



Boys Take First, Girls Second at Squash Nationals

By **DEVEN PATEL '27**
News Editor

This past Sunday, February 22, Boys and Girls Varsity Squash competed at the 2026 U.S. High School Squash Team Championship, placing first and second respectively. The teams traveled to the Arlen Specter US Squash Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to compete in a tournament from February 19-22. This year's victory from the boys team marked their first ever win at the national championships in the school's history.

Last year, both the boys and girls teams placed second. In 2024, the boys

"The championship was the greatest sporting event I've ever seen," said Luke Velasco '27.

came in fourth place, while the girls finished in third. Both team's strong regular season record earned them the second seed heading into the national tournament.

The national tournament features a team-scoring format, with only the team's top seven players facing off against another team's top seven. In order to win the round, a team needs



A win by Simrith Gaddam '28 secured the first place victory for Boys Varsity Squash.

to win a minimum of four out of seven matches.

Both teams have had strong seasons thus far. Led by co-captains Makeda

Moshi '26 and Olivia Choo '26, the girls had a record of 8-1, with one loss against Greenwich Academy. After winning their first three rounds at the national

tournament 7-0, 7-0, and 6-1, they faced off against the number-one seeded Greenwich Academy again in the final round.

Zara Mohd Fakhur Razi '28, Moshi '26, Trinity Moshi '29, Choo, Eloise Oakley '27, Pippa Clark '28, and Charlotte McAfee '28 played for the team. The team lost 5-2 in the final round, with the two wins coming from Moshi '26 and Moshi '29.

The boys had an undefeated record heading into nationals. Co-captains Rohan Gupta '26 and Parth Khera '26 led the team to a 16-0 record over the regular season, with a number of shutout wins.

In the championship round, the boys faced off against the number one-seeded St. Andrews School (FL). The teams were tied 3-3 before heading into the final match.

The seven boys who played were Khera, Gupta, Jude Cha '28, Reed Morris '28, David Martoma '28, Knox Vitrano '28, and Simrith Gaddam '28. Thanks to wins from Cha, Morris, and Vitrano, the outcome of the championship was to be decided by the final match, played by Gaddam.

After beginning two games down, Gaddam came back, eventually winning his individual match three games to two, securing the team's victory. Upon Gaddam's game-winning point, which featured a noteworthy between-the-legs shot, both the boys and girls teams stormed the court in celebration.

Luke Velasco '27, a member of Boys Varsity Squash, said, "The championship was the greatest sporting event I've ever seen."

The Life I Left For: Tommy Molina '28 Reflects

By **TOMMY MOLINA '28**

Tommy Molina is a Lower Mid exchange student from Bogotá, Colombia who has joined the community for MP3. He will be departing next week.

"I will become stronger," I told myself. Zipping up my bulging suitcase, I took one last glance at the place I called home—the place that had seen me grow and build my values. It was difficult to believe that for the next two months, I would be living a brand new life, where my face and name would be foreign to others. I would be stepping into uncharted territory. I began to doubt my decision of leaving the familiar behind.

Leaving, for me, has always been hard. Coming from two culturally disparate countries, I know my answer to, "Where are you from?" will never be simple. Ten thousand miles separates the "Down Under" that raised me and "La Tierra Querida" that welcomed me during my teenage years. When my family migrated back to Colombia from Australia in 2016, everything was hard to adjust to. The overtly ebullient culture took me by surprise. But I adapted in the end and became comfortable in my new home. Yet in 2025, I found myself stepping into discomfort once again, saying one final goodbye to my parents. If I was scared and doubtful of entering the unknown, why was I leaving?

The term "sonder"—coined in the *Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*—refers to "the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own." Sitting on the

airplane, only having been to the U.S. on holiday, this profound feeling overwhelmed me. I was curious to experience the "boarding-school life."

Seeing the campus for the first time was sensational: the dormitories, the Main Building, the Athletic Center, and the Dining Hall felt so distinct. I was excited to get to know all of it. I was astonished to realize that everyone at Hotchkiss had a story similar to mine, but each with their own unique experiences, motives, and ambitions. I began to experience sonder everywhere I went. I met a broad range of people—from Taiwan to Mexico to Sudan—and exchanged stories about our cultures. My face began to seem familiar again, and my name was heard amongst new friends. "At last, I'm home, right?" I pondered.

But as time went on, the excitement and extravaganza of the new environment began to fade. Daily strolls to the Dining Hall began to bore me, while assignments and homework began to pile up. The boarding school experience I had been so eager for left me wonderless. Looking for change, I turned to someone I admire a lot, whom I knew faced the exact same struggle I did. My older brother helped me realize that the "underwhelming" sense of finally adjusting to something new is inevitable.

He offered some advice: try something new every single day. I carried this with me as time went on. Placing myself in a higher math course challenged my current abilities.

Involving myself in volunteer work showed me the importance of giving back. Going sledding taught me to make the most of the environment that surrounds me. After several weeks, I was enjoying myself again.

As I prepare to zip up my suitcase again, I reflect on the privilege of the extraordinary time I've had at Hotchkiss and the important lesson I've learned here: leaving means living an unknown future, while not forgetting about the past—it means leaving your comfortable life behind in pursuit of a new one. I encourage those who are afraid of or uncertain about leaving comfort to do so. After all, discomfort is necessary for comfort. My still bulging suitcase now holds new, unforgettable memories and stories that I cannot wait to share with those back home.

"I am stronger in wisdom and gratefulness," I conclude.



TOMMY MOLINA '28

Announcing the 128th Editorial Board

128TH EDITORIAL BOARD

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Rising Sports Editor Jayden Perlman '27 considers the team's dominant season.

News

It's Alive! HDA Presents *Frankenstein*

By **ELLIE MATASAR '29**
Staff Writer

From February 13-15, the Hotchkiss Drama Association (HDA) presented a production of *Frankenstein* by Nick Dear in Walker Auditorium. The show was co-directed by Director of Theatre Derek Brashears and William Becker '26.

Thirty-one students and six faculty members and local artists participated in the production's design and management elements. Destiny Herd '26 was production stage manager, Kate DeAngelis did costume design, and Mr. Brashears was the set, lighting, and sound designer. Yanglin Fazzone '29 and Autumn Hemelt '27 did makeup design. Ms. Davida LaCrosse, instructor in chemistry & physics, was the technical director, and Mr. Andrew Knight, instructor in English & theatre, managed props.

Frankenstein follows a scientist, Dr. Victor Frankenstein (played by Jack McCarthy '26), in his attempt to create a living creature by combining body parts of corpses. Dr. Frankenstein succeeds in making his creature (played by Steven Hicks '26), but abandons it because of its ugliness. The plot follows the Creature's evolution and the dynamic between the Creature and Dr. Frankenstein as creation and creator.

The story of *Frankenstein*, from Mary Shelley's book, has been adapted countless times into movies, plays, and musicals, the most recent being a 2025 film directed by Oscar-winning filmmaker Guillermo del Toro and starring Jacob Elordi, Mia Goth, and Oscar Issac. Mr. Brashears said, "This story, and especially this version of this story, is about how the Creature is misunderstood. He is born into abuse and fear, and yet somehow still gains his humanity. He's also a warning. He shows us that that life can move beyond our control. This story

has lived for so long, because its main questions warp and grow and evolve with the times."

Co-director Becker said, "This story grapples with who is the monster and who is the man, and what happens when humans try to meddle with science and the natural order, especially in relation to human life."

Mr. Brashears has been making plans for the production since it was approved in April by the HDA Board. Mr. Brashears said, "When you think about it, I have been artistically living in that headspace of gothic horror for about 10 months."

"Steven's acting was incredible; he embodied the character so completely," said Chloe Cairns '29.

In October, Becker was brought in as stage manager and assistant director, and soon took on the role of co-director. Chiwo Mupita '27, who played the role of Madam Frankenstein, said, "Mr. Brashears is just relaxed enough where I feel like I can really have fun on stage, yet he also pushes us to be better. It is the perfect happy medium, and I am grateful to be a part of this show!"

Auditions and castings took place in early to mid-November, then the rehearsal process started. Rehearsals took place almost every day, including Sundays. Not all crew members were involved in every rehearsal session, so busy students could still stay on top of their other priorities. Mupita said, "The characters with the most scenes are Victor and the Creature. So often, I would only be called three to

four times a week, depending on what scenes needed work."

