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September 21, 2023

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TECHNOLOGY AS A DISTRACTION: WHY WE SHOULD SET OUR OWN BARRIERS

HOW MUCH MORE PRODUCTIVE COULD YOU BE IN LECTURE WITHOUT A LAPTOP?

BY ABRIL RODRIGUEZ DIAZ '26

With the fall semester taking off, most Harvard students are doing their best to set good habits and regular routines. Starting the year off strong can be crucial to succeeding academically and promoting a healthy work-life balance. Being a Harvard student often means racing against the clock, playing a game to add as many responsibilities as possible and see how much we can add to our plates. After all, attending class is only a small part of the day; most students have work, extracurriculars, sports, meetings, and more. For many, limiting one's personal usage of technology is key to being productive, staying on task, and getting a nearly impossible number of things done.

Social media in particular often feels like an unbeatable evil, despite using all the tricks in the book: Do Not Disturb mode, time limits, and even deleting apps. The benefits of limiting social media are well known; according to a study from the University of California, Irvine, it takes an average of 23 minutes to refocus on a task after being interrupted.

But, what about other technology-related distractions? Do other forms of technology have an unrealized impact on our productivity? Many professors at Harvard seem to think so. As a result, some classrooms and lectures have begun discouraging, or even prohibiting, the use of electronics.

The ECON 10 series, taught by Professors David Laibson and Jason Furman, is one Harvard course in which in-class electronics use is discouraged, according to the syllabi for the classes. A section titled "Electronics in the Classroom" reads, "We will print paper copies of the slides for each lecture and strongly encourage you to try taking notes on these slides. Research shows that the use of laptops and tablets in the classroom has, on average, a negative impact on learning."

Although electronic devices are not prohibited, the ECON 10 professors do encourage students using them to sit towards the back, and with good reason. The ECON 10A syllabus states, "We ask that...you be considerate of the distraction your device use may create for those sitting near you...If you choose to use a laptop or tablet, we ask that you sit near the back of a section to minimize distractions for students sitting behind you." A 2017 York and McMaster study confirms the distracting nature of in-class technology use. "Students who could see the screen of a multitasker's laptop (but were not multitasking themselves) scored 17 percent lower on comprehension than those who had no distracting view," the study states.

The *Independent* interviewed Professor David Laibson on the ECON 10 series technology policy. "For some students [laptops are] a great technology... For other students it is a gateway to distraction (you are one click

away from everything that is not class relevant)," he said. Laibson also referenced a study conducted at West Point that he shows students in one of his ECON 10 lectures, in which "randomization to access or non-access (of electronic devices) yields an 11 percentage point difference in percentile course performance among those students who have access to electronic devices."

Laibson's discussion aligns with various studies that have been conducted on the topic of in-class laptop use. One study at the United States Military Academy found that "average final exam scores among students assigned to classrooms that allowed computers were 0.18 standard deviations lower than exam scores of students in classrooms that prohibited

computers."

Despite the pains of taking notes by hand, the benefits to leaving laptops out of lecture halls seem monumental. Researchers at the University of Michigan corroborate that laptop use has a negative correlation with academic performance. According to the study, in one hundred minutes of class, students with laptops spend an average of about forty minutes using the internet for nonacademic purposes. Additionally, the research finds that students with laptops also spent an average of five minutes or less looking at syllabi and other class-related material on the internet. These statistics confirm that laptops are not essential to classroom learning and that other methods of note-taking or studying are both more efficient and less distracting.

