

## Students Share Thoughts as Super Bowl LX Rolls Near

NICCOLO LEE-SUK & JOHN KIM

Super Bowl Sunday nears with the New England Patriots (Patriots) having made it back to the NFL finale to face the Seattle Seahawks (Seahawks), sparking excitement among some of Andover's community members. On-campus watch parties are scheduled for Sunday evening, highlighting how the Super Bowl is independent of whether one's team makes it or if one does not regularly watch the sport.

Instructor in English Thomas Kane, a decades-long Patriots fan, reflected on the team's past success. He particularly mentioned its former head coach Bill Parcells and former quarterback Tom Brady as instrumental to Patriots' triumphs.

"I remember when the games were 'blacked out' due to lack of ticket sales on some very losing teams in the late 80s and early 90s, and then [Bill] Parcells and then [Tom] Brady changed all that, and now it is akin to being

a Yankees fan; the [Patriots] are widely loathed due to all the winning. Two bad years is nothing, so people have not forgotten their dominance. As Taylor Swift says, 'Haters gonna hate, hate, hate.' And, if they raise another banner, I'm 'gonna shake, shake, shake it off.' Go Pats!" wrote Kane in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Day student Yui Takeuchi '26 grew up in Seattle and supports the Seahawks, which she feels is a minority sentiment due to heavy campus support for the Patriots. Takeuchi shared that she believes the Seahawks are the favorites heading into Sunday's game.

"The Seahawks are going to blow out the Patriots. It is their rematch because they played against each other in 2015, and that was a really heartbreaking ending, but I think they will have no problem with the Patriots this time. Patriots fans still have faith in them that they're going to win, but I think the

Continued on A5, Column 4



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY K.MA/THE PHILLIPIAN

Patriots fan Cristian Ramirez '29 and Seahawks fan Yui Takeuchi '26 pose with their respective team jerseys.

## Head of School Raynard Kington Announces End of Tenure in 2027



K.MA/THE PHILLIPIAN

Head of School Raynard Kington delivered a commencement address to the Class of 2025. His last address will be to the Class of 2027.

ANGELA GUO & STELLA SEONG

Head of School (HOS) Raynard Kington announced last Friday that he will conclude his tenure at the end of June 2027. The Board of Trustees has also begun the search for the next HOS as Kington continues to implement ongoing institutional initiatives.

When asked about the factors and considerations behind his decision, Kington said the timing of the announcement was shaped by both personal reflection and logistical coordination with the Board of Trustees.

"It's always a complicated decision... largely driven by the board once decisions are made in order to give sufficient time for [the] search. Obviously, the board is very supportive of a number of initiatives that are ongoing and wanted to make sure there's enough time to do those things," said Kington.

He continued, "I will quote my father, 'To everything there is a season, and the time for every purpose under the heavens.'"

Looking ahead to his remaining 18 months, Kington said much of his focus will be on advancing initiatives that have emerged from the school's roadmapping process, which evaluates Andover's academic, residential, and co-curricular systems.

"There are a whole series of proposals coming out of the roadmapping process, the Learning Steering Committee, related to ninth-grade dorms and advising, the structure of the dorm system, the faculty work model. We're having an athletics review," said Kington.

When asked what success on these initiatives would look like in his final months, Kington framed the time period as a continuation of his leadership.

"I've been consistent throughout my career in focusing on the work I have to do to help an institution thrive. I see this as no different. I will do the work I'm supposed to do until the last day that I'm here," said Kington.

The search for Andover's next Head of School has also begun, and will be overseen by the Board of Trustees. Amy Falls, President of the Board of Trustees, said the board is in the process of forming a search committee.

"I could imagine sometime in the next three to four weeks, [there] could be an announcement about who's leading the committee, [what] the composition will be. [The committee] has historically included faculty. But a majority of trustees," said Falls.

The board will work with the search firm Carney, Sandoe & Associates to solicit nominations and conduct outreach across the Andover community. Falls outlined a tentative timeline for how the search will proceed over the coming year.

"The board [does] a big listening tour, [trying] to put together a sense of what the right next Head would [be]. You would expect to have an announcement sometime in the October, November time frame next year to the whole world. You also have open platforms for people to nominate. The search firm will have a place, usually it's a website or they just take email. And

Continued on A5, Column 1

## Uppers and Seniors Reflect on College Counseling Process

DINA NAMJOO & JUNIPER KLOCK

This year, the College Counseling Office (CCO) kicked off its process with Uppers in December, starting with meetings in small groups. This marks a return to the timeline they used previously, in which the process started before winter break rather than after. As of now, students have begun meeting with their counselors individually and researching colleges.

Taylor Ware, Associate Director of College Counseling, clarified the CCO's rationale behind determining their logistics and timeline. She explained that December would be the earliest time counselors could shift their focus from Seniors to Uppers.

"When we get back from November break, [Seniors are] heading into the last stretch of application deadlines, and so just as Uppers will want the CCO's focus to be on them next December when it's their Senior fall, it doesn't really make a lot of sense for us to try to start in December with Uppers. We really want to be fully present and accessible to our Seniors as they're getting to that last push of the applications," said Ware.

Maddie Soong '27 expressed their appreciation for the earlier start to the process, noting that the CCO introduced several aspects of the admissions process that students might otherwise learn later.

"It was good to know that we weren't just gonna be left in the dark because as [the deadline] gets closer, you start to worry. I didn't know you're supposed to take the SAT and the ACT this year, so stuff like that, where if the deadline passes, you can't really go back and do it. It's good to get some guidance, even if you don't have to do anything right now," said Soong.

Robert Budzinski '26 acknowledged that the college counseling process seemed daunting for most students at first. He reflected on how the process benefited him in ways that differed from his initial expectations.

"The general reception among Uppers, at least in my grade, when we got [our first email] was like, 'Oh no, we have to start this now.' Everyone was a little bit scared because the whole process has a menacing reputation in a way, and then people are scared [that their] college counselor is going to tell me that I can't apply to X school or things like that. I didn't necessarily experience any of that," said Budzinski.

He continued, "I did feel like I was being underestimated at some points, but that's a natural thing that they make sure everyone is safe [and that] everyone can go to a college... And as the process went on, the feedback got more and more positive, to [the point] where I felt like the entire CCO, not just my counselor, believed in me."

Lisa de Boer '26 suggested that the CCO expand its range of counselors to better reflect the challenges faced by certain student groups. She elaborated that international students applying for financial aid often receive limited guidance due to counselors' limited knowledge or experience.

"I really wish that they did match up college counselors under certain criteria, especially for international students, because the process looks so different for international students in terms of financial aid [and] what you fill out on the form. For example, me and a lot of my friends who have been to international schools have a lot of trouble filling out these grading forms," said de Boer.

Eloise Malle '27 noted that the CCO could have provided more targeted advice regarding college applications earlier on. She explained that other schools, including The Hotchkiss School, work to prepare students to navigate the process independently.

"At Hotchkiss, they have an entire day of college counseling where they have people who work in the admissions team of different colleges come and share what they look for in applications and what to think about when writing essays and things like that. I get that we might eventually get that guidance, but we haven't yet," said Malle.



COURTESY OF THE UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION FOR YOUNG PHYSICISTS TOURNAMENTS

Andover's YPT team poses with tournament administrators and faculty advisors after making it to finals.

RIAANA BAJAJ & EDWARD KIM

The 2026 Young Physicists Tournament (YPT), a physics competition bringing together teams from dozens of high schools, was held on Andover campus last weekend. Teams from each school presented original research and solutions for open-ended physics problems to a panel of judges, who asked questions and then ranked them. Andover's team made it to finals and placed third overall, where just over two points separated all of the finalists.

Andre Wu '26, a returning member of Andover's YPT team, explained how the tournament's open-ended format distinguishes it from traditional classes and competitions. Wu further described his belief that this flexibility presented a unique opportunity for competitors both during and after the competition.

"YPT is very different because there's no right answer, and there's very little guidance. Going into the problem, you are given a lot of freedom with how you approach it. The questions are deliberately vague. You can take it an infinite number of ways, and at the tournament, we saw a lot of different approaches to problems, which was really cool to see. Having no right answer, having to figure stuff out for yourself, is the biggest way

that YPT differs from a traditional physics class. That helps everyone that's done it a lot in terms of introducing the academic research [process]," said Wu.

There are four problems in YPT's problem set each year, each of which has a team dedicated to solving it. Manalee Chowdhury '28, captain of everyone on the Andover team, explained the format of the competition. In particular, she highlighted the collaborative nature of the tournament and the skills it required beyond individual problem solving. She highlighted the key roles of teamwork, communication, and strategic thinking in team success.

"The tournament has a presenting panel which consists of four people from our team. I happened to be on the presenting panel this year. You really have to work with your team, even if you're working on different problems, to convey your findings well, really practice your presentation with them, and also learn how to find points to talk about on the opponent's team," said Chowdhury.

Mika Latva-Kokko, Assistant Dean of Scheduling, Instructor in Physics, and a coach for Andover's YPT team, explained the existing academic pathway that prepares students for YPT. He explained that the Physics Prize exam and a class where students explore the YPT problem set are both involved in shaping the school's team.

"The Physics 500 Advanced Experimental Physics class runs every fall, and it's a class that allows the students the time and the space to study these problems, design their own experiments, conduct them, and practice presenting. At the end of the spring term, we host a Physics Prize contest where students propose experimental approaches to the problems, and based on that, we choose a maximum of 16 students for the class, and they will form our team for the YPT. Over the course of the year and during the class, we help them with whatever problems they happen to have with their experimental setup," said Latva-Kokko.

Given that the tournament is hosted at a different school each year, Latva-Kokko reflected on the meaningfulness of Andover being the host this year. He noted that the event created opportunities for students to engage with visiting teams and the general physics community.

"As a high school competition, the Young Physicists Tournament [YPT], when it comes to physics competitions, is one of the premier research-oriented competitions. To host it is an honor, but also a big responsibility. Everybody had an opportunity to see that we can pull off a good tournament, the students got an opportunity to show off their home, and it was a good experience all around," said Latva-Kokko.

Commentary, A2

### The Super Bowl's Halftime Performance Won't Be Politically Neutral

The halftime show for the Superbowl has taken on a political stance.

Eighth Page, A8

### Long Weekend

All these long weekends have led to major changes on campus.

Sports, B1

### A Pair of Swift Responses

Bouncing back from its loss to Hotchkiss, Girls Squash defeated Groton and Nobles 8-0 and 7-1 respectively.

Arts, B9

### Khaosan is in Town

Read a review of the new Thai-and-Vietnamese fusion restaurant which opened Downtown.

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Editorial

# No, I Won't Give You My Signature.

We haven't heard that too often. Many Andover students are indifferent about giving their signature to prospective Co-Presidents.

Each year, pairs collect five hundred signatures over three days as part of their eligibility to run for Co-President. The task of collecting signatures may serve as a weeding-out process or a way for candidates to demonstrate their commitment to their campaign. Importantly, though, a five-hundred-signature requirement forces candidates to meet their voters. But when candidates or members of the student body fail to meaningfully connect with one another, this purpose is made obsolete.

Some students have noted that they are not even aware of a pair's platform before giving their signature. This phenomenon begs the question: What's the point of the signatures? Are students being nice, or do they not care about who our Co-Presidents are altogether?

Instead of mindlessly giving candidates their signatures, student voters ought to treat their decision in this campaigning stage as an opportunity to effect real change. Our signatures hold weight as endorsements that help propel a candidate to the next stage of the election process. A thorough understanding of the candidates, then, should inform student voters' interactions with potential Co-Presidents. We must remain actively curious in our conversations

with candidates, digging deeper to inquire about the feasibility of their initiatives or learn about the values that underpin their leadership. Our signatures matter, and we should respect our autonomy by making an effort to evaluate our candidates before deciding to provide our signature. Meanwhile, prospective co-presidents must view signatures not as checked boxes on a to-do list but as a way to establish a sense of trust with and truly engage with their voters.

Candidates have ample opportunities to connect with the student body. On the first voting day, pairs typically give brief speeches in Commons, and after the second round, they participate in a structured meet and greet. These events often receive moderate engagement. However, if students feel apathetic about endorsing candidates through their signatures, then perhaps there is more engagement to be made. The Co-Presidents only have the influence that we give them. That is, if we feel that their roles are inconsequential, then it is up to us to show up to their events, to get to know them, and to be invested in their initiatives. We owe it to ourselves and our presidents.

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# Are You Even Reading This?

MEDHA KONDA



Through an onslaught of quizzes, in-class writings, and that mid-year reflection you've been putting off, at 7:59 PM, you hit send on an email containing your article to editors of *The Phillipian*. Whew. You fall back into your chair, thinking this is where the madness ends. Unfortunately, you return to your dorm after an exhausting Monday with a disappointed, paragraph-long message from your editor. But an aspiring Commentary writer doesn't quit! So you spend the week following up and adjusting phrasing, and at last, you're in SamPhil hoping to see your PA Pals buried in *The Phillipian*. Instead, you find copies of the paper strewn across the

Sharing your work is one of the most powerful things you can do as a writer, but you must do it for yourself.

table, some flipped to Commentary, others to sports. To top it all off, you've just gotten an email — it's time to submit for next week already? These are the troubles that hold back a new writer from returning to Commentary. It takes courage to submit to publish one's work, and when we fail to receive praise or validation for it, we often reach the extreme opposite conclusion that people are judging us. While it's only natural to seek commendation when you've worked hard, I propose that writing was never meant to



CAMILA CHEN / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

be that way. Anyone who calls themselves a writer can look back in their Google Docs to find hidden stories and endless drafts that will never see the light of day. Sharing your work is one of the most powerful things you can do as a writer, but you must do it for yourself. My nine-year-old self, who wore bright colored leggings and sequined shirts, became a writer because of my idol, my 11-year-old cousin. What began as sharing a Google Doc during the COVID-19 pandemic grew into a Moleskine journal we mailed to each other, and though that tradition died, the seed she planted never did. I didn't particularly enjoy sharing my work with friends, but I found joy in sharing my work with people who would never come to know me. Even now, as I regularly share my thoughts in this Commentary section, I often don't consider who is going

to see my work when I submit it. I encourage others to do the same. Let go of any worries and consider submitting to a publication. Think of newspapers and journals as somewhat of an active archive. A collection for you to look upon as what you consider your "best work" evolves from year to year. Our writing is a culmination of all of our experiences, and reflects our growth from youthful innocence to more self-conscious adolescents. Putting pieces of writing out there isn't necessarily about who might see it, but how you'll see it months later. We may not receive attention for something we write now, but perhaps it's not others who should give meaning to it, but you. In being scrutinized, I have learned much about my writing style. My history teacher frequents upon my habit of run-on sentences and flowery

prose, while my English teacher would probably say I have too many ideas going on at the same time. Efforts to look sophisticated often lead to circuitous paragraphs, losing the thesis along the way. However, we cannot expect to improve on these flaws and view writing objectively without someone giving pointers. Submitting to publications is a chance to relearn your comma rules, get your article torn apart, or rewrite your argument within a week. The revision process involved in publication isn't a reflection of the quality of your work, but rather a guide for proofreading. Similarly, comments about your work from friends and family shouldn't be taken as criticism; instead, take it into consideration for your future pieces. More often than not, readers will come to tell you how much they enjoy your writing, or that they are related to something

emotional you opened up about. Even though my initial reaction to such comments is often to be embarrassed, accepting praise comes along with embracing areas for improvement. If your cursor hovers over the send button to that publication, go for it. Sharing work isn't about who reads it or how they feel about it, but the excitement of knowing your work is out there for you to look back on as you grow. Look at writing for newspapers and literary magazines as how you would write for your own journal — with your true feelings and uncensored thoughts.

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**CORRECTIONS:**  
*The News article "10 Questions with Andrew Cheng" was credited incorrectly. The authors were Judy Liu and Teddy Steinert.*  
*The author of the Commentary article "When You Still Don't Know What You Want to Do," Junwoo Shin, is a Junior, and his email is [jshin29@andover.edu](mailto:jshin29@andover.edu).*  
*The Phillipian regrets these errors.*



# Under the Amber Glow of Our Dorms

MUAZ REZA



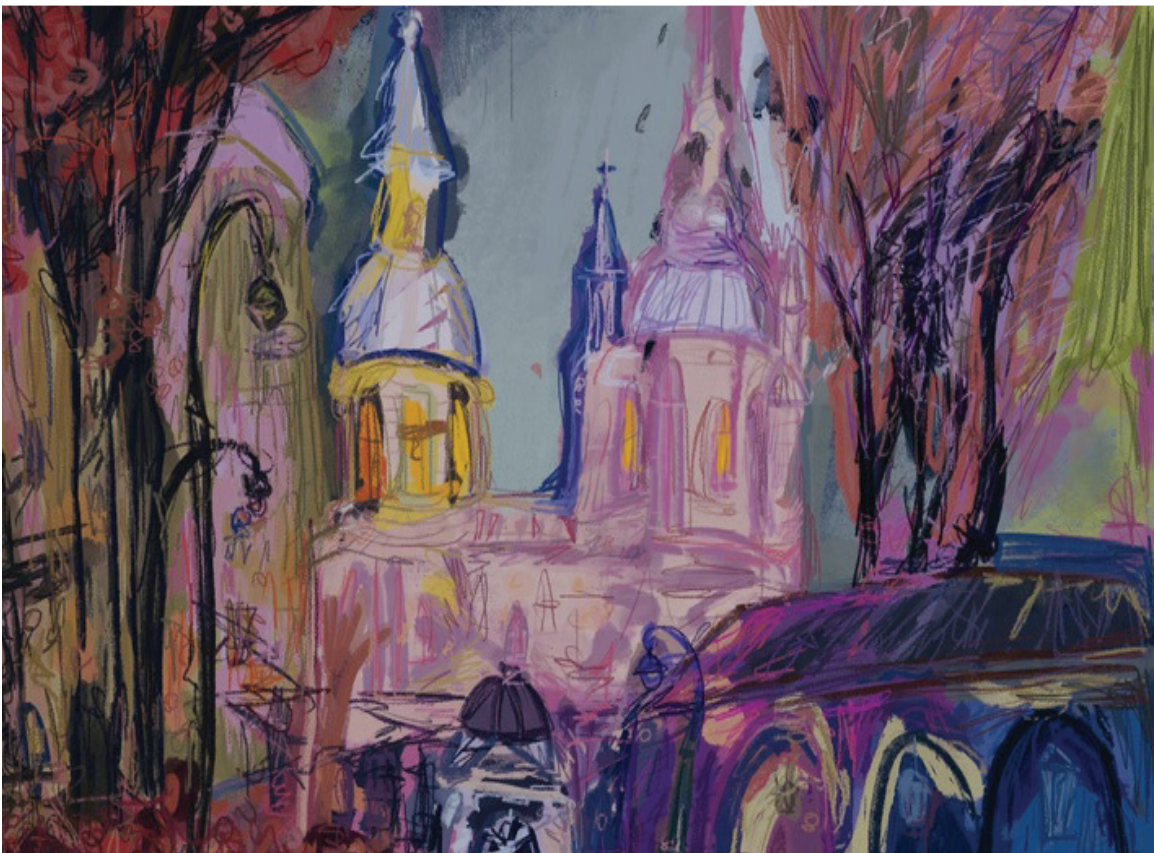
On most evenings at Andover, the lights stay on longer than they need to. Dorm rooms glow well past midnight, study spaces hum with the murmur of unfinished work, and students move through commitments with practiced efficiency. None of it feels unusual. In fact, it feels like proof that things are going well. Andover does not explicitly ask students for this level of devotion, but it feels normal anyway. Institutional messages center around wellness and mental health. Assemblies urge adequate sleep and leisure with friends. Despite it all, overcommitment exists because it is quietly rewarded.