Music and set design were chosen to create a dark setting. There was music throughout the majority of the show, whether quiet instrumentals or loud pop songs, and sound effects created an ominous atmosphere. Additionally, the lighting created moments of horror and visual attention. The production also included fake blood and corpse props, which increased the forbidding atmosphere.

Mr. Brashears said, "I spent my pre-teaching professional career working with some of the foremost physical theatre artists in the world, and have used that experience to inspire how this production was created. Movement, sound, and clean, powerful visuals drive this production as much as a great script and performances to match. There are moments that are certainly weird, and feel potentially out of place, but when combined as a whole create what I was hoping for. I wanted to give us something that was always beautiful, but never pretty."

Many students and faculty had positive reactions to the show. Michaela Springer '27, who attended the show on Friday night, said, "The dancing with Lily and Steven was fascinating, since other than the musicals most productions don't have dance. The music that played throughout it helped create the horror element that Shelly was going for. It was absolutely insane that Steven could do so much acting without any lines in the first ten minutes of the play." Chloe Cairns '29 said, "Steven's acting was incredible; he embodied the character so completely."

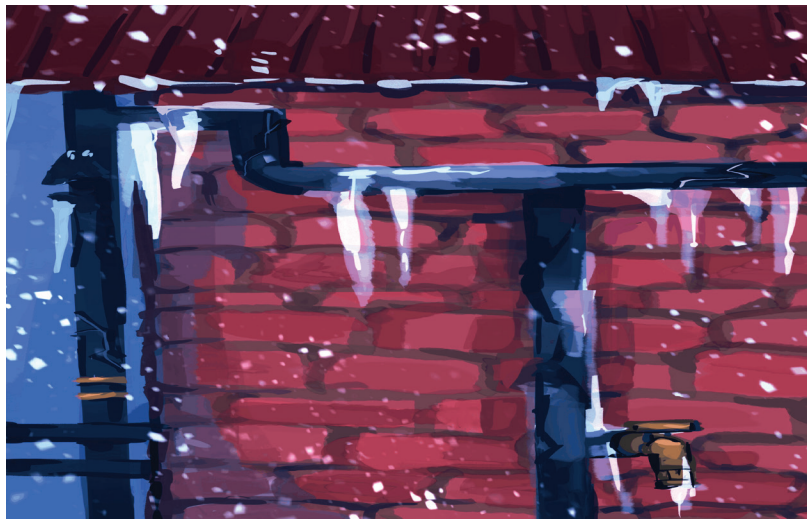
HDA will present *Romeo and Juliet* in the spring. Carla Oudin '26 and Philip Fauver '26 have been cast as *Romeo and Juliet*. This production will be directed by Mr. Knight and will take place from May 8-10.



Steven Hicks '26 played the lead role of the Creature.



Jack McCarthy '26 and Olivia Kwon '26 played Dr. Frankenstein and his fiancée.



Sub-Zero Temperatures Create Challenges on Campus

By **EMILY HWANG '29**

An extended period of extreme cold hit the local area this winter, bringing sustained single-digit temperatures and multiple days of below-zero wind-chill to campus.

Winter temperatures in the Housatonic Valley region typically range between 20°F and 40°F, but this winter saw nearly four consecutive weeks of single-digit temperatures. "This hasn't been typical for the last decade in our region," said Director of Facilities Michael Virzi.

This freeze has affected campus facilities. The extreme cold, along with high levels of snowfall, led to ice buildup on sidewalks and rooftops, increasing safety concerns and requiring more regular plowing. Since a number of the buildings on campus are relatively old, it has been a challenge keeping them warm. "Heating the buildings with this type of cold weather is really extraordinary," Mr. Virzi said. "We're using a lot more fuel, and that has a

cost."

The deep freeze also caused water pipes to break and sprinkler heads in both Redlich and Elfers Hall to freeze. "We have responded to those quickly and damages have been limited," said Mr. Virzi.

Beyond campus, the winter also created challenges in the local area. The freezing of the Hudson River prevented barges of salt from reaching the area, limiting access to traditional de-icing materials. According to Mr. Virzi, the staff can comfortably manage without these supplies, but as there are another six weeks of winter, it is still a challenge to face.

Mr. Virzi noted that maintaining the campus during extreme weather conditions is a shared effort.

"Everyone has a part," he said in regards to protecting the campus, whether it be closing the windows or reporting potential risks such as heating issues. "The school is coming through it fairly well, but I am looking forward to spring."

The Gearcats Compete at State Championship

By **DEVEN PATEL '27**
News Editor

On Saturday, February 21, the Robotics team competed in the FIRST Tech Challenge Robotics CT State Championship at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. The championship united thirty top-ranked teams from New England. The Gearcats went 1-4 and won a third place in the Inspire Award judging for sportsmanship. Unfortunately, the team failed to advance to the next round of competition.

The Gearcats qualified for States by going 3-2 and earning fourth place in the Hartford Armory Qualifier on

February 14. They also received the first place Inspire Award.

"It was a really successful season overall," said David Ayodele '27.

According to First Tech Challenge, the FIRST Robotics Inspire Award is presented to the team who is an "inspiration to other teams, acting with

gracious professionalism both on and off the playing field." It is the highest award that can be bestowed upon a team and celebrates the strongest qualities of all the judged awards.

The team is led by captains Emily Cho-Sayegh '26, Clifford Lanier '26, Shaye Lee '26, Lindsay Miao '26, and coached by Mr. Jeff LaCrosse, instructor in physics, and Mr. Bill Fenton, director of the EFX lab.

David Ayodele '27, a member of the team, said, "It was a successful season overall. The team worked really hard, and I think there are a lot of lessons to learn and good things to come from us as we move onwards."



The Gearcats pose at the Hartford Armory Qualifier.

Features

Muslims Celebrate Ramadan On Campus

By RIKAKO UMEZAWA '27
Staff Writer

After Long Winter Weekend, as the community pushes through the final stretch of winter before spring break, many are trying to get back into an ordinary rhythm. For Muslim students, February this year brings the start of the holiest month in their calendar.

“The school makes Ramadan accessible for us, despite being far from home,” said Yusuf Ahmed '27.

Ramadan, which commemorates the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad, is one of the most important holidays for Muslims. Muslims fast from dawn to sunset to draw closer to

God and cultivate self-control and compassion for those less fortunate.

“Ramadan has been a large part of my life,” said Amy Deme '26. “In the months leading up to it, I feel closer to God.”

Yusef Ahmed '27 said, “Ramadan is a time where I pray, have my prayers answered, and empathize with those who are less fortunate.”

Observing Ramadan at a boarding school is different from at home. “At home, the celebration is more energetic,” Deme said. “At school, the scale is much smaller, with fewer kids. It is harder.” Ahmed agreed. “There is less of a communal feel,” he said. “At school, it's lonelier and personalized.”

Fasting during daylight hours is a requirement for healthy adults during Ramadan. Observant Muslims avoid all food and drink while the sun is in the sky and often break their fast with celebratory after-sunset meals. “I try to wake up at 4 a.m. to eat before the fast begins,” Ahmed said. He prays,

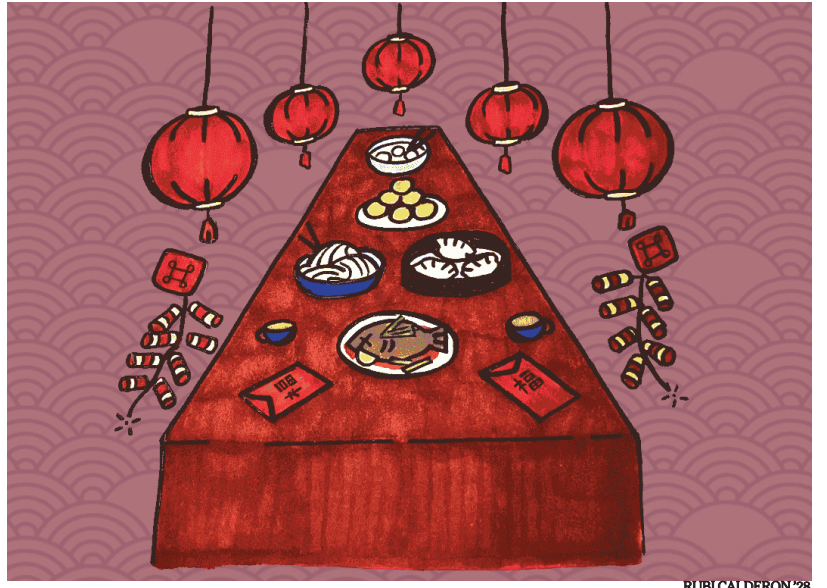
goes to class, then heads to practice before breaking his fast at the Multicultural Center (MCC).

