 Player of the Year and Coach of the Year, the Cougars have the best chance of winning it all this year.

SLEEPER: NC STATE WOLFPACK

The Wolfpack have had one heck of a season, boasting a 22-14 record. North Carolina State had a great run in the ACC Tournament, beating out No. 11 Duke and No. 4 North Carolina to win their Conference Tournament. This team's resume may not seem like the sleeper kind having a 9-11 conference record, but the Wolfpack have some outstanding players and have proven to outlast good teams in close games. Star Senior Guard D.J. Horne has been an excellent player for the Pack, speeding up the game while leading the team with 16.7 points per game and was honored with the All-ACC Third Team. Horne is headed into March helping the Pack win a big game against No. 4 North Carolina racking up 29 points and will be the guy to not let get hot in March. Standing at six foot nine 275 pounds D.J. Burns Jr. the absolute freak of an athlete has been the difference for the Pack averaging 12.8 points per game and 4.1 rebounds. State is ranked 58th in fast break points averaging 12.34 points per game, 88th in Steals averaging 7.3, and 91st in Scoring averaging 76.5 points per game. Those numbers may not seem like the best, but in March those numbers can increase rapidly with one shot. The Pack didn't have many players win an award but the depth on their team is what will get them far in the tournament having four players average 11 plus points per game. The Wolfpack are headed into the tournament hot with a 5-0 record in March. The Wolfpack are the No. 11 seed and will face a tough No. 6 seed Texas Tech team but should push through the Red Raiders with their big fellas and D.J. Horne making key plays for the Pack.