Andover culture of overcommitment is subtle, manifesting itself in the social cues we receive from the community. We learn early on that our achievements cement our place in the community when disproportionate praise is given to the busiest among us. Often, it feels that admiration is reserved for those balancing a rigorous academic schedule and four leadership roles at once. Anyone doing less, even intentionally so, risks appearing demotivated to others, reinforcing excellence as the norm.

This expectation is not exclusive to Andover; elite institutions attract ambitious students. The issue lies in attributing ambition to overextension. Ambition is healthy, serving as a catalyst for growth. Overextension is not; it sacrifices mental well-being for feelings of achievement, which may lead to intense burnout within students. Moreover, in a setting like Andover, comparison is inevitable. We ask ourselves: is my GPA high enough? Do I have enough board positions? Should I be doing more? This rhetoric is common among many, manifesting itself simultaneously in exhaustion and guilty self-care. For example, taking time to recharge by, say, watching a movie, feels unsatisfying when that time is categorized as “wasted” rather than necessary. Worse, our community often prefers performance over transparency, which cultivates an environment where fatigue is common but rarely named. Those who succeed are placed on a pedestal, their success labeled as a consequence of perfection, rather than consistent effort and growth.

Addressing overcommitment does not require lowering standards or dissuading ambition.

Institutional incentives play a role in this matter. Recognition systems, such as athletic awards and college admissions, often spotlight “model” students. The achievements of our student body should be celebrated, but students’ journeys and challenges are rarely discussed. Thus, the audience



SOPHIA KIM / THE PHILLIPIAN

receives a clear signal about what type of “success” Andover champions, reinforcing a standard of perfection that students may grapple with. Ignoring the obstacles of model students diminishes the value of perseverance. It’s important to show that growth and struggles are integral parts of any narrative.

To Andover’s credit, rigorous instruction is part of the school’s appeal. Students come here expecting to be challenged. Rigor motivates students to engage deeply with academic materials, and many are energized by a packed schedule that pushes them to grow as thinkers. Still, the current environment gives little flexibility for selective ambition. It’s difficult to define what “enough” looks like person to person without feeling the need for an explanation. Consequences can even bleed into other aspects of student

lives. Many prioritize productivity over curiosity and growth because failure is framed as an absolute. Students prefer safety and predictability over the uncertain and genuinely exciting because every choice they make seems consequential.

Many times, when discussing this topic, I’m met with a simple answer: “Well, that’s just life.” The world is a demanding place, requiring sacrifice to manage the intensity of day-to-day activity; there is truth to this. However, a key distinction exists between preparation and normalization. Students should not be taught to simply bear unsustainable systems; they should instead be given the courage to question and reshape those systems. Addressing overcommitment does not require lowering standards or dissuading ambition. It means making space and cel-

ebrating alternative forms of success. Broadening the narratives we celebrate, recognizing depth alongside breadth, and being more transparent about the tradeoffs even the most accomplished students face is critical. Celebrating small wins, like raindrops in a bucket, compounds to overflowing success. After all, culture is not built solely on what we say, but on the way our actions shape our community.

The lights will probably stay on tonight. After all, that’s Andover. But questioning whether it’s all necessary — maybe turning the lights off a little earlier — is a vital step in the right direction.

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# Super Bowl LX Will Redefine American Identity

ANDREW PARK



Since its rise, the Super Bowl Halftime show has always been more anticipated than the actual championship game. These shows, extravagant music acts performed by global artists, are often purely entertainment. Such high-ranking superstars are often influenced to keep performances enjoyable by mainstream audiences. With Super Bowl LX just a few days from now, millions of Americans are preparing for a classic ritual of food, friends, and spectacle. This year, that stage will have Bad Bunny, a Puerto Rican superstar whose catalog is proudly Latin, and Green Day, the famous anti-authoritarian punk band, opening the game. In the current environment of political polarization governing everyday life for many, this lineup will put forward identities and ideologies often marginalized as “un-American” in the center of the largest symbol of American mainstream culture. Rather than weakening national unity, I believe the upcoming line-up suggests a more honest version of it, one that recognizes dissent, multilingualism, and cultural difference as central to American life.

Bad Bunny’s ascendance to the Super Bowl stage is a powerful rebuke to the narrow, exclusionary vision of American culture that has risen in recent decades. He embodies the Latin diaspora in the United States, a community accepted in terms

of cuisine and labor, but simultaneously culturally marginalized, and frequently targeted by “anti-American” political rhetoric. This marginalization immediately made itself evident when conservative figures labelled his musical collection as “not broad enough” for a mainstream audience and created a secondary “All-American Halftime Show”. That critique, however, unravels under examination. First, it ignores a fundamental fact: Bad Bunny is American, born in Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory. Secondly, his music centers on Latino culture and directly challenges the monolingual ideals promoted by the same social conservatives by using Spanish. Latino Americans make up a significant and growing portion of the U.S. population, contributing meaningfully to American culture while remaining fully American themselves. His music would resonate with millions of U.S.-based Latino fans, making his performance a reflection of contemporary American identity rather than a departure from it.

Unlike Bad Bunny’s performance, which would focus

The upcoming halftime show should be the turning point to reflect on ourselves.

on cultural expression, Green Day’s on the Super Bowl stage would be an explicit political confrontation, channeling their long-standing punk rock culture promoting social change. Starting in the 1970s, punk music emerged due to economic downfall during neoliberal politics, marked by increased privatization of public services and free rein of the market economy. Two decades later, Green Day, during the 90s and early 2000s, came in a similar era of anti-establishment, anti-racist



FELISHA LI / THE PHILLIPIAN

solidarity, and youth power in America. Social justice, especially in its start in the East Bay in California, solidified the conscious culture Green Day was born out of. Their music often critiques the American government, imperialism, and explores the values of youth in a world filled with commercialism and the decay of community. Events like the military conflict with Iraq and government invasion of privacy in post-9/11 politics sparked the creation of albums like “American Idiot”. Now, twenty years later, as state violence and authoritarian characteristics resurface, Green Day’s return, on the most nationalistic and commercialized stages in the country, marks the end of political neutrality. Their presence in the musical performance comforts those who feel lost in the current tumultuous environment, where resistance is stamped out.

Because the Super Bowl is a cultural mirror, the ideas communicated on its stage are reflected onto communities like

ours, where diversity is not abstract but lived. As a school, Andover is incredibly diverse. Representing dozens of countries, various ethnic groups, and various ideologies, Andover works due to the small differences that help each other grow and understand the world in a better way. However, this diversity is being targeted with the growth of exclusionary behavior by the federal administration. Pillars of the U.S., like birthright citizenship and free speech, are being decimated while immigrants are being terrorized by executive forces. This isn’t disconnected information, as many of our students are immigrants or children of immigrants. Fear for our relatives, friends, or ourselves is understandable.

This diverse population is why the upcoming performances are going to be so meaningful. To the immigrant population, Bad Bunny serves as a continuation of the forgotten American Dream while celebrating their cultural identity. To those who have differing political views,

Green Day offers a reminder that resistance, criticism, and protest have long been central to American cultural expression. In an environment where companies and the government coerce conformity, these artists will affirm the clear presence of a much more diverse identity in this country. Our job, as the diverse audience this is for, is to actively understand their messages. The upcoming half-time show should be the turning point to reflect on ourselves. In our identity, are there characteristics that we change to become more “American”? By answering this, we can take diversity from just a data point to something wiser.

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# Gardening for the Soul



Fingernails caked with dirt during planting, pulling weeds under the warm spring sun, a refreshing feeling after cold winter days, and then finally drawing a large, ruby-red radish out of the ground are common spring occurrences for me. My family grows a large garden in our backyard, its harvest intermingled on our kitchen table with fresh eggs from the roaming chickens. Many days in spring, I find myself wandering its rows, watering the newly planted seeds or simply pulling weeds from the soil. Watching these plants grow over many weeks and nurturing them through my work has been an enjoyable part of my life for so long that I don’t often reflect on its importance.

Recently, in Biology 100, we finished an experiment on plant growth, where we investigated the effects of different variables on radish seedlings. One of the key results of this assignment was that every day, for two weeks, I would go into Gelb Science Center to observe the seedlings’ growth and to water them. Despite occasional grumbling about the time it took away from other work or activities, checking the growth of my radishes allowed me to bring my familiar gardening practice from home to Andover. Looking



ELLE PARK / THE PHILLIPIAN

back on those two weeks, I realized that this time “taken away” was instead small, treasured moments where I could engage in something I loved, providing a break amidst my busy life of sports, homework, and clubs.

Whether gardening or something else entirely, cherishing small moments allows us to be happier and more balanced individuals. It can be a break from the stresses in our lives and offer us time to reflect on our thoughts, something we often neglect to do in the turbulence of life. Additionally, it can offer us a change of environment from something we are working on, and lead to new inspiration. Oftentimes, I’ve found myself in

my family’s garden, alone with my thoughts, and realized a new idea for a piece of writing. Other times, I’ve found a solution to a math problem I had been struggling with for hours, one that I otherwise would still be blankly staring at on a screen.

With our busy lives at Phillips Academy Andover, it might seem hard and even ridiculous to set aside time for personal leisure. We stay up late studying, often sacrificing sleep, breakfast, or quality time with friends. However, just as too little sleep is shown to impact our performance, feeling that we lack enough time for ourselves can contribute to stress and influence us as well. By

setting aside small parts of our day, even if it is just replacing ten minutes of studying, we can eliminate a portion of this

Whether gardening or something else entirely, cherishing small moments allows us to be happier and more balanced individuals.

stress and give ourselves time to reflect. If we become more balanced from these moments, it is not time “wasted,” but rather time that can improve our per-

formance. Small moments of joy will help make us less stressed for the exams and social life at Andover.

Growing those radishes made me realize that I have often forgotten the importance of these small moments. Those many years wandering those garden paths and watering the seedlings has revealed a secret I have not realized until now — that I was gardening, not only for the plants, but for myself.

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# Romance is Alive and Well



I love reading, so obviously I’ve heard of Emily Henry. Her name has become its own subgenre of romance books (seriously, I’ve heard someone describe a new release as “Emily Henry-esque”), characterized by her artsy covers and swoon-worthy book boyfriends. Ironically, although I’ve heard so much about Emily Henry, I’ve never read an Emily Henry book in my life. See, I love reading, but I’m not a romance reader. I like classics and literary fiction, anything with history, creative nonfiction, and practically every genre under the sun—but not romance. The romance genre often seems entrenched in pink, fun, flirt, and a little bit of delusion, something I’d like to push back on. If being a reader of romance demotes being feminine as something without depth, what does that imply about women in general? While I’ve never particularly liked reading romance, I’m obsessed with rom-coms on film. Does it make sense? Probably not, but there’s something about the faster pace of the fluffy ones and the misrepresented nature of the more symbolic ones that makes it the perfect genre. It was only when I watched the movie adaptation of one of Emily Henry’s most popular novels “People We Meet on Vacation”



ERIC YANG / THE PHILLIPIAN

that I realized romance books could also have complexity as well as make you believe in love. I found out Tom Blyth and Emily Bader would star in the film in 2024 and, as I had seen and enjoyed previous projects by both, I was thrilled. Bader had already worked with romance, and I had no doubt Blyth would be an excellent leading man in a romantic comedy, although I wasn’t sure of what a romance book adaptation would yield. The day the movie premiered on Netflix, I jumped at the chance to watch it. Even with an Andover student’s busy schedule, I have continued to rewatch “People We Meet on Vacation” every weekend, including this Sunday with my roommate, when I realized I had to write about it. After so many Friday movie nights rewatching 90s and 2000s romantic comedies, reminiscing on a time I can never claim, I have a 2020s rom com to call my own. “People We Meet on Vacation,” you will always be famous. The film is a highly realistic love story, which

lends itself to coming across beautifully and poignantly on both the page and the screen.

The first time I watched “People We Meet on Vacation,” I was slightly nervous. I had never been a fan of romance books because I felt I couldn’t focus on a romance for hundreds of pages and found the many that were recommended slightly shallow. I had given them a try many times because I was a firm believer that books, as opposed to movies, provide more vivid portrayals of stories. If I loved rom-coms on film so much, why couldn’t I love their literary counterparts just as much? However, these initial feelings melted seeing one of my favorite actors Tom Blyth on my computer screen, portraying Alex Nilsen, the practical, seemingly boring and uptight, male lead of the movie. I had never experienced Alex before, as would the readers of Henry’s book, but I thought Blyth personified awkward apprehension and seemed so in love with Emily Bader’s character Poppy.

The key dynamic of “People We Meet on Vacation” centers on Poppy’s outgoing and exuberant personality and her love of exploration and travel in contrast with Alex’s aforementioned personality and rooted lifestyle in their hometown of Linfield, Ohio. The movie flashes back and forth between the past, where every summer, Poppy and Alex met for an exotic trip to commemorate their friendship, and the future where they reunite at Alex’s brother’s wedding. The masterful portrayals of the two contrasting personalities that seemed to jump off the screen by Bader and Blyth felt so human, something my roommate pointed out to me during her first watch this Sunday.

However, I felt the main reason Alex and Poppy felt so human was Emily Henry’s style of writing them. They were just normal people. That’s when I realized what her appeal was. Emily Henry books must not be shallow, stupid, commercialized romances, but stories that real people can see themselves in. There’s no delusion to Emily Henry—in a way, she’s telling a story that could very well hap-

I was a firm believer that books, as opposed to movies, provide more vivid portrayals of stories

pen to me or you. There’s a line Alex says in the movie that resonated with me. “Love was never our problem.” Alex says this to Poppy as he breaks up with her before leaving her on the dance floor alone. Poppy is devastated, but of course, he’s right. The pair spent years as friends, with romantic feelings lingering under the surface. They had always loved each other, even when they were friends, but

they were interested in different and often conflicting, lifestyles. The story then results in compromise and acceptance, with Alex and Poppy reveling in their differences and how they compounded into love, and creating a life that fit both of them. It is the most realistic love story I have ever experienced, and I owe it to Emily Henry, the pinnacle of the modern version of romance I disliked.

My hope is that “People we Meet on Vacation” will also teach people that stories about romance aren’t always some fluffy, girly fantasy. Sure, there are elements of that, but love is one of the most realistic representations of the human experience and something universally understood, although never perfectly described. Alex and Poppy from the film are about as close as we can get to a textbook definition on true love, love that’s real and relatable. Women who read romance books or watch rom-coms, whether they’re stupid or meaningful, should be free to enjoy them, without being stereotyped as lacking intelligence. Rom-coms are back and better than ever, all thanks to romance books which have grown in quality as the quality of romance films has declined. This bridging of worlds brings me, a movie rom-com lover, into the fray of the romance novel world, and hopefully introduces strictly romance book lovers (no pun intended) to the domain of movie rom-coms. This coming weekend, you can find me in my room as usual, but instead of watching “People we Meet on Vacation” for the umpteenth time, I’ll be reading it.

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# Kington’s Announcement Launches Search Process for New Head

Continued from A1, Column 5

by April, you’ve got a job description that’s posted, and then the search committee spends April, May, June, July, working very hard to meet. The whole goal would be that a person who is really happily employed at a great institution can give them close to an academic years’ notice. The search committee does the work, comes down to two or three finalists, and the board votes. The search firm will help interview lots of constituents, so they’ll want to come to campus and talk to faculty,” said Falls.

Falls said the board also plans

to solicit community input as part of the search process, including feedback from students.

“They want to talk to some cohort of students to feel what the students think. A good search is also a moment to reflect as a community where we are and where we want to go... I vaguely remember sitting in Commons at an open table and students could just come talk. That’s one way that works pretty well. I could imagine surveys... But, yes, there will be an intentional effort to get a broad based understanding of what students think,” said Falls.

Kington said he will remain deliberately removed from the selection process. He added that

he does not plan an extended or highly public departure.

“One responsibility that is unambiguously the board’s is selecting and hiring the [HOS] so that the outgoing person doesn’t unduly influence the selection of the next person. I’m going to have more than an arm’s length between me and the process,” said Kington.

Kington continued, “I’m not one for a long goodbye... Leaving will be on my terms and it’s going to be low-key. I’m going to literally pack up stuff, close the door, turn off the lights, and have a clean desk for the next Head.”

# Students Predict Results of Super Bowl LX

Continued from A1, Column 2

stats and everything show otherwise,” said Takeuchi.

She continued, “The Seahawks are for some reason a really underrated team. No one ever has faith in the Seahawks... I know maybe two other Seahawks fans on campus. And then there’s been one [alumnus] that I’ve had some conversations with. So there’s really not many of us, but I think people will respect us more once the Seahawks win the Super Bowl and prove that we can.”