“In the months leading up to Ramadan, I feel closer to God,” said Amy Deme '26.

Mr. Souleman Toure '19 said, “Fasting makes the day more exhausting and endless; the important thing is to pace myself.”

Even with the challenges, students feel supported by the school. Ahmed said, “They make Ramadan more accessible despite being far from home.”

Still, students hope for more awareness. Ahmed and Deme proposed an All-School Meeting to introduce the idea of Ramadan and overall understanding and respect from others.



RUBI CALDERON '28

Community Welcomes in The Year of the Horse

By TAYLOR PANG '27
Staff Writer

Lunar New Year is a multi-day celebration of the beginning of the lunisolar calendar year. It is primarily celebrated throughout East and Southeast Asia. This year is the year of the Fire Horse, which symbolizes speed, independence, and intense action.

This year, the celebration started with dumpling and scallion pancake making workshops in the Dining Hall. This was followed by an all-school performance including dancing, singing, and more. Later, the Dining Hall provided a special dinner.

Ms. Denee Hinman, senior general manager at CulinArt Managed Dining Services, was in charge of this year's Lunar New Year dinner. She said, “I did a lot of research. I did my best to meet with parents and students to talk about what recipes they like and what ingredients they use. It was tough, but I tried to immerse myself in the experience. I went shopping at an Asian market to pick out all of the spices and teas.”

The menu featured scallion pancakes, dumplings, fried rice, glutinous rice balls, noodles, and more. Hinman said, “We had a committee that decided. I had more

things, for example crispy pork, that was taken off, but I knew in my heart that people would like it. Since it was our first time in this dining hall, I learned a lot for next year, for example, including more gluten-free or vegan options. I also want to do a specialty Korean meal, hopefully soon.”

The dinner followed many traditions, including clementines, longevity noodles, chocolate coins, and dumplings. Clementines symbolize luck, wealth, and prosperity. Longevity noodles represent a long and healthy life. The chocolate coins symbolize fortune and abundance. The shape of dumplings resemble that of ancient Chinese ingots, indicating fortune in the upcoming year. Hinman said, “We researched to find the meaning of each item in hopes of making the whole meal symbolic.”

The Lunar New Year dinner took a lot of preparation. Hinman said, “Since we have so many different pieces of equipment in the kitchen, I had to assign certain chefs to certain foods and ensure that they watched videos on the importance of perfecting the spices and using equipment correctly. It was challenging to produce enough food at a rate fast enough to cater to so many people.”

Farewell to the Retiring Board!



SHAYEE LEE '26
Best at balancing a billion activities



JACK MCCARTHY '26
Most eagle-eyed editor



KATHARINE ELLIS '26
Owns the most iconic water bottle



CLEMENTINE MORLOCK '26
Most elegant accent



EMMA LIU '26
Best person to go to for advice



BEN WISTAR '26
(Mostly) arrives early to layout



JULIAN ZHANG '26
Does not go to sleep



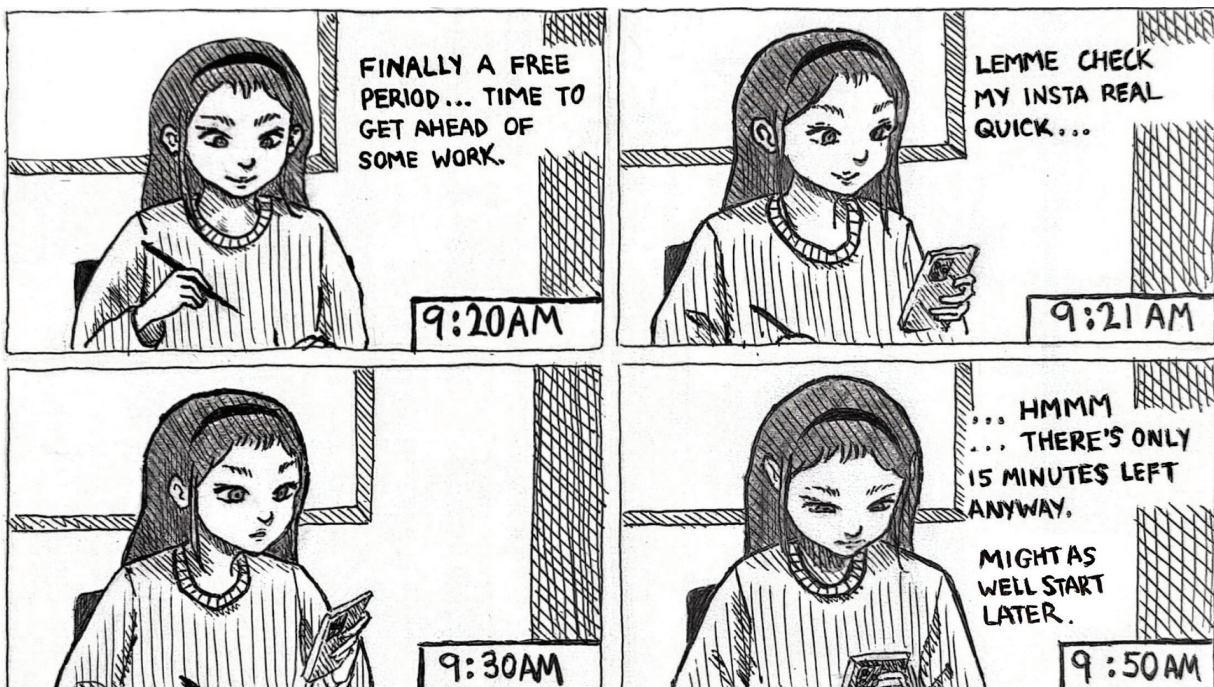
JACKSON GRACE '26
Worst case of senioritis



BEA YORKE '26
1/2 of the cutest Hotchkiss couple

A Typical Student's Free Period

By LAUREN NIEM '26



COMMUNICATIONS

Opinion

Defunding NASA Won't Save the Earth

Izzy Liang '29

On July 20, 1969, the whole world held its breath as a human stepped foot on the Moon for the first time. For the American people, this was more than a victory in a two-decade long space race—this was proof that when united with purpose, humans could rewrite history. For a moment, we looked upwards at the expanse of space and felt excitement. And yet, somewhere between that triumphant step and today, our gaze has drifted back downward.

Following the fateful moon landing, space has lost its novelty. The following space missions received significantly less attention, and after the major tragedies of Challenger (1986) and Columbia (2003), public trust in space programs dipped sharply. Space research and exploration appeared wasteful to the general public when there weren't consistently dramatic milestones like the moon landing.

Space exploration isn't an escape from Earth's problems; it's a way of confronting them in a different way.

With the rise of Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin, the image of space exploration has complicated for many. They view space research programs as vanity projects for billionaires who wish to take joyrides in space.

The issue, however, isn't space exploration itself—it's our inability to see the benefits it is bringing to us. Because of this, we often blame our struggles to solve problems on Earth on our investments in space. Global warming still an issue? Social injustice and public health concerns? Blame those blasted space programs.

But the truth? Scapegoating and defunding space programs won't solve urgent issues on Earth—it might even make them worse.

Critics of space exploration love to repeat, "It's too expensive." Based on a 2018 *Business Insider* poll, the average American believes that NASA receives approximately 6.4% of the federal budget. This is a massive overestimation. Since the 2010s, NASA has accounted for only 0.3%–0.4% of total federal spending, and this number has been decreasing every year, according to the Planetary Society (2025).

But even if NASA required more money per fiscal year, space exploration is still worth investing in. Each year, new technologies emerge from space exploration. Take the cameras on your iPhone: in 1990, a team of engineers at the Jet Propulsion

Laboratory worked to create cameras small enough to fit on a spacecraft but big enough to preserve scientific quality. Now, one third of all cameras contain this technology. And there's so much more: wireless headphones, water purification systems, LEDs, ear thermometers...I could go on and on.