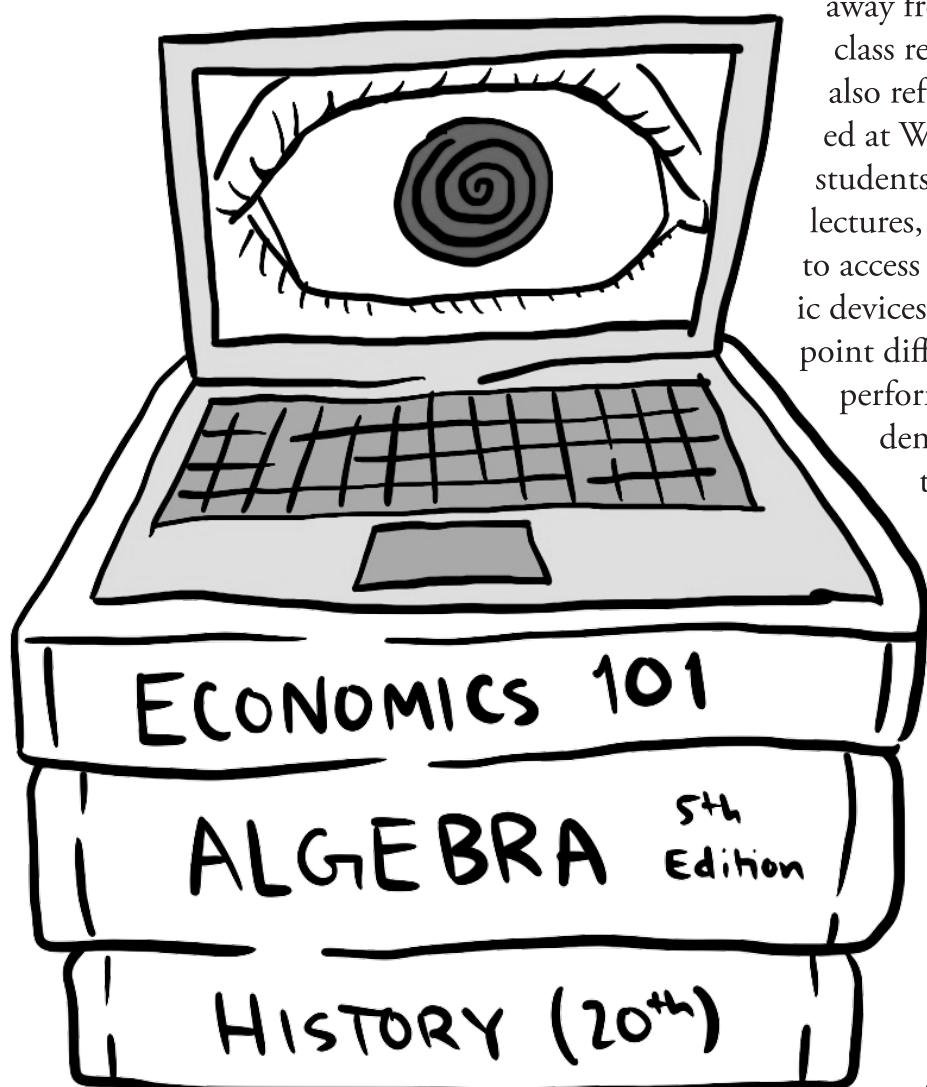
This realization is essential to promoting productivity and information retention. The impacts of technology go far beyond whether our professors prohibit it, but also hinder our own ability to focus and remain successful. As Harvard students, we owe it to ourselves to try proven avenues that ensure our wellbeing and allow us to go through our everyday lives efficiently.

These hidden distractions are often deceptive, created because students believe their technology will be more helpful than harmful. Clearly, successfully beating these distractions is a matter of limiting our own access to technology. However, that is not a simple task, especially because of the speed and convenience that laptops provide in class. As Laibson mentioned, the tempting benefits include "better note taking and real-time access to relevant material on the web, like definitions." Also, when class materials are located on the internet, access to those relevant materials becomes entangled with a direct path to distracting sites.

The distractions imposed by technology do not just affect Harvard students; they are pervasive in academic environments worldwide. The impact of technology on our focus, concentration, and productivity might not be fully avoidable, but surely work can be done towards lessening distractions by setting barriers against technology-related distractions. Next time you are sitting in lecture, think twice about pulling out the laptop, and opt for pen and paper instead.