Tyler Baty ’27, who hails from California, professed support for the Seahawks. He also predicted a victory for the Seahawks.

“It’s obviously the Super Bowl, so it’ll be a little closely contested. [But it will be] one-sided as in there will be a clear winner. I don’t even think this is going to go to overtime. I think this is going to be four quarters and done. I believe in [Seahawks quarterback] Sam Darnold and what he has going on [in Seattle] and [Seahawks wide receiver] Jackson Smith-Njigba. They have what it takes to take it all the way,” said Baty.

Even as a Patriots fan, Jedward Sanchez ’29 shared his belief that the Seahawks would outperform the Patriots in the Super Bowl.

“Although I am a Patriots fan, I do not think they will pull out with this [win] this year. The Seahawks are just a better team in general, with their strong defense and offense. So I’m predicting a score of 10 to 28 [in a] Seahawks [victory],” said Sanchez.

Despite being from Atlanta, Brayden Ko ’28 discussed how he supports the Patriots due to living in Massachusetts. However, he

noted that he did not have especially strong feelings regarding the game.

“I’m not from here, but since I am living in Massachusetts, [my] heart is telling me to go with the Patriots, and I do want the Patriots to win, but at the same time, I wouldn’t mind seeing the Seahawks win as well...I’m from Atlanta, and [the Atlanta Falcons] have never won a Super Bowl and we’ve lost to the Patriots in the infamous 28 to 3 game where we were up by 25, and we lost the game in overtime,” said Ko.

Although she does not follow football, Hannah Jung ’28 mentioned that she occasionally tunes in for the halftime show due to its cultural significance.

“Since I was a kid, my family would just always pull up the halftime shows and not watch the actual football part because it was kind of like watching like the Oscars or the Grammys. We were more interested in the pop culture aspects of the entire thing and not football the sport itself...[I also watch it] to be able to talk about it with friends later on because it’s a really big part of the culture here,” said Jung.

Ren Kilic ’29, a New York Jets fan, considers himself a minority among football fans on campus. However, he highlighted that the true beauty of the Super Bowl does not depend on one’s favorite team making it to the finale or whether one regularly follows football.

“[The Super Bowl’s important] because it’s a time where you can sit and watch a game with other people, and you’re together with people because you’re rooting for a team together. Or even if they’re not rooting for the same team, just fun to have friendly competition [and] keep spirits high,” said Kilic.

# The OWHL’s Evolution Into a Beloved Campus Staple

SARAH SUN &  
JEREMIAH NUÑEZ

On any given day, students drift through the Oliver Wendell Holmes Library (OWHL), whether in the morning with coffee cups in hand, clustering around the tables for group projects in the afternoon, or settling into the Garver Room (Silent) at night. Over the years, the OWHL has become a space woven into students’ daily lives at Andover.

The OWHL has evolved alongside broader changes in how students study and socialize. Camille Torres Hoven, Director of the OWHL, explained that this shift reflects a reimagining of the library’s role on campus.

“Over the years, the OWHL has become much more of a student-centered space. Long before my time, librarians were stationed on floors and in Garver to monitor students and control noise. Today, we allow some of those spaces to be louder—not because we aren’t an academic space, but because the library is now more inclusive of clubs, games, and community activity. It no longer requires constant monitoring to ensure that only traditional academic work is happening,” wrote Torres Hoven in an email to *The Phillipian*.

This evolution is especially apparent to alumni who experienced earlier cultures and configurations of the library.



COURTESY OF THE OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES LIBRARY ARCHIVE

A photo of students studying in Silent, sourced from the OWHL archives.

Heidi Wall ’94, Instructor in Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science, reflected on how the OWHL functioned during her time as a student and how technological changes have reshaped the space.

“I studied in the library but it was also a place I could go where I knew I would see my friends... If I needed to get work done, I would go to Silent and sometimes the stacks. Both downstairs and upstairs tended to be pretty social. There was also a computer center in the basement of the library, so I would go there to work on papers... The addition of the Makerspace has been a huge change and the evolution of technology over the years has changed a lot of things. Many books have been removed (stacks) and we don’t need a computer lab

anymore!” wrote Wall in an email to *The Phillipian*.

Beyond study and socialization, the OWHL’s archives also provide a gateway to Andover’s institutional memory. For Mayen Etuk ’26, after an early encounter with the archives left a lasting impression, the OWHL became an indispensable resource for her historical research.

“When I was little, and I came to the school for the first time, I mistakenly ventured to the top floor. I was like, ‘What is this? Why does it say archives? Why does this exist?’ And then it made me realize that not only is the library a hub for the future and the present, [it is] also a hub for the past,” said Etuk.

She continued, “I was looking to do a project on Andover’s history with South Af-



A.WANG/THE PHILLIPIAN

Students continue to use Garver Room to study during their free time.

rican apartheid, and whether there are people available. So I emailed the archivist, asking and inquiring as to what resources were already available within the archives, and she sent me a few documents. The archives have a policy where they only release certain things 30 years after [their publication]. A lot of the documents I was requesting luckily enough had just been released. I was able to get access to a few documents. It was pretty cool to peer into Andover before.”

Many current students use the OWHL to both study and spend time with friends. Camden Schopler ’27 described how she moves between those activities.

“I’m always studying or socializing. I go there to study, but then I’ll also go there to

play cards with my friends or hang out and talk. I like that students can just go to the OWHL to socialize if they’re not in Silent rather than being forced to study or read. It makes the OWHL a more lively spot on campus,” said Schopler.

Torres Hoven noted that this balance is central to the OWHL’s culture, describing it as an informal space where students can be themselves without fear of judgment.

“At the OWHL, students don’t have to worry about being graded for their behavior. It’s a space where you can work, study, laugh, have fun, goof off a bit, and still be productive—and, most importantly, a place where you can just be yourself,” said Torres Hoven.

# The Behind-the-Scenes of the Weekender

OLIVIA TEMPLE  
& KAI OBATA

The Weekender, a three-columnned, colored flyer sent by email to the inbox of all Andover students on Thursdays, outlines campus events taking place over the weekend. Coordinated by the staff of the Student Activities Office, it displays any and all campus happenings submitted (on time).

In an email to *The Phillipian*, Stephanie Cormier, Student Activities Coordinator, outlined the process that shuttles events from submission to display in the Weekender. She went further into depth on the needs the timeline meets.

“Events are submitted by noon on Wednesdays and compiled in chronological order. Any submitted ads are put into a template. Any event that doesn’t send in a flyer gets a flyer made. A draft is shown at a Thursday morning admin meeting, final edits happen in the afternoon, and then

it’s sent out to the community at 3pm,” wrote Cormier in an email to *The Phillipian*. “By 12:01pm [on Wednesday] the information already received is being put together and the dominoes are set and ready to go, so-to-speak.”

Cormier noted that in past years, art-interested students have been involved in creating the visuals for the Weekender, and photography students would submit photos to be the Weekender’s header in hopes of extra credit. She explained her enjoyment of student collaboration, and encouraged anyone interested in design or photography to reach out to help with the project.

“It’s awesome when we have student helpers who aren’t in a Wednesday sport who like and know PhotoShop and want to come and knock it out so I only need to edit Thursday morning. And I mean A-W-E-S-O-M-E. If anyone out there is interested in helping, email me,” wrote Cormier.

Cormier continued, “I usually pull stock images for the header

image, but would love for people to submit their own images and if they want photo credit or not is up to them. There was a time when photography students would get extra credit if I picked their photo for the header. I didn’t know it at the time, but when I found out it made me smile. I liked the engagement... Someone should bring it up with the photography teachers and we can do it again.”

Evie Kim ’27 is a board member of Asian Society, which submits events to the Weekender several times throughout the school year. Kim noted the increase in attendance when hosting events that are submitted on the Weekender.

“Since Asian Society is an affinity space, our bi-weekly emails or meetings only go out by email. I feel like those often have a really different turnout than our events shown on the Weekender because [Weekender events] are usually open to everyone,” said Kim.

Merson Tang ’29 expressed interest in a greater variety of

events in the Weekender. He suggested more student-centered gatherings for studying, which would allow socialization and productivity at the same time.

“I wish study groups were available, like if there’s an event where people can come together to study for a specific subject or for a specific class. I know that we have the Academic Skill Center and peer tutoring, but if there was a place where people can socialize while being productive and being able to help each other, that would be an event that I would go to,” said Tang.

Christopher Capano, Director of Student Activities, emphasized that he enjoys seeing planned events become a success among the students. He underscored his openness to student feedback in order to better tailor events to students’ desires.

“One of the most fun parts of my job is interacting with students at events and hearing if they like it or don’t like it, or if we can maybe change something about it... It doesn’t hurt my feel-

ings when kids don’t show up at an event. I just wish they would tell me why they didn’t come so I could plan something better,” said Capano.

In Cormier’s opinion, one of the most rewarding parts of working on the Weekender is experiencing interaction from the student both with the Weekender. Cormier outlined that these are often small tokens of appreciation or fun replies back to weekly easter eggs that arrive in her inbox, often suggesting something for the next week’s layout.

“It’s really just the little way people (especially students) engage with the Weekender that I love. I feel so behind-the-scenes sometimes that it’s nice getting an email that’s declaring ‘The answer to the riddle is this’ or ‘I LOVE the quote you put in this week...here’s an idea for next!’ or ‘more corgi pictures,’ or the best ever, which is, ‘I HAVE AN IDEA FOR AN EVENT... can we meet?’” wrote Cormier.



# 10 Questions with Ethan Liu '26

REPORTING BY SIMRAN SHAH & HELEN XIONG

*Ethan Liu '26 is a senior from Tallahassee, Florida. During his involvement with The Phillipian, Liu has shot the majority of the portraits for “10 Questions” features. Passionate about photography, he serves as the head of Your PA Memories and is a board member of the Andover Moviemakers Club. Equally dedicated to music, Liu plays piano and saxophone in several ensembles on campus, including his band Goose&Moose. Recently, Liu was recognized by YoungArts for his performance in Jazz Piano. In his free time, Liu enjoys running and biking.*

**When and why did you first become interested in photography?**

Throughout my life, art has [played] a big part because my dad’s an artist and my mom is a musician. I’ve loved doing both music and drawing and ink brush painting when I was younger. During quarantine, I would spend all my days outside in the woods in Florida. I would bring my camera along and begin capturing moments I found beautiful. That translated [when] coming to Andover. [I am] still trying to capture stuff that is beautiful to me, but in the context of the Andover community. I found my way into The Phillipian as a freshman, and ever since, “10 Questions” has been a way for me to capture the personalities of the teachers that are featured each week.

**How has working at The Phillipian impacted your photography experience?**

“10 Questions” has been very interesting for me because photography was always me going into the woods, or me in the streets of Boston doing street photography. “10 Questions” has been a more conscious human interaction aspect of photography because every week, I get assigned a different teacher. I only get five to ten minutes, and I want to take the photo that brings the best light out of them. I’ve tried and experimented with different ways of giving advice and getting close with them in that short amount of time so that they can feel comfortable in front of the camera. I’m like, ‘just pretend you’re talking to a student or making a joke to a student,’ and that usually gets them to laugh. Then, clicking the camera at the right moment has always been the way for me to capture these faculty in their best light. I’m very grateful for meeting so many different people through this.

**When did you first become interested in music, particularly in instruments such as the saxophone, piano, and violin?**

I started piano at three and violin at seven. I played [saxophone] in middle school. My childhood years were filled with music. Jazz has become my passion because [of] meeting friends, like my best friend [Brandon Fu '25] and others in my band called Goose&Moose, and being able to play and perform



C.ZHOU/THE PHILLIPIAN

for so many people and bring so much joy to people. [That] has been my passion for playing music.

**What is your fondest memory involving music at Andover?**

The highlight of my music career is always the Den Show in May. My band, Goose&Moose, rehearses a lot, many weeks in advance. We prepare around thirty pop tunes, jazz tunes, [and] sing-along songs. Our band can play it in a way where we can showcase our talents, improvised solos, and get the crowd’s energy to go crazy. It feels surreal coming from a classical music background, [to be] able to play for such an energized crowd who’s cheering, laughing, and smiling. That has been a dream of mine since I was a kid. Being able to do that with my band has been so fulfilling.

**How do you blend your two disciplines? What are the similarities and differences between photography and jazz?**

All the art forms that I like to partake in seem fluid to me, no matter what form it takes. For me, it’s kind of a way of expressing myself, my stories, [and] my identity. Also film, making short movies, has been a way for me to bridge all these different aspects like photography, music [through] the film scores, poetry where I can write beautiful narratives, and also acting.

**What advice would you give to students who want to pursue the arts?**

Be confident. When I was a freshman, a lot of nervousness was there because I felt like all these seniors knew what they were doing. They were

doing so many things, and how could I do that? It seemed almost impossible. Just give it time, explore new things as well, and eventually, things will come together. For me, that has been finding my space in different communities, communities that I thought I would be in, and also ones that I did not expect myself to be in.

**Where do you draw inspiration from?**

Life. Just existing, looking around, being appreciative of everything that goes around me, of the people and the environment. A lot of that stems from my background in Buddhism. I’ve done some work here at Andover, trying to guide some meditation sessions and expose Buddhism to the community. For me, as a self-practice, it has helped me go through my daily life with gratitude and openness.

**What do you want to carry with you from Andover after you graduate?**

Coming from Tallahassee, Florida, and growing up not knowing about these boarding schools, the moment that I stepped on campus and saw how broad and different the views of my peers are, that’s what I want to stick with me. I want to continue to remind myself that there are so many different perspectives out there and people with different backgrounds. Yet, we can come together to create such meaningful things. I’ve seen that happen, especially in the arts or music. We might share completely different backgrounds and experiences with art, but when we come together and create something meaningful, that’s beautiful.

**What other hobbies do you enjoy?**

I love to run. I love to go back and forth. I love to bike through the woods. That’s been a way of exploring. At Andover, it’s been hard for me to explore, so that’s why I do so much art. Art is a way of exploring myself. I used to run on the indoor track team as well, and that has been fun.

**What is your favorite book and why?**

I really love this book called “Ender’s Game.” “Ender’s Game” is about this child hero who is confused about his actions. He’s confused because he saves humanity, but kills a whole other alien species. He spends the rest of his life traveling through space at light speed so he can live through more than two thousand years of human existence to save this alien species. For me, reading that in seventh grade was so eye-opening and gave me a lot of inspiration. Sometimes, I look at the stars at night when I’m going back from Falls and imagine myself out there. That book talked about humanity being a multiplanetary species, and that’s cool to me.



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# Free Skate Brings Students Onto the Ice

IAN S. KIM & WINSTON WU

Last Saturday evening, students gathered at Andover’s Free Skate event, waiting in line for skates before joining friends on the rink. Though attendance this week was lower than usual, students still described the event as a fun and much-needed break from academics.

Simba Xiong ’28 found the event welcoming to beginner skaters such as himself, and he intended to attend another if it is offered again.

“You get to skate with all your friends, and you can chat and talk about anything. This is a really good event to meet new people and just have fun in general. Some of my friends told me I should go because it’s really fun. At first, I was hesitant because I was afraid I might slip. In a way, [it felt welcoming to students], because there are tools you can hold onto so you don’t fall.

But I had to wait quite a long time to get skates that fit my feet properly, so that was a potential downside,” said Xiong.

Another attendee, Benjamin Levchin ’28, commented that the event was a highlight in the Weekender. Levchin also expressed disappointment with the wait times to obtain skates.

“To get onto the ice, you need skates, and it’s so bad that some people end up going onto the ice with skates that don’t fit properly. My feet have gotten friction burns because I had to wear skates that were too big. It’s really hard to find skates that fit. Some people even go onto the ice without skates because of how difficult it is to get them,” said Levchin.

Some students pointed to small changes that could improve the experience. Bryan Bu ’26 noted that he would like to have seen food at the venue.

“Helping my friends learn to skate for the first time was

the most memorable part of the event... Not wearing helmets was really fun, although there was no food this time [unlike last year]. Food would have made the event much better,” said Bu.

Ethan Liu ’26 described the Free Skate as a welcoming event, highlighting how students of different skill levels helped one another throughout the night and recalling that he first learned to skate at a similar campus event.

“I’m from Florida, so I’m not really good at skating. I’ve only skated through the events that the school has had here. But one of my friends had not skated before. And it was just fun helping him out. It’s just a fun night in general... I remember the open skate lower year for me. And that was really a fun experience too, because that was where I learned to first skate. It’s scary, but also fun,” said Liu.

Christopher Capano, Director of Student Activities, mentioned how the goal of



C.ZHOU/THE PHILLIPIAN  
Students step onto the ice during Saturday’s Free Skate.

the event was to provide students with an opportunity to have fun and connect. Capano also discussed how the event needed a chaperone to supervise, which on this occasion was John Rogers from the Chemistry department.

“We like events where students can gather, and we love it when students try new things. If students are from New England, they likely grew up skating, but if they are from somewhere else, this might have been their first time to try it. [We’re] trying to give students options and have fun.”

# Students Take On the Long Weekend

REPORTING BY ADELYNE LIU & TEDDY STEINERT

Last week, students were granted a three-day weekend, with classes off on Monday, February 2. Some students used the long weekend to relax with friends and explore local cities and areas, while others went home to enjoy time with family.

Teddy Blum ’29 (he/him)

“My plans were to go home to New York, Millbrook in the Hudson Valley, relax and sleep a lot, eat good food, and spend time with my family. We cooked together, moved furniture, did some chores, and had a nice time talking with each other. We had fresh bolognese sauce [with] pasta and smoked salmon with bagels. It was really good for me to come home and relax before the second half of the term to recharge.”

Philip Molina ’28 (he/him)

“I live in New York, so my family drove up four hours so that we could spend the whole day together. We left at about 12:00 p.m., and we went out to shop and eat, which was nice. We got to spend some great family time. We came back at about 6:00 p.m. to attend the Catholic Mass at Andover. As someone who experiences a lot of fatigue driving back and to New York, I was super happy that they came up instead because personally, I feel super tired after the long drive. I knew I wouldn’t have been as productive as I was staying here. For me, it worked out really nicely, but I’m also jealous of the people who did go home because that sounded really fun too.”



