



Ben Gray/KRT

THE WIRE

WEST POTOMAC HIGH SCHOOL

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Hazing Taken To New Heights

Kate O'Connor
Editor-in-Chief

This past June, on the final day of school, eight rising senior boys left school after their final class and drove to Carl Sandburg Middle School, where they waited outside the school for students walking home to Riverside. They rounded up six rising freshman boys, and in the style of the movie *Dazed and Confused*, hazed them using paddles.

Principal Rema Vesilind caught wind of the events through angry e-mails from the rising freshmen parents. In her four years overseeing our school, hazing has been an ongoing problem. Ranging from shaving students' heads to tying students up in the parking lot to harsh beatings, hazing continues to plague our school grounds.

She called the senior boys and their families into the school. As she talked to the perpetrators and their parents, a common thread in their stories emerged. While sitting at her desk, she recalled their discussions. "They all remembered being hazed," said Vesilind. "They said they were scared as freshmen because they remembered bigger, older boys beating them. They looked at me and said 'That's what seniors do.'" She leaned back in her chair and threw her hands into the air with frustration, before asking, "What were they thinking?"

The cycle of hazing behavior passed down from class to class that Vesilind found is not difficult to unearth. Many students agree that, while they do not know if hazing has always existed, it certainly feels that way. Senior TJ Cleary said that, as a freshman, he was given wedgies, pushed, picked up and put into two trash cans, yet he maintained that hazing is "a form of initiation and a way to get to know the upperclassmen." He said he believes that the practice builds character and gives the upperclassmen a chance to exercise their seniority. He also said that despite what happened to him, or perhaps because of it, he would haze freshmen this year if given the opportunity.

Vesilind acknowledged that students she has talked to who graduated ten years ago or more do not remember being subject to any kind of violent or demeaning hazing at our school. "I think in some cases, you can attribute this behavior to what people see in the media," said Vesilind. "In this situation, these kids just did what they'd seen in a movie."

Susan Lipkins is a psychologist, author of *Preventing Hazing*, and runs the website *insidehazing.com*. Her website states that 1.5 million high school students are hazed each year. 92% of students say they would not report



Photo by Cindy MacPherson

Many organizations feature mild forms of hazing, such as dressing members ridiculously, to induct them. Here, Linnea Markson dresses up like a sandwich for her soccer team.

hazing if they heard about it, and of that group, 59% said they knew of hazing activities going on in their high school. Of our situation, she said, "There are earmarks of a 'perfect storm' - one in which the hazing may rear its ugly head and get far worse." Lipkins suggested that the students involved seek counseling and

See Hazing, page 4



Photo by Zach Feinstein

The 35W bridge collapse in Minnesota killed at least 13 and injured many more. It's repercussions that affected the nation reached across the country, all the way to our school.

Underneath all the Rubble: The Minnesota Bridge Collapse

Zach Feinstein
Online Editor

During rush hour on August 1, 2007 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the 35W Bridge collapsed into the Mississippi River, along with the cars driving across the bridge at the time. This bridge collapse sent shockwaves throughout the nation and raised the question: Are our nation's bridges safe to drive across? Rescuers are still looking for more bodies at the wreckage, but currently the death count is at thirteen. Almost one hundred were reported injured.

Although this bridge collapse was in Minnesota, the shockwaves reached back to our school. P.E. teacher Daniel Lundin was in Minnesota at the time of the bridge collapse and said that something like this was not very surprising. When asked if something like this could have been prevented, Lundin said, "Hindsight is 20/20 but that bridge has been under scrutiny for a decade, so in a way, it wasn't that surprising. The funds just weren't available." While this statement is shocking to the everyday person, it is a reality because, in most states, there is not a lot of money to repair bridges,

so some, like the 35W Bridge, are neglected. This could have been prevented, because in 2006, a report came out that the bridge should be reinforced with steel plating, but the state did not have the money.

This could be a warning because many of America's famous bridges are very old and need repair. The Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco opened in 1937, the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883, New York's George Washington Bridge in 1931, and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in 1964. In comparison to these other bridges, the 35W Bridge was completed in 1967, according to Minnesota Public Radio (MPR).

In the future, Minneapolis hotel worker Terri Ochsner thinks that this will be a wake up call to our government to make sure our bridges are safe. She said, "[Government officials] will be more careful. [There will be] more security and checking things out."

In response to this tragedy, President Bush and the First Lady flew to Minnesota to survey the damages and visit the survivors. After that, it was proposed that the national gas tax be raised to help fix the nation's

See Bridges, page 4

Kicking the New Year Off 'Fast'

Asma Ahmad
Reporter

Put aside the food. Abstain from temptations. Reflect on how to better yourself. These are some of the ways Muslims around the world and within the school unite to observe their Holy Month of Ramadan when it comes once a year.

So what exactly is Ramadan, and how does it affect the lives of students? Fasting is one of the Five Pillars of the religion of Islam and one of the highest forms of Islamic worship. Abstinence from worldly desires, evil intentions, and food is regarded as an act of obedience, submission to Allah as well as atonement for sins and mistakes. Muslims believe that fasting helps one experience how hungry a person feels on an empty stomach. It teaches one to share the sufferings of the less fortunate and appreciate what they have. Students at our school unite with the Muslims around them to practice good deeds and help the needy during this month of cleansing and forgiveness.

Since the aromas of food from the cafeteria may be hard to resist, the library is open during all four lunches for Muslim students who are fasting to enjoy a book, do homework, or talk with their peers. A television production room within the library is also available for any student who wishes to pray or reflect in peace (permission from a librarian is needed).

The lunar cycle is the basis for the Islamic calendar. Therefore, each year the first day of Ramadan moves exactly eleven days before. According to *Islamtoday.com*, "A lunar year is about 11 days shorter than a typical Gregorian year. As a result, dates of events in the Islamic lunar year 'move forward' 11 days every year." This year, the Holy Month will begin on Thursday, September 13. With school starting just a week before, some



Photo by Mariya Ilyas

Praying is one of the many activities Muslims practice during the Holy month of Ramadan.

students feel it will be hard to deal with the early pressures of school during the arrival of Ramadan. "Keeping up with homework and making sure I am completing my duty as a Muslim is going to be hard but I hope teachers understand how difficult it can be," said junior Mariam Nasser. Although most Muslim students want to fulfill both their academic and religious duties, balancing both can be a difficult task. Nasser said, "Fasting for thirty days is tiring but going to the mosque to pray until late hours and then waking up to take a big test is much harder."

Sports are a significant part of the school community, but fasting and working out can cause one to dehydrate quickly, making it harder to participate in seasonal sports. Muslim athletes within our school are also faced with the dilemma of how to manage their athletic and social lives during this

See Ramadan, page 4

STAFF EDITORIAL



Photo by Erin Parker

Learning From Tragedy

We cannot help but start this new year with a bit of a dark cloud over us as we remember the tragedy that befell our community last June. We were that school. The 6:00 news' leading story. Top local news reporters were visiting our Variety Store. People had heard of us. How awful, they said. Yes, we agreed, it was awful. But those who heard about it had no idea about that Friday at school after the accident. They did not see girls collapsing in the hallway, they did not have to deal with anxious news crews as they left their schools, they did not have to see the Rock, our Rock, once a sign of hope for the future—notifying the school of upcoming birthdays, games, club activities—become a morbid symbol of the past. "Never forget" it reads. And while we should never forget, it is also imperative that we take what we have learned, against our wills, and apply it to the future.

Our most basic responsibility to our community and those we lost is to not repeat the past. We have seen the consequences. If this has not opened one's eyes, nothing can. It could not have struck closer to home. The senior class has the obligation to have learned something. It is the least we can do.

In looking forward, we must ensure that this does not happen again. That is why the senior class must make a pledge to not drink and drive, not just on June 13th, but everyday.

Less than a year from now, when the class of 2008 takes to the stage, many will not be able to help but think of 2007's tragedy. We can make graduation a celebration of happiness again. It is supposed to be the beginning of the rest of our lives and we can remind people that the transition from childhood to adulthood is a joyous one. All we have to do is walk across that stage and make sure we are fully capable of driving safely before we get behind the wheels of our cars later that night. Is that too much to ask?

Seniors, a pledge is just giving your word. It really is more of a symbolic gesture than a binding contract. But we urge you to think of it as one. If you have any respect for yourself, uphold it. Even if you do not respect yourself, do it for your friends, family, and school. After all, we have seen that the consequences of a tragedy like this go beyond just the victims and their families.

The future rests in our hands. With a seemingly small act, we can restore hope to graduation. We owe it to ourselves, our school, and last year's victims. It is how we can most profoundly honor their memories. We do not want any more vigils, funerals, or wakes. We want graduation parties and happy last days among friends. June 13th should bring tears of joy—no other kind. Don't we deserve a happy celebration? Isn't it time we cleared our name?

Rants and RAVES

A rant for the end of summer. A RAVE FOR NEW TEACHERS.

A rant for the end of Harry Potter. A RAVE FOR THE VIRGIN MUSIC FESTIVAL.

A rant for AP summer work. A RAVE FOR SCHOOL STARTING AT 7:30.

A rant for less time between classes.

POETRY IN COMMOTION



RIDICULOUS JAMS

Shredding like a grate on some cheese,
Fingers on fire like burning trees,
Keepin' the beat, makin' mad melodies.

Hittin' those notes and meltin' faces,
I'm so skilled; I could play with my shoelaces,
Strikin' chords so hard, they'd knock off a kid's braces.

Making the original artists look like bums,
I'm jamming on their music, down to the strums,
Pickin' up the beats they drop like a mouse on crumbs.

Watchin' my axe spit mad fire, I feel like Nero,
Too bad hittin' these frets means practically zero.
This shenanigans is only me on Guitar Hero.

-Brad "B-rad" Lupton



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COPY EDITORS

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Shannon Bowdring
Alex Fabrizio

West Potomac High School
6500 Quander Road
Alexandria, VA 22307
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BUSINESS MANAGERS

Tidae Johnson
Laina Schneider

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Erin Coggins
Kevin Fowler
Erin Parker

REPORTERS

Asma Ahmad
Laura Howell
Allison Leisner
Tess Mackey
Colin Mathewson
Stephanie Simmons

ADVISER

Kelcy Pierre

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Uniformity: Constitutional Conformity

Erin Parker

Photographer

With talk of instituting uniforms in public schools, debate has broken out on whether or not forcing students to wear uniforms violates their rights, and if uniforms are actually beneficial.