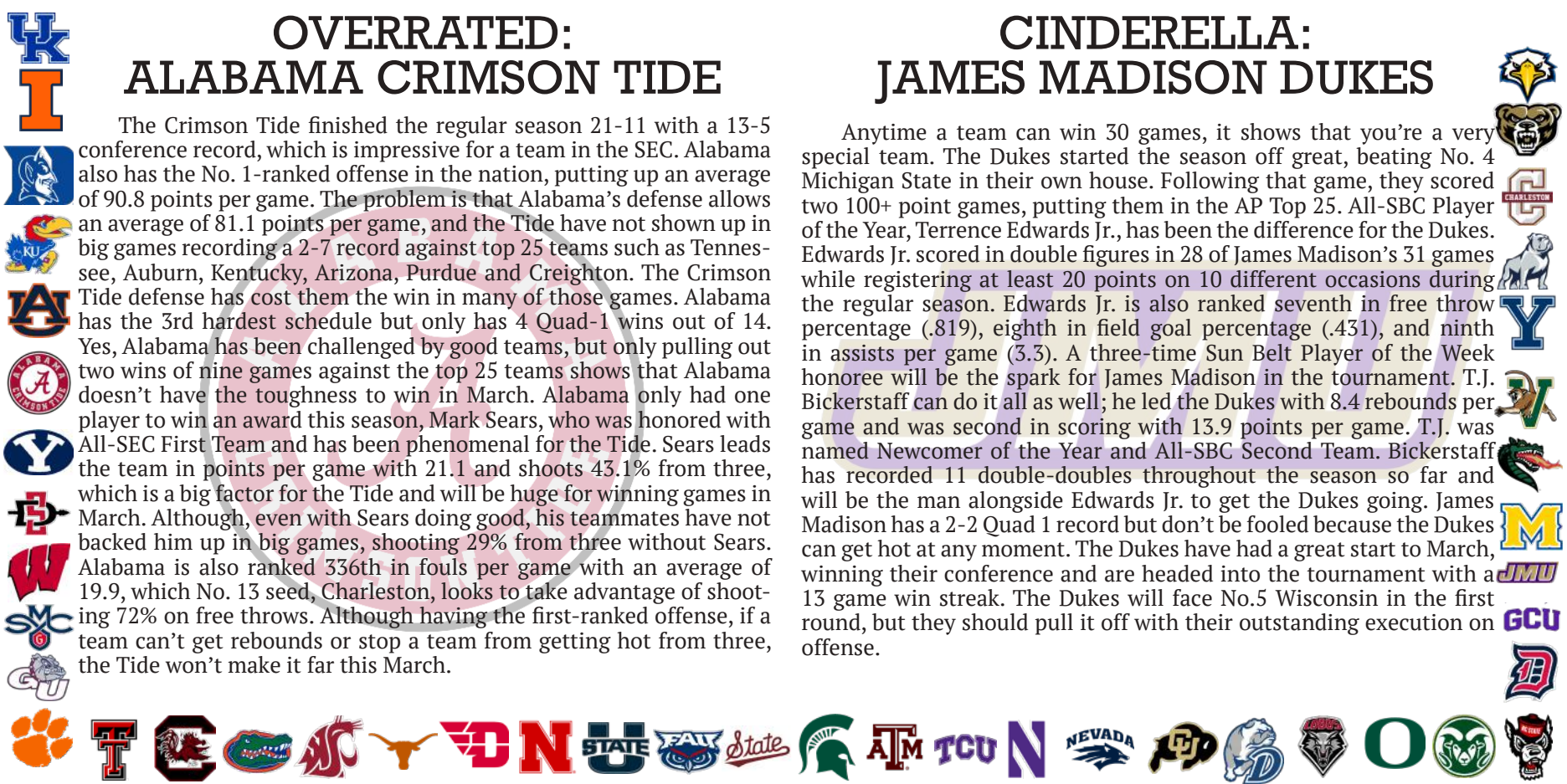
NCAA MARCH MADNESS PREDICTIONS
BY: MITCHELL GRANDJEAN
STAFF WRITER

OVERRATED: ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE

The Crimson Tide finished the regular season 21-11 with a 13-5 conference record, which is impressive for a team in the SEC. Alabama also has the No. 1-ranked offense in the nation, putting up an average of 90.8 points per game. The problem is that Alabama's defense allows an average of 81.1 points per game, and the Tide have not shown up in big games recording a 2-7 record against top 25 teams such as Tennessee, Auburn, Kentucky, Arizona, Purdue and Creighton. The Crimson Tide defense has cost them the win in many of those games. Alabama has the 3rd hardest schedule but only has 4 Quad-1 wins out of 14. Yes, Alabama has been challenged by good teams, but only pulling out two wins of nine games against the top 25 teams shows that Alabama doesn't have the toughness to win in March. Alabama only had one player to win an award this season, Mark Sears, who was honored with All-SEC First Team and has been phenomenal for the Tide. Sears leads the team in points per game with 21.1 and shoots 43.1% from three, which is a big factor for the Tide and will be huge for winning games in March. Although, even with Sears doing good, his teammates have not backed him up in big games, shooting 29% from three without Sears. Alabama is also ranked 336th in fouls per game with an average of 19.9, which No. 13 seed, Charleston, looks to take advantage of shooting 72% on free throws. Although having the first-ranked offense, if a team can't get rebounds or stop a team from getting hot from three, the Tide won't make it far this March.

CINDERELLA: JAMES MADISON DUKES

Anytime a team can win 30 games, it shows that you're a very special team. The Dukes started the season off great, beating No. 4 Michigan State in their own house. Following that game, they scored two 100+ point games, putting them in the AP Top 25. All-SBC Player of the Year, Terrence Edwards Jr., has been the difference for the Dukes. Edwards Jr. scored in double figures in 28 of James Madison's 31 games while registering at least 20 points on 10 different occasions during the regular season. Edwards Jr. is also ranked seventh in free throw percentage (.819), eighth in field goal percentage (.431), and ninth in assists per game (3.3). A three-time Sun Belt Player of the Week honoree will be the spark for James Madison in the tournament. T.J. Bickerstaff can do it all as well; he led the Dukes with 8.4 rebounds per game and was second in scoring with 13.9 points per game. T.J. was named Newcomer of the Year and All-SBC Second Team. Bickerstaff has recorded 11 double-doubles throughout the season so far and will be the man alongside Edwards Jr. to get the Dukes going. James Madison has a 2-2 Quad 1 record but don't be fooled because the Dukes can get hot at any moment. The Dukes have had a great start to March, winning their conference and are headed into the tournament with a 13 game win streak. The Dukes will face No.5 Wisconsin in the first round, but they should pull it off with their outstanding execution on offense.