Without investing in space exploration, we risk missing out on groundbreaking innovations.

NASA has also contributed significantly to the medical field. Space exploration programs developed a digital image processor that later led to the development of MRIs and CAT scans. The LVAD (left ventricular assist device), based off of a space shuttle's fuel pump, helps keep people healthy as they wait for heart transplants and in some cases, can even rule out transplants as unnecessary. Without space exploration investment, we risk missing groundbreaking innovations.

Another space exploration contribution is the way it can deepen our understanding of our own planet. In the 1970s, renowned climatologist James Hansen was inspired by his research on runaway greenhouse effects on Venus to investigate climate change here on Earth. His early warnings about the phenomenon in the 1980s would later earn him recognition as the "Father of Global Warming."

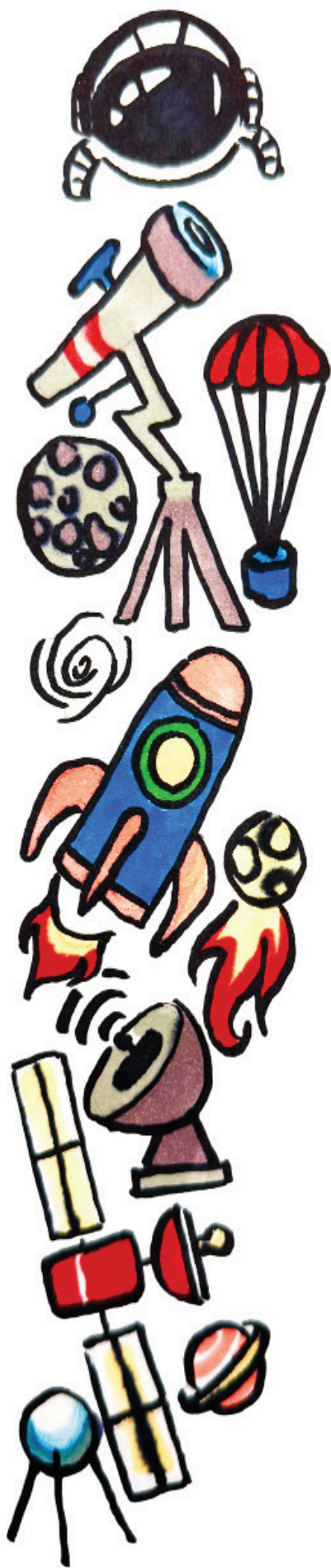
Space exploration, then, isn't an escape from Earth's problems as many believe; it's a way of confronting them in a different way.

While exploring other planets for habitable possibilities may one day help secure humanity's long-term survival, those pursuits shouldn't, in any way, encourage destroying Earth in the meantime. After all, we do not build lifeboats because we plan to sink the ship—we build them because we value the lives aboard.

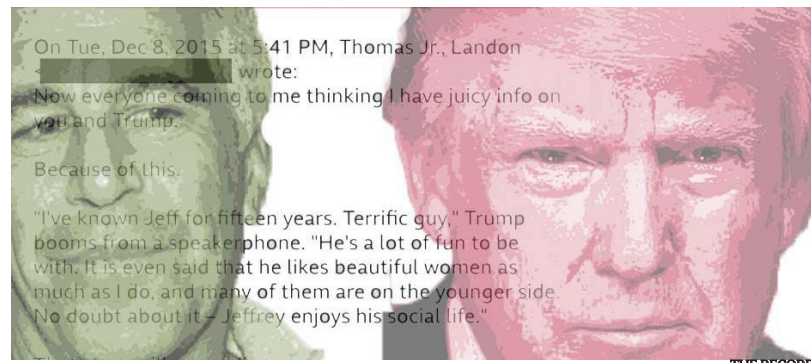
Leigh Phillips, a political journalist writing for *The Guardian*, writes, "If we cannot have space exploration until every last child on Earth is free from starvation, then neither can we have music or cinema or sport." From brutal wars in Eastern Europe to tragic humanitarian crises at our own borders, there is no denying that urgent issues persist right in our world.

However, funding space programs need not delay action elsewhere. Space exploration isn't the reason why the Earth's problems aren't being solved. We're just unwilling to tackle them with the same boldness we once used to reach the Moon.

We must choose to reach upward again—not because it is easy, but because it is hard.



ALICIA FENG '28



THE RECORD

The Epstein Files: Transparency or Political Theatre?

Sara Garcia '27

The Epstein files are a massive collection of over 300 gigabytes of documents, emails, images, and videos detailing the criminal activities of convicted child sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, whose network extended into the highest levels of wealth and politics. Public figures named in connection with Epstein over the years include Bill Clinton, Elon Musk, Prince Andrew, Richard Branson, and Donald Trump.

This is no allegation. It is a documented fact.

The files were released only after a bill passed with near-unanimous support (427-1 in the House). Their release was presented as a commitment to transparency. Americans were told this was "accountability." If that were true, there would not be this much confusion.

There were extensive redactions. Limited explanations about what was withheld and why. Representative Jamie Raskin (D-MD) stated publicly that Donald Trump's name was redacted in multiple places in the files. According to Rep. Raskin, there was a censored conversation between Epstein's lawyers and Trump's lawyers related to the 2009 federal investigation into Epstein. That matters. Not because redactions automatically imply Trump's guilt, but because selective redaction, especially involving a sitting president, raises obvious questions.

If the goal is full disclosure, why hide the existence of conversations between legal teams? Why not explain clearly who is being protected, and why? Whether it is attorney-client privilege, victim privacy, or something else entirely?

Redactions can be legitimate; survivors, for one, deserve privacy and respect. Ongoing investigations also require discretion. But redactions without detailed justification, especially after promising full transparency, diminish trust. Especially when the person whose activity is being obscured is the president of the United States.

Attorney General Pam Bondi was questioned by Representative Ted Lieu (D-HI) about whether underage girls were present at gatherings involving Trump and Epstein. Her response failed

to clarify anything. Instead, she shifted away from the question toward Trump's booming "political accomplishments" and the NASDAQ's record highs. Are we really surprised?

The Epstein files are not a partisan issue—most former presidents from both parties, including George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and others, do not appear in the released materials. But our current president's name does, and that fact matters. Why does his name appear in documents tied to a child sex trafficking investigation at all? This demands clear and direct explanation.

The Epstein case is about more than one man's crimes. It exposes how elite networks, wealth, and political connections insulate the powerful from the consequences of their actions. At Hotchkiss, that reality should concern us. Many students here will enter law, finance, government, and media. We will become leaders.

We talk about integrity. The Epstein files present a direct test of those ideals. Does power change the law? Is the government "releasing" the files for transparency or theater?

Transparency should be simple. Meet deadlines. Release documents. Explain redactions in detail. Provide clear reasoning grounded in law, not politics. Avoid deflection.

Instead, what we are seeing feels strategic. Information released in waves. Names obscured. Officials responding defensively. News that generates headlines, views, money—but few answers. Is that democracy?

If Trump's name was redacted in communications between legal teams, the public deserves to know why. If the redactions protect legitimate legal privileges, say so plainly. If they protect victims, explain that. Silence benefits no one except those already shielded by status.

This article is not assuming guilt. It is demanding justice. The Epstein files were supposed to close a chapter. Instead, they have unearthed deeper, darker questions. Does the rule of law apply fairly when those involved are wealthy, famous, or politically powerful?

Until those in power address it directly—not performatively—skepticism will continue.

Debate May Be Scary, But It's Necessary

Sienna Hwang '27

Many of you will recall an email from Mr. Richard Hazelton, director of the Center for Global Understanding and Independent Thinking, the day after we returned from Long Winter Weekend announcing the cancellation of the "surround debate" with Max Salzinger '25, sponsored by Open Discourse.

A note citing "low interest" surprised some in the community who were excited to see the return of an alum.

A brief note citing "low interest" caught some by surprise, especially the Hotchkiss debate fans who were

excited to see the return of a highly regarded alum.

Mr. Hazelton attributed the lack of interest primarily to the discussion topic—"Moderately Regulated Capitalism is the best economic system"—which he described as "not very enticing or provocative." He added that Open Discourse is re-approaching Salzinger with "more controversial and/or current issues that are on the minds of students."