In 1987, Cherry Hill Elementary in Baltimore, MD was the first public school to implement a uniform policy. Since then about one-eighth of secondary and one-fourth of elementary public schools nationwide have enforced a uniform policy. Schools in the Long Beach, CA area, as stated in a 1999 *Psychology Today* report, found that after the uniforms were put into place, the overall crime rate dropped by a whopping 91%. But, there are still many problems that come along with enforcing a uniform policy in public schools.

Money. One word can bring up one big issue: who is going to pay for the uniforms? Public education is government-funded, but how is the government going to come up with the money? Uniforms can be quite expensive. If the families were forced to pay the cost, how would the school system come up with a way to give grants to students whose families could ill afford

After uniforms were put into place, the overall crime rate dropped by a whopping 91%.

the expense? Families would have to deal with paying for uniforms and supplies as well as for clothes for outside of school. It adds up to be too much for some.

Another issue that comes along with uniforms is a student's right to self-expression. Public educational systems

have a lot of diversity, and uniforms are too conforming for this type of atmosphere. The freedom to wear independently-chosen attire gives students the opportunity to express their personal style. "When I



Photo by Emily Smith

was in private school, you did not have to think about what you were wearing," said sophomore Melissa McClure, "but wearing the same thing everyday was not very thrilling either."

On the issue of safety, uniforms make students more identifiable, so if a stranger entered into a school, security guards and administrators would have an easier time keeping students protected. Students are also less likely to get involved in gang-related activity, not to mention fashion-identified cliques. There would be no issue dealing with expensive articles of clothing being stolen because there would be no point for a student to steal if everybody were in the same attire. But simply throwing a uniform on a student would not break apart the cliques and gangs that are already formed.

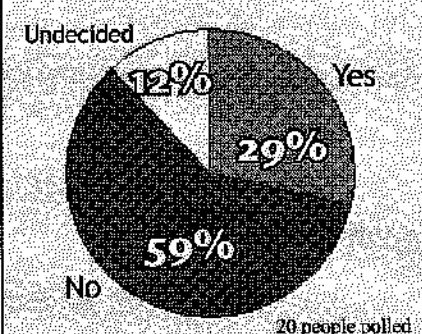
Saying the crime rate is going to go down if a school is to implement a uniform is not necessarily true. Sure, there are several surveys that prove this and it is very wonderful to hear that violence will not

be much of an issue, but where are the studies on how a student performs while under a strict uniform policy? There are none because uniforms do not have the power to raise a student's history SOL score from 411 to 540 in a heartbeat. That would certainly be nice, but it does not happen.

With less focus on the clothes on a person's back, students will benefit from realizing that clothes do not make a person, unique abilities and personality do. This might be harder to get across to students at the middle and high school levels, where self-image problems start to come up and one's body is how people identify him or her. Uniforms can be unappealing and not very comfortable to some people, therefore damaging their self-esteem.

Our school does not seem to be trying to implement a uniform policy any time soon. But if the time did come, do you think uniforms would benefit our school or violate student rights?

Would school uniforms be beneficial in our school?



"School uniforms hinder students' ability to express themselves freely."
Mrs. Kimberly Thompson,
English teacher

Early Applications Sensation

Brad Lupton

Opinions Editor

Applying for college is a task that looms over most students' heads during their high school careers. However, there are more ways than one to go about this process. Among the most popular ways are early action and early decision applications.

First of all, standard applications are how most people apply to colleges, and they are usually due at some point in late winter. The alternative method, early applications, notifies students earlier of their acceptance to or rejection from a school. As with anything, there are pros and cons to this method of applying.

Senior Sandro Gvakharia said, "Early applications definitely have advantages and disadvantages. I mean, not everyone knows what they want to do. So for most people who are not exactly sure, they are not good to use. However, if you know where you want to go, definitely give them a shot."

When weighing the potential pros versus cons in regard to application deadlines, early decision and early applications are the way to go. Despite some binding early applications, if one is absolutely sure that a certain school is right for him or her, then it is worth it to give that school an early shot. This holds true even more so for non-binding early applications as gaining a head start on any competition

is a good idea. In general, there is not much to lose from applying to a college early, while waiting can yield worse results.

Early applications are an alternative method to getting into college that works for a lot of people that use them. However, they are not the only option for applications, and all types should be considered in order to suit each person's special needs.

Pros:

- There is early notification of entry or rejection.
- If not accepted immediately, one can often still be deferred or apply normally.
- Applicants are often viewed as eager students.
- If an applicant is absolutely sure where they want to go, this option is often ideal.
- It is possible to take action earlier if one is rejected from his or her school of choice. If put on a waiting list at a school of choice, applicants may be able to take more tests (the SAT IIs or ACTs) to gain favor with the school before regular decision applications rush in.
- Applicants who are accepted early decision avoid the stress of applying to multiple colleges later in the year and then having to wait for further acceptances.

Cons:

- Many of these applications are often binding.
- If an applicant is rejected or denied from a school of choice, his or her hopes may be crushed.
- If early applications fail, it adds to the load of college applications instead of helping to lighten it.
- First and second quarter grades from senior year cannot be included in early applications.
- The applications are another expense.

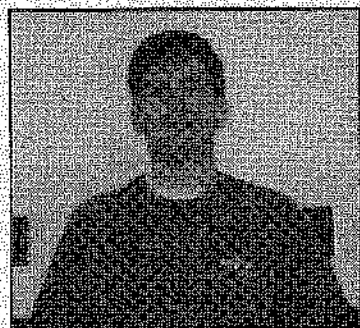


Photo by Erin Parker

Just Talken

He doesn't see much, he doesn't write about much either.

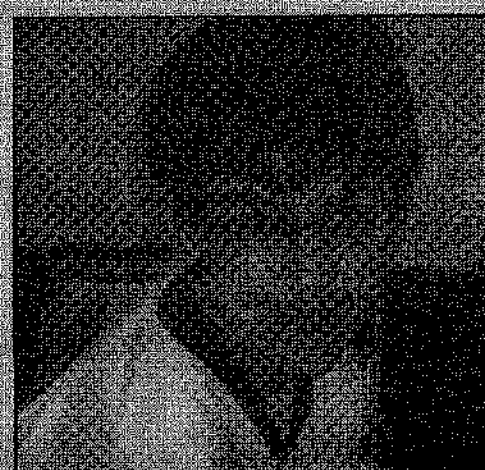


Photo by Hooff, Crockett

Ken Llewellyn

Opinions Editor

Why don't we just skip the "It's back to school time, so you know what that means," intro?

What a summer it was, though, from sports scandals (see page 8) to overworking actors. Personally, my summer was a little less extraordinary. I get to experience the life of a working man at Target. Do not be fooled by the fancy title; it is not very glamorous work. I cannot decide if I liked emptying the trash or taking the carts inside more. Anyway, it is good to be back in school.

I have only been in school for two days so there is not that much to say about it. What I can say is that I am not looking forward to after school activities this year. What I mean is, after I get back from school and get my homework done, the first thing I like to do is watch TV, and this year? TV shows look really horrible.

From the ads I've seen, "Chuck," "Big Shots," and the rest of the new shows look like garbage. I could drink or better TV show ideas than that. In fact I will.

My ideal show would be called "Michael Con-Vict." It is a reality show about Michael Vick's life in jail as he attempts to make the prison football team and faces a ridiculous amount of autograph requests from fellow inmates. Imagine the drama that could be captured on film if Vick were to encounter one of those drug-sniffing dogs. It would be like a TV version of *The Longest Yard*, except better, and with no Burt Reynolds. That show would be more popular than "Grey's Anatomy" and "Survivor" combined.

Fall movies do not look much better either. The summer ended with *Superbad* (hilarious, see page 11) and it looks like no good movies are going to be coming out anytime soon. Speaking of summer movies, I still have not seen *The Bourne Ultimatum*. Jason Bourne is so ridiculous. I wonder who would win in a fight between him and Chuck Norris.

The summer also saw a lot of sports action that was not full of scandal. Who could forget the Arena Bowl? Man, that was a great win by the San Diego Saber Cats. Now that the NFL season is about to start, I doubt it will be able to match the excitement that Arena Football brought to the table. Here's hoping the Redskins do not sink it up. Baseball season is heating up (not that anyone cares) and Barry Bonds is not involved, but the Yankees are just like I said they would be all last year.

So with nothing to watch on TV or on the big screen, I will have plenty of time to concentrate on school my senior year. (Sike!) I do not know what I am going to do this year but it has got to be something good because this is my last year of high school.

AP Scores: How Much do They Affect College Applications

Hooff Cooksey
Managing Editor

Considered to be some of, if not the, hardest courses students can take in high school, Advanced Placement (AP) courses are taken by a great deal of students at our school. These college-level classes can be very rigorous and demanding. The courses require extensive knowledge of the subject, and to achieve this, many students find themselves loaded with twice as much homework as regular classes (if not more). The courses conclude with a nationwide exam similar to exams taken by college students. The scores received on the AP exams may qualify high school students to receive college credits, but it is at the discretion of each college or university. The scores a student receives on these AP exams have no impact on whether or not a student is accepted into a certain college.

When applying to college, most schools are looking to see if the applicants have taken the most difficult courses they can handle throughout their high school careers. Next, the college or university looks at the grades the student received in their challenging classes. Colleges are also impressed to see students taking AP-level courses in their core curriculum classes (English, History, Science and Math). When completing applications, most schools do not ask for AP exam scores. Only after a student has been accepted and has declared that they will attend the school will the college decide how many credits that student earned based on their exam scores. In some cases, schools, such as the University of North Carolina, recommend that a student submit their AP exam scores, along with any IB or SAT subject tests scores. However, as AP courses become more readily available to students, the scores needed to receive credit for a class become higher.