COURTESY OF TEDDY BLUM  
Blum poses cheerfully with his family member.



COURTESY OF NINA TORRENS  
Huang (left), Mercado (middle), and Torrens (right) pose for a mirror selfie at Glossier in Boston.

Nina Torrens ’26 (she/her)

“I wanted to do something fun, so I ended up going to Boston with two of my friends, Michael [Huang ’26] and [Magdalena Mercado ’26], and we went to get Malatang at YGF in Boston near Newbury Street. We did a little bit of shopping, walking around, and then we got dinner at Eataly. On Monday, I went to school, and I got acupuncture, which was really nice and relaxing. Then, I went to [Pan Athletic Center] with my friend, Yumi [Lai ’27], and we danced for a couple hours and choreographed. I went to another dance class at my dance company, where we did a conditioning class and then a stretch and technique class, which is really fun, and I got to see all my dance friends... I was able to be productive and still have fun with my friends, and have a more relaxing weekend, which I haven’t been able to have in a while. I know that these last few weeks of the term are also going to be rough, so it’s nice to have almost a ‘mini break.’”

Maddie Yang ’29 (she/her)

“On Saturday, I had a swim meet. It was an away meet against Deerfield, so I was gone basically the entire day. After that, my dorm had ‘Make Your Own Açaí Bowls,’ so we did that as well. I’m going to meet my mom because she’s coming over, which is really fun, and we’re just going to hang out in the town of Andover. She’s going to take me out a bunch, and we’re going to stay at the Andover Inn. I feel like these plans are the best option because I didn’t really have much to do, and also I’m really excited that my mom’s coming because I haven’t seen her for a long time.”

Claire Bancroft ’28 (she/her)

“My plans over the long weekend started out on Friday, where I had a Nordic race. It was a classic-style 5K for Nordic, and that was very exciting because it was on a nearby course that we had done before. I was able to compare times, and that went successful, so I was ready for a great weekend. On Saturday, I spent the night at my local boarder friend, Julia Xu [’28]’s house, with Hannah Jung [’28]. On Monday, we came back from campus and picked up [Maxie Wu ’28], and went skiing. We went up to New Hampshire to Loon Ski Resort. Since we’re all in the Nordic skiing team together, we would be able to spend time doing not just Nordic skiing. Since Julia had done alpine skiing and I had done snowboarding, [we were] able to get on the snow and do things outside of sports that we all know that we really enjoy.”



COURTESY OF CLAIRE BANCROFT  
Bancroft’s view of the mountains from the Loon Ski Resort.



[REDACTED]

Nefarious Actions During Third Straight Long Weekend

Upon receiving a third straight long weekend, students did not know what to do with all this newfound free time. Confused by this foreign concept, they turned radical. The student meeting of the SDS (Susie's and Den Supporters) took place in a dimly lit room in Bulfinch. At the head of the table, a masked figure pulled out a photo of Dr. Kington — one that showed him announcing the 2026 Head of School Day. It was met with tears. “¡Viva la revolución!” The student who said this had, in fact, DoorDashed during the snowstorm, dampening his statement a little.

The SDS soon found themselves in cahoots with the Board of Trustees in the plot to find Kington's successor. They had conflicting priorities. While the board cared about “important” things like Andover's #6 ranking on Niche, the students brought forth real issues, like the lack of flushing in Rockwell bathrooms and the decomposing body smell in the OWHL bathroom. A few errant students thought about falsely accusing Dr. Kington of bullying students, but that idea was shot down as everyone agreed that Dr. Kington could never connect with the students enough for that to be believable. Now, the hunt for Kington's successor is on. Because Dr. Kington was Andover's first ever automaton head of school, the next person (?) will have a tall order to fill. Unfortunately, there are no more long weekends, so the board of trustees has free rein to choose.

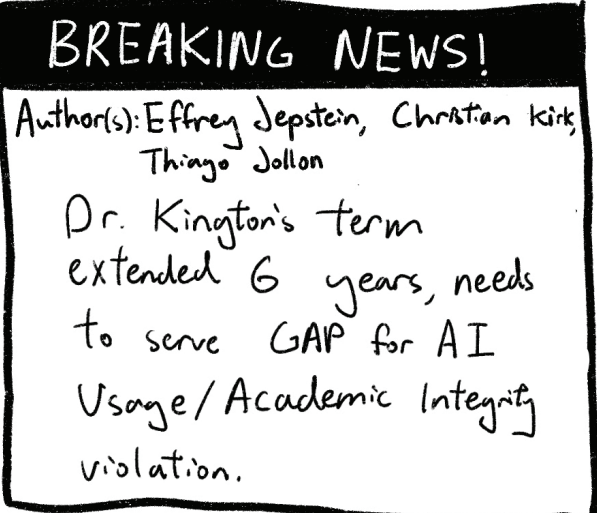
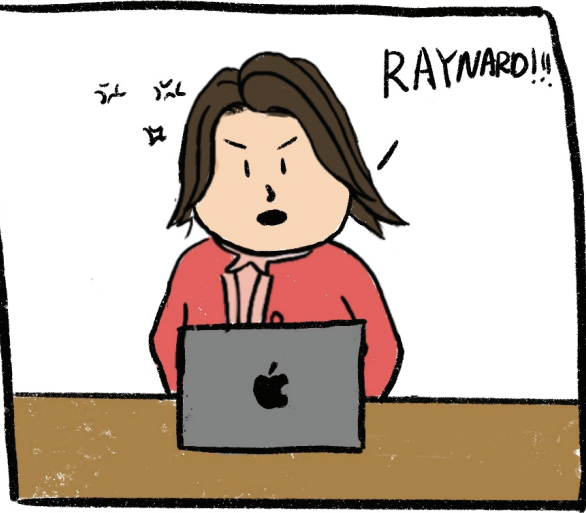
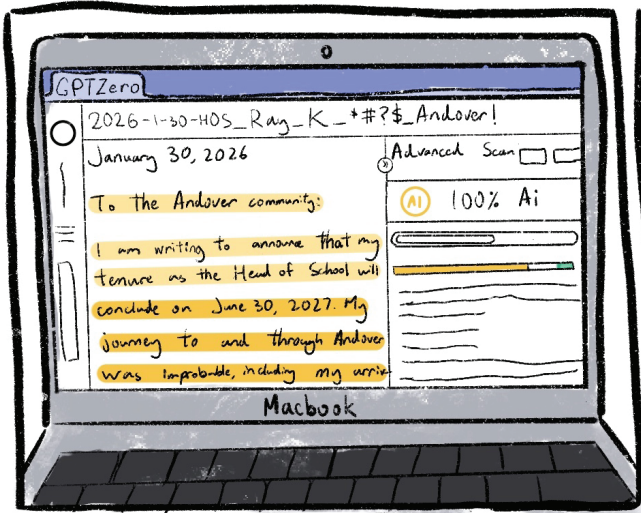
Week's Top Headlines

- J.K. Rowling comes forward and issues a statement: “I wrote the Harry Potter series so that kids from different places could experience magic ... that was not one of the intended places.”
- Sykes Wellness Center and Borden Athletic Trainers tell Lindsey Vonn that she can not participate in the Olympics: “That bruise on your hand looks realllllly bad...”
- 1200 students submit Mid-Year Reflections, suspiciously claiming their problems were solved by Elon Musk.
- GSA and Catholic Student Union conversation ends in 1st Round Knockout
- Gavin McKenna's promising young hockey career cut short; former Eighth Page Editor to fill role
- Student attempts to “rawdog” 75-minute class without NYT games



KELVIN MA / THE PHILLIPIAN

Back for More



NATHAN WU / THE PHILLIPIAN

Overheard On The Paths

“Heyyyy... can you sign this for me? Thanksssss...”

“Girls are not allowed to play Clash Royale. It’s MY safe haven.”

“This new file release has me worried bro...”

“Wrestling isn’t gay!”

“He’s like Clavicular and Marlon’s third, horribly ugly brother.”

“Just like consent, pronouns can be revoked at any point.”

“Oh ok cus you know dada.”

“What is Clairo’s real name?”

Snowstorm Disaster

During January’s snowstorm, the entirety of Bertha Bailey House was left buried completely under snow. Already in the middle of nowhere, OPP forgot about the existence of this stack. It took nearly a month before the school realized they were missing nine seniors, because they were not nominated for any Senior Superlatives. It took a further week for the school to send a rescue team. We suspect this is because the school’s billion-dollar endowment is to be used exclusively on one ply toilet paper.

Class meetings that week included a mandatory freshman shovel sesh, lasting a grueling 45 minutes. It was NOT a Good Morning in Andover. Efforts unearthed only a single student: the sole member of the stack who was not a part of the distance running cult. The bodies of the diseased students were retrieved and used for a BIO100 lab where students had to determine their cause of death. A 6 constituted solving the case and arresting the killer (malnourishment), as well as ensuring that it never happened again (more expensive Den snacks). Later, after bribing the surviving student with a \$5 J.P. Licks kiddie-cup gift card, they agreed to give testimony on what really happened during that month. Allegedly, the trapped stack, after realizing the gravity of their situation, decided to distribute the nutritious 4th meal snacks of the last five months through a poker tournament. A wrestler and a distance runner split the final pot, ensuring that none of the food was ever eaten.





# The Phillippian SPORTS

Volume CXLIX | Number 2

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podamos lograr

February 6, 2026

## Depth, Discipline, and Dominance: Boys Squash Rolls Through a Statement Weekend

XAVIER HOWELL &  
ATHREYA YEGNESWARAN

SATURDAY 1/31	
Andover	7
Westminster/ Choate	0
WEDNESDAY 2/4	
Andover	7
Exeter	0

Boys Squash delivered a commanding weekend of results, sweeping Choate and Westminster on Saturday and Phillips Exeter Academy (Exeter) on Wednesday. Through its wins, the team reinforced a clear identity of disciplined shot selection, improved mental toughness, and a new focus on fitness as it heads towards nationals.

Andover opened with emphatic 7-0 wins over Choate and Westminster. While Westminster sat lower in the ladder and provided fewer key matchups, the team treated them with the same seriousness as any other. Franklin Kozol '27 praised the team for its consistent success.

“Seeing lower numbers on those easier matches against Westminster is pretty good, as it’s been pretty team-wide. The biggest battle has been managing our errors and what we can control,” said Kozol.

According to Kozol, Jonathan Xu '28 stood out against Choate. Xu played a familiar opponent, Elias Starr. He controlled his match from the opening rally and maintained a tone that was emulated across the ladder.

“Most people thought that match was going to be a little bit closer than it was, but [Jon-



J. CHAN/THE PHILLIPIAN

Kevin Wu '29 leans in for a shot against his opponent.

athan] was pretty much in control. He was winning the mental battle and the physical battle. I’d say he’s the better squash player. I got to catch the third game. It was relatively close, like [five to five]. All of Elias’ attacks, [Jonathan] was picking up. It was clear Elias was in his own head, disappointed with how he’s playing,” said Kozol.

Another key contributor was Corey Shen '26, who handled one of the more experienced opponents the team faced over the weekend. Despite a handful of creative shots from the other side, Shen absorbed the pressure calmly and put on a performance that reflected the team’s

emphasis on staying steady regardless of opponent quality.

“The guy Corey played was hitting a few good shots, but he handled it pretty well. It was still an easy match. [His opponent] was hitting a couple lucky shots, but Corey was standing up to it as he does,” said Kozol.

The team rose to the moment in an electric atmosphere on the road against Exeter, completing a third 7-0 sweep. While many matches were decided quickly, the defining moment belonged to Ali Gamal '26. After falling behind late, he rallied back in front of a loud crowd, eventually closing out a dramatic game, demonstrating the team’s resili-

ent mindset.

“I didn’t see [Gamal’s] first game, but the score was 18-16, which is really close. And he was losing to someone who was rated below him, so it [was] just important for Ali to come back. And there [were] a lot of people watching so the atmosphere really picked up. Ali was down 10-6 in the fourth game, so if he lost, it would have gone to the fifth game. And Ali was visually really tired, but he somehow came back. [Boys Junior Varsity Squash] and [Boys and Girls] Squash were all cheering for Ali. It was incredible,” said Wu.

Xu further commented on the team’s preparation for its

matchup against Exeter. While Exeter was not a strong team, it was still thoroughly prepared to perform to its best abilities.

“We were going in expecting to win, but we weren’t underestimating them. We had to practice the day before. We’re just trying to go there, dominate, and get back home quickly and do some homework. We did that. We crushed them,” said Xu.

The team’s next matchup against St. George’s on Wednesday will be its last before High School Nationals.

## Girls Hockey Dominates Against BB&N, Deerfield, and Tabor Academy

EVA JACKSON

FRIDAY 1/30	
Andover	4
BB&N	1
SATURDAY 1/31	
Andover	4
Deerfield	1
WEDNESDAY 2/4	
Andover	3
Tabor Academy	2

Girls Hockey (15-1-1) defeated BB&N last Friday, followed by a decisive win over Deerfield on Saturday, before securing an overtime victory against Tabor Academy on the road this Wednesday.

The team had their sixth away game at BB&N during the opposing team’s cancer awareness event, creating a lively and energetic atmosphere. Vanessa Hall '28 commented on the special environment at the rink.



J. CHAN/THE PHILLIPIAN

Jackie Louie '29 (left) and Liz Averill '29 (right) chase after the puck.

“The boys’ team played before, so they and [the crowd] all stayed for us. There were also people around the rink, because the rink is a common area on their campus. So it was lively, and it was just good energy,” said Hall.

Despite the energetic atmosphere at the rink, the team didn’t come out as strong as expected in the opening period. However, it quickly adjusted, correcting its energy as the game progressed. Hall reflected

on the slow start at BB&N and explained how the team used that experience to improve their performance in their following game against Deerfield.

“We came out as a whole, a little bit flat, but then the second and third, we really picked it up. One of the biggest takeaways is that we needed to come out stronger for the first period. In the Deerfield game, we came out very fast. So it was a nice change that we corrected from that day, which I think

helped us,” said Hall.

Without the same electric crowd present at BB&N, Andover relied on its own bench energy in its home game against Deerfield. Lauren Kennedy '28 described how this win against an opponent ranked sixth in NEPSAC Class A was a confidence booster and a standard for the remainder of the season.

“The bench made our own energy; we were all cheering for each other, keeping the vibes high, making [the energy] con-

tagious. Deerfield was a top-ranked team, so beating them by such a big margin was really good for us. Especially since we’re going into a stretch with really tough teams the last few weeks of the season. Beating Deerfield boosted our confidence; we showed ourselves the level we know we can play at,” said Kennedy.

The team carried its high level of play into Wednesday’s matchup against Tabor Academy, maintaining consistency throughout the game. Maya Kou '28 reflected on the team’s sustained effort as well as the Co-Captains’ and Seniors’ ability to lift the bench during low-energy stretches.

“We gave a full effort and were consistent in all 3 periods, and we made sure to backcheck and forecheck. We did what we needed to do. Our bench energy could have been better, but after the 3rd period, when we were tied going into overtime, our [Co-]Captains and our Seniors really stepped up, and encouraged us to have a much better attitude and to be cheering and screaming all on the bench,” said Kou.

Girls Hockey will next face New Hampton at home on Friday.



# Dominating the NEPSAC: Julian Rios '26 Leads with Experience and Passion

## AVIAD AWA

Co-Captain Julian Rios '26 is no stranger to the wrestling mat. Under the guidance of his father who used to wrestle in high school, Rios began his athletic journey at age three, officially beginning his wrestling career at age six. Toward the start of this season, he reached 100 career wins. He also ranked third in the 2025 National Prep Wrestling Championships, earning him his third All-American title. He is a three-time NEPSAC Class A and New England Prep champion. According to Sports Illustrated, Rios is currently ranked 27th nationally in the 126-pound division.

According to Rios, his family dynamic shaped his early exposure to the sport. His brother and father, specifically, guided him toward his love for wrestling.

“[My dad] always loved wrestling, so I’ve always been around the wrestling mat since I was younger. [When] I was really young, [I] didn’t want to wrestle. I was scared of the mat. Then one day, my brother and my dad kind of just put me on the mat when I was six years old at the Lowell Boys and Girls Club, and since then, I’ve been wrestling,” said Rios.



C. ZHOU/THE PHILLIPIAN

Initially, Rios powered through numerous years of wrestling with his competitive nature. He expanded on how his desire to improve as a wrestler has driven his involvement in the sport.

“I’m very competitive naturally, and I hate losing. I like seeing improvement, and I just fell in love with that. That’s my motivation to keep going. I want to be the best. I want to get better. I want to be as good as I can possibly be. Now it’s changed a little bit,

but those were the main reasons when I was younger,” said Rios.

In addition to setting the team standard, Rios draws out the best of his teammates in difficult moments. According to teammate Oliver Rodgers '28, Rios is motivational, inspiring his teammates with pep talks and encouragement, regardless of position on the team.

“He’s really good at riling you up ... He knows exactly what to say. He’s been in every situation

you’ve been in, and he knows exactly what to do, how to prepare for your next match, how to beat your opponent, and how to deal with a loss and move on. He’s really good at giving advice and leading the way,” said Rodgers.

Becoming a Co-Captain as an Upper, Rios models his leadership tactics on the team’s former leaders from his Junior and Lower years. Throughout his captainship, he has looked to emulate the uplifting energy that guided him as an underclassman.

“[My previous Co-Captains] made me assume that my role as a leader was to lead by example on the mat performance-wise. [They taught me] what it meant to perform at a high level, but also [how to best shape] my character. [I try to be] a leader inside and outside of the room, helping out my teammates whenever they ask for help, involving myself in the wrestling community and the team community and being very inclusive to everyone,” said Rios.

Rodgers also highlighted Rios’s defining quality: his humility. Even as one of the nation’s top high school wrestlers, he grows alongside his teammates, offering words of wisdom and encouragement rather than standing above them.

“[Rios is] another wrestler who’s just trying to get better

with you. He’s not acting like one of those captains who are like, ‘Oh, I’m so much better than you. Just listen to me.’ Although he is easily the best wrestler Andover has ever had, he’s there alongside you. He doesn’t try to be like, ‘Oh, I know better.’ He’s like, ‘This is why it works. This is how to get through something,’” said Rodgers.