Stacey Benn '28 and Isabella Deng '27 both believe that Salzinger's reputation as an excellent debater may have discouraged potential participants. Benn suggested, "Our goal is not to force arguments but to facilitate the respectful trading of ideas and knowledge. If we can convince people that open discourse is nothing to be scared of, then I believe we could hold this event without issues."

All in all, Hotchkiss is fortunate

to have distinguished alumni who are willing to give back in the way that Salzinger would have, and we should take advantage of such generosity.

A bit of pre-scouting, such as gauging potential topics that may garner interest from the community, and more visible marketing would help ensure the success of future events.

I believe a bit of pre-scouting—such as gauging potential formats and topics that will garner maximum interest from the community—and more visible marketing would help ensure the success of future events with alums. We look forward to seeing Max back on campus soon!



MAX SALZINGER '25

EDITORIAL

The EiCs Pass the Baton

Katharine Ellis '26

The festivities of this past week—such as the 100 days of school celebration and numerous evening sessions of interviews for *The Record*—have made me extra sentimental about my last couple of months here. While sitting in room 306, listening to eager, young writers as they expressed their passion for the paper, I couldn't help but think back to my three experiences being in their very same seat. Sitting across the table, I was suddenly hit by the realization of how far I had come in my three short years working for *The Record*. It's a crazy feeling to think back to my early writing days, tracking down unresponsive interviewees, and addressing Mx. Wynn's plethora of corrections on my submissions.

As I look back on my growth, if my time with the paper has taught me anything, it is simply to try. Show up for things you care about. Step out of your comfort zone. I was often worried that my work wasn't good enough or that I was doing something incredibly wrong as an editor or writer. Despite this, I kept showing up, putting in the work, and improving each week. Whether you are an avid writer for *The Record* or have never picked the paper up in your life, I am confident this guiding attitude will aid some part of your Hotchkiss journey. It has definitely shaped mine.

Jack McCarthy '26

The first article I wrote for *The Record* was a Features piece interviewing Amy Yang, the owner of Golden Wok in Millerton. I put apostrophes on the wrong side of class years, misplaced commas, and wrote exclusively in the passive voice. This had been why I originally signed up to write for *The Record*: I wanted to improve my writing. Over the next few issues, I got fewer and fewer comments on my articles—though still plenty—and started feeling more assured. But just as I was finding my footing as a writer, I was promoted to editor of the Opinion section.

Editing felt like a whole other beast. How was I, a Prep, going to critique Upper Mids and Seniors whose writing was significantly stronger than my own? On top of that, I needed to immediately learn to use InDesign, a software I had falsely claimed to have experience with on my editor application. My co-editor, Sophie Perkel '24, was two grades ahead of me and seemed like the smartest person in the world. Sophie's patience with me was infinite, and our year editing together was the largest shaper of my writing today.

Shaye became my next co-editor, and the growth continued. Shaye's energy and creativity brought new life to the Opinion section, inspiring my attitude as an editor and motivating me to do more than the bare minimum. I was ecstatic to continue working with her as Editor-in-Chief and even more so to be joined by Katharine, whose work as a News Editor I had admired from across our shared desk in SB202.

Over the past year, the three of us have probably spent hundreds of hours together, groaning over misaligned text boxes and laughing at ridiculous typos. Working with these co-editors—and Ms. Villano and Mx. Wynn!—has been the highlight and privilege of my time on *The Record*. My growth as a leader, writer, editor, and InDesign user is entirely a product of these relationships. To Jeremy, Annabelle, and Deven, I have full faith in your ability to lead *The Record* and hope that the three of you will enjoy working together as much as I have with Katharine and Shaye.

Shaye Lee '26

There are many downsides to pottering around on the hamster wheel of school commitments: the blue-light image of the Canvas dashboard permanently stains the underside of your eyelids, your posture curves into the solution graph of the polynomial you failed to simplify last math class, and in a biological marvel somehow resistant to five cups of coffee or any amount of compensatory rest, you are always sleepy. But the worst of these consequences by far is that you rarely have time to think. Sure, your No. 2 pencils are sharp and prepared to dutifully scribble down whatever subject your teacher is lecturing on; but your critical awareness—your ability to process what these ideas really mean and apply them to your interactions with the external world—has eroded to a dull nub.

For me, the only way to restore this important and necessary skill—the ability to think—has been writing. To verbalize an idea you must engage with it, a mandate that at the very least forces us to 1) search for new and interesting ways to give voice to ordinary thoughts or 2) reflect seriously on the ideas and experiences we've absorbed. We come to revelations as we write—one does not precede the other. What's more, writing is practice for the most fundamental dimension of human existence: communication. Learning to articulate what we think and what we feel is essential to being understood by, and to understanding, others.

This brief reflection can lead to two conclusions: 1) that nobody should outsource the process of contortionist thinking that writing insists upon by using AI, and 2) that everybody should write for *The Record*. I credit this newspaper for strengthening the process of articulation which I view as essential for any meaningful life, and that's why I encourage anyone—regardless of their writing ability—to contribute to it.



THE RECORD

America Loves the Idea, Not the Reality, of Diversity

Sofia Buck '27

The lights of Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara pulsed in rhythm to the closing notes of "Debi Tirar Más Fotos." Dancers filled the field carrying rows of raised flags. From Brazil to Colombia, Mexico to Canada, America's countries came together in a colorful celebration of representation and unity. The jumbotron illuminated a sea of faces and "The only thing more powerful than hate is love." The stillness that followed the message, the way the stadium held its breath as the words sank in, was a stirring example of the power of music and the way it can reach each and every one of us.

The stillness that followed the message was a stirring example of the power of music and the way it can reach each and every one of us.

Bad Bunny's Super Bowl performance was a historic moment, a true breakthrough extending far beyond entertainment. It was the first-ever Super Bowl halftime show performed entirely in Spanish.

This highlighted a multicultural America at a time when it is being undermined. Former president Barack Obama endorsed the performance as an example of what Martin Luther King Jr. called "beloved community." He highlighted the show's broad resonance; even for non-Spanish speakers, the images of elderly women serving drinks and kids dancing with their grandparents communicated warmth and belonging. The performance actively offered a vision of

integration.

Political backlash began even before the show started. After the show, Republican Representatives Andy Ogles (R-TN) and Randy Fine (R-AZ) called for federal scrutiny, claiming the performance included sexually explicit content and was too indecent to be broadcast worldwide. However, according to *The New York Post*, songs that political leaders accused of being inappropriate like "Safaera," "Monaco," and "Titi Me Pregunto" were "scrubbed" of lyrics that would normally have included references to sexual acts. During the 13-minute show, Bad Bunny didn't include any explicit language.

Bad Bunny's cultural and political commentary during his career generated much of the controversy, particularly among MAGA supporters, who objected to the halftime show on the principle that it would be performed in Spanish. President Donald Trump criticized the show, calling it "an affront to the greatness of America." Many viewed Trump's comment as not only a direct attack on Latin culture and identity, but as a troubling claim about who and what belongs on America's biggest stage.

All this backlash raises questions about what, exactly, was so threatening about his performance. It contained no explicit language, adhered to broadcasting policies, and spread a powerful message of love and cultural unity.

The outrage, then, seems to stem not from concern about vulgarity, but from resentment that a Spanish-speaking artist has gained the opportunity to headline one of the biggest performances in America.

If millions of U.S. citizens speak Spanish daily, why is Bad Bunny being rejected and treated as an

alien? Why is unity only celebrated when it conforms to one narrow version of what American culture should be?

The reactions that erupted reveal many Americans' resistance to a culture that has always existed and highlight the very real social barriers and biases Latinos face.

If Latin artists are welcomed only when they assimilate to English-language norms, then America's acceptance operates conditionally.

Latin artists like Shakira and Jennifer Lopez have performed at the Super Bowl. While their shows did generate some backlash, criticism centered on their dance styles and what some labeled "sexual" movements, and the performances were ultimately celebrated and widely praised. This public embrace was due in large part to the fact that they incorporated significant English into their performances that aligned with the audience's established comfort levels.

So was the issue ever really about explicitness? Or was it actually about language and culture all along?

Bad Bunny has forced America to confront the truth. We praise diversity theoretically. Yet when it is truly manifested, it is met with resistance and criticism.