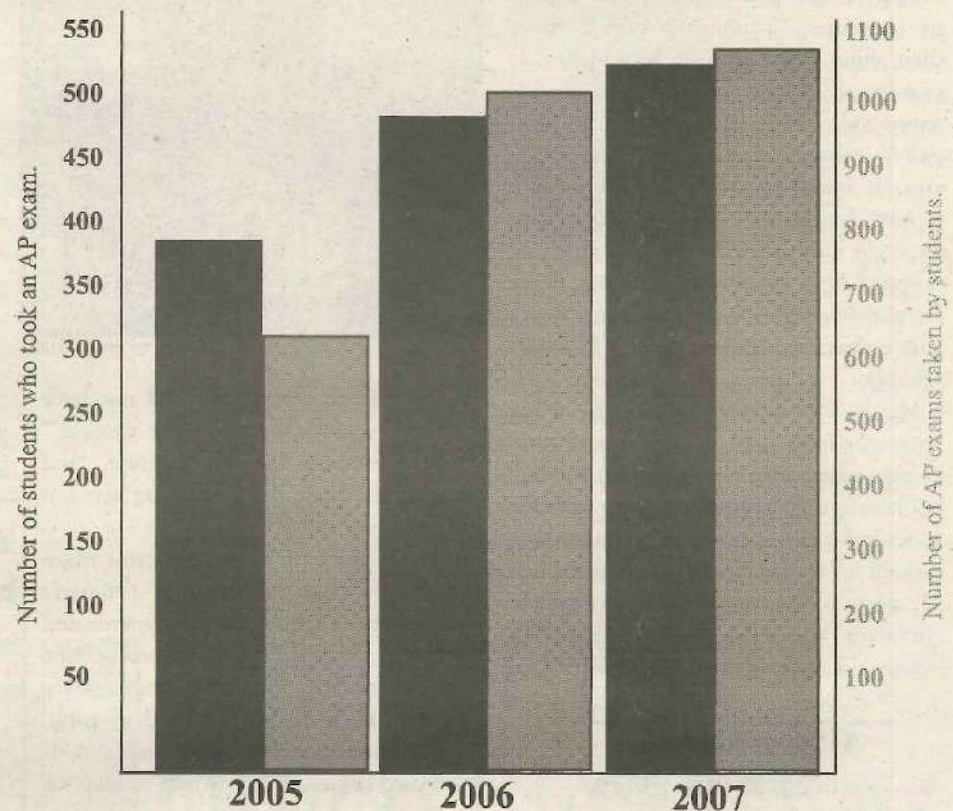
The AP exams are graded on a 0-5 level (0 being the worst

and five being the best). The score is based on a timed multiple choice test section as well as a timed essay section. It is becoming harder and harder to actually gain a course credit based on some of the standards set by colleges. For example, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a student must score a 5 on the AP English Language exam to gain a course credit. In some cases, students would rather just retake some AP courses they previously took when in college. Senior Jenn Hofmann said, "It depends on the class. If we were talking about English, I might want to retake it in college for more practice, but as for a history class, I would rather take my credit earned and skip the course." "I would probably want to retake the course in college because I would learn something new that I had not learned in high school," said senior Andy Blacker. Though the advanced placement courses are very challenging, it is sometimes very hard to match the atmosphere and attitude of a college course.

AP classes are a great way for high school students to prepare for college. As to

what most colleges and universities are looking for in terms of test scores, the exam itself is not nearly as important as the grade the student earned in the class, and the fact that the student took the most challenging course offered in that subject.

AP Exams at West Potomac



Graph by Hooff Cooksey

Bridge from page 1

bridges, but President Bush opposed that idea because he wants Congress to change the way it handles highway money. When asked about this, junior Ryan Pierpoint said, "I think we should put more money into [bridges] to keep them safe, but I don't want to raise taxes."

This disaster could be a hot topic in the upcoming presidential campaign where candidates are realizing they need to speak up on this issue. Lundin agreed with this and said, "I believe infrastructure rebuilding will obviously be a topic amongst the presidential debate topics." Now, because of this disaster, more and more politicians are trying to find ways to make sure this kind of thing never

happens again.

While this tragedy cost a lot of lives and injured many people, when the dust has settled, it could make our country safer. All across the country, people are now starting to check out their bridges to make sure they are safe enough to cross every day. As Lundin put it, "I believe that the commonwealth of Virginia is safe for the most part, but I never thought (the) 35W Bridge would collapse, either."



Photo by Zach Feinstein

Hazing from page 1

that the school try to break the accepted "tradition" of hazing.

The Virginia Hazing Law, 18.2-56, states that the act of hazing is a misdemeanor, and if the injuries to those hazed are severe enough, it can become a felony. If the parents had chosen to sue, the boys would have faced legal action, but instead our school administered the consequences for the boys. Vesilind gave them the option to design their own punishment. The seniors, who realized the weight of their actions, looked for a positive solution. "They felt that they could make a difference, and looked at what the BAM brothers did last year for our school as inspiration," said

Vesilind. Last year, BAM Brothers (Brothers Achieving More) was a new academic mentoring program that helped students pass and graduate through tutoring. This year, the boys will start a freshman mentoring program, run by seniors, tentatively called "Students for a Positive Community," or SPC.

The school sent a letter explaining the SPC program to freshmen, seniors, and their parents in the packets students picked up during the last week of summer. The original copy, in its unedited form, sits on Vesilind's desk. It was written by one of the senior boys behind SPC. "I don't know if this is going to stop hazing," said Vesilind. "Teachers and staff will be watching and cracking down, but it comes down to who is going to stop the cycle." She smiled and continued, "That's going to be up to the kids."

Ramadan from page 1

month of constant fasting. The lack of nutrients can cause breakdowns if one is not careful about overworking themselves. "My entire lifestyle gets rearranged during this sacred month because I have to make sure I am up to my best behavior," Nasser said. Although she would love to play for the West Potomac volleyball team this year, Nasser understands that she will not be able to participate because of the extended practices and games she would have to face without nourishment.

For junior Hassan Abdelagder, finishing all his homework on the school campus makes it easier for him to complete his religious duties when he returns home. Abdelagder said, "I cannot waste my time watching television because I have to finish reading the entire Quran before the end of Ramadan." By picking a certain bad habit within himself and working on improving his character, Abdelagder learns the importance of possessing good qualities and being ready for Ramadan.

During this Holy Month, waking up before dawn to eat a massive meal becomes routine for Muslims. One can only imagine how arduous it is to eat pancakes, eggs, milk, toast, juice, cereal, sandwiches, and that last piece of chocolate cake all at 4:30 in the morning. However, since the next time food can enter their empty stomachs is after a grueling time period of either fifteen or eighteen hours, depending on the time of year, these early morning feasts become necessary to make it through the day. Preparations for Iftar (time to break the fast) begin when the sun sets. Nasser said, "My big family and I have large gatherings where we get together to break our fast." She enjoys helping her mother prepare food for there is a special feeling of emotional excitement and religious zeal among Muslims of all ages. Though fasting is only mandatory for adults, children as young as seven willingly observe fasting with their elders.

With Ramadan approaching, students may be wondering about the annual Ramadan Iftar sponsored by our very own Muslim Student Association (MSA). According to MSA sponsors Ms. Dahabo Said and Ms. Raheel Ahmed-Litz, it will take place on

Saturday, September 22. All students are welcome to attend the event and may volunteer or participate if they wish to do so. Details about the Iftar will be available closer to the event. Last year, MSA had over two hundred guests as well as speakers such as the president of MSA at George Mason University, Mr. Goal Husain. Nasser said, "I hope the Iftar will bring our Muslim and non-Muslim communities together to have a clearer understanding about Islam as well as the month of Ramadan!"

Common Ramadan Practices

- ◊ Read Quran
- ◊ Fast from dawn to dusk
- ◊ Pray five times daily
- ◊ Sohor (morning meal)
- ◊ Iftar (the nightly feast)
- ◊ Eid celebration (similar to Christmas for Christians)
- ◊ Pick a bad habit to correct

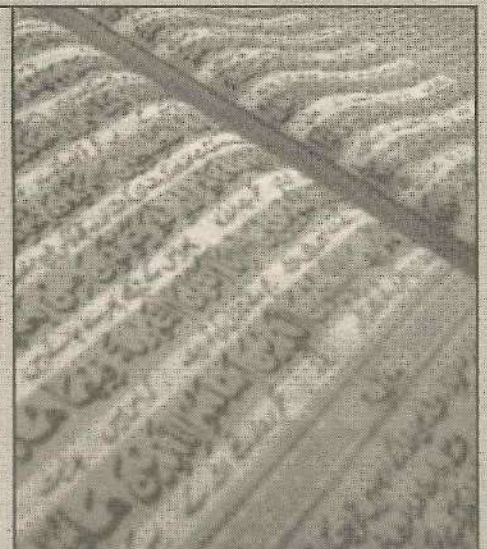


Photo by Mariya Ilyas

Virginia Rings in Harsher Driving Laws and Punishments Over the Summer

Stephen Howell

News Editor

In typical teenage fashion, high school students across the state will find themselves begging their parents for the car keys on Friday nights. However, what many Virginia teens do not know is that they have more to fear than coming home after curfew. They have the \$3,550 speeding ticket to fear.

Over the summer, Virginia passed harsh new driving laws that went into action July 1. The legislation, largely supported and influenced by Del. Dave Albo, hopes to raise \$65 million a year for expanding highways and railways. The Virginia "abuser fees" enact large fines, targeted at dangerous drivers and repeat offenders. One of the fees, driving as little as 15 mph over the speed limit on an interstate, can cost drivers a \$2,500 fine, six license demerits, up to a year in jail, and a mandatory \$1,050 tax. In addition, the speeding driver will have to pay an annual fee of \$100 if he or she has more than 8 demerit points on his or her license.

Overlooked by lawmakers, similar abuser fees have been implemented in both Michigan and New Jersey, and both programs have met little success. New Jersey, which implemented their abuser fee program in 1983, gives out almost 800,000 license suspensions a year, and according to the New Jersey Treasury department, a quarter of the license suspensions are given out because people cannot afford the abuser fees. Also, a 2001 study by the New

Jersey Institute for Social Justice found the laws were creating a permanent underclass of citizens unable to pay the fees and use their cars. The study also showed that 16% of New Jersey residents live in established low income neighborhoods; however, this 16% of the public accounts for 40% of the

because people could not afford them. These failed attempts at raising funds translated into multiple studies that show there is little to no evidence that these fees improve road safety.