Committed to wrestle at Stanford University’s Division I program, Rios expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to experience academics and athletics at an elite level.

“[Stanford University] offer[s] so many amenities to their athletes, and it’s really impressive how well [it] treat[s] them. That’s something I want to be a part of. The coach is making notions toward how he wants to grow the sport of wrestling at Stanford [University] and become one of the best [programs], and that’s something I want to contribute to. It feels noble, and it made me feel special that I could contribute to a greater cause of creating a better room and making my teammates better in general. I found that truly amazing. And again, with the benefits Stanford [University] gives to their athletes and the prestige of academics, it was really a no-brainer,” said Rios.

# Grounded Leadership: James Bae '26 Sets the Standard on the Mat

## WESLEY PHAM

Having joined Wrestling as a Junior, James Bae '26 has steadily developed into a leader both on and off the mat, shaping his approach to his captainship through his experience with teammates at every stage of the program. Now, in his final season, Bae holds a 12-5 record and serves as a steady presence in practices and meets.

Bae reflected on his early experiences on the team, which he noted initially felt nerve-racking. He shared how his experiences have shaped the way he leads and supports the team.

“One of the benefits of starting wrestling as a [Junior] is that I know what it’s like to be new on the team. Wrestling, especially, is one of the sports where it’s pretty daunting at first, especially when you’re new and you’re in front of a crowd, duking it out. It was [daunting] for me, at least. As a leader, I’m pretty intentional about trying

to make sure people are comfortable. I know how uncomfortable I was at first in Wrestling and how scared I was, so I try to look after the team and make sure they know they’re okay, because I’ve been in their shoes before,” said Bae.

Hendrick Chen '29 emphasized how Bae’s reputation as a Co-Captain goes beyond simply being a skilled wrestler and extends to being a grounded, relatable teammate who leads by setting examples.

“He has a really good technique. His work is great. But it’s not only about being skillful. I’d say it’s the fact that he is so down to earth with us instead of trying to set himself up as a superior. He also takes on that role by leading through his work as well. He works hard,” said Chen.

Chen continued, “[Bae brings to Wrestling a] strong work ethic [and is] a supportive, good teammate. He doesn’t let anything break him down. He has a very strong mentality, and he keeps grinding.”



C. ZHOU/THE PHILLIPIAN

Shayan Ahmed '29 echoed these sentiments, emphasizing Bae’s ability to lead by example and explaining why his consistency and attitude have earned the respect of the team.

“He’s respected because he’s very consistent and leads by

example. He’s always working hard in practice and stays focused, which sets the standard for everyone else. He shows up every day and puts in the work and treats everyone with respect. That makes it easy for the team to trust him. On top of that, he’s always encouraging people. Whether it’s helping someone after a rough match or pushing them in practice, he’s constantly trying to bring the team up,” said Ahmed.

Bae’s impact is also profound in the way he supports his teammates individually. Chen expanded on Bae’s willingness to teach, and encouragement of others had made him a role model for wrestlers on the team.

“In my opinion, he’s both inspirational because he is willing to teach anybody. He’s patient enough to go through the moves with you. No matter how many times it takes you to do it, he’ll do it with you. That cements him as someone you want to look up to,” said Chen.

# Tasha Bohorad '26 Leads with Grit and Selflessness for Wrestling

## BENJAMIN KAZLOUSKI

Tasha Bohorad '26, Co-Captain of Wrestling, has participated in the sport throughout her four years at Andover. Although she had never played a combat sport, she was intrigued upon watching her club soccer teammates at wrestling practice, and decided to give it a try in her Junior year. After winning her first match with Andover, Bohorad was hooked on the sport.

Bohorad’s leadership philosophy centers on selflessness, shaped by the example set by older teammates during her early years on the team.

“The Seniors would work with me after practice every day on moves that I wanted to work on, and I want to be that person for other people. There are some Juniors on the team now who ask to stay after practice, and I’ll stay after practice as long as I can to help them with their moves,” said Bohorad.

Bohorad added that her leadership also extends to helping teammates navigate the mental demands of competition, particularly for younger wrestlers adjusting to the sport.

“I used to get really, really ner-



C. ZHOU/THE PHILLIPIAN

vous [before matches]. So I like to talk about the mental aspect, and how to have people calm their nerves and what they should be thinking about ... Not only do I help with the wrestling side, but I really want to be that person to tell people my experiences,” said Bohorad.

Wrestling Manager Ellen Mueller '26 has a distinct vantage point on the wrestling team. She pointed to Bohorad’s role in setting the tone at the start of practice.

“She’s always ready to get ev-

erybody moving and engaged [before practice]. She will make eye contact with people and snap everybody into shape, so we can all be ready for when the coaches are ready to start practice,” said Mueller.

Mueller added that Bohorad’s effort extends well beyond formal practice, as seen in the extra time Bohorad spends helping teammates one-on-one.

Mueller continued, “She’ll run little drills with people who have questions, and she’ll stay for another fifteen minutes, even

though it’s getting close to six o’clock. She stays and waits for some of the Juniors, answers their questions, and runs drills with them. She will talk or sit and answer questions after weigh-ins, and it’s really sweet to see because she’s always willing to help with questions.”

In competitive settings, Mueller observed how Bohorad consistently emphasizes encouragement over outcomes, fostering a sense of camaraderie across the team.

“During matches and meets, even if you don’t win, she is hyping you up. For her, as long as you try really hard, that is what’s most important. She puts in all her effort and encourages others to do the same, even if it doesn’t lead to the most success. For her, success is in the effort,” said Mueller.

Nicholas Marini '28 highlights how Bohorad keeps teammates accountable, both at the beginning and the end of practice.

“At the end of every practice, we get in a little circle. A day or two before a meet, she’s always pumping everyone up, giving tips, and telling them what they need to do to be better, and it’s extremely helpful. Also, at the beginning of practice, when we do push-ups, for example, she makes sure that

everyone’s doing them and not slacking off,” said Marini.

Bohorad said that her emphasis on intensity and effort is intentional, and that the team’s ability to match her energy motivates her to lead.

“I really value hard work and grit, which the team doesn’t lack at all. We’re one of the grittiest teams on campus. If you sign up for wrestling, yes, it’s going to be fun, but you’ll get only what you put into it. In practice, you’re working hard to make yourself better and make your partner better, but to do that, you have to be gritty. You have to be thinking about what you want to improve or how you can be better, and I think the team carries this aspect of hard work in everything it does, and that’s something that I’ve tried to do my whole life. It’s really enjoyable to be on a team that values hard work so much,” said Bohorad.

Although not currently committed to wrestling in college, Bohorad said she remains open to continuing the sport in the future.

“Girls’ wrestling is growing very quickly... if anything, I just really hope to build a program that’s gonna last, and especially [in] New England,” said Bohorad.



# More Than Wins: Ophelia Lee '26 Redefines Leadership

LUCY VINNAKOTA

Before coming to Andover as a Junior, Co-Captain Ophelia Lee '26 had never wrestled before. Yet, her background in Muay Thai sparked her interest in joining the team. Now, as a Wrestling Co-Captain, Lee leads with an emphasis on fostering connections among her teammates and promoting a hardworking atmosphere.

Lee did not find immediate success on the mat, enduring a difficult first season. Rather than discouraging her, she grew from her losses by training throughout the following summer.

“[In my first year,] I had one win with eleven losses, so not great. But then I joined my team back home at my local high school, and I trained with them over the summer. Because of that, I had a much better season the next year,” said Lee.

Remembering what encouraged her to continue competing in the sport, Lee shared that she prioritizes ensuring her teammates feel supported and explained how she works to create that environment.

“I am definitely trying to create a close-knit girls’ team. That is what really inspired me to stay in

the sport. We would go to dinner together as a girls’ team for everyone to get to know each other, and I try to get to know all of them on an individual basis as best as I can, being there to support them in practice, helping them after practice, and also during matches. At the end of the day, I want everyone to have a good time wrestling,” said Lee.

Regardless of the sport, most athletes rely on a mentor or coach to guide their development. For Lee, that role was filled by Coach Thomas Pankey, a coach from her hometown, who Lee identified as a major influence for igniting her love for the sport. Lee reflected on how Pankey’s support pushed her to improve, shaping both her growth as a wrestler and her understanding of what makes a strong mentor and leader.

“Coach Pankey, my wrestling coach back home, is my main source of inspiration. There are a bunch of them back home, but he helped me a lot, especially. My team was all guys, and he really made me feel included and gave a lot of personal attention, [which] really helped me improve and made me love the sport a lot more,” said Lee.

Toni Elliott ’27 highlighted how Lee’s emphasis on building connections is evident in her leadership, as well as her commitment



C. ZHOU/THE PHILLIPIAN

to leading by example. Even while injured, Lee continues to push herself to improve, remaining actively engaged in practices and supporting her teammates from beyond the mat.

“She is always really enthusiastic about helping people out, whether that’s learning a move, if somebody needs something at a meet, or if they have questions about how something works. Especially with new wrestlers, she is really good about always being ready to talk to them. On top of

that, she does a really good job leading by example, putting a lot of effort in during practice and outside of practice, working even on days when we don’t have practice. Right now, she is injured, so she can’t actually wrestle during practice, but she is still always working on the edge of the mat,” said Elliott.

For newer members on the team, Lee’s leadership plays a key role in creating a sense of unity. By maintaining a consistent positive presence, Lee helps create a

supportive yet hardworking environment. Devin Akyali ’29 shared how this approach has shaped his experience on the team.

“This is my first year, so I was pretty nervous at the start of the season, but [Lee] was always super friendly and always had a smile. She makes people, especially new wrestlers, feel comfortable. The day before our matches, she always tells everyone to do their best and give it their all, reminding us that at the end of the day, that’s all you can do. She’s never too intense and always has a positive demeanor, whether people are winning or losing. Even though wrestling is an individual sport, Ophelia makes it feel like we’re all working together as a team,” said Akyali.

This past December, Lee competed at the Beast of the East Tournament held in Delaware. In late February, she will compete at the National Prep Tournament in the 126-pound division and hopes to cap her season with the best possible result.

“After I competed at Beast of the East, it made me really want to win All-American at [the] National Prep [Tournament]. So that’d be my biggest goal if that’s possible. I just want to end this season with a bang and do as much as I can,” said Lee.

# Wrestling Takes Third at Northerns Despite Adversity

EVA JACKSON

Wrestling placed third out of eleven teams in the Northerns tournament, boasting multiple successes. Although the team was wrestling in a larger environment than it was used to and missing multiple athletes due to illness, three wrestlers took home the win, whilst five others placed in the top three of the tournament. This success propelled the team into its following matchups against Governor’s and Middlesex.

As Northerns is a large tournament for wrestlers, the environment was louder than many were used to. Rios described the difficulty a tournament’s environment presents and how everyone’s support and preparation contributed to the team’s success.

“For newer wrestlers, it’s their first tournament, and that pressure and environment can be a little overwhelming sometimes. Our coaches did a good job in preparing us and having



A. LE/THE PHILLIPIAN

Will Park '26 executes a half-nelson against his opponent.

people mentally prepared for what the tournament was gonna be like, and I thought everyone did a good job at preparing for the event,” said Rios.

In a wrestling tournament, there are many matches happening at the same time, so not

many people are able to cheer on their teammates. Rios commented on the individual aspect of wrestling at tournaments and his pride in the team.

“In these tournament formats, you can learn the true individualism of wrestling and

all the pressures on you, and that can be really difficult to deal with. I’m very proud of the team for just being able to go out there and perform to the best of their abilities. Takes a lot of courage to do that,” said Rios.

Narek Hambardzumyan ’26 commented on how the team has shifted its focus to conditioning, which has set them apart from their competitors. As the team goes into the end of their season, it has especially seen its hard work pay off through successful results.

“I’d say the main thing we’ve been focusing on all season, but especially for these tournaments, was our conditioning during practice, which has helped us a lot, even in the duels we’ve had throughout the season,” said Hambardzumyan.

The Girls competed at Middlesex whilst the Boys team competed against Governor’s at home. Melissa Mariana de Souza ’28, a wrestler on the girls’ side, described the team’s performance, outlining their improvements.

“I think the girls did really

well. At the end, we had a short conversation with the coaches, and they were praising all of us, because we’re wrestling faster than in other matches, and we’re getting more used to the techniques. We were improving,” said Mariana de Souza.

Although illness still depleted the team’s numbers, its success helped uplift the team for its future matches. Mariana de Souza commented on how the support and motivation teammates give each other bring the team together through tough moments.

“Although a lot of people are sick, when we have huge matches, we all congratulate each other, which is really nice and it helps us to keep motivated for the next games because it’s definitely a tough sport,” said Mariana de Souza.

Wrestling will battle in the NEPSAC Class A Championships on Friday at Hyde. It will host the 13th annual Female Wrestling Tournament on Sunday.

# Nordic Skiing Finds Success at Middlesex and Belmont Hill, Led by Strong Performances All Around

ALEX GODSEY

Nordic Skiing competed in a Friday race at Middlesex. The team, led by a first place finish by Ansel Bartell ’28, saw great success and finished in third place on the girl’s side and placed second on the boy’s side. On Wednesday, Andover traveled to Belmont Hill, where they raced against multiple schools in the relay format. Through extreme cold and equipment challenges, the team persevered, showing grit and a strong team bond.

In last Friday’s race at Middlesex, Bartell led the field placing an incredible first overall, his highest placement this year. Gavin Freeman ’26 shouted out the team’s top scorers and shared insights to Bartell’s performance.

“Sebastian Vermut [’27], Ansel Bartell, Henry Wall [’27],

and Matt Robinson [’27] all scored really well. Ansel actually won the Friday race overall, he’s specifically really good at gliding on classic skis. It’s really important to glide a far distance every stroke so you can maximize efficiency, and that allowed him to get a real edge on the competition, especially on the new course we’re skiing on. It had a really long flat section and minimal hills, so gliding was really, really important, and that really contributed to a lot of general team success as well,” said Freeman.

The most difficult part of Friday’s race was enduring the weather. Nordic Skiing had to adjust to difficult conditions, such as low temperatures. Co-Captain Noah Binkowski ’26 described the way the team excelled, even despite the cold.

“There was a temperature advisory, so they had the boys and girls start one after another.

There were a lot of people on track at once, but it was really cool getting to see just a lot of action. Sebastian Vermut was moving up and down a lot, getting through people and moving around. The team’s perseverance in the cold was what really got us through that one,” said Binkowski.

Wednesday’s race at Belmont Hill was relay style, where the top two teams of each competitor scored points. Bartell and Wall made up Andover’s highest placing team. According to Vermut, their strong combination of a fast start and defensive finish helped bring them to the finish line.

“Ansel was pushing super hard and just doing really well, and Henry was defending, and it was really impressive. Ansel gave two really strong laps, and Henry was really good at defending the position and holding it strong. It’s a really good

team. Ansel’s a legacy, scary. He’s been skiing for so long, and Henry, this is his third year of Nordic. Henry’s the strongest skier. He’s really been working for a long time, and so the two made a really great team,” said Vermut.

Andover’s second best team was made up of Vermut and Robinson. Freeman described how their separate strengths created a strong performance.

“Our second-place team was Sebastian Vermut and Matt Robinson, and they did really well. Matt’s a really lightweight skier, so the more hilly course really fits his strong suit, that helps going uphill. And Sebastian is a really strong double-poler, he’s a strong kid, got some good muscles on him, so he did well on the flats. For this course they actually made quite a dynamic duo,” said Gavin.

On the girls side of Wednesday’s race at Belmont Hill, the

team showed extreme grit. A person that best exemplified this was Kate Birdsall ’26, who faced a massive setback with broken boots. Binkowski elaborated on how he viewed this struggle as Birdsall quickly bounced back.

“[Birdsall’s] boot completely fell apart, and we managed to tape it back up and send her out there. On the girls’ end, watching Dylan [Siegel ’26] and Kate put together a really good performance, though Kate’s boot combustion was really cool to see. There was a point where she had to run part of the race because her boot was not attached to the ski anymore, but she was able to finish strong,” said Binkowski.

Nordic Skiing will race again next Wednesday at Dublin School.