If a message of love, unity, and community can still cause controversy, then the real question we should be asking ourselves isn't whether or not Bad Bunny's show belonged on the Super Bowl stage, but whether America is truly ready to embrace the diversity it so frequently claims to celebrate.

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Arts



TAHA CLAYTON

Tremaine Exhibits Taha Clayton's *Historic Presence*

By EVELYN LIU '29
Staff Writer

in the 2016 documentary *Heavyweight Paint*.

"I am inspired by stories that give us little peeks into ordinary moments," said Mr. Clayton.

Brooklyn-based artist Taha Clayton visited the Tremaine Gallery to open his exhibition *Historic Presence* on February 14 and to give an artist talk on February 19. *Historic Presence* highlights African American life in the 1920s-50s, focusing on ordinary people and moments that are often overlooked.

Curator Terri Moore, director of the Tremaine Gallery, helped bring the exhibition to the school after seeing Clayton's work at the Wassaic Project and Troutbeck Symposium at Amenia, New York. "When we unpacked the work in the gallery, visually it was just stunning. Each figure feels like its own portal into history," she said. "It worked beautifully because we were open and respectful of each other's vision. The result is an exhibition that feels alive."

The exhibition shows the historic depth of Black American history, celebrates ordinary lives, and reminds visitors that history isn't only about famous figures or major events. Mr. Clayton said, "I was inspired by stories of just people. Grandparents, siblings, neighbors. Not the entertainers or famous figures, but the everyday lives that don't always get shown. I wanted to give little peeks into ordinary moments."

"I want youth to see the humanity in people and understand the everybody's people," said Mr. Clayton.

Mr. Clayton is a self-taught painter who specializes in portraiture. His work has been exhibited at the European Museum of Modern Art in Barcelona, Spain, and in 2023, his painting was selected as the cover of *New American Paintings*. His work is also highlighted

He also shared what sparks or inspires a new project. "It could be anything. Watching a film, listening to a song, reading something, or even hearing someone tell a story. Often it's the people I meet or stories I discover that make me want to put that visual out there," Mr. Clayton said.

Mr. Clayton hopes young viewers see themselves reflected in the stories he paints. "If you only see a hip-hop video or a movie that's exploiting something, your knowledge of a culture might just be a caricature," he said. "I want youth to see the humanity in people and to understand that everybody's people."

During his visit, Mr. Clayton led workshops with students in the gallery and art studios. "Hearing stories, whether from a whaler, a farmer, or someone's grandmother, gives me a story I want to put into a painting," he said. "Students get an alternative voice from someone with a different experience, and it opens up new ways of thinking about history and their own place in the world."

Through *Historic Presence*, Mr. Clayton invites visitors to connect with the past, legacy, and history. He said, "If you don't know where you came from, you don't know where you're going. Carrying that history with you gives you perspective on the future."

The exhibit will run until April 5, 2026. *Vulnerable Earth*, a photography show inspired by the High Arctic will open April 21.

Is Sexualization Truly an Artist's Choice?

Clover Curry '27

Sexualization within the music industry is nothing new. Ever since music videos from the 1970s and 1980s, women have been portrayed in hyper-sexualized ways by male artists such as ZZ Top and Robert Palmer.

As more women entered the industry, they were also objectified by the media. One prominent example of this is Britney Spears, whose early-2000s image was heavily shaped around her youth and desirability.

The promotion and normalization of hyper-sexual songs and performances



LAUREN NIEM '26

by producers has intensified the issue. Today, it is arguably getting worse.

However, in recent years, female artists have attempted to reclaim their sexual identities, framing their image as self-directed. This presentation suggests that their sexuality originates from personal empowerment rather than industry pressure.

Responsibility for sexualized content is increasingly reframed as artists' personal choice rather than an industry expectation. Artists such as Madonna in the 1980s and, more recently, Cardi B, have framed sexual freedom as a form of control over their own narrative. This shift appears to move from industry-regulated image-making toward presenting sexual expression as an act of autonomy.

Yet, is this reclamation actually positive? Even today, artist-driven music videos and song lyrics are criticized as "too sexual." Although responsibility for sexualization has moved from producers and managers to artists, the result—objectification—remains the same.

Many people criticize artists such as Sabrina Carpenter. She faced attacks for her styling and stage presentation, rather than explicit nudity, in her 2026 Grammys Performance of "Manchild."

Her album cover for *Man's Best Friend* features a stylized, pinup-inspired outfit where she suggestively pulls a man's tie, a presentation a social media user argued "sets women back 20 years."

Even when artists preach individuality, their actions are still, unfortunately, shaped by what the media rewards.

Artist Chappell Roan, who claims to produce music "for girls," arrived at the Grammys in an outfit with her chest exposed. It is a pity that discourse always revolves around how women are "setting us back" instead of how the music industry makes sexual displays profitable.

Male artists have also begun to experience increased sexualization in mainstream performances. Justin Bieber's 2026 Grammy performance, where he wore only silver boxers, generated attention but was largely framed as a personal stylistic choice.

Although nudity is becoming more prevalent in mainstream performance, it is increasingly framed as a reflection of industry normals.

By treating sexualization as an individual choice, the industry avoids scrutiny—even as it continues to profit from it across both male and female artists.

AOI: Andrew Lee

By SOFIA CLARK '27

Andrew Lee '26 is a four-year Senior from Sydney, Australia. He plays violin with Right Brain Logic jazz band ensemble and attends the Manhattan School of Music every Saturday. Outside of music, Lee is a member of Boys Varsity Wrestling and Varsity Ultimate. He is also the senior advisor for *Songs for Smiles* and a co-head of Eudamonia.

How did you start playing the violin?

I began in middle school, when I started at the Elizabeth Morrow school, which has a renowned string program. I love the violin and the sound of it—I think it's a very lyrical instrument. It's one of the closest in resemblance to the human singing voice.

I switched to the jazz violin because while classical music is cool, it wasn't right for me. I enjoyed some parts of the music, but it often felt repetitive and minimalistic. We'd talk about how to phrase certain pieces in terms of what the composer wanted, which felt very restrictive.

As an artist, I think you have to learn to express yourself. In some ways, music is an embodiment of

your identity, so it just didn't feel like classical was that for me.

How has the school's music program helped you grow as a musician?

The facilities here are world-class, and the access to the equipment at Hotchkiss are unmatched. We probably have the best music facilities out of any of the boarding schools.

I think Elfers is gorgeous. I practice on the stage all the time, and the acoustics are incredible. For jazz musicians, living on campus is very important, as you get to play and rehearse with other musicians.

How do you improvise and come up with solos?

I think improvisation is methodical and liberating at the same time. You have to really respect the jazz tradition and you have to listen to a lot of the jazz greats—the musicians that came before you—and what they did with their improvised solos.

Jazz solos are a lot like speaking a language. There's a lot of vocabulary words and sentences that make up the tradition. You need to understand what those are and represent that in your playing.

Your solos should be a representation of your identity and what you think sounds great to you.

You have to listen to a lot of recordings, play with a lot of people and understand what jazz is really about to appropriately improvise. But it is also a really spur-of-the-moment thing, which I think is beautiful.

It's interesting with solos, because it really reflects how you're feeling in that moment. Sometimes you walk into band practice and you may just start playing, but if you're feeling just really sad that day, that will show up in your playing.



COMMUNICATIONS

A Spotlight on Senior Artists



LAUREN NIEM '26

Sports

Four Varsity Wrestlers Advance to New England Tournament

By ANDREW WISTAR '29

Varsity Wrestling sent four athletes to compete in the NEPSWA Prep tournament at Greens Farm Academy on Saturday, February 14. The wrestlers qualified after their amazing performance at Western New England, the second largest tournament among New England prep schools, on February 7.

Hotchkiss hosted five meets in late December and January, beginning with a scrimmage against Salisbury and an iconic Bearcat Brawl against neighboring schools.

With many different opponents, the team had numerous opportunities to wrestle new schools and improve throughout the season. Some of their closest competitors were Taft and Salisbury. "Salisbury is always a fun match; they are usually our first meet of the season, and almost always a home meet," said Jack Lykourretzos '27.