Abril Rodriguez Diaz '26
[abrilrodriguezdiaz@college.harvard.edu] struggled to use her laptop only for its intended purpose while writing this article.

Graphic by David Li '25



THE FACES AT THE FRONT OF THE MARCH

WHY STUDENT ACTIVISM ON CAMPUS IS LIMITED TO A SELECT FEW.

BY SANTIAGO SALAZAR '26

To an outsider, Harvard might seem like the kind of place where student activism blooms. Just this summer, Harvard students congregated both in Harvard Yard and Washington D.C. to dispute the Supreme Court's rejection of Affirmative Action. In January, more than 100 students walked out of John Comaroff's classroom due to allegations of sexual assault. Despite these grand demonstrations of protests tied to the Harvard name, however, I find it difficult to affirm that our student body is representative of a culture of activism—the vast majority of students either do not care or are in a position where they cannot demonstrate their interest in involvement.

Sophomore Kawsar Yasin '26, who has been involved in multiple protests on campus, especially those involving the rights of the Uyghur population in China, articulates the general indifference of Harvard students. "Campus culture in terms of activism and organizing tends to be the same pockets of people. Organizing protests and showing up consistently requires you to deeply care about these topics, and I think the broader Harvard community is somewhat apathetic to a lot of them," she says. "Unless these issues particularly affect them, or they are easy to hop into, most people just do not get involved."

Other students cite Harvard's fast-paced environment as the main factor for their lack of participation. "It feels like there is always something going on, and it is hard to keep track of [protests]," said Aidan Kohn Murphy '26, the Founder of *Gen Z for Change*. "So even though students might want to help, they might not even know [the protests] are happening in the first place." While Harvard students do typically fill their schedules with countless activities and time-demanding enterprises, sometimes these outlets serve as nothing more than a *distraction* from the real world.

Furthermore, the concept of protesting is in itself stigmatized; activists look to make people uncomfortable in their passiveness towards contemporary issues. Many Harvard students are not willing to

take the risk of being asso-

ciated with a student movement. "I believe the pre-professional culture at Harvard stops some students from getting involved for fear of possibly affecting their career prospects," confirms Dalal Hassane '26, a student activist who has organized many protests on campus, including one last year after the murder of Jina Mahsa Amini in Iran.

Almost all protests on campus are led by the same small group of socially-engaged students. For instance, many of the students who helped organize the protests for the Palestine Solidarity Committee were also actively involved in the Comaroff walk out, as well as the demonstrations against laws banning Critical Race Theory. The result (regardless of the personal lev-

"Campus culture in terms of activism and organizing tends to be the same pockets of people. Organizing protests and showing up consistently requires you to deeply care about these topics, and I think the broader Harvard community is somewhat apathetic to a lot of them"

el of political interest) exceedingly limits the impact that these protests can have; meaningful change is reliant on the diverse perspectives and efforts that an entire community can bring. A campus that is reliant on a select few passionate students to fight against injustice is doomed to perpetuate the systems that its activists hoped to eliminate.

Political apathy represents a position of privilege—students can afford to not care about these problems if their lives will remain unchanged. But not all students are unaffected. Yet still, those who hail from war-torn countries or backgrounds of political turbulence might also not feel inclined to participate in on campus protests because of fear of retribution. "For me, organizing does not have the same stakes as for some of my peers," said Kashish Bastola '26, who in spring organized a vigil for the Nepali workers that died while constructing the World Cup Stadiums in Qatar. "Thankfully, I know that I can still go back to my motherland safely. But many of my friends can't say the same. Because of their stance against their government's practices,

they now can't return to their countries out of fear of persecution."

So why do politically active students embrace protests? For many of them—the answer lies in the perceived impact of their voices. "If I don't [protest], I don't know who will," added Bastola. "I take on these issues because, as a Harvard student, I have a platform that is one-hundred times more likely to be heard. For many students these issues can seem distant, but these protests help to show them how close they actually are."