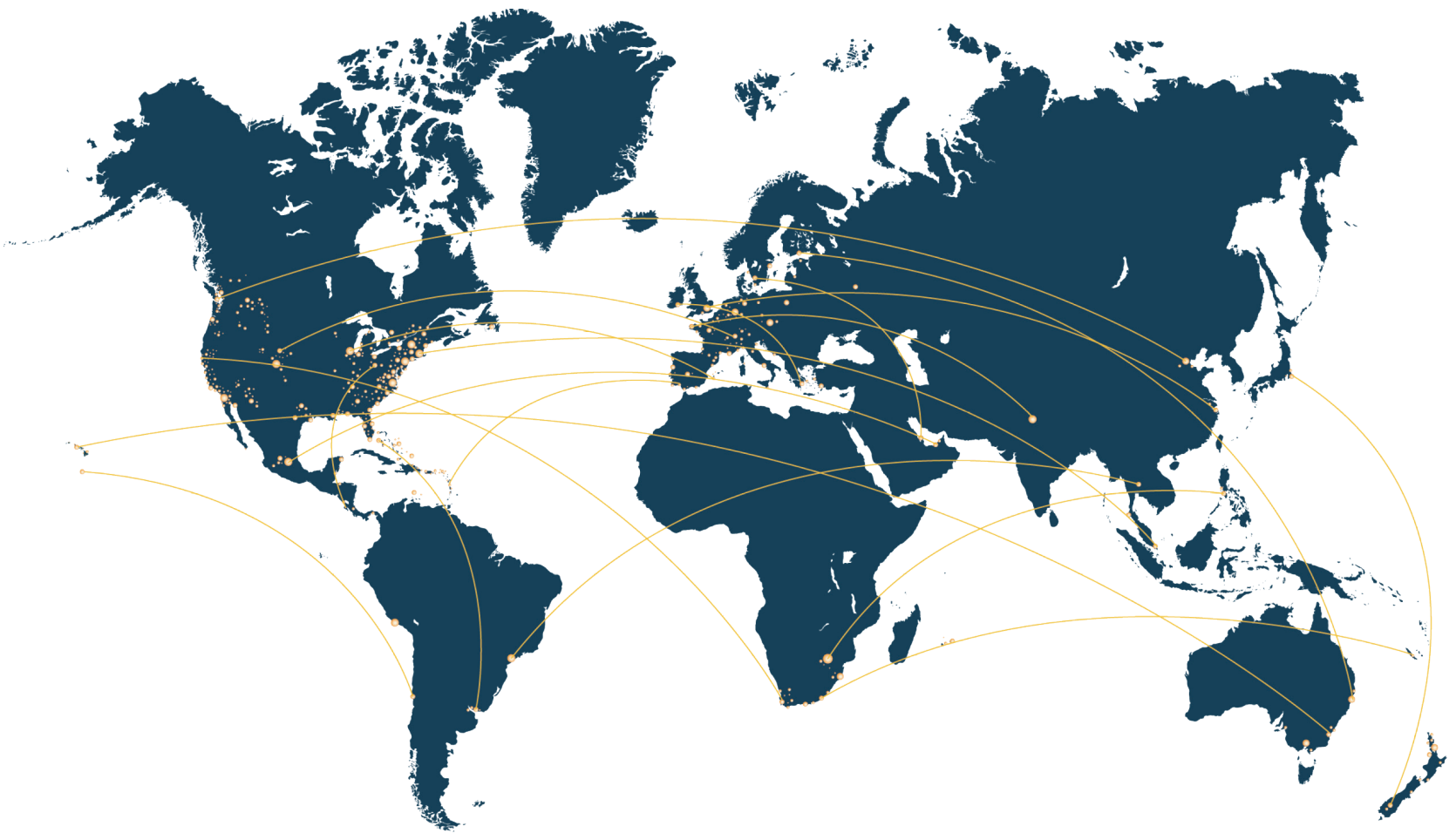


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# A Temporary Collapse: Boys Basketball Looks to Find Its Form Amidst a Losing Streak

NICHOLAS JUNG

FRIDAY 1/30	
Andover	62
Loomis	32
SATURDAY 1/31	
Andover	50
Nobles	54
WEDNESDAY 2/4	
Andover	60
Tilton	82

Despite a riveting 62-32 win against Loomis Chaffee (Loomis), Boys Basketball (11-4) has lost four of its past five games. It suffered losses on the road against Noble and Greenough (Nobles) and Tilton on Saturday and Wednesday, respectively. Following a short two-game



A. PIZZAI/THE PHILLIPIAN

Jaylen Edmonds '27 performs a hesitation move.

losing streak against Deerfield and Milton, the team showcased a dominant performance at home against Loomis. Manager Ryan Swales '27 commented on the team's dynamic defense and efficient rebounding that led to a 30-point win. "We were shooting pretty well at [the] game. Shots were going down, [and] that's what we needed because the last couple of games we were not [shooting] very well. Being able to get those

threes really helped us. And overall, we were doing really good on [the] defensive end. We locked down the perimeter where a lot of shots [were] trying to happen. Being able to keep them inside, but not having them go for easy lay-ups, was definitely where we thrived," said Swales. On Saturday, the team traveled to Nobles, where they came up short in a close game despite a rally that cut down on a 15-point deficit. Despite the loss, there

were positive aspects of the game, which Kosi Udeh '27 elaborated on. "Towards the end, we started giving a lot more effort on defense because our shots really weren't hitting. [We relied] on what we can control, which is our defense, [the] effort we're putting, [and] rebounding. That one went well towards the end, but it was a rocky road," said Udeh. Udeh further highlighted Jaylen Edmonds '27's effort defensively. Specifically, he praised Edmonds for the energy he brings. "Jaylen really brings the energy defensively. It starts [with] limiting the amount of points they can score on us, controlling what we can control, staying in the gaps, [and] giving lots of effort on defense is the reason why we really turned around that game. His rebounding has been super underrated as well," said Udeh. The team's next game on the road against Tilton did not go as well as it wished, ending in an 82-60 defeat. Kingston Johnson '28 remarked on the team's execution. "Today, we unfortunately lost by a pretty good margin of points. We weren't really play-

ing to the best of our abilities, but like our coach says, it's always the next play," said Johnson. Looking ahead to the rest of the season, the team hopes to rebuild core tactics that were the foundation of its dominant first half of the season. Johnson explained what the team needed to work on. "We definitely have to work on being consistent with our ball movement, defense, [and] communication. We especially have to work on our defense because at times, we get a little lackluster and don't really have the energy we need," said Johnson. Udeh shared Johnson's sentiment on improving the team's defense. He pointed out specific details the team will focus on. "Definitely, we're gonna have to prepare to play in the zone again. Playing in the zone was something we weren't prepared to do that game, and it caught us a little bit off guard. We're going to change our defensive principles going into the rest of the season, and going back to what made us really, really good towards the first half of the season," said Udeh.

Boys Basketball will face Thayer at home on Friday.

# Girls Basketball Falls to KUA and Brooks, Looks Ahead with a Positive Mindset to Middlesex

TIGER WANG

SATURDAY 1/31	
Andover	45
Kimball Union	49
WEDNESDAY 2/4	
Andover	46
Brooks	69

Girls Basketball faced two challenging opponents this past week. The team played Kimball Union Academy (KUA) on Saturday, losing by four points, before returning to the court to play Brooks on Wednesday, where it lost by 23 points. Across both games, the team persisted through strong defensive efforts. According to Sophie Stetson '29, Andover cooperated with each other well against KUA, playing with an unselfish style where strong bonds and spirit among team members were emphasized. "We played really well together as a team. Everyone was playing their hardest and we were all bringing energy and lifting each other up. It wasn't just a



E. CHAI/THE PHILLIPIAN

Sophie Stetson '29 drives to the basket.

one-person game. We were sharing the ball, and we were playing as a team rather than just having one person take over. That was a highlight of the game, being able to play together as a team unselfishly," said Stetson. Reflecting on Saturday's game, Maddie Marshall '29 elaborated on the physicality and struggles during the close match-

up. A low-scoring third quarter for both teams highlighted Andover's defensive capabilities, but also emphasized the need for a more effective offense. "We actually played aggressive and strong the whole time. [KUA] had a bigger team. Sometimes the rebounds didn't go our way and shots didn't fall the whole time. But it was definitely

a great game and we played really aggressively. It really just came down to the end. During the third quarter, both sides didn't score that much. We only scored three points and they scored six points. But that means we were playing good defense. We just have to get our offense going a little more," said Marshall. As the team looked ahead to its game against Brooks, Marshall pitched her positive outlook on future games, hoping to bounce back after falling to KUA. "The goal is to just have another good practice and work hard prior to the game. Just because we lost before doesn't mean we can't win," said Marshall. After Saturday's loss against KUA, the team looked to apply its reflections immediately. Chloe Abou-Ezzi '27 described how this mentality translated into its game, allowing it to catch up to its opponent. "By the end of the third quarter, going into the fourth [quarter], it was a six-point game, opposed to at halftime when it was around a 15-point game or something. We definitely closed the gap a little bit, and we went on our own run, and we were playing with a lot of intensity, which was really good. One difficulty [or] weakness in the game was that, despite playing with so much intensity and playing

hard and with a lot of effort, the other team wanted it more," said Abou-Ezzi. According to Abou-Ezzi, instead of dwelling on its previous loss, the team emphasized its new focus on learning, adjustments, and maintaining a consistent energy moving forward in their game against Brooks. Although it lost again, the team implemented a strong 1-3-1 defense that it hopes to continue to use effectively, with one top chaser, three defenders across the middle, and one low defender. "We will learn from this experience and see that this is what happens when we don't play with the heart that we normally do and with the energy that we normally do. It's about learning from it, and reflecting on it, and understanding that this should be the only time we play like that ... Moving forward, our 1-3-1 defense works really well. We're going to finalize that and work a little bit more on transition defense because [Brooks] did have a lot of really good transition points on us. We're going to work on that and push to the end in practice" said Abou-Ezzi.

Girls Basketball will play Middlesex at home this Saturday.

# Alumni Athlete Feature: Thomas White '23

ALEX GODSEY

Previously a pitcher for Boys Baseball, Thomas White '23 now competes at the Triple-A level with the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp, the Miami Marlins' affiliate team. At Andover, White was the 2022 and 2023 Baseball Massachusetts Gatorade Player of the Year, also contributing as a cornerstone to the Boys Baseball's 2022 NEPSAC Championship victory. Multiple dominant outings throughout his career thus far have resulted in his current position as the 17th-ranked player in the Major League Baseball (MLB)'s Prospect Rankings. On July 23, 2023, Thomas White was selected 35th over-

all by the Miami Marlins in the MLB Draft. Choosing to forgo his commitment to play Division I baseball at Vanderbilt University, White instead decided to sign with the Miami Marlins for a \$4.1 million bonus, gaining a head start on his professional baseball career. While the opportunity to play professionally is a dream opportunity, the college experience is often something that players cherish. White shared his thought-process in this difficult decision. "There are some things I have given up in choosing pro baseball over college. For example, living amongst a bunch of other students like myself, playing for the college national championship, and of course

college parties. The opportunity to start at a younger age than most is one I couldn't pass up. I take baseball more seriously than going to parties anyway haha. I also think that Andover had prepared me to know how to live on my own at a young age, so I felt really comfortable with that decision to start my career early," wrote White in an email to *The Phillipian*. Now a professional baseball player, White's yearly schedule has changed, and White described his new day-to-day life and training routine in comparison to his time at Andover. "The biggest difference [from my time at Andover] is that baseball is less of a hobby and more of a full-time job. During spring training and the

season[,] I'm at the field for 8+ hours everyday. Most of the time it's a lot longer. We play games 6 days a week with 1 off day on Mondays. We don't have more than 1 off day in a row except for the All-Star break. It's a nonstop grind from February to October. We play 160+ games when it's all said and done. In high school it's for fun, but now it's for real. It's amazing to play a game I love for a job, but it's also a grind, and there's always someone coming to try and take your spot. So it's stressful, but that's the beauty and this is what I've always wanted to do with my life so I love every minute of it," wrote White. Since being drafted, White has quickly worked his way through the minor leagues,

moving from Single-A to Triple-A baseball in just two years. He described the pride he felt after winning the Triple-A championship in late September, in which the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp defeated the Las Vegas Aviators 8-7. "It's definitely been a fun experience so far, winning the Triple-A championship is something I'll never forget. It's also fun because the average player age in Triple-A is almost 30. So I've had fun with the challenge of playing against guys much older than me. At the end of the day it's the last level in the way of playing in the big leagues. So it's a cool feeling knowing that I'm at the last stop before Miami," wrote White.



# Efficiency, Not Exploitation: The Truth Behind Shai Gilgeous-Alexander’s Free Throws

XAVIER HOWELL

The term “free-throw merchant” is one of the many labels that have become synonymous with some of the best players in the league today, particularly those who get to the rim, score efficiently at the basket, and get to the free-throw line often. However, the label is also often used to imply that a player relies on baiting out fouls rather than scoring through their skill, with Oklahoma City Thunder point guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander being a recent and prominent target of this narrative. From fans in opposing arenas to analysts and experts alike, most notably sports commentator Dors Burke, the term has been applied to Gilgeous-Alexander in broadcasts and echoed from the stands night after night. However, when looking at Gilgeous-Alexander’s style of play from a critical standpoint, it is hard to argue that his free throws are anything more than the natural byproduct of elite basketball skill, a high-level understanding of the game, and exceptional ball control.

My definition of a “free-throw merchant” is someone who intentionally and manipulatively acts to draw fouls. There is honestly no way to guard a true free-throw merchant because they play to the referees rather than the defenders. These players hunt whistles by initiating



HARRY ZHOU / THE PHILLIPIAN

unnatural contact and shooting ridiculous shots solely to draw fouls. For viewers, including myself, this style is frustrating to watch because it disrupts the flow of the game and diminishes the viewing experience.

Gilgeous-Alexander’s scoring profile, however, provides strong evidence that he is not dependent on officiating to score in basketball. Outside of free throws, he remains one of the most efficient high-volume scorers in the entire league, combining a lethal midrange game with an extensive and creative finishing pack-

age. In recent seasons, he has averaged over 30 points per game while shooting between 53 and 55 percent from the field. His midrange numbers alone place him among the league’s best, as he converts well over 45 percent of his pull-up jump shots into scored points.

When I watch Gilgeous-Alexander play basketball, I do not immediately notice his ability to draw fouls, despite it being a major part of his game. Instead, I am drawn to how he manipulates the opponent, toying with defenders before draining a heav-

ily contested midrange jumper and the skillful maneuvers in the paint. His frequent trips to the free-throw line, then, are a byproduct of his dominance rather than the source of it.

How Gilgeous-Alexander generates fouls is also what differentiates him from other so-called “free throw merchants.” Players who carry that label are often known for exaggerated contact, excessive flopping, and baiting defenders with awkward or unnatural shooting motions. In contrast, Gilgeous-Alexander generates fouls through pa-

tience, balance, and precision. He creates space when attacking defenders by taking long, powerful strides and using sharp stop-and-start movements and changes of direction. As a result, defenders frequently find themselves out of position, late to react, or reaching in desperation, which naturally leads to fouls, not because of “flopping,” but because of Gilgeous-Alexander’s high basketball IQ.

According to NBA tracking data, Gilgeous-Alexander consistently ranks near the top of the league in drives per game, often recording 20 or more drives per night while converting those opportunities at an elite level. Players who attack the basket frequently are expected to draw fouls, and Gilgeous-Alexander is no exception. His free-throw rate among high-usage guards aligns closely with other elite downhill scorers rather than standing out as an extreme outlier. If anything, his smoother and quieter style makes those fouls less noticeable since he avoids the dramatic, exaggerated movements commonly associated with foul-baiting.

Gilgeous-Alexander’s game was never even centered around his ability to get to the free-throw line. It has always been about technique, finesse, and skill. The narrative that he is a flopper or a foul-baiter is ignorant considering Gilgeous-Alexander truly is the best scorer in the NBA.

# Girls Swimming & Diving Remains Undefeated After Victory Against Deerfield

SARAH WANG

SATURDAY 1/31	
Andover	102
Deerfield	83

Last Saturday, Girls Swimming & Diving competed in its first away match against Deerfield. Facing an eight-hour meet day and the unfamiliar pool, the team prevailed in a decisive victory. This win extended its undefeated win streak to 4–0. This meet was critical to the team, being the last meet before the team embarks on a trip to the four-day Easterns Championships (Easterns) in Pennsylvania, the most anticipated meet of the season happening in less than two weeks.

Even though most swim events are individual, team support plays a critical role in

each swimmer’s performance. Madeleine Yang ’29, who placed fourth in the 100-Yard Backstroke, shared a personal experience on how the team’s spirit helped her at Deerfield.

“We all cheer for each other. If someone’s nervous, we all try to hype up the swimmers. I did the 100[-Yard] Fly and the 100[-Yard] Back[stroke]. But before the 100[-Yard] Fly, I was really nervous and didn’t know how I’d do in that event. Some of my upperclassmen teammates were also swimming in the 100[-Yard] Fly and they encouraged me, which made me feel a lot better after talking to them,”said Yang.

To prepare for this meet, the team continued working hard at practice, going beyond its usual weekday sessions. In the girls’ division, Chloe Ru ’27 placed first in the 200-Yard Medley Relay, 100-Yard Freestyle, and 100-Yard Breaststroke. Her team finished second in the Girls 200-Yard Freestyle Relay. Ru elaborated on the practice

schedule last week to prepare for the meet.

“We had practice every day of the week from Monday to Friday, and because we didn’t have a meet last Saturday, we had practice on Saturday morning with the boys’ team, and we did a tough set. It’s called a lactate set, but it’s specifically targeted towards racing, which was really helpful. We also worked on a lot of techniques, like dives and turns, to prepare for [the meet],” said Ru.

Sarah Sun ’29 also elaborated on the importance of reinforcing the team atmosphere as the season progresses and how it helps her personally as she competes. Sun finished 1:21.10 in the 100-Yard Breaststroke, 2:37.24 in the 200-Yard Individual Medley. She also anchored the 200-Yard Freestyle Relay in 28.23 seconds. She explained that the team often cheers for each other behind the blocks when people are competing and how this personally gave her extra motiva-

tion to swim faster in her event.

“It’s helpful when I turn and see my teammates behind the blocks cheering for me, because it gives me more motivation. Overall, our team spirit at this meet was better than at any other meet. While not everyone was swimming their best times, everyone was cheering on their teammates behind the block, and we all did our team cheer. Overall, the Deerfield meet was a very supportive environment for our team,” said Sun.

Ru shouted out Advika Swamy ’29, who competed in her first Saturday match against Deerfield. Ru expanded on Swamy’s performance of 2:26.22 in the 200-Yard Freestyle.

“Someone I would shout out is Advika because this was her first Saturday meet. She did really well. Also, because it’s a dual meet, our coach put us in events we usually wouldn’t swim in to experiment and step outside our comfort zone. So those swimmers did well in

their events, even though they might not usually swim them,” said Ru.

Looking forward, the team will travel to Pennsylvania to compete at Easterns in less than two weeks. Yang shared a final lesson that she learned competing against Deerfield and explained the team’s mindset moving forward.

“The biggest lesson is that it’s okay not to swim the best times, because, especially considering yesterday, we weren’t really used to the pool. It’s essential to stay optimistic and take something away from your swim, even if it wasn’t as good as you wanted. That’ll be really helpful for our [championship] meets as well. Deerfield was an end-of-season meet to prepare for Easterns and New Englands. Since we’re on a win streak and our team is undefeated, we’re feeling really good about going into Easterns,” said Yang.

# Boys Swimming & Diving Round Off Regular Season with a Win at Deerfield

NATHAN BYUN &  
OLIVIA WANG

Boys Swimming & Diving had its first and only away dual meet of the season at Deerfield on Saturday. The two-hour drive and the different pool posed a challenge for the swimmers as they got used to their surroundings. However, the team quickly found its footing and secured the victory due to their intense training in preparation for the upcoming Easterns Championship (Easterns) in Pennsylvania.