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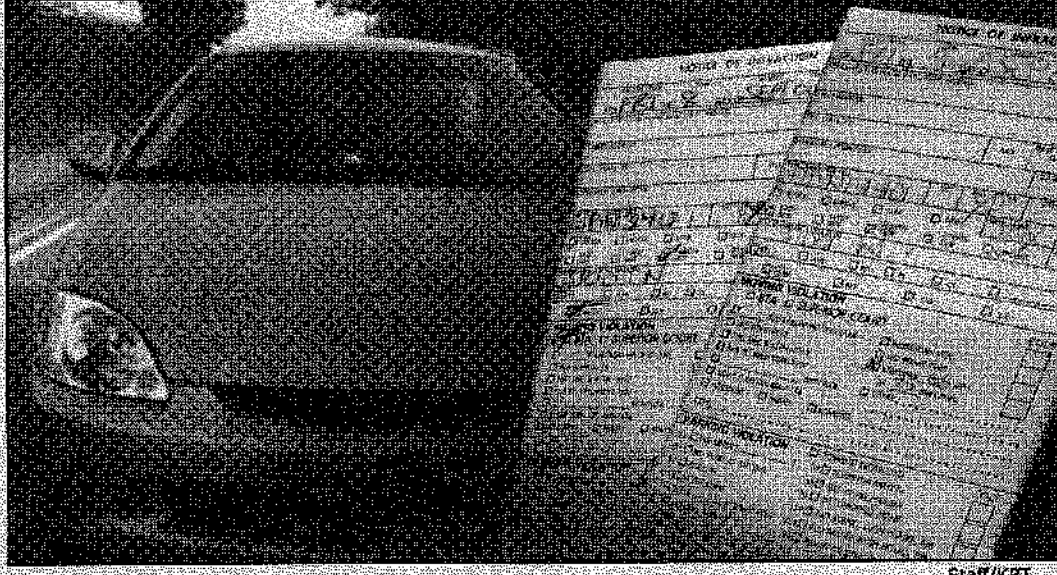
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So far, two convictions have been overturned from the unconstitutional controversy. In one ruling, Judge Thomas Jones of the Richmond General District Court wrote, "The law requiring the assessment of Civil Remedial Fees only upon the Commonwealth of Virginia does violate the 14th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States."

Students at West Potomac are growing concerned about the laws. "I am outraged. I just don't know when the pressure they continue to put on Virginia's young people is going to stop. Something must be done," said senior Tramel Morrison.

Morrison is not alone in the fight against the laws. In Front Royal, the town council voted to block the enforcement of the driver fees within the town limits. Also, an online petition opposed to the driving laws has reached over 175,000 signatures.

So, if cell phones and charity friends were not enough, Virginia teens have one more distraction: Albo's abuser fees. These fees are a slightly scary reminder to teen drivers that they must be careful when driving and should follow all the rules of the road.



Staff/KRT

Because of new Virginia driving laws, speeding tickets now carry heavier fines, charging violators up to \$3,500, a noticeably large increase over fines from previous years.

Summer Institute Allows Freshmen to Get Ahead of the School Year

Grace Powell

Focus Editor

Back to school took on a whole new meaning for a group of rising freshmen. Three weeks before the 7:30 bell rang in a new school year, two classrooms were already filled with students participating in a two-week summer institute geared towards preparing minority students for high school level Honors classes.

The Summer Institute has been in effect for the last two years at our school. The purpose of the program is to introduce minority freshmen into the high school environment. Areas covered during the two week program include the typical core subjects that freshmen take: Algebra, Biology, History, and English. Valuable information is discussed within the classes, such as a reviewing the first unit of each subject. The program extends into the school year with various meetings to provide academic help and set up mentor relationships for the students.



Photo by Grace Powell

Members of the Summer Institute work during the summer to get a headstart on the new school year.

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Accordingly, the Michigan abuser fees hoped to raise \$100 million dollars a year, but only 40% of the fees were ever collected

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While the program is open to only honors students, Biology teacher Tia Walker has noticed that the students in this program are extremely capable of these higher-level classes. "I think the students this year are more motivated. I think the program should be open to any student who wants to participate, not just the honors students," she said. Walker feels that the students taking honors classes are already prepared for them; however, the students who are not signing up for these classes may need a program like the summer institute to encourage them in their educational studies.

While the teachers participating in the program continue to evaluate what works or needs improvement within the program, it is clear that they are on their way to creating a helpful summer tradition that will be available to students for many years to come.

September Calendar

- 4- Final Power Exam
- 5- Senior Class Meeting
- 5-7- No New Student Registration
- 8- Fine Arts Day
- 10- Registration Deadline for Honors
- 11- Homecoming
- 12- National Honor Society Meets
- 13- Choral Banquet
- 14- AGU Test
- 15- Senior Forum, Makeups
- 16- School Pictures, Auditions for Fall Play, College Information Night, Back to School Night
- 19-21- 501 Reviews
- 20- Home Varsity Football vs. Lees
- 24- Day 16 Holiday
- 24-25- Counselors TouchBase with Seniors
- 25- Early Closing 12:25, Cross Country All-Confers at Ft. Hunt Park
- 29- Senior Class Parent Breakfast

Virginia Rings in Harsher Driving Laws and Punishments Over the Summer

Stephen Howell

News Editor

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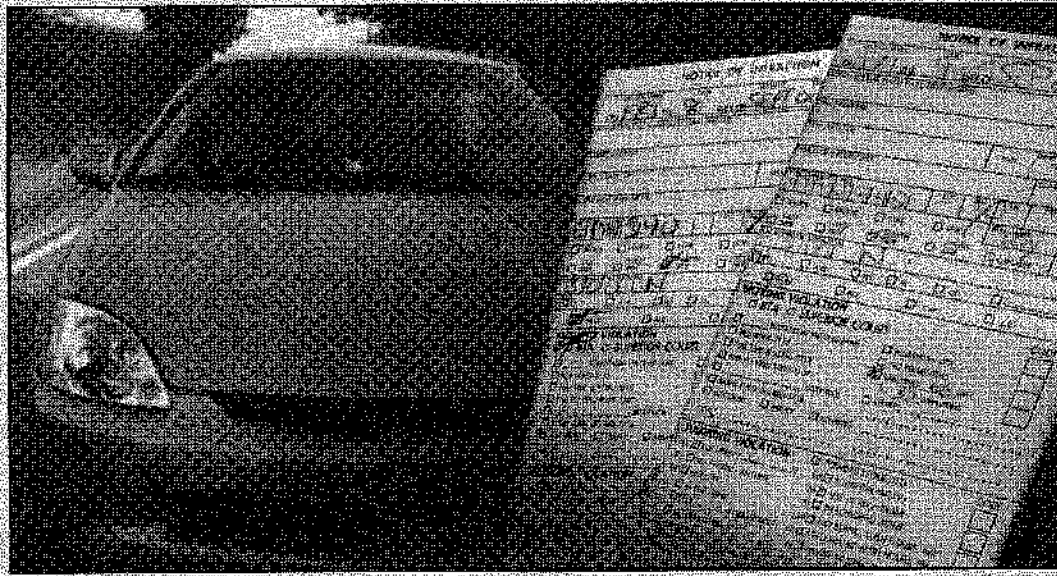
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Staff/KRT

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- 4- First Day of School
- 5- Senior Class Meeting
- 6-7- No New Student Registration
- 8- Homecoming Day
- 10- Registration Deadline for Honors SAT
- 12- National Honor Society Meeting
- 13- Choral Concert
- 15- AGT Meet
- 17-18- Senior Formal Makeup
- 18- School Picnic, Additions for Fall Play, College Information Night, Back to School Night
- 18-21- SAT Retakes
- 20- Home Varsity Football vs. Lees
- 22- Play Test Day
- 24-25- Counselors Touchbase with Seniors
- 25- Early Closing 12:15, Cross Country Ad, Concert at Ft. Hunt Park
- 29- Senior Class Parent Board Meeting



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Mr. Alex Case - AP Government and Freshman Focus World History Teacher

Q. What do you want to accomplish the most this year?
A. Great AP scores.



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Ms. Alexandra Bowman - Algebra 1 and Math Analysis/Trig Teacher

If I could be any character from any book, I would be Robert Langdon from the books *Angels and Demons* and *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown.



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Ms. Carolyn Coleman - Gourmet Foods, Intl. Foods and Hosp, Life Planning, Relationships and Fitness and Foods

Q. What do you most want to accomplish this year?
A. Great cooks and great chefs!



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Mr. Dan Tra - Algebra 1 and 2 Teacher

Q. If you were a three-year old, which show would you most likely watch?
A. "Clifford"



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Ms. Kelli Frattini - Geosystems Teacher

Q. What do you want to accomplish the most this year?
A. Establishing myself at West Potomac and getting the students excited about science!

New Community Service Requirements

Mariya Ilyas

Managing Editor

All seniors are required to complete 30 hours of community service before graduation. Students can earn a Community Service seal on their diploma for completing 50 hours of community service. There are many opportunities for everyone to get involved. Organizations such as National Honor Society and Student Government are already community service based. Volunteering locally is another way to give back to the community. Visit the website www.volunteerfairfax.org to find local volunteering locations near you. Get involved!

New Policies for Athletes

Michaela Accardi

Focus Editor

Up until this year, every high school in Fairfax County has been able to write and distribute their own Extracurricular Policy. However, this year, things are a little different. The county has written a policy for every school to follow, and at the same time, caused quite a controversy.

For better or worse, the new policy is definitely stricter in several ways. Last year, the policy allowed students involved in extracurricular activities to attend a party as long as they did not use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs. This year, students may not be found at a party where any of these illegal substances are being used. If the student does not leave immediately, they risk being suspended from student activities for at least 15 calendar days. When it comes to steroids, things get even more extreme. If it has been determined that a student uses steroids, on any offense, they are suspended from all

activities for two years.

And these consequences are just for the first offense.

With the exception of students suspended for using steroids, a student may try out for a new season and participate in activities after their 15 to 30 day suspension is complete. On the second offense, the policy bans students from activities for the rest of the school year.

On a day-to-day basis, the policy becomes even tighter. Students must attend every hour of school to participate in an extracurricular activity. The only exceptions include those pre-approved by the school or principal such as doctor or dental appointments.

So students, this year it is time to buckle down and work hard if you wish to be involved in anything outside of the regular school day.