The Prep School Wrestling Association organizes a tournament every year for the Western portion of New England boarding schools, which allows Hotchkiss wrestlers to compete against Taft, Salisbury, Canterbury, and other regional schools. Among those competing for the school this year were Cayden

Kim '26, Anya Reppa '26, Geraldo Moran '27, Yusuf Ahmed '27, Bonham O'Marra '27, Lykourretzos, Shaan Patel '27, Ryan Lee '28, Luis Guerra '28, and Andrew Wistar '29.

"New England gives the wrestlers a chance to see how they can do against the best," said Head Coach Cooper Puls '11.

At Western New England, teams wrestled off in a bracket to decide one winner in each weight class, with the seeding decided beforehand by a group of officials. Wrestlers competed until their second elimination, giving each wrestler multiple chances to move ahead in the ladder.

In the girl's division, Reppa earned three swift pins, winning her bracket against NYMA and Marvelwood opponents and earning first place. Reppa recorded pins in times of 0:09 seconds, 0:17 seconds, and 0:27 seconds, setting a new season's

record and scoring the team nine points (three per pin).

Shortly thereafter, Patel set a record for the fastest pin in his second match against Woodhall, taking his opponent down in only seven seconds, breaking a record held since 1968.

The team made the podium four more times, thanks to Ahmed, Lykourretzos, Kim, and O'Marra's hard-earned wins. Combined, they pinned eight different opponents, moving through the ladder and claiming their medals while contributing to the team's score.

Following their success at Westerns, these four wrestlers attended the NEPSWA New England tournament at Greens Farm Academy in Westport, CT. The NEPSWA tournament pitted over 35 regional teams against each other. Head Coach Cooper Puls said, "New England gives the wrestlers a great chance to see just how well they can do against the best wrestlers in this part of the country." The team faced off against some of the most experienced regional contenders, learning more about the sport and their own abilities.

The team ended the season with a record of 4-14. Ten Seniors from the team will graduate this year.



The team had four podium finishers at Western New England.

How Much Press Exposure Is Too Much?

Stella Liao '27

During this year's Australian Open, one of the most replayed moments of Coco Gauff was not her winning forehand or a clutch serve; it was her smashing her racket in the corner of the locker room after a frustrating quarterfinal loss to Elina Svitolina. The broadcast camera stayed on her for nearly 90 seconds as she reacted.

As the video went viral, commentators began speculating about her nerves. This instance sums up an issue in professional tennis: players are not given space to experience their emotions in private.

Gauff had entered the Australian Open labeled as a title contender. As a Grand Slam champion and one of the most marketable players on tour, she carried enormous expectations.

Within minutes of her defeat, Gauff had to walk into a press conference and answer questions about what went wrong. Although she handled it professionally, the situation itself raises questions: should a 21-year-old athlete have to publicly process her disappointment in front of the cameras, mere moments after walking off the court?

The Australian Open's production style amplifies this exposure. Cameras zoom in during changeovers, often focusing on players' faces during vulnerable moments; broadcasters replay their reactions in slow motion.

In Gauff's case, her emotional responses become material for exhaustive analysis. The focus shifted from the technical reasons behind why she lost her points to how she "looked" after losing them.

Tennis is uniquely isolating. In team sports, a struggling player can blend into the collective. In tennis, the athlete stands alone. Every mistake is individual. Every reaction is magnified. And unlike many other sports, tennis players are obligated to speak to the media almost immediately after matches, win or lose.

Gauff has been under this microscope since she was fifteen years old. At that age, most athletes are competing in junior tournaments. Gauff, on the other hand, was playing on Centre Court at

Wimbledon.

As such, Gauff has rarely competed without the narrative of "future superstar" attached to her name. The Australian Open only reinforced that: the media framed her performance at the event as a representation of her entire career.

Some will argue that this level of exposure is part of being a professional athlete. Grand Slams are global events. Media coverage fuels the sport's popularity and sponsors' investment. Players sign endorsement deals knowing increased visibility is part of the package. But there is a difference between visibility and constant surveillance.

The issue is not that Gauff was covered by the press; the issue is how she was covered. Replaying a missed forehand to analyze footwork is fair. Replaying an emotional outburst moment to interpret inner turmoil is exploitative.

Athletes are competitors, not reality TV stars. Not every moment needs to be packaged and redistributed over and over.

The Australian Open is one of the most prestigious tournaments in tennis. It prides itself on entertainment and global reach. But as coverage becomes increasingly immersive, it's important to draw the line between sports analysis and invasive exposure.

Athletes are competitors, not reality television stars. Frustration and disappointment are part of performance, but not every moment needs to be packaged and shared with the world.

Overall, Gauff handled her Australian Open loss with maturity. Yet, that professionalism should not distract from the broader issue.

Just because players cope well with exposure does not mean the exposure is harmless. Tennis needs to reconsider how much access is too much. When every emotional reaction turns into content, the sport risks forgetting that behind the ranking, the brand deals, and the headlines, there are people just trying to compete.



Preston Merrick '26 passed 1,000 career points on February 21.

A Look at BVB's Dominant Season

Jayden Perlman '27

As the snow starts to melt, the weather isn't the only thing that's heating up. With winter sports teams at the tail end of their seasons, one thing is clear: for Boys Varsity Basketball, the competition is intensifying as they gear up for the 2026 New England Founders League playoffs.

At the moment of publication, the team has a dominant 18-5 record. If you're not aware of how special this team may be, let me give you a rundown of how this talented group got to where they are at this point in their season.

Throughout the season, the boys accumulated their fair share of blowout victories over teams like Trinity Pawling, Salisbury, Kent, and Millbrook. One of these displays came against our rival Taft, where we smoked them 62-32 in the Hoop Hall Classic in Springfield, Massachusetts back on January 18. Though I'm

sure no one is counting (yes we are), the boys doubled down against the Rhinos, beating them yet again with a 58-47 win just a couple weeks later on February 4.

Let me give you a rundown of how this talented group got to a dominant 18-5 record.

But on the other side of the spectrum, the team has had its nailbiters. For example, they lost their very first game of the season against Avon by a single point, and came up four points short of defeating Williston, the defending NEPSAC Class A champions, on January 31.

Despite these close losses, the boys came through in other thrillers—none bigger than their comeback win against Dexter Southfield on February 11th. I'm sure the entire school has seen the clip by now: with our guys down by 2 as time was winding down, the Jordan Ghee '26 would hit a game-

winning buzzer beater from beyond the arc to earn a narrow victory.

Another memorable moment came just this past Saturday, on the team's Senior Day, when Preston Merrick '26 scored his 1000th career point to help lift the boys to a hard-fought 59-42 victory against Choate. This rare milestone was last achieved by Dean Hogans '25, who scored his 1000th point last season. Merrick, a four-year senior, is currently a co-captain of the team. He is committed to play basketball at Harvard University next year.

Players are staying focused on their quest for the program's first NEPSAC Class A League championship since 2022.

Under the leadership of Head Coach Joe Busacca and Coach Souleman Toure '19, the team has been able to combine relentless defense with unselfish offense. Being able to stay composed in tight games makes them a force that no one wants to face. The strength of this force was evident in the team's longest win streak (eight wins in a row). And as of now, the boys have been dialed in, winning 13 of their last 14 regular season games dating back to before the Winter Break.

These results aren't achieved by accident; it's what happens when people show up to every single practice ready to put in the effort—when talent meets hard work. After every one of their games, they award the DOG chain (defender of the game) to the player who best exemplifies effort and tenacity for the defensive side of the game. As the famous saying goes, "offense wins games, defense wins championships." Perfecting the little details is what separates the great teams from the elite teams.

The boys wrap up this year's regular season in the coming couple of weeks with games against Kent and Loomis—games that will determine the team's seeding in the playoffs. With an 80% regular season winning percentage at publication, the season has been a remarkable success. As amazing as these results are, though, the team is staying focused on their quest for the program's first NEPSAC Class A League Championship since the 2022 season. Regular season accolades are nice, but championship banners last a lifetime.



US SQUASH

Moshi won her championship round match in five rounds at the 2026 U.S. High School Team Championships.

Athlete of the Issue: Makeda Moshi '26

By AIDAN SONG '27

Makeda Moshi '26 is a four-year Senior from Washington, D.C. She has been part of Girls Varsity Squash for four years and is now co-captain. Moshi is committed to play squash at UVA next year.

Teammate Valentina Castro '26 said, "She is a great captain and extremely inspirational. She is a leader on and off the court and is very supportive of us during games and practices."