OHS WRESTLING WINS THREE STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Hud Clark

staff writer

The OHS Wrestling team recently wrapped up their season, three OHS wrestlers finished first in the individual state championship. Along with the three individuals, the team finished third place overall in the state of Mississippi. The team is led by head coach Konrad Ernst in his second season after just beginning the program last year. With a state championship win on his belt, Ernst has a future goal in mind for the program.

“Right now my goal for this program is to continue building onto our success and getting a deeper commitment from our team,” Ernst said.

Ernst’s 18 years of prior wrestling experience has truly helped him become a better coach for his wrestlers.

“Not only in understanding the technique, my experience has also helped with strategies and training procedures,” Ernst said. “Knowing what it feels like to work your tail off in a wrestling practice and get up and have to do the same things the next day is really what I think helps me the most as a coach.”

One of the OHS Wrestling state winners, Alexis Wilks, is a sophomore at OHS. Wilks has proved herself on the mat, winning two North Half titles and one state championship this season. She is hoping to repeat such victories in the upcoming season.

“It honestly is an amazing feeling,” Wilks said.

“After coming up short last season just by one match, and being the bottom seed and rank all of this season it feels good to prove everyone wrong on the mat.”

This team has not had it easier than some, coming into this season with only a short number of girls, they proved themselves on the mats. Wilks and her few female teammates have proved that having a large team doesn’t matter, winning North Half, a team state title, and placing 4th against teams with over double their number of wrestlers. Wilks is hoping to bring more girls on the OHS Wrestling team next year.

“We’re a team of girls who can go pin-for-pin with any team and win,” Wilks said. “But, with us having to forfeit empty weight classes, we lose by points. But, I hope to keep growing my team and expanding wrestling in my school.”

Junior Kamar Houston is also a state champion and a part of the boy’s OHS Wrestling team. Houston is a multi-sport athlete playing football, track and wrestling. Houston shares how his serious hard work and effort allowed him to come up on top this season.

“There were some days where I just didn’t feel like putting in effort but had to push myself,” Houston said. “I was constantly learning valuable things from the first practice to the state finals and it helped me appreciate the little things a lot more.”

Houston and his team have had a strong connection on this year’s wrestling team, pushing each

other on the team to be the best they can be.

“There was never any hate or problems within the team and the coaches were great,” Houston said. “We would always cheer each other on, lift each other, and push each other every day. It’s like we were a real family.”



Photo Courtesy of OHS Wrestling

Top Left: Junior Kamar Houston stands on the podium.

Top Right: Sophomore Alexis Wilks stands with her bracket as state champion.

Bottom Left: 8th grader Izzy Balkin on the first place spot in on the podium at the state meet.

Oxford High Tennis team prepares for postseason

Fisher Giles

staff writer

The Oxford Charger tennis team started off their 2024 spring season strong. The Chargers are coached by head coach Lewis Nash who has been with the program for 24 years. The team has prepared for this season by putting in the work and playing hard at practice all year round.

“Different times of the year practices run different ways because we are potentially practicing all the time, practice through the summer, practice through the fall, practice in the spring,” Nash said. “In the summer it’s all voluntary. I can have anywhere from 20 kids to 50. They just come. I match them up and we play from 12-2. In the fall it’s a little of the same but more singles play, and in the spring it’s more conditioning for the season and getting ready to play typically foot work, some running, a lot of conditioning when we’re playing. You try to vary practice because if you don’t enjoy hitting the tennis ball then you’re just not gonna enjoy hitting the tennis ball. It eventually all comes down to if you enjoy playing the game.”