Student Athletes Take on New Roles

Mariya Ilyas

Managing Editor

Our school is the only school in Fairfax County to have a Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), in which student-athletes take leadership roles and bring a positive change to our community. The mission of the SAAC is to "enhance the total student-athlete experience, promote a positive student-athlete image throughout the community, and provide opportunities to foster strong and lasting leadership skills within our student-athletes." A select group of 20 athletes were chosen to be a part of this council. Organizers of the committee, Assistant Director of Student Activities Mr. Aaron Helmick, senior Megan Donovan, and junior Hannah Leverdige, held their first council meeting on August 28 in the cafeteria. "We're really trying to do things little by little," said Donovan when explaining the mission statement and purpose of SAAC.

The committee will meet once or twice a month during Flex. More information and details will be posted on Blackboard for committee members. The goal of SAAC this year is to raise school spirit for all sports, get more involved in the community, and bring a positive reputation to our school.



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Ms. Laura Zitnik - English Teacher

If I could be any character from any book, I would be Holly from the book *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, written by Truman Capote.

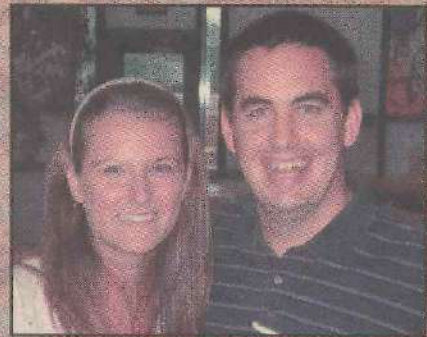


Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Ms. Allison Satterwhite - HN Algebra 2, Math Analysis/Prob-Stat.

Mr. Adam Riddell - Algebra 1 Part 1 and Geometry

Q. If you were a three-year old, which show would you most likely watch?
A. "Mr. Rogers"

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Mariya Ilyas
Managing Editor

Class of 1987 20th Reunion
The very first graduation
1987, will be celebrating
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Homecoming game on
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homecoming game. T
ing a reunion dinner
tion and details, visit
events.htm.Go Class

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SGA Plans for Upcoming Year

Mariya Ilyas

Managing Editor

Student Government Association (SGA) has a full agenda this coming school year. School President, junior John Rice, and school Vice President, senior Dereck Parada, organized a SGA meeting over the summer in which they discussed plans and activities for this year with their fellow SGA members. "The aim of the SGA this year is to get involved with the student body. Activities like the summit are attempting to promote participation and to give a voice to the student body," said President Rice. "The SGA has been a transparent organization in previous years and this time we hope to stand up and be the leaders we are elected to be." One leader, (president, captain, etc) from each club, organization, and team is invited to attend the leadership summit to discuss various issues in our school and community. Below is a list of SGA activities and their tentatively scheduled months for the new school year:

Leadership Summit: September (second week)
 Homecoming Game: Friday, October 26
 Homecoming Dance: Saturday, October 27
 Talent Show: December (first week)
 Student Film Festival: January
 Winter Formal: February
 Mr. West Potomac: March
 Parent Prom: April
 May Fair: May
 Prom 07-08: Friday, June 6



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Ms. Heather O'Grady - Government and Economics Teacher

Q. What do you want to accomplish the most this year?
 A. Learn my way around the Gunston building.



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Ms. Chris Faust - ESOL Teacher

Q. If you were a three-year old, which show would you most likely watch?
 A. "Barney"



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Mr. Robert Rigby Jr. - Latin Teacher

Q. What do you want to accomplish most this year?
 A. Get students interested in Latin and Roman culture.



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Ms. Naima Vinson - AVID Teacher

If I could be any character from any book, I would be Juliet from the book *Romeo and Juliet*, written by William Shakespeare.



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Mr. Paul Watlington - ESOL Teacher

Q. What do you want to accomplish most this year?
 A. Work with new colleagues and help as many students as I can!

School Schedule Gets a Makeover

Emily Smith

Opinions Editor

Fall has arrived and changes are in the air. Just when students thought they had gotten used to our school's schedule, they now have to deal with three significant changes, including the moving of FLEX from fourth to eighth period, school starting at 7:30 instead of 7:20, and lastly, the lack of an end-of-school bell.

Of course, these changes can be seen as either good or bad. For some students, this means that they can no longer complete their sixth or eighth period homework during the school day. For other more responsible students, the new schedule allows them to get a head-start on their homework. Some students, of course, see eighth period FLEX as a way to end school an hour and a half earlier. For teachers, this new change can either mean getting some of their work done before heading home, or a nightmare in which half of the seniors in their class are missing. Sophomore Lauren Floyd sees eighth period FLEX as a joke. "I think that a lot of people are going to skip," she said. "I'm also kind of mad that I can't finish my homework during fourth period like last year." Although skipping may be an appealing thought, punishments will be enforced for absent students.

The reason behind the change is due to the West Potomac Academy's schedule. Last year, students from the Academy were not able to flex into their fourth period classes due to the fact that their teachers had students. Eighth period FLEX now allows Academy students to attend the free period along with the rest of the school.

School will begin at 7:30am this year as opposed to 7:20am last year. This gives students more time to buy and eat their breakfast before heading off to class. This ten minute postponement in the school day will change the amount of time students have between classes. That amount is now reduced to seven minutes. However, the new schedule leaves room for morning television announcements. The news broadcasts will be aired every morning right after the final bell.

The final change this year is the school bell. Instead of ringing the school bell to signify the end of a school day, students will be dismissed after the end of the school announcements. While some are skeptical about these changes, Ms. Adriana Meeke, the school librarian, said wholeheartedly that she will "support anything that will better serve the West Potomac community." With all of the positives and negatives of this year's new schedule, the students and faculty at our school will just have to see how it works.



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Ms. Juanita Brunson - Biology, Anatomy and Physiology Teacher
 Ms. Erin Sikes-Thurston - Biology and Chemistry Teacher

Q. If you were at three-year old, which show would you most likely watch?
 A. "Clifford" and "Mr. Rogers"



Photo by Hooff Cooksey

Ms. Laura Franchi Clark - Counselor

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uniting Old Friends

s from West Potomac, Class of
h high school reunion this Octo-
ing the half-time show during the
October 26. The alumni are plan-
their tailgating party, just before the
wing Saturday, they will be celebrat-
Waterford Hotel. For more informa-
ebsite at <http://wepoclass87.com/3/>

Graphic By Clipart

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Graphic By Clipart

Football Fathers Fix Field

Caroline Staples
Style Editor

At the beginning of May 2006, four dedicated football fathers founded a group committed to keep the playing field maintained. They have put hours and hours into fixing up the main field so that it shines as much as our players.

We can all remember that last year, our playing field was nothing to be proud of, nor something any of our players wanted to call home. "It was in terrible shape and was progressively getting worse," said parent Paul Cooksey. The field's grass had patches throughout the field and a perfectly straight path of dirt that ran down the middle and quickly turned into mud during sports games. It was a field that many visiting teams looked at with disgust, which then reflected on how they saw our teams.

Thanks to Paul Cooksey and other football parents including Tom Swinson, Richard McFarland, and Bob St. Clair, the field has vastly improved. The fathers have recruited some spring sports parents and even band parents volunteer to help the school's field look brand new and better than ever.

Every Saturday and Wednesday evening, per their regular schedule, the group can be seen up on the field mowing the lawn, watering and fertilizing the grass, or putting down fresh paint for home games. Although at first the dads had to use their own personal equipment and money, Cooksey and Swinson soon became

official employees of FCPS in order to be able to use the school's equipment this year.

Another group to thank is the Wolverine Athletic Booster Club, which pays for necessities such as paint,

came together after watching their sons' season be played out in first dirt, then complete mud and filth. It was not only slippery on the field during rainy games, but also embarrassing for the players and fans. Thanks to these

parents' unofficial project, our field now bears new, fertilized grass and newly painted straight lines. Not only were the field and surrounding areas of the field refurbished, but "nearly 2,000 volunteer hours have been put in from June 1st, 2006, to February of 2007," said Cooksey. Even the buildings surrounding the field were painted thanks in part to Jim Caste and his work crew.

Thanks to devoted parents like Cooksey, Swinson, McFarland, St. Clair, and other parent volunteers, our field is now lined with white and blue paint and completely

covered with grass. In addition, the buildings are freshly painted. Our players can now play without the uneasy feeling of their opponents mocking our field and without slipping every other step due to all the mud.

Next time you go to a football game on a Friday night and you are sitting up in the stands, look down at the phenomenal field and appreciate all the labor that these honorable men and women have put into repairing it. Hopefully, the repairs will last a long time.



Photo by Caroline Staples

Parent Paul Cooksey tends to the football field with unrelenting dedication and selflessness.

seeding, and fertilizer. Every year it gives \$50,000 to our school's athletic department for certain needs, such as fixing up our field. Last year it donated an additional \$9,000 to fix and mend the field, and this year Cooksey submitted a request for an \$8,500 donation to continue preparing the field, which was approved. The Booster Club, Mrs. Rima Vesland, Mr. Jeff Deitze, and Mr. Aaron Helmick deserve much gratitude for their support of the field improvements.

This proud group of football fathers

Mike Vick Perpetuates the Cycle

Emmanuel Koduah
Sports Editor

Another high profile athlete in trouble with the law is hardly surprising news. Atlanta Falcons superstar quarterback Michael Vick is the latest addition to the long list of athletes who have had legal troubles.

Vick's case, however, is a lot more controversial than most. This is because it involves a sentimental subject that is personal to many people: animal cruelty. Vick was indicted on federal charges of running dogfights in his home in Virginia. According to the charges, Vick was not only a participant but a chief architect of these dogfights, as he financed and even directed the execution of some dogs. Vick allegedly bred and trained dogs only to have them fight to the death, purely for the thrill and gambling pleasure. After continually denying his involvement and claiming his innocence, Vick accepted a guilty plea on August 21 "taking full responsibility for his mistakes."

These allegations have given Vick plenty of enemies as he is taking hits from all angles. Animal rights groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) are calling for Vick to be "sacked" from the National Football League (NFL). Things only got worse for Vick. Nike, who produced a line of Michael Vick signature clothing items, terminated his multi-million dollar endorsement contract. "What Vick did was extremely

cruel. I think he got what he deserved," said freshman Khoki Bernier.