This passion for activism has even shaped the way these leaders have interacted with the opportunities at Harvard. "Organizing has become central to my experience at Harvard. It's how I met most

of my friends today, and it has influenced small things, like the classes I have taken or the conferences I have attended, to bigger things like what I want to see for my future after college," said Hassane.

These circles of impacted students are relatively small, calling for the need to bring

multiple identities and communities together to make an impact. This practice of combining various identities under a collective narrative is known as intersectionality, which leads to protests like the one against John Comaroff which brought in individuals from myriad backgrounds on the grounds of feminism. However, as Hassane pointed out, "Many students are already familiar [with] the ideas surrounding feminism, but not so many can say the same about issues like the Palestine Occupation." As a result, more niche, culture-specific protests typically garner less support, and thus struggle to achieve the goals that other collectives obtain with a more widespread blessing.

Although more and more students are putting their efforts into generating change in our community—carrying the burden of years of injustice on their backs—the story of a culture of social protest is still one that the broader student body is not ready to write.

Santiago Salazar '26 (santiagosalazar@college.harvard.edu) writes Forum for the Independent.

THE BUBBLE WORLD

SORRY, HARVARD: YOU'RE NOT SPECIAL.

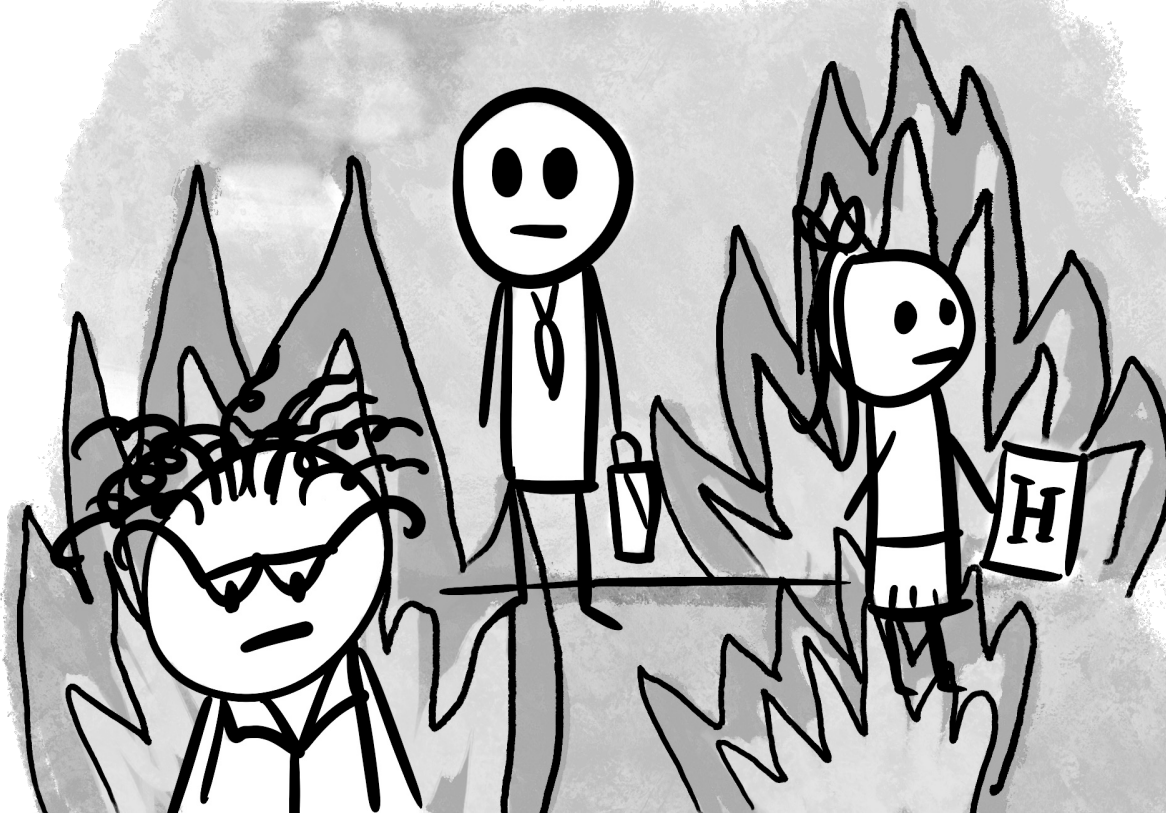
BY JUDE HERWITZ '25

In the pages of last year's Love Issue in the *Harvard Independent*, Layla Chaaaraoui '26 argued that the frenetic flurry of semesterdom—the “Harvard bubble”—serves for too many students as a shield against the myriad of crises, tragedies, and catastrophes happening everywhere in the world. She asserted that we ought to leverage the power of our unique bubble and its 50 billion dollar endowment towards stopping that terribleness, or at least work towards limiting it as best we can.

Chaaaraoui touched on perhaps the most critical issue of our time but misdiagnosed the cause of its symptoms. Any supposed apathy to the issues in the world around us which she identified does not stem from any Harvard bubble—whether that term refers to the rush of commitments and activities on campus or the privileged status we have to spend eight semesters in the ivory tower of academia. Instead, a broader American, Gen Z, 21st-century bubble dampens our collective spirit. Raised in an era of seemingly insurmountable challenges and political gridlock, we are not indifferent, but paralyzed—a generation all too aware of the world's problems yet stunted by a disillusionment so pervasive it transcends campus boundaries.