The Chargers have had many matches during this season which helps them prepare them for the difficult postseason play in the coming

weeks. Senior Kaitlyn Urbanek shares how they have progressed throughout the season.

“The first couple matches definitely showed the team what our strengths and weaknesses are this year,” Urbanek said. “We knew going into this season that every match can go either way and I feel like the team has done a great job putting in the work during every match.”

Despite many challenges and difficulties that have come up in this spring season, the Chargers are learning to overcome those struggles. “Practicing harder than you play is our biggest challenge,” Nash said. “When you practice poorly you play poorly when we practice well we play well. It’s a pretty common thread among coaches all over the place regardless of sports.”

The Chargers have learned their mistakes and after some talks and practice they are learning to work hard every practice to fix their mistakes.

“We had a long discussion after poorly played matches and they responded with probably the best matches they’ve played and I give them a lot of credit for that. They responded to a coach’s challenge and got after it. It was nice that they handled it well.” Nash said.

Senior Sutherland Smith explains

how the team is full of leaders on the courts and have a special bond with each other off the courts.

“We all know each other very well and have a good team bond,” Smith said. “We are able to be serious during match play while also having a good time off the court with each other.”

The Chargers have had very successful teams in the past, with the standard always being to win a state championship, and that standard will not change for this year’s team.



“Our main goal is to win the state championship, that will always be your goal when you have been successful in the past, and it better be our end goal every year and everything else is working towards that goal,” Nash said.



Top Left: Senior Leland Koestler begins to hit the ball over the net. Koestler plays in the boys double with senior Ben Campbell.

Top Right: Senior Charlie Fruge serves the ball to his opponent in his match against Lewisburg. Fruge competes in the boys singles event.

Bottom Left: Senior Crawford Shows backhands the ball to her opponent. This will be Shows’ final season as an early graduate.



OHS STUDENTS SPEND SPRING BREAK IN COSTA RICA

For this past spring break, seven students from Oxford High School went on an Education First trip to Costa Rica for eight days, from Mar. 8 to Mar. 19. The trip centered around learning about Costa Rican culture, environmental consciousness, and immersing students in the Spanish language. Other schools joined OHS on this trip, including Lincoln School and Rocky Hill Country Day School. Spanish teacher James “Señor” Jiminez joined the OHS students on the trip as their chaperone and guide. The trip to Costa Rica included many activities such as painting classes, cooking classes, ziplining, swimming, and scavenger



Kendall Kipping • the Charger

Students **Will Grem, Wells Valliant, Glenn Carrington, Kendall Kipping, Julia Jo Bryan, Alexandra Ritchie, and Stella Wilkins** pose for a picture. This was while the group was staying in Guanacaste, Costa Rica.



Kendall Kipping • the Charger

Spanish teacher James “Señor” Jiminez poses with his students, **Wells Valiant, Alexandra Ritchie, Kendall Kipping, Glenn Carrington, Stella Wilkins, Julia Jo Bryan, and Will Grem**, in front of a sign in Sarchí, Costa Rica.



Kendall Kipping • the Charger

Julia and James Jiminez, chaperones on the trip, pose with students **Will Grem, Kendall Kipping, Julia Jo Bryan, Stella Wilkins, Wells Valliant, Glenn Carrington, and Alexandra Ritchie**. This picture was taken on the groups first full day of the spanish immersion trip.



Kendall Kipping • the Charger

OHS seniors **Stella Wilkins and Glenn Carrington** smile during cooking classes. The two students were grating cheese in preparation for making traditional Costa Rican dishes.



Kendall Kipping • the Charger

OHS students **Wells Valliant, Stella Wilkins, Alexandra Ritchie, Julia Jo Bryan, Will Grem, Glenn Carrington, and Kendall Kipping** pose for a picture while in Fortuna, Costa Rica. This photo was taken before the group went ziplining.



Senior **Julia Jo Bryan**, junior **Alexandra Ritchie**, and junior **Kendall Kipping** pose for a picture during cooking classes in Fortuna, Costa Rica.