Facing a more-than-likely jail sentence and a probable two-year suspension from the NFL, Vick could possibly be facing the end of his short career. But

who believes Vick is being unfairly punished. "Michael [Vick] is not being treated fairly," said senior Thomas Johnson. "A couple of months ago, an astronaut woman attempted to kill her boyfriend's mistress but was only put on probation. [Vick] is probably going to jail for just being affiliated with dog fighting," added Johnson.

Vick is set for sentencing on December 10. He could face a maximum of five years in prison along with a fine. After his plea hearing, Vick made his first public statement, apologizing for his "immature" actions, condemning dog fighting, and urging children everywhere not to follow his actions. As sincere as his statement sounded, it was a little skeptical. After six years of running a dog fighting agency, it is unbelievable that one can sincerely change their total perspective in less than a month, coincidentally after the threat of five years in jail. The question is whether Vick is sorry for what he did, or just sorry for getting caught. Only time will tell how genuinely Vick has changed.

With its new harsher judgment on player run-ins with the law, the NFL has suspended Vick indefinitely without pay. After serving his jail sentence and an NFL suspension, Vick will not only have the difficult task of restoring his career, but his incredibly tarnished image as well. No matter what, this will set a precedent for athletic treatment.



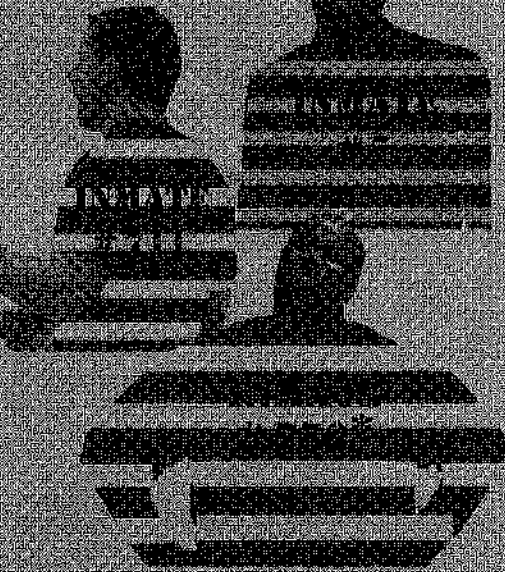
KRT Campus/Harris County Sheriff's Office

Top: A Pit Bull dog shows the fury that makes the breed ideal for illegal dog-fighting. Bottom: Vick at a news conference pleads guilty.

does the superstar quarterback deserve all of this? Unlike Bernier, some are jumping to support Vick. National Basketball Association (NBA) star Stephon Marbury was quoted saying, "I don't think we say anything about people who shoot deer and other animals." Marbury is not the only one

Laughing from the Bench

LAW AND ORDER:
ATHLETES UNIT



Taylor Dankmyer

Editor-in-Chief

On my way to a Redskins vs. Steelers preseason game, a man next to me told a story of his nephew who just got a brand new Michael Vick (former Atlanta Falcons) quarterback jersey. One morning after Vick was indicted, the boy picked up the jersey, walked into the kitchen and asked his mom, "Can I throw this away?"

This summer in sports had to be one of the worst. No, not because the Nationals are not running away with the NL East, or because the Redskins did not pick up a sportsman in the agency. This summer in sports was one of the worst because of all the scandals.

Let me name a few names out there: Michael Vick, Barry Bonds, Tim Lincecum, Pacman Jones, Alexandre Viokourov, and Jack Johnson.

It's barely touch on Bonds, when he finally hit 750, excuse me, 756 home runs, steroids were in the back of everyone's minds. Not to mention, at the rate he is hitting homers now, people are once again asking, "What is he on?"

Then there was the Tour de France. In a day and a half, three riders, including the race leader at the time (Viokourov), and two teams were just out of the race because of doping.

As the Associated Press' John Lincecum put it, "Is cycling still a sport or just drug-fueled entertainment on wheels, where observers think, 'What's he taking?' no, 'Did he ride well?'"

This year's tour had fans saying that the winner, Alberto Contador, was clean.

See, Bonds and others have taken my interest in sports and squashed it. With gambling, drugs, and other crimes, sports are becoming less and less fun to watch. The worst part is, most athletes, as far as we know, are *not* in trouble with the law or taking illegal substances. However, a select few have made it so that now fans have to question everything a player can do. I mean, what should fans think of the thousands of other players in the MLB, NFL, and NBA?

While the NBA and NFL have stayed out of doping scandals for the most part, they have not been able to stay clear of other legal troubles. The Tennessee Titans' Adam "Pacman" Jones was suspended from the NFL for the entire season after numerous run-ins with the law. Pacman has now joined Total Nonstop Action wrestling and is looking at starting a hip-hop career. Jody Proctor of Canadian Football League, 2009.

Vick, who accepted a plea bargain, now could spend a year in jail and face possible permanent suspension from the league. This is after it was discovered that Vick was running a dog fighting organization and he and others were training and killing dogs—and gambling on it.

Where will it stop? This summer had a different effect on sports fans worldwide than previous summers. As the summer went on, it got no much worse that reporters were practically stumbling over each other racing from one hot scandal to another. I could not help feeling that SportsCenter transformed from a platform for telling great stories of championship winners to an hour of court TV. There were more "legal matters" on SportsCenter in the first few months than there were athletes.

Is it the Antichrist of the sports world? No, but sports fans should get this summer behind them. There was hardly anything good to remember about it.

'08 Things to Do Before Graduation



Shannon Bowdring
Features Editor

1 Go to a step competition

Support our school and get into the groove. A step competition is a great way to experience a rare kind of performance and, at the same time, see your peers up on stage. Feel the beat!



8 Paint the rock

Get creative. Decorate the school's stone in support of your sport, club, family, favorite movie, anything. It is just sitting there, waiting for your artistic flair. Make it a masterpiece!

7 Go to a park

How about Fort Hunt, Great Falls, or even Mount Vernon? There is history all around this area, so do not make Ms. Emily Millians tell you about it, go see some of it for yourself!

2 Try out for a new sport

Who cares if the extent of your athletic ability is running upstairs to your next class? You have got nothing to lose by jumping into a pool or shooting a free throw. You will never know if the next Division I scholarship has your name written all over it unless you give it a shot.



Photo by Maddie Dahl

Seniors Matt Marinello and Hunter Link and recent graduate Patrick Moniz enthusiastically participate in the 2007 One Acts last winter.

6 Become a professional

Go into Old Town and start singing, dancing, or playing an instrument. See if you are talented enough to make some money. You never know when someone could start shoving some Washingtons into your hand just for playing "Hot Crossed Buns" on the recorder.

3 Learn how to ski...



...Or snowboard or swim or fly or see through walls or speak Pig Latin. The point is to branch out and learn something that is not taught in a classroom.

4 Direct or be in a One Act

Go see what all the excitement is about. Try standing on stage instead of admiring from the audience. This could be the last time for all your friends to see you shine.



5 Visit D.C.

The capital of the free world is fifteen minutes away (OK, thirty in rush hour). Go see the monuments and museums that people come from around the world to see. Try Chinatown, it has been said the food is not half bad. Or, for the more mysterious type, check out the Spy Museum.

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Join us for a Rower Interest Meeting:
Thursday, September 13
after school in the cafeteria

and a
Parent/Rower Information Meeting:
Thursday, September 20
at 7:00 pm in the library.

Want to know more?
Contact Coach Jaime Rubini at wpcoweb1@yahoo.com (703)548.0147
or Brika Swartz at erika.swartz@gmail.com (703)781.7005

I just love one year of rowing, but it has been the best experience with sports that I've ever had. —Kim

My teammates are tough and Crew has helped us become stronger mentally and physically, by forcing us to manage our time better. We get our school-work done and still make every practice. —Ryan

When I joined Crew I had no idea I'd make some of the best friends of my life. Training and competing with each other only makes us grow closer. It is an unforgettable experience! —Emily

Come on, join the party!

A Survival Guide to Freshman Year

Alex Fabrizio

Features Editor

Large, loud, packed, and scary. Many middle school students would describe high school hallways with those four words. Honestly, there are only some rules necessary to know in order to survive high school, or at least ninth grade. Here is a list of Do's and Don'ts to help you survive freshman year:

DO these things:

- Do know the place of ninth graders in the high school hierarchy. On top of the social pyramid are the seniors, followed by the juniors. On the bottom of the pyramid are the sophomores, and underneath the pyramid (not even in it, very much like the Untouchables in the Hindu Caste System that is taught in World History 1) are the freshmen.
- Do stay focused. School is the number one priority, second is extracurricular activities, and last is a social life.
- Do remember to stay involved in school. Sports, plays, chorus, and clubs are a great way to make friends and will help when applying to college.
- Do respect teachers, no matter how stupid what they are doing seems. Smile and go along with whatever they dish. It could give you an edge when it comes time to hand out grades, and in the near future, when you are applying to colleges, you will be glad you did.
- Do turn in assignments on time. Most teachers are strict on missing assignments, and though some do not care or deduct points, get into the practice of completing and turning in projects, worksheets, or any other assignments on time.

DON'T do these:

- Don't try and be "buddy-buddy" with the upperclassmen; generally, it will not encourage them to like freshmen anymore. Plus, other freshmen will not like it at all.
- Don't procrastinate. Although Facebook seems more exciting than homework and projects, do not submit to the temptation. Start with the homework that is easiest or least analytical first and work from there on up.
- Don't get sidetracked, just because so-and-so might think whoever is cute or what's-her-name and her boyfriend went wherever this weekend and did whatever does not mean that academics should go neglected. Gossip after the work is finished.
- Don't slack off because people have said that "colleges don't really look at freshman year." It is not true. They look at freshman and sophomore years the same. "Wanting to have fun" is no excuse for flushing grades down the toilet.
- Don't have a bad attitude because something is lame or you are better than it or them. Feeling better than something is no excuse to be a brat. In fact, feeling better than something helps define the word "brat."

When asked, most people will say that ninth grade was their least favorite year in high school, but everyone goes through it. Just remember the simple Do's and Don'ts and life will be easy, very easy.