The new environment posed a challenge for some swimmers due to the nature of the pool.

Ryan Loh ’28 noted that, despite this, the team was able to remain consistent.

“Being in a different pool always messes things up, but no one had a really bad race. One of the captains did well in the one fly, considering he doesn’t swim fly. However, I wouldn’t say that there were too many standout swimmers since we were all getting used to the new pool. We should definitely be preparing to get used to different pools, as we will also have to adjust to the pool for Easterns,” Loh.

Soohan Cho ’29 emphasized that the practices set him up for success at the meet, most notably the sprint set the day

before, which prepared the team thoroughly. He also noted that he was pushed outside his comfort zone, swimming a distance event he doesn’t usually compete in.

“Today, my coach put me in a distance event, and I don’t swim distance [events] at all. But I dropped time from one to two weeks ago, I dropped four seconds, which is not bad. But then he put me in two back-to-back relays, so I couldn’t really warm down or anything. But judging on my condition, I did pretty well for that as well. At the end of the day, I dropped time, so that’s what matters,” said Cho.

Beckett Kavanaugh ’29

echoed Cho’s sentiment on intense practices leading up to Easterns. Specifically, the team performed a sprint set before the meet, which Kavanaugh thought prepared the team well for the meet ahead.

“Our coach gave us a lot of sets leading up to the meet. The day before the meet, we did a sprint set to prepare for the races we were going to do the next day, and the practices that the coaches gave us prepared us well,” said Kavanaugh.

With more injuries and more strenuous schedules, the team is pushing beyond its comfort zone to compete at the highest level. With Easterns on February 15 quickly approaching,

Cho believed that the meet served as valuable preparation for the team.

“Since we have a big meet coming up, we have Easterns in two weeks, this win serves as really good preparation for how you’d be expected to race and be there for the team even if you have events that require you to go outside your comfort zone. I think that’s a really important thing to enforce, especially when the end of the season is drawing near,” said Cho.

Boys Swimming & Diving will compete next week at Easterns.



# Boys Hockey Starts February Strong, Beats Deerfield and Ties to Loomis

WYATT ORRACA-CECIL

SATURDAY 1/31		
Andover		3
Loomis		3
WEDNESDAY 2/4		
Andover		4
Deerfield		1

Boys Hockey (11-8-1) played Loomis Chaffee (Loomis) on Saturday and Deerfield on Wednesday. Both games were sure to be challenging, with Loomis and Deerfield both having an

approximately 0.500 record. Since losing four of its last five games, the team was looking for a turnaround going into the last twelve games of the season and a momentum change to make the playoffs.

On Saturday, the team traveled to Loomis for a 6:00 p.m. game. Senji Kimura '29 recounted the intensity of the game and the team's slow start.

"The game against Loomis was definitely a battle. We went down early. We were getting beat, and we were getting dominated for a lot of the game," said Kimura.

Although it had a difficult first couple of periods, the players were unfazed. After hearing speeches from Head Coach Paul Tortorella '80 during intermissions, the team felt inspired to

come back from a three-goal deficit.

"Coach gave us a really good speech during the intermissions. That definitely pumped us up to come back from that deficit of three goals [and] tie it up. That was one of the better outcomes that could have happened in that game. We play really well. In the third period, especially, we [were playing] a team game compared to earlier," said Kimura.

Commenting on a stimulus for its comeback draw against Loomis, Kimura mentioned Alex Theodore '27. Despite playing heavy minutes, he demonstrated leadership and generated a spark for the team.

"Alex played a really good game. He played a heavy game as he usually does. He hit a bunch. He had a goal [against] Loomis

and just played really good all around," said Kimura.

Following its tie against Loomis, the team faced Deerfield. It won dominantly, defeating Deerfield 4-1. Jack Cannon '29 described the game's energy.

"The game went well. Good effort from the boys, good comeback. Everybody contributed and played well. It was a fun one," said Cannon.

The morale of the team solidified after the 4-1 win. Jack O'Dell '28 related the exceptional playing of goalie Eddie Lord '26.

"[Lord never] has a bad game. He's always at his best. Making saves every game is what he does," said O'Dell.

Following the win against Deerfield, the team has ten games before a potential playoff berth. With an upcoming home

stretch featuring opponents such as Dexter and Exeter, the team is preparing for challenging matchups ahead.

"These next ten games are [against] really good teams. It's gonna be a war each game, so we just gotta go in there with the same mindset of playing our game and winning battles," said O'Dell.

The team will play Belmont Hill next, with Dexter soon following. It hopes to get revenge on Dexter after losing 4-2 in the season opener.

# Girls Squash Extends Record to Eight Wins, Claims Victories Over Groton and Nobles

JULIAN REQUA & JOHN LEW

FRIDAY 1/30		
Andover		8
Groton		0
WEDNESDAY 2/4		
Andover		7
Nobles		1

After a challenging match-up against Hotchkiss last week, Girls Squash (8-1) responded with back-to-back victories over Groton and Noble and Grenough (Nobles) 8-0 and 7-1 respective-

ly. Led by convincing wins from the team's top players, it gained momentum as it prepared for its upcoming tournament.

The match against Groton featured long, back-and-forth rallies at the top of the ladder. With Groton's strength concentrated on the top two seeds, those matches turned into intense battles that tested both sides' endurance and skill. Lara Kim '29 reflected on Judy Liu's '29 game, where victory was driven by the energy provided by teammates and the home crowd.

"[Judy] was down by a few points in the third game, but she managed to come back to win. It was a really admirable moment. The whole team was watching and cheering her on and it was really impressive because it's hard for players to maintain that level of focus, especially when

you're down," said Kim '29.

In addition to the energy and support of the team, its performance was fueled by its intense training leading up to the game. Isabella Tang '28 highlighted a specific moment of encouragement during her game.

"When I was playing Groton, my teammates were all rooting for me around the glass court. We're doing something new this year, where we do an arm circle. We [talk about] something we're working on and some positive affirmations that we all repeat. I have a lot of confidence going into these matches and that affects our mindset as well," said Tang.

Versus Nobles, Girls Squash put together another decisive win over a top ten team in the nation. The team played with purpose, applying pressure and

competing through every rally. Co-Captain Minnie Kim '27 described an intense moment in Caroline Zhao '27's game where she was driven by her desire to win.

"Caroline [is] the number six seed. Her first game was very close. She was a bit nervous, but as the second and third game went on, she definitely started to assert her dominance. She played really well, played very strong, and saw the opponents weakness, and then used her best abilities to win the match," said Kim '27.

The atmosphere in Nobles was palpable with a supportive and positive crowd. The team arrived early, and used its time effectively to warm up and prepare while the captains offered encouraging words before the matches began. Liu recalled her

experience at the game.

"Nobles was definitely a closer competitor for us this season. We [had] an hour and fifteen to change then warm up. We had positive affirmations. Our captains led us in a circle and talked about what we wanted to work on so we could really hammer out our game plan. The atmosphere was pretty hype. We had some good supporters there. A lot of people's friends came and I think it was just a very supportive and positive atmosphere," said Liu.

The team looks to extend their win streak away at Brooks on Friday.

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# ARTS & LEISURE

The Phillipian, VOL. CXLIX



## From Lesson Plans to Live Performance: the Adjunct Faculty Showcase

ELIZABETH QIN & JIA-YI ZHI

Music Department Faculty members displayed their talents on Friday night during the Adjunct Faculty Showcase. Held in John Barry Hall in the Falls Music Center, the concert featured vocal solos, a saxophone and electric guitar duet, and two ensemble works written by faculty composers. The showcase offered students a rare insight into their teachers as active, collaborative musicians. With an energetic audience and a dynamic program, the recital offered students a chance to experience their teachers' artistry firsthand.

Among the performers was Ms. Rebecca Plummer, a piano teacher, chamber music coach, and choir accompanist. Plummer spoke about the importance of faculty performances for students, explaining that concerts like this allow teachers to model the musicianship they emphasize in lessons and rehearsals.

"To see that we practice what we preach, we ourselves have to perform. We practice and get all of our pieces to the best of our ability and show that we not only teach, but that it's important to perform. Performance is performance. [We] give it all our best and do the best we can. It's important for us as teachers to show our students that we still engage in live music and music is relevant to people today," said Plummer.

Audience member Ellen Mueller '26 attended the recital after hearing friends discuss the showcase, deciding to come for the performance after recognizing several of her former teachers in the program. She



C. ZHOU/THE PHILLIPIAN

Vocalist Katherine Growdon delivers a contralto performance.

described a performance of Studies on Rage for Each Day by Mary Kouyoumdjian, performed by a flute, bassoon, and piano trio, as the performance that stood out to her most.

"[Studies on Rage for Each Day of the Week] stood out to me because I [had] never heard anything like it before, but I loved it! It was stressful and beautiful. I heard my friend whisper next to me 'That's what dissonance was invented for.' I've seen the faculty perform individually, but never like this, so it was really special," said Mueller.

Mueller also commented on the atmosphere of the concert, noting how the size of the audience and the energy in the hall contributed to the experience.

"Everyone was really supportive and happy to be there. The space was perfect for a group of this size, and there were quite a few people in the audience, so it was really lovely. Even though I'm graduating this year, I will come back next time," said Mueller.

For many students, seeing their teachers perform live added a new layer of inspiration and appreciation for their work



C. ZHOU/THE PHILLIPIAN

Gregory Newton performs on the bassoon.

beyond the classroom. Enzo Yang '29 described his experience, especially the captivating opening vocal performance.

"I really liked the sopranos and the singing at the beginning because they weren't only singing, but their facial expressions and stance were all just very expressive. It was almost like a whole theatrical performance, but very short and expressed very musically, and I just really liked that. My friend invited me to come, and my trumpet teacher was playing, so I was interested in what he would play in this recital. The performance

motivated me to practice trumpet more," said Yang.

Attendee Junu Lee '29 noted his favorite part of the concert and the inspiration he garnered through the performances.

"I liked how the melody appeared with the same motive, and [how] they had different solos like trumpet, piano, [and] trombone. I got the feeling that I wanted to try jazz. There [were] a lot of interesting jazzy pieces. I might start practicing one of those. If there's another opportunity like this, I would definitely come," said Lee.

## New Thai and Vietnamese Restaurant Opens Its Doors: What Do We Think?

ELIZABETH QIN & JIA-YI ZHI

Past J.P. Licks and right beside Shoyu sits Andover's newest restaurant: a Thai-and-Vietnamese-fusion eatery called Khaosan. Khaosan occupies what was previously an Indian fusion restaurant named Indulge India. We walked downtown and headed in for lunch, and here's what we think.

As soon as we entered, a mural greeted us from the opposite wall, with a turquoise-tiled counter on our left, and a signature waving cat perched on top. Our server brought us to the right side of the restaurant, where all the tables were. The space was well organized to appear bigger.

Quiet music played in the background, and bamboo lamps overhead created a calm atmosphere. The tables, which range from two

to six seats, were far enough from each other to feel private. Along the far wall of the restaurant was a large wooden wall with hunter green shutters, framing spices, toys, and jars of sauce. At the back of the space, an archway hung with paper fish frames the entrance to the bathrooms, which are convenient and easy to find.

As for the food, the menu is split into Thai and Vietnamese sections, and we sampled both with one appetizer and two entrées. In addition to the main dishes, Khaosan offers classic Thai and Vietnamese drinks and desserts, along with spicy, mild, and vegan options, making the menu accessible to a wide range of palates. We ordered summer rolls with a thick peanut sauce, beef pho served with bean sprouts and a lime wedge, and a spicy fish fillet accompanied by lettuce.

The summer rolls were



E. CHAI/THE PHILLIPIAN

Khaosan's mango sticky rice, priced at \$10, is set on a table.

heavy on lettuce, which made them feel dry, especially since the peanut sauce was more paste-like than expected. However, the sauce did add a strong burst of flavor. The fish fillet, paired with lettuce and a spicy sauce, was flavorful and had a satisfying kick. The beef pho was also well done, generously topped with cilantro and green onions, though the rice noodles were noticeably short. Portion-wise, the pho was more filling than the fish fillet, which left us less satisfied. We enjoyed the presentation of the dishes and

the reasonable timeliness of their arrival. Although there was only one server working during our lunch visit, service was efficient.

In terms of prices, Khaosan is definitely on the pricier side. It's about \$15-\$25 per person, depending on what you order. For some dishes, like the fish fillet (\$17.95; not as filling as we expected) and summer rolls (two rolls for \$8.25), it's not completely worth it. Because the pho's portion size is large, we would say their pho is worth the cost.

This restaurant, which is one of the few serving Asian cuisine in the area, can only be compared to Shoyu and Kokoro Craft Udon. It's for sure less commercial than Shoyu, but its prices and vibes are similar to Kokoro, especially in the way both restaurants are decorated to emphasize their respective cultures. Compared to the Indian eatery that used to call Khaosan's location home, the interior is quite similar, perhaps even a bit more polished, with its red and yellow booths.



E. CHAI/THE PHILLIPIAN

Khaosan opened its doors to customers on January 8.

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# Hue Knew? Emerging Artists Make Their Mark at Annual Gallery Show

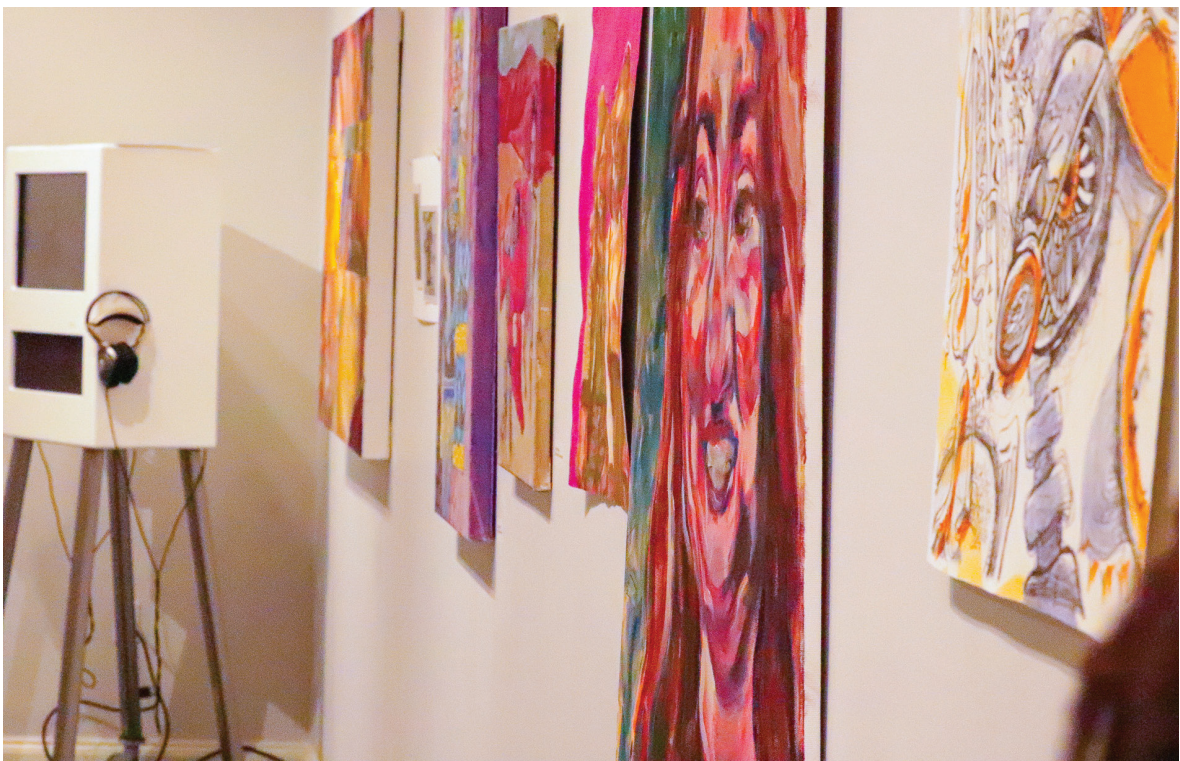
ALEXANDER TONG & DANIEL LIU

A steady stream of students moved in and out of the Gelb Gallery in George Washington Hall (GW) on the evening of Thursday, January 29, pausing beneath bright lights to examine sculptures, paintings, photographs, and digital works at the annual Emerging Artists Show. Conversation filled the space as viewers compared interpretations, pointed out details, and returned to pieces that caught their attention. The exhibition brought together student artists from across Massachusetts, transforming Gelb Gallery into a dynamic display space. Drawing students, faculty, and visitors alike, the show offered artists the opportunity to see their work installed in a professional gallery setting while engaging directly with an audience.

Among the exhibiting artists was Ted Kinservik, a third-year student at Tufts University, who presented two sculptural works: “The Troll” and “The Dragon.”

“‘The Dragon’ was made for summer campers when I worked at a summer camp as a kind of a mascot for them to come together better as a group. ‘The Troll’ is based on Norwegian wood carvings and children’s book images. The initial idea was to have it be poseable and able to put it around corners. I use it to scare my roommates now. It’s based on these trolls that people carve and put in the woods,” said Kinservik.

While the two pieces differ in both form and origin, they reflect Kinservik’s evolving



A. BAETEN-RUFFO/THE PHILLIPIAN

The Gelb Gallery will feature collegiate artists’ work from January 29 to April 13.

interest in movement, play, and experimentation with new materials.

“For The Troll, it’s felted onto foam like you’d find in an exercise mat. It is wool felted on with a sharp needle, and there’s wire through the joints. It reflects where I’m at as an artist now because I’m working on moving sculpture, poseable sculpture, scaling things up, and bringing in more mediums. The next version will include welding and stop motion puppetry techniques,” said Kinservik.

For many student artists, the Emerging Artists Show marked a rare shift from studio spaces and informal critiques to the controlled en-

vironment of a professional gallery. Seeing his work installed in a gallery space was a really meaningful shift for Kinservik.

“Seeing [my art] in an art gallery setting is really cool. I kind of wish some people could pick it up, touch it, move it, whatever. But the better lighting and better posing, we don’t really have facilities like that, so it’s pretty cool. If it’s something that somebody can walk away from and remember, it’s a good visual,” said Kinservik.