My primary concern with blaming Harvard for low attendance at social justice club meetings is that it falsely implies a uniquely disengaged student body. While matriculates here may have fuller Google Calendars than other students, very few universities are hotbeds of political activism; we don't see news being made about mass student sit-ins anywhere of the sort endemic in the 1970s around the Vietnam War. The closest analogue I participated in were high school walkouts in protest of gun violence, which resulted in no legislative change; indeed, 2023 is likely to set a new high for incidence of mass shootings. Recently such movements simply do not make substantive change.

While discussing the idea for this article, some argued that a sense of impending doom is nothing new—every generation feels the world is on the brink of collapse. To some extent, this is true. Whether it's religious folks adhering to a moral code in preparation for an apocalypse or climate activists today working tirelessly to prevent environmental collapse, some fear an imminent end and act accordingly.



Yet our generation is unique. We're not grappling with the terror of a quick, apocalyptic end; rather, we're faced with a slow, seemingly inevitable decay. It's as if we're passengers on a train that is derailing at an agonizingly slow pace. The engineers in control have no intention of surrendering the wheel. So what does this reality inspire? Not action to prevent the disaster, but a grim resolve to maximize personal gain before the whole thing comes crashing down.

Consider a quick inventory of the major crises we grew up hearing about and the “progress” we have made in solving them. Most students now enrolled in the College were born after 9/11/2001; I saw recognition of this year's anniversary exclusively on Instagram. We don't understand the emotional reaction of our parents; instead, we see that the American invasion of Afghanistan spanned our generation's most formative years with few positive results.

The political system seems broken, too; Donald Trump's supporters voted for him because they agreed when he said the swamp needed draining, and those who don't support him view his victory as impossible in a healthy democracy. Joe Biden, while an incredibly competent president, does not have the dynamism required to counteract the distrust he encounters. Barack Obama had the opportunity to inspire hope—indeed, that was his platform—but the gridlock he faced in Congress prevented him from accomplishing nearly any of his lofty goals. The one exception, Obamacare, reformed our privatized health-care system which ought to be done away with entirely.