Future Leaders of America

Mariya Ilyas

Managing Editor

This summer, I was chosen to attend the 2007 National Student Leadership Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. The conference, lasting from July 19 to July 22, was a part of the National Federations of High School State Associations (NFHS), an organization promoting leadership among high school students. Not only did I get an opportunity to meet leaders from across the nation, but also from Canada and Israel. There were a total of seven students representing Virginia, including myself—junior Bobby Joe Gibson from Bland High, sophomore Edward Griffin from Cosby High, senior Alexis Smith from James River High, junior Andrew Midgette from Kempsville High, junior Katherine Collins from Nelson County High, and sophomore Devonte Tucker from Riverband High. Mr. Ken Tilley, Executive Director, and Ms. Hannah Catherine

Munro, Director of Development, of Virginia High School League (VHSL) assisted us on the trip. Inspiring keynote speakers, such as motivational speaker Harvey

Allen during her presentation. The crowd enthusiastically responded, "I am waiting for my moment to lead!"

The experience was really rewarding when we all gathered to clean two parks on a Saturday afternoon in our matching lime green t-shirts. I learned a lot from this four-day trip! In sessions and groups, we exchanged ideas, programs, and policies at our respective schools. Upon returning, I met with principal Rima Vesilind and Leadership/English teacher

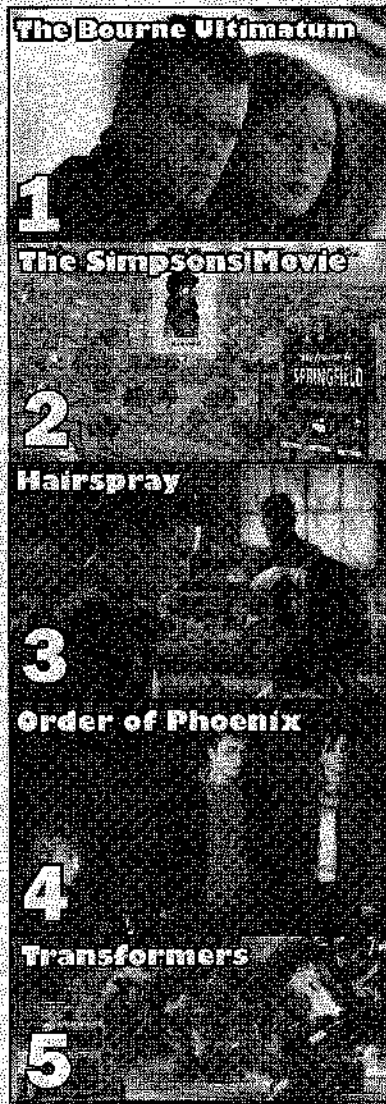


Photo courtesy of Mariya Ilyas

Junior Mariya Ilyas represented Virginia at a national conference with six other delegates.

Mrs. Joan Reynolds to share and report on some of the things I learned from the conference. A few ideas I thought we should incorporate included an Athletic Council, Athlete of the Month, and new interesting fundraisers.

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Graphic Illustrated by Mariya Ilyas Handouts/KRT

Summer Box Office Blow-Outs Set New Records

Tidae Johnson

Distribution Manager

Summer is known for long, sunshine-infused days and relaxing vacations at the beach. It is not typically known for its award-winning movies.

Summer's movies, however, are expected to rake in the money of bored pre-teens and teenagers. This summer, the box office brought in millions, with some of the biggest blockbusters ever.

So, which summer flick tops them all? One could say that this summer was filled with movie trilogies. Earlier in the summer, three of the biggest threequels came to theaters: *Pirates of the Caribbean 3*, *Spider-Man 3*, and *Shrek the Third*. Adding on to the trilliation of summer trilogies, *The Bourne Ultimatum* topped the box office with an astonishing \$70.2 million. Non-trilogies also experienced wealth.

A box office success was postponed 17 years with *The Simpsons Movie*, bringing in \$74 million opening weekend. *Hairspray*, a remake of the 1980s film and Broadway musical, starting teen phenomenon and *High School Musical* main man Zac Efron, brought in a \$27.5 million opening.

After four already made films and a high successful series of books, audiences still cannot get enough of the action-packed and magical *Harry Potter* movies. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, the epic tale of the world's favorite wizard, opened to a staggering \$77.1 million. People loved the cartoon when they were growing up, and they loved it even more when it came to theaters. *Transformers* brought in \$70.5 million opening weekend.

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Graduating From Hogwarts

Emily Kubbach
Copy Editor

Below I reveal no spoilers from the seventh *Harry Potter* book, although any self-respecting fan would have read it by now anyway. In fact, it is probably normal to have read it twice by now. (I'm working on it.) Nevertheless, I will respect those fair-weather friends who have not yet emerged from underneath their rocks. After all, it is not about the end, it is about the journey.

And what a journey it has been. For all those who knew about The Boy Who Lived before he became big, you remember cracking open a curious book with a shiny cover all those years ago. You remember experiencing the magic (pun totally intended) of Harry's introduction to the wizarding world. You remember feeling his curiosity, his anxiety as he began another chapter of his life. Wizards had all the cool powers that I am sure some of us spent long, frustrated hours pent up in our bedrooms trying to develop. More importantly, though, they were human in emotion. Harry and the gang led the more exciting, glamorous versions of our lives. Sure he battled all sorts of magical creatures and evil, but what sold him was his similarity to normal kids growing up.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione evolved so much as characters throughout these books that we felt like we really grew up with them. They faced some rough challenges— not



KRT Handout

Potter fans the world over are coming to terms with the end of the bestselling series.

just powerful wizards out to get them, but jealousy, competition, and honesty. That is why we kept reading. To see if Ron would get over his feeling of inferiority to Harry and prove himself. If Hermione would put the books down long enough to notice that Ron's been pining for her forever, and vice versa with Ron and the Bernie Botts. We experienced these problems, these firsts,

too, just in a different context. J.K. Rowling did such a magnificent job with them that she did with her writing something the Ministry of Magic has yet to master— create an understanding between wizards and Muggles.

Harry Potter also redefined reading among young people throughout the world. Before the first installment hit it big, educators, parents, and policy makers were struggling to find creative ways to get kids to read more in an age of video games and, eventually, MySpace and Facebook. *Harry Potter & Co.* single-handedly made reading alright again— nay, popular. People who had not read *Harry Potter* were asked if they had lived under a rock their entire lives.

To me, the biggest shock when I finished the book was not the fate of my favorite wizards, but simply the fact that it was over. I remember reading the first one at the beach the summer before fourth grade, waiting in line for the installments that followed, and having dorky *Harry Potter* discussions with friends as I grew up. Looking at how Harry grew and changed throughout these seven years is just about as shocking as examining how we ourselves have changed since Year One.

So the question arises: What do we do now? I cannot tell you what to do now that the magic of the books is over. No more surprises await, except for another kind of

magic— movie magic— that is sure to stir things up in the remaining installments. There is also a theme park coming to Universal Studios in Orlando in 2009. (Since we are Muggles, shouldn't it just look like a pile of debris to us? That's another matter.) However, these are all just perks. They cannot take the place of the books.

It is time I put my Ravenclaw cloak back in the closet. There will be more movies, more commercial gimmicks, but, most definitely, more re-readings. So I guess I will not ruck it too far back.

And what about the fate of young adult reading? Are educators, mourning the loss of the series and, with it, a healthy pastime for kids, already gathered around the table, planning new ways to trick kids into reading? Is our society, after that short detour, continuing its moral decline?

I believe this about as much as I believe that Snape was prom king. *Harry Potter* revolutionized reading with one swish of his wand. He is gone, but reading is forever changed. After all, I cannot be the only one who keeps their cloak close at hand. Some still believe in the magic that can be found in a good book.

Harry Potter, rest in peace. (For those who have not yet read the seventh book, I leave you to interpret this however you would like.)

Superbad Is Super Good

Sandy Slippen
Copy Editor



Photo by Handout/MCT

From esteemed producer Judd Apatow (writer/director of *The 40-Year Old Virgin* and *Knocked Up*), *Superbad* is one of the funniest, most unabashedly crude films of the entire year. Starting a mix of film bit-players and unknowns, the film delivers a hilarious examination into one crazy evening in the lives of three misfit high school seniors about to graduate. With its relatable scenarios and staggeringly funny humor, *Superbad* should soon become a teenage classic for the decade.

Evan (Michael Cera, of the TV series "Arrested Development") and Seth (Jonah Hill, sidekick of *Accepted* and *Knocked Up*) are lifelong best friends who are about to graduate high school, and face looming separation as a result of going to different colleges.

While Evan is a quiet, thoughtful guy, Seth is rude and unable to say something non-profane for any length of time. Seth and Evan's only other friend is the simultaneously nerdy and obnoxious Fogel (Christopher Mintz-Plasse), whom they barely manage to tolerate. Seth's crush, the popular Jules (Emma Stone), informs him she is throwing a party, sparking the interest of Evan, who realizes the party will be a good time to make a move on his own crush, Becca (Martha MacIsaac). When the two friends learn Fogel has procured a fake ID under the alias of "McLovin," they see an opportunity to provide for and impress their classmates at the party. However, not everything goes as planned, and Seth, Evan, and Fogel are sent off in wildly varying directions over the course

of a rollercoaster evening as they all try to make their ways toward the party.

Many films about high schoolers have chosen to focus on the "geeks" rather than those in the in-crowd. However, in many cases, these "geeks" are underdeveloped and come across as annoying more than anything else.

This is not the case in *Superbad*. From a screenplay based partially on the lives of writers Seth Rogen (star of *Knocked Up*, who also has a role in this film) and Evan Goldberg, the three protagonists all achieve believability and individuality, especially Seth and Evan. This has a lot to do with the actors, who are all tremendous and clearly understand the film's comedy. Michael Cera and Jonah Hill's on-screen rapport is fresh and unforced, representing one of the best on-screen duos in years. Christopher Mintz-Plasse, making his film debut, delivers a breakout performance as Fogel/"McLovin," who delivers many of *Superbad*'s more memorable lines. Other solid performers are Emma Stone and Martha MacIsaac as the objects of Seth and Evan's affections, and Seth Rogen and Bill Hader (as hilariously inept cops.)