Attendees echoed that sense of energy and intention. Elisa Lee ’26, an attendee, reflected on the significance of seeing student work displayed

on campus.

“It’s really interesting to see something like this on campus because as students and people interested in majoring in art, it can be hard to navigate what direction to go after college. Seeing stuff like this and seeing the works that are produced makes you question whether there’s a purpose in pursuing this in college, and it’s really incredible,” said Lee.

Attendee Shijun Li ’28 appreciated the exhibition’s embrace of experimentation across media and subject matter.

“I saw a celebration of the extraordinary and the weird things in life. It makes mean-

ing from the ordinary, and if there is no meaning, it creates its own meaning. I saw that across every piece and medium. They were free to do whatever they wanted, and you can really see they had a lot of great ideas and expressed them clearly and intentionally,” said Li.

Lee pointed to the exhibition’s variety of scale and types of media as especially memorable, explaining how different works created distinct emotional responses.

“I really like the rainbow room one with the dragon in the corner because it’s really nostalgic for me. The animation is also cool, and the soundtrack is good for that too. I also really like the big painting piece. It’s different bodies. It’s very colorful. You get a glimpse of each person’s identity from this. Everyone’s artwork has a bit of their identity in it,” said Lee.

Collin Fernandes, a fourth-year student at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University, described his work, “The Green Painting, His Gesture for Preservation,” as both a personal exploration and a playful experiment.

“You just have to focus on what you want to work on and make sure you don’t have any outside distractions when you’re painting. I did take some risks because I don’t usually use all one color. I put a little pop of yellow because sometimes you need contrast with one-color paintings. It’s a little oversaturated, but I wanted it to feel fun. I try to make paintings fun because sometimes paintings are boring, and I like to make things fun,” said Fernandes.

# The Art of Printmaking in “Parasol Press: Breaking New Ground”

CHARLIZE SOW

Prints line the second-floor galleries of the Addison Gallery of American Art (Addison), including geometric grids, mathematical patterns, and playful images of gumball machines and candy. The exhibition “Parasol Press: Breaking New Ground” traces more than four decades of printmaking, presenting works published by Parasol Press between 1970 and 2014.

The exhibition also tells a distinctly Andover story. As Rachel Vogel, Assistant Curator at the Addison and curator of this exhibition, explained, Parasol Press was founded in 1970 by Phillips Academy alumnus Bob Feldman, whose long-standing relationship with the Addison helped shape the museum’s collection and the exhibition itself.

“Parasol Press was a print publisher founded in 1970 in New York by [Andover] alum [Robert] Feldman [’54]... When I came here, I realized that the founder had this [Andover] connection and was a strong supporter of the Addison,” said Vogel.

Parasol Press was among the first publishers to invite minimalist and conceptual artists in the 1960-70s to experiment freely with printmaking. Vogel explained that this emphasis on experimentation was central to the exhibition’s focus on process and technique, and highlighted a pivotal moment in the medium’s history.

“[Artists] were trying things with printmaking that had not been done before. At the same time, they were learning from printmaking and from the experience itself. Printmaking

was changing them, and they were changing printmaking. As you will see in the exhibition, there is a strong focus on process and technique. The idea is that the visitor is also learning about printmaking and how these prints were made,” said Vogel.

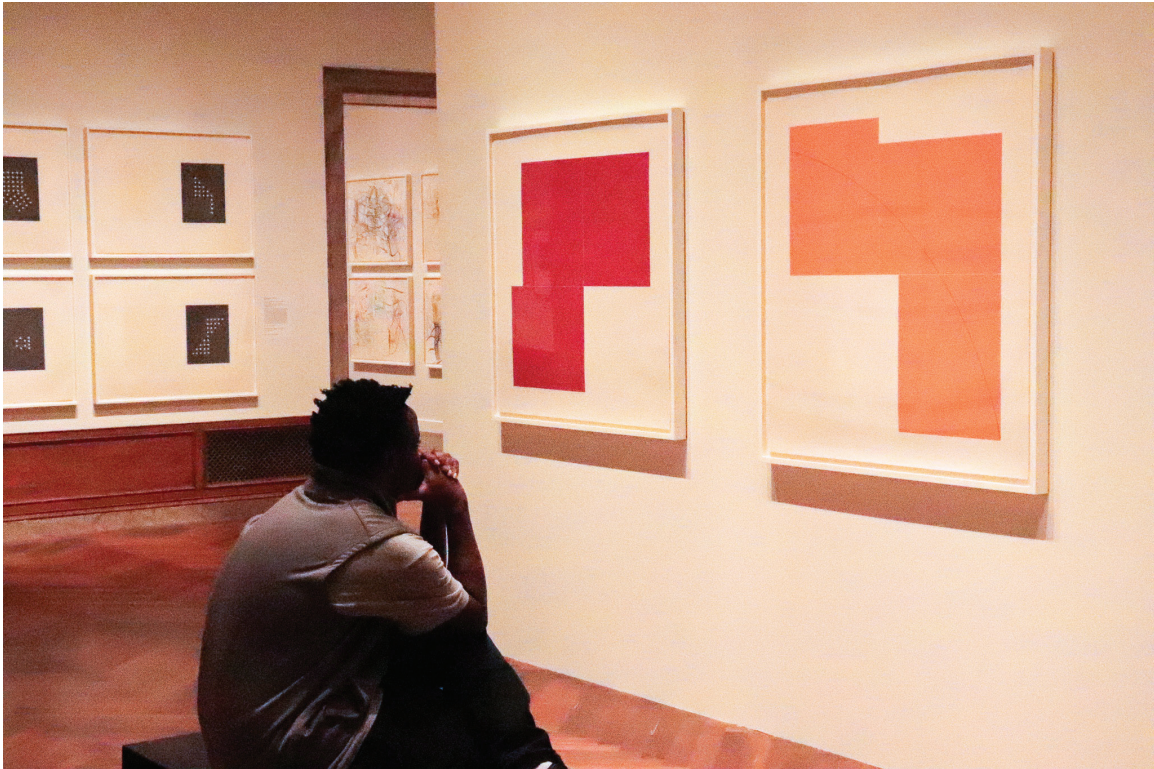
Vogel continued, “The 1970s [were] an especially exciting moment when printmaking shifted from being seen as a secondary medium to being embraced as a true art form. It also tells a story about different types of printmaking and what is possible within the medium. That layered focus on history, practice, and art makes it educational in several ways.”

Viewers encountered prints that appeared deceptively simple, a quality that Felisha Li ’28 thought made the exhibition more engaging.

“I was expecting more elaborate paintings, so I was surprised by how simple everything was. The works almost looked like room decor because they were so bright and colorful. I think the minimalism added to the experience. When there is more blank space, it gives you more time to observe. With a very detailed or cluttered piece, it can feel confusing, and you might not fully process everything,” said Felisha Li.

By allowing for a wide range of interpretations, the exhibition enabled visitors with different interests to find their own points of entry. Angela Parker, Educator for Academy Engagement at the Addison, emphasized the exhibition’s interdisciplinary value.

“Students who are interested in art may be excited by how much there is to learn about printmaking and what is



A. BAETEN-RUFFO/THE PHILLIPIAN

An attendee of the exhibition evaluates two juxtaposed frames.

possible within the medium. Math students might be interested in the logical and mathematical thinking involved in printmaking. Other students might find interesting connections to different modes of visual expression... From an educator’s perspective, I don’t think of the exhibition as having one central takeaway. I think the value lies in there being space for many different takeaways, depending on the lens students bring with them,” said Parker.

That openness resonated with Shijun Li ’28, who approached the exhibition from an artist’s perspective. He noted that it gave him a renewed appreciation for abstract art and challenged common as-

sumptions about what gives art value.

“Most people, especially people who are not artists, judge art solely on the technical skill. You very often hear ‘I could do that’ in abstract or modern art exhibitions as a sort of dismissal of the piece. That philosophy completely misses the point. Abstract art’s purpose is not to showcase technical ability, but to specifically explore fundamental elements of art and design by removing all the clutter. It confronts the audience with simplicity and challenges us to find its value. I learned all that from this exhibition, and I’m grateful that it has opened me to a whole world,” said Shijun Li.

Those moments of reflection aligned with Vogel’s hopes for the exhibition, to shift viewers’ attention away from polished outcomes toward the processes behind the works.

“The process of making can be iterative, and artists often began working in a medium they were unfamiliar with. That experimentation, and sometimes even failure, became the force that drove their work forward... I hope visitors take away a willingness to try something new, to experiment, and to innovate. I also hope they develop curiosity about how things are made.... That creates a different kind of relationship with art,” said Vogel.

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# A Single’s Inferno Look-Book: Dress to Be Chosen for Paradise

CHARLIZE SOW & AUTUMN XIA

CAMPFIRE CONVERSATIONS: A MALE CHOICE

Conversations around the campfire are where feelings start to surface and the games take an emotional shift. With tension building through quiet glances and the passive aggressiveness of contestants, the outfit should feel relaxed and intimate. A soft zip hoodie strikes the perfect balance between casual and stylish. It’s comfortable enough for lingering conversations and just practical enough to offer when the night air turns cool.

BREAKFAST ON THE INFERNO: A MALE CHOICE

For a low-key breakfast on Inferno, the seafoam green Burberry polo strikes the perfect balance between ease and intention. The soft pastel tone leans into the island’s relaxed, sun-washed palette, while the iconic Burberry check at the collar adds enough structure to feel styled. It gives off understated “soft boy” energy: a polished, gentle, and approachable look without being overdone. The formality is present, but subdued, aligning seamlessly with the “Single’s Inferno’s” signature casual, but deliberate, breakfast aesthetic.

THE FIRST IMPRESSION FIT: A FEMALE CHOICE

If the opening episodes of “Single’s Inferno” have taught us anything, it’s that entrances matter. Opt for a well-fitted, flattering dress that showcases your confidence and charm. Not only will it capture the attention of other contestants the moment you step onto Inferno, but it makes for an easy conversation starter. This is the kind of look that makes an entrance without trying too hard.

Under the unforgiving island sun, first impressions on the Korean reality series “Single’s Inferno” are made long before anyone even speaks. This popular dating series strands contestants on a resource-scarce island, nicknamed “Inferno,” where they must cook their own meals, navigate survival challenges, and find a romantic partner to ultimately escape to the luxurious “Paradise” with. Season 5 is currently unfolding on Netflix, once again turning tropical isolation into a high-stakes dating show, where romance is uncertain and competition is relentless. With no phones, limited conversation, and relationships dictated by pairing and power dynamics, style becomes one of the few things contestants can truly control. In “Single’s Inferno,” fashion isn’t just about looking good; it’s about being chosen.



A PARADISE DUFFEL THAT LEADS TO ALL THE ROMANCE: A FEMALE CHOICE

For Paradise, the pink Gucci duffel functions as both a luxury essential and a visual statement. Sized just large enough to carry everything needed for an overnight escape, it blends practicality with glamour. The soft pink color leans fully into the feminine, “girly girl” aesthetic. The dual carrying options, handheld or cross-body, keep it versatile and effortless. And if it’s too heavy to carry, that’s fine. Paradise’s romantic energy assumes that someone will effortlessly take it from here.

HEAT IN PARADISE: A FEMALE CHOICE

Of course, no “Single’s Inferno” fashion guide would be complete without providing a look for the show’s steamiest scenes. This bikini strikes the perfect balance between playful and alluring, pairing a classic triangle cut with a soft, gingham pattern. It’s eye-catching without feeling overdone, letting confidence do most of the work. Equally cute and seductive, this is the kind of look that feels effortless while still leaving a lasting impression.



GEMMA PARK / THE PHILLIPIAN

THE DECIDING DRESS: A FEMALE CHOICE

For Leaving Day, the light blue Dior shirt dress harmonizes with the feeling of an exhale after weeks of tense decision making. Its soft color blends seamlessly into the hues of the beachside, letting the moment, and not the outfit, take center stage. Worn during the final walk and hand-taking, it carries a quiet confidence, signaling resolve over uncertainty. It’s the kind of look that feels emotionally right for the finale: gentle, romantic, and composed as the season’s last decision is made.

WHERE COMPETITION TURNS PHYSICAL: A MALE CHOICE

Physical activities on “Single’s Inferno” involve speed, strength, and of course, a considerable amount of close contact. This is your moment to let all those hours in the gym speak for themselves, without distraction or excess. A sleek, well-fitted pair of swim shorts keeps things uncomplicated and purposeful, moving easily with your body while placing the focus exactly where it belongs. For this look, some good shorts, worn with confidence, is the ultimate way to go.

# More Than a Trophy Case: A Review of the 68th Grammy Awards

WENDI WEI

The 68th Grammy Awards returned to Los Angeles on Sunday, delivering a night packed with show-stopping performances, milestone victories, and broader cultural conversations. The award show reminded audiences once again that the Grammys are never just about music. Hosted one last time by Trevor Noah, the ceremony offered both celebration and controversy, underscoring how the Recording Academy (the Academy)’s biggest night continues to reflect the music industry’s triumphs, missteps, and ongoing evolution.

Major Wins and Historic Moments:

This year’s winners broke new ground on several fronts. In a landmark moment for global music, Bad Bunny’s “DeBÍ TiRAR MáS FOToS” won “Album of the Year,” marking the first time a fully Spanish language album

earned the Academy’s top honor. This victory was widely celebrated by fans and critics alike as it was a seismic shift in the way Latin music is recognized on the world stage. Moreover, Kendrick Lamar and SZA’s collaboration “luther” took home “Record of the Year,” while Billie Eilish’s “Wildflower” won “Song of the Year,” affirming both artists’ continued creative influence across genres. Kendrick Lamar emerged as the most awarded artist of the night, further cementing his status as one of hip-hop’s most decorated performers. The “Best New Artist” award went to Olivia Dean, whose jazzy soulful voice and genre-defying sound made her one of the year’s most talked-about artists.

Performances and Cultural Statements:

Performances ranged from emotional tributes to boundary-pushing set pieces. Lady Gaga, Rosé & Bruno Mars, Tyler, the Creator, and Jus-

tin Bieber delivered standout moments, each bringing distinct energy to the stage. Several performances were imbued with political or cultural significance — particularly those advocating for immigrant rights and community unity — reminding viewers that music and activism often intersect. Several award winners used their acceptance speeches to echo these themes, as artists used their time onstage to confront systemic inequities and current turmoils, reaffirming the role of music as both expression and resistance.

Criticism and Controversy:

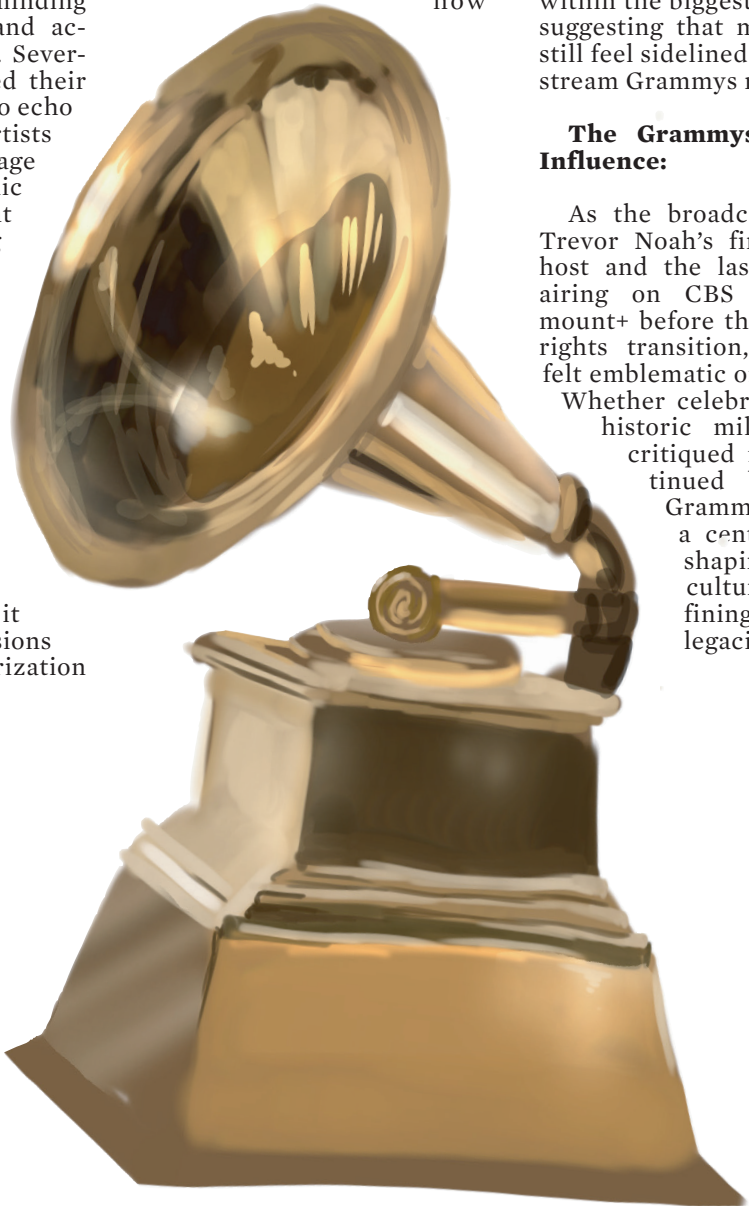
Despite the evening’s triumphs, some debates resurfaced. While Bad Bunny’s historic “Album of the Year” win was celebrated, it also sparked discussions about genre categorization

and whether the Grammys have fully broadened their lens to include diverse global sounds on equal footing with traditional English-language mainstream releases. Additionally, conversations continued around how

the Academy balances commercial success, artistic merit, and cultural impact when choosing winners. Furthermore, critics pointed to ongoing questions about the visibility of genres such as rock, alternative, and world music within the biggest categories, suggesting that many artists still feel sidelined from mainstream Grammys recognition.

The Grammys’ Broader Influence:

As the broadcast marked Trevor Noah’s final year as host and the last Grammys airing on CBS and Paramount+ before the broadcast rights transition, the night felt emblematic of transition. Whether celebrated for its historic milestones or critiqued for its continued biases, the Grammys retain a central role in shaping music culture and defining artistic legacies.



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