How did you get started with squash?

My dad put me in squash when I was about nine or ten. He's from Tanzania, and he played back at home.

Why did you decide to come to Hotchkiss?

The coach here was at one of the tournaments I was playing at over the summer before my eighth grade year, and she was talking to my parents about boarding school and the squash program here. Then I came and visited, and I really liked the school.

How has the school helped you develop as an athlete and student?

My experience has been great. As an athlete, I've improved a lot because the team is growing a lot and most of us are playing at the championship level. A lot of us are playing in and traveling to the tournaments together, and we're improving a lot with practicing with one another.

I think academically, Hotchkiss is a lot more challenging than my middle school, so I definitely grew as a student. I also would say coming to Hotchkiss definitely taught me to be more independent, because I was very dependent on my parents with almost everything, and now I know how to manage a lot of my own things on my own.

What are some of your favorite memories here?

I would love to say last year at high school nationals. With the team in the semis match, I had a really crazy match. I was really nervous, and I ended up winning.

Then we went to the semis and we placed second. This was the highest that Hotchkiss squash has ever placed. That was one of my favorite memories because I grew closer to the team a lot, and I got to also really see how much I've been improving.

What are some lessons you've learned playing at Nationals?

Nationals is a four-day, three-night trip, and it's very fun. The whole team grows closer, especially since we are all rooming together for the whole weekend. We're competing at the Spectre Center, which is the main squash facility for the U.S and the U.S national team's training facility. Being able to play there is an amazing experience because we have top-notch players and the best schools from all over the country watching us.

My experience in these past couple of years at Nationals has been really fun, because we've been getting to the semifinals, which is where our team can compete on the main court. It's been a good experience, because I've been able to put myself out there and get over my fear of playing in front of a huge crowd.

Can you tell me more about your experience as the captain?

When I was first captain, I didn't understand what I was supposed to be doing, because I thought it would be weird having authority over people that in the previous years I had just considered as teammates. They're still my teammates, obviously, but, as captain now, I find myself taking it more seriously.

Now I'm seeing high school nationals as really serious, because I'm a Senior and this is my last chance to be able to take home the title. As captain, I feel like I'm trying to push my teammates to try harder in practice, take everything seriously, and put all their effort in. I also make sure I'm setting a good example for them and staying on top of my stuff. I think I was already doing that, but having the label of captain is motivating to continue doing my best and help them do their best as well.

Could you tell me more about your recruitment process?

You can start recruitment during your Upper Mid year and the recruiting process started on September 1. I sent out all my emails the last week of August to get them out early. I received emails from a couple of schools, including UVA, which was one of my top choices, so then I planned to meet with the coach. During that September 1 weekend, there is a junior championship tournament in Greenwich, Connecticut, where most of the squash players, especially juniors, go to play. At that tournament, I talked to the UVA coach more about visiting and other logistics, and then we planned a visit. I visited UVA during the first week of October, and I committed on the final day of my visit.

What are your goals for the rest of your Senior year and at college?

One of my biggest goals is to hopefully take home a national title for Hotchkiss, and or take home the NEPSAC title. Those are my squash goals.

At Hotchkiss in general, I'm looking forward to spending more time with my friends and trying to enjoy the last couple of months I have here. Now that I'm officially into college I want to take advantage of every event happening: every dance, every event, every open discourse forum, and go to all the club meetings that I can.

What advice would you give to younger players?

You play how you practice. With squash, the way you practice can really predict the way you play in a match. I tell the team this all the time to make sure they're really taking practice seriously and not joking around all the time, because when it comes to an actual match we want to play well against other teams. Some teams aren't hard to play, but when we do come up against teams that give us a run for money, like Greenwich Academy, we need to make sure we're practicing the same way we would play a match.

Alum Spotlight: Kaila Richards '25

By CAMILLE CHOO '26
Staff Writer

Kaila Richards '25 is from Far Rockaway, New York, and currently plays basketball for Bucknell University. During her four years at Hotchkiss, Richards was co-captain of Girls Varsity Basketball. She scored over 1,000 points, had more than 500 rebounds, was a four-time NEPSAC all-star, and received the Upson Prize in her Senior year. At Bucknell, Richards has a career high of 15 points and made some starting appearances as a freshman.

Head Coach Langston Ross said, "What makes her both a good captain and player is that she is very inclusive of everyone on the team and wants the best for them on and off the court. As a player, it's the tenacious will to compete and play hard."

Former teammate Brooke Dicarolo '28 said, "Kaila was more than just a captain. She always pushed me to be my best and inspired me so much with her work ethic and love for the game. She made such an impact on the program, and I continue to look up to her."

How did you get into basketball?

My older brother was also a basketball player and he always brought me to his games. I saw how close he was with his teammates and I wanted to get into it to find friends and be more social. I started practicing a lot and I improved quickly. I have since made a lot of connections just from playing basketball with numerous great people.

How has your time at Hotchkiss shaped your basketball career?

Hotchkiss taught me multiple lessons, starting with living on my own and being able to manage when to eat, go to class, study, and go to the gym. Boarding school taught me how to be organized and responsible. These skills translate into my basketball career, because I have to be able to show up for my teammates and my coaches in a present, focused manner at all times.

What were some of your favorite moments at Hotchkiss?

One was we had a big playoff game at home against Sacred Heart (I think we had lost to Sacred Heart maybe once or twice earlier that season); the gym was completely packed. My team and I were having a great day. We beat them by a lot, and it was a really big upset.

Second, we had a game against Taft that we were losing, and then we hit a couple shots at the end of the quarter. It sent us into overtime and we ended up winning the game.

Sometimes after the games all the

students stormed onto the court to jump and celebrate with us. Those moments were really fun!

Do you have any rituals you do before every game?

I always make sure before I step foot into the game or before the ball is tipped off to tie my shoes super tight. My dad always told me that when you tie your shoes really, really tight then you run faster.

What was your college recruitment process like?

I was recruited by twenty-plus D1 schools, which was really exciting and an experience that not a lot of people have, so I am grateful for that. For every school—no matter the level of academics or basketball—I found myself learning something new which was a great experience as well. You learn a lot about yourself throughout the recruitment process and I am glad I got to experience it.

How do your experiences with high school and college basketball differ?

It differs a lot intensity-wise. A lot of the stuff I was able to get away with at the high school level was mainly because most of the girls that were in the league or on my team were the same size as me. When you come to college, especially D1-level, everyone is bigger than you. I'm short (around 5' 4") and everyone on my team is 6' plus, so it's a huge adjustment getting used to playing with bigger and stronger people, learning new techniques and details that I never focused on in high school.

At Hotchkiss, I was focused on getting recruited, winning games, and having fun. Once you get to college, it's definitely more like a job. You are playing basketball every day. You have a job on the team, and if you don't do that job then you have to fix it or they won't take you.

What are your goals for the rest of college and beyond?

I want to maximize my college basketball experience. I am a freshman now, and I have learned a lot over the last couple of months. I want to make sure during my four years here that I utilize all my resources: get in the gym, talk with my coaches, and build relationships.

Beyond basketball, I am a neuroscience major. I am interested in getting into research when I am older. I am not 100% sure if that's what I want to do, but right now I am taking the classes that will help prepare me to pursue this path.



BUCKNELL ATHLETICS

Richards scored over 1,000 points in her career at Hotchkiss.

Winter Season Recent Results

Boys Varsity Hockey
vs. TP: 7-4

Boys JV Hockey
vs. Millbrook: 9-0

Girls Varsity Hockey
vs. Deerfield: 0-5

Girls JV Hockey
vs. Deerfield: 6-0

Boys Varsity Basketball
vs. Choate: 59-42

Boys JV Basketball
vs. TP: 35-38

Girls Varsity Basketball
vs. Choate: 29-53

Girls JV Basketball
vs. Choate: 20-36

Boys Varsity Squash
@ Nationals: 1st Place

Boys JV Squash
vs. Taft: 7-0

Girls Varsity Squash
@ Nationals: 2nd Place

Girls JV Squash
vs. Taft: 6-1

Boys Varsity Swim & Dive
vs. Kent: 103-82

Girls Varsity Swim & Dive
vs. Kent: 96-66

Varsity Wrestling
@ Westerns: 5th Place