Even beyond the very real proliferation of systemic failings around us, social media ensures that we see an unprecedented degree of devastation—from individual instances of police brutality to entire villages and towns wiped out by natural disaster. I cannot imagine that many Harvard students have not

heard about the recent wildfires in Maui, for example. Push notifications alone prevent any “bubble” from truly sheltering students here. The onslaught of tragedy stretches the limits of our empathy, desensitizing and disheartening.

On net, though, the increased awareness may well be a positive. In a thoroughly unscientific survey, more students than I expected conveyed hopes of fixing things—not through public insti-

tutions, however, but private enterprise. The reasoning views money as the ultimate source of power; by going into business, which rewards speed and efficiency, one can make a real impact in some important field without running into the foundational issues plaguing the political process; one can also make a bunch of money; with a bunch of money, one can acquire political influence and start fixing foundational issues.

Ultimately, though, more super-rich philanthropists cannot save us. Only we can, through broad engagement in the political process. Any solution to our generational malaise requires collective effort based upon mutual respect—a recognition by every individual that we all do better, together, and that we have a clear incentive for collaborative problem solving. People will disagree about solutions. That is both inevitable and good. It provides the opportunity to rigorously discuss and test out our ideas against each other, ensuring that the decided-upon remedies enjoy shared recognition as the best option. Such a process can only happen in a forum that recognizes and respects the basic rights of all its participants, with a regimented system for redress when rights are violated, where all opinions can be voiced and judged accordingly; it can only happen in a representative democracy. And thanks to a history of successful struggles—from suffragettes to civil rights—we live in one where ultimate power does lie in the voting booth, in the people. Our government can function, as long as those it represents care enough to make it do so.

Jude Herwitz '25 (jherwitz@college.harvard.edu) watches Instagram Reels and calls them TikToks.

Graphic by Seattle Hickey '25

DISTRACTIONS

Your Instagram Poll results! Graphics by Reeve Sykes '26 and El Richards '26

HOW DO YOU TAKE NOTES?



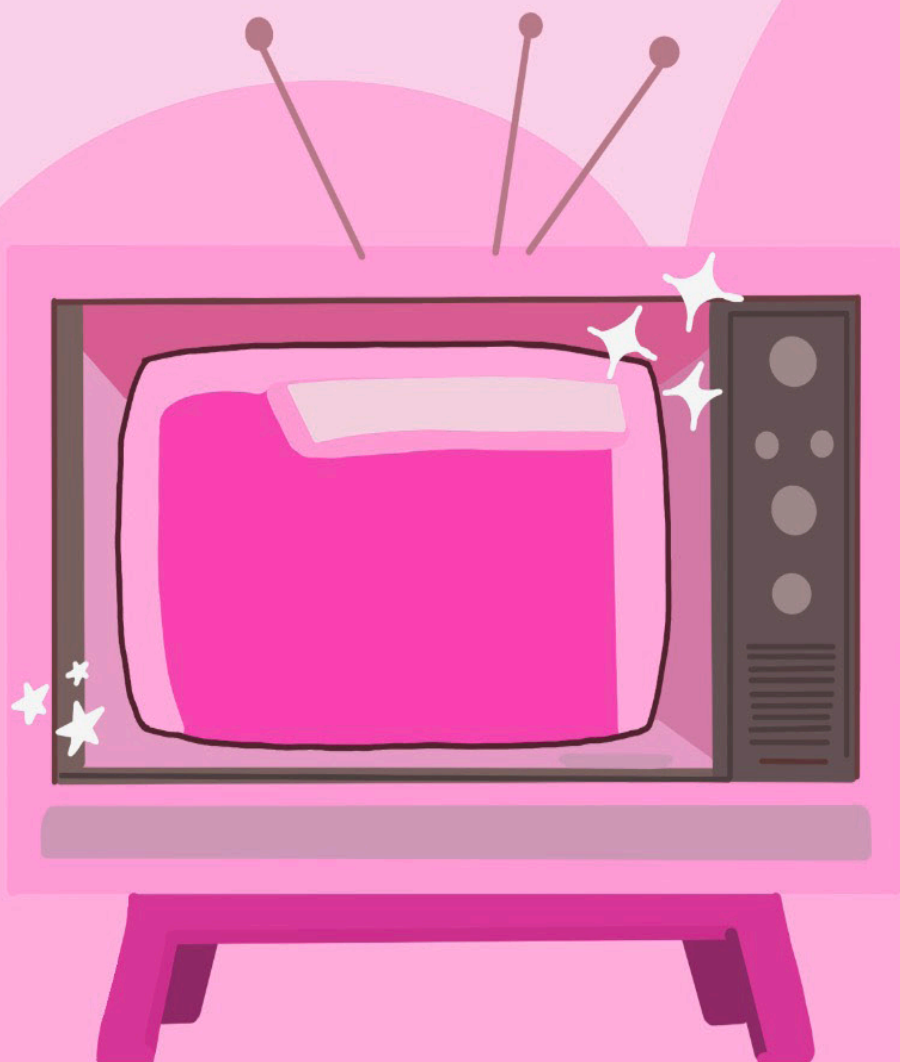
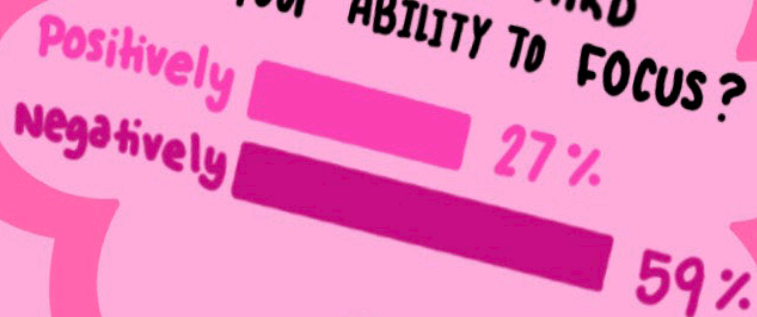
HOW LONG CAN YOU FOCUS?