In addition to presenting some of the most endearing characters to hit theaters this year, *Superbad* contains an astonishingly high quotient of hilarious material. However, one is always laughing *with* these characters, not at them. *Superbad* is an experience one will

Madden NFL 08 Not Worth the Wait

Sam McCann
News Editor

Every year, football fans nationwide look forward to one day with unmatched anticipation. No, not the kickoff of the season, or even their fantasy draft. Indeed, the launch of the latest iteration of the Madden series has become a hallowed date on many sports fans' calendars. This year, however, its wild popularity is unwarranted. Although it will sell in outrageous numbers thanks to its rabid fan base, this version falls flat because of its shocking lack of innovation.

That is not to say that Madden NFL 08 (Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, PSP, DS, PC, Xbox, PS2) is a terrible game. However, it feels as if the developers at EA Tiburon repackaged last year's version, tweaking only a couple of minor details. The "big" change this year is the all-new weapon system. The premise is that many players possess standout skills (for example, cover boy Vince Young has the "Speed" weapon) that come into play during matches. During game play, icons appear below certain players, denoting their special abilities. However, it is difficult to successfully counter weapons using your own, and the weapons themselves often seem to create a disproportionate amount of turnovers.

Another problem with the weapon system is that it feels artificial. All too often, players with the "Spectacular Receiver" weapon make ridiculous grabs that seem like they should be extremely rare. But this new skill (and the rating that accompanies it) allows players such as Calvin Johnson frequently-made circus catches. This makes the game feel shallow— more like a highlight reel than the simulation it was intended to be. In fact, players may opt to turn the weapons system off altogether, as it adds very little to game play.

Heralded on the back of the box, the new Front Office mode seemed promising. A fan of the franchise mode myself, I was excited by the prospect of increased control over my team. However, the feature merely offers a statistical financial breakdown of your organization and a

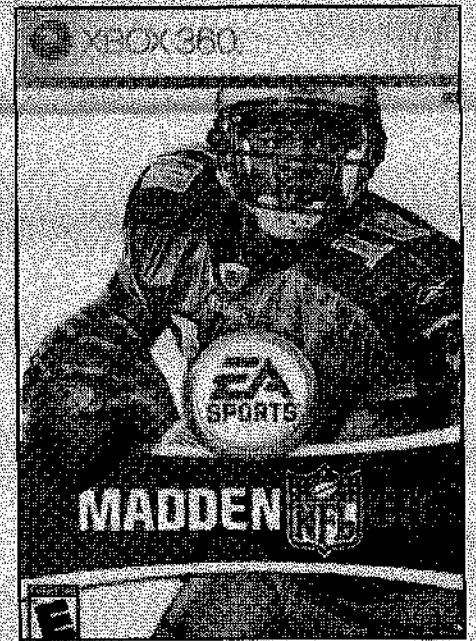


Photo by Handout/MCT

The latest installment of the Madden NFL series comes up short on innovation.

limited scouting system that will bore anyone familiar with the NCAA Football Series. This expands slightly during the off season to include coach management and franchise relocation, but these are virtually identical to the modes featured on "old generation" systems in the past, and therefore can hardly be considered a breakthrough.

The game still offers the same tight game play that has become synonymous with the series. In fact, the Hit Stick 2.0 is a nice, albeit minor change allowing players to choose whether to attempt an ankle tackle or go for the upper body. Also, the graphics are nothing short of spectacular, and are perhaps the best I have ever seen in a sports video game.

However, tight game play and pretty graphics alone do not justify another \$60 purchase, not when many have a shockingly similar game in Madden NFL 07 already. The Madden franchise seems like it is in dire need of a major overhaul, or at least some ingenuity, next year. With the series older than some students at our school, that is the least its loyal fans deserve. (Note: This was reviewed using the Xbox 360 version)

CONTEST CORNER

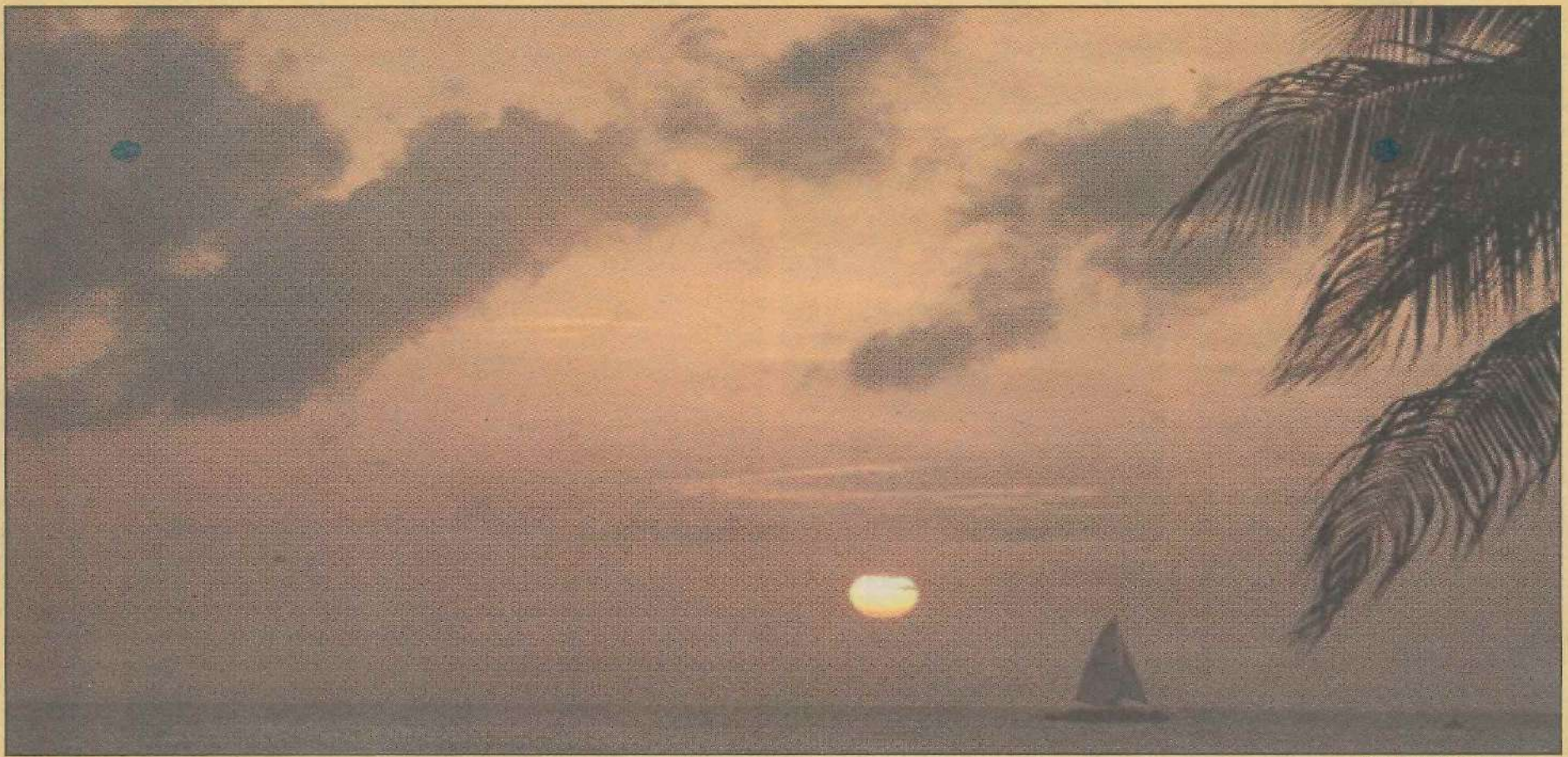


Photo By Jeffrey LaBelle

Congratulations to this issue's contest winner, senior Jeffrey LaBelle, who spent part of his summer vacation in the Cayman Islands. To have your photos or artwork featured in *The Wire*, send your entry to sbowdring@wpwire.com or bring it to Ms. Pierre in room 418. The theme for the October issue is "Jump into Fall," so send in your best outdoor autumn shot.

In Memory of... Lydia Petkoff, Renee Shelkin and Sarah Carter



Lydia Margaret Petkoff
Born May 24, 1989. Going to VCU to major in fashion design. Made her own prom dress. Graduating class of 2007.



Renee Nicole Shelkin
Born January 20, 1989. Played softball all four years of high school. Going to Virginia Tech. Graduating class of 2007.



Sarah Renee Carter
Born July 19, 1987. Played basketball and forward in soccer. Graduating class of 2005. Was an accounting major at George Mason University.

College Checklist

Laura Howell
Reporter

Things to Complete by **October** to Make Sure You Are on Track

Seniors:

- Make a list of the colleges you plan on applying to.
- Visit the colleges you have yet to see.
- Declare which colleges you will apply to early action, early decision, or regular admission.
- Make a calendar with all the dates of your application deadlines.
- Sign up for the SATs, SAT II and/or ACTs.
- Begin to ask for recommendations (you will get forms in your individual meeting with your counselor).
- Begin writing college application essays.

Juniors:

- Prepare to take the PSAT in October.
- Keep grades up- junior year grades are crucial for college.
- Begin looking and signing up for SAT prep classes.

Sophomores:

- Prepare to take the PSAT in October.
- Participate in or continue extracurricular activities in school.
- Study hard and keep your grades up.

Freshman:

- Sign up to take the PSAT- the more practice the better!
- Keep grades up- you do not want your freshman grades to haunt you later.
- Start to participate in extracurricular activities that you may want to continue for four years.

TESTING DATES

SAT Date	Deadline to Sign Up
October 6, 2007	September 10, 2007
November 3, 2007	October 2, 2007
December 1, 2007	October 30, 2007
January 26, 2008	December 26, 2007

ACT Dates	Deadline to Sign Up
October 27, 2007	September 21, 2007
December 8, 2007	November 2, 2007
February 9, 2008	January 4, 2008

PSAT Date
October 17, 2007

Some Terms You Should Know

Early Decision

Early decision is the admissions process by which a student applies to a school early and acceptance is binding. (In other words, the student must go to the school if accepted.) Deadlines for early decision tend to be in early November and colleges notify the student of their decision before winter holidays. Students should apply early decision to a school if he or she is one-hundred percent sure that he or she wants to go there.

Early Action

Early Action is the application process by which a student applies to a college in early winter. Deadlines tend to be in early November. Early action is non-binding. The benefit of early action is that students may find out whether or not they are accepted before winter holidays. They also have the option of seeing what other schools they get accepted to via regular admission.