DOES ALCOHOL USE AFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO FOCUS?



HOW HAS HARVARD AFFECTED YOUR ABILITY TO FOCUS?



DON'T
CALL
ME!



Where do you
go when you
need to focus?

WIDENER

THE
BIOLABS

SMITH
COMMON
SPACES

MIKE SAATCHI: THE PROPHET

MEET MIKE SAATCHI, THE SELF-PROCLAIMED PIONEER OF HYPERGOSPEL MUSIC.

BY MATT SAKIYAMA '25

In March 2022, Mike Saatchi released a song titled “i <3 boobies.” The cover art for Saatchi’s “God heals” features an image of Jesus Christ holding an enormous styrofoam cup full of prescription cough syrup. In “keep a Bible,” Saatchi sings, “God keep me insured like Geico.”

Mike Saatchi, a 24-year-old rapper, singer, and producer, has experimented with various genres of music over the course of his career to varying success. His early releases are mostly generic Soundcloud rap, while his more recent projects are more akin to experimental pop. This year, he began releasing songs that combine Christian pop and hyperpop, a unique genre he has dubbed “hypergospel.”

To most people, “hypergospel” is merely a publicity stunt; many Instagram commenters, for example, seem to find humor in Saatchi proselytizing over distorted pop instrumentals. In reality, there is no hint of irony in his dedication to his Christian message. He claims that he has been chosen by God to counteract demonic presences in the music industry—a proposition that, while abstract, may appeal to more listeners than his current Instagram following of thirteen thousand.

Saatchi spent most of his upbringing in San Ramon, California. He began rapping at the age of nine, when he performed a song under the moniker “Kid Mocha” to help promote his older brother’s automotive company. Beyond just music, Saatchi characterizes himself as an artist at heart. “I can’t not create... I need to be having an idea and then bringing it to life,” he explained in an interview with the *Independent*.

Saatchi has always maintained somewhat of a connection with God. “God’s been pursuing me. That seems to be a pattern in my life. My dad, he prays for me a lot. [He] wanted me to have a relationship with God, but I never found it for myself until I got older,” he said. From a young age, his father would drive him to church every Sunday, but it was a recent harrowing experience that sparked Saatchi’s desire to commit his music to God.

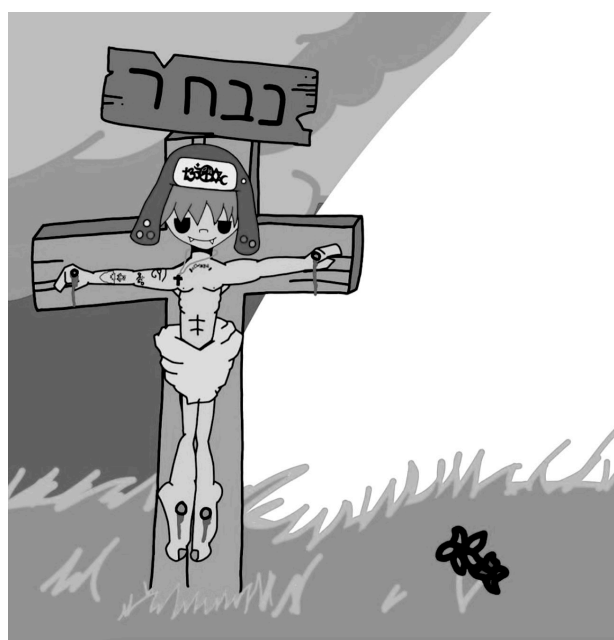
“There was a point where I got 5150’d,” Saatchi said, referring to the California code for a 72-hour involuntary psychiatric hold. Saatchi points to this experience as the catalyst for reinventing himself: “This is kind of what caused a huge shift in my life... and made me realize I wanted to make music for God.” Saatchi explained that he had taken psychedelic mushrooms and wanted to end his life. “I was just feeling like driving into a wall and killing myself that night,” he said. He was eventually admitted into a mental health facility in Martinez, CA.

At the facility, still reeling from the effects of the mushrooms, suffering from anxiety and panic attacks, Saatchi met a man who handed him a Bible verse printed on a sheet of paper. He recounted what the man told him: “He was

like, ‘You’re off mushrooms, so you see it, right? You see everything for how it is, don’t you?’”

Saatchi elaborated on his thoughts following their conversation: “There’s chemicals they put in our food that are banned in other countries because they’re so detrimental to our bodies, but they like to keep us weak. They like to keep us easy to control because it just makes it easier for us to not call them out on their BS and cause revolution.” When asked who “they” refers to, Saatchi responded, “I’m talking about the people who only care about greed and power,” and did not specify further.

Saatchi described the experience of seeing the man being denied his Bible by the employees of the facility, and explained the revelation it sparked within him. “It was a metaphor for existence itself, and the tug of war between God and the Devil,” Saatchi said. Saatchi realized



that this same tug of war was present in the music industry, and told the *Independent* about the effects of modern musicians on young listeners.

“Let’s talk about these artists who are influencing young kids to do drugs and do demonic things and throw their lives away. Let’s talk about Playboi Carti. He didn’t pay any of his producers; that’s why he works with new producers on every project,” Saatchi said. “He has a demonic image. I think he’s evil. If you don’t care about others, that is the work of Satan.”

Saatchi, however, does not hold any ill will towards these musicians whom he sees as demonic presences in the music industry. “I got love for all artists. I got love for Playboi Carti, too. He’s a human being. We’re all sinful.”

Saatchi elaborated on his desire to release Christian music. “I think the music industry needs to not be so much about ego... I’m not going to go to tell all these kids it’s cool to nod off to drugs and kill yourself. I’m going to promote health and good things and personal growth... I’ve yet to see artists in interviews spit some real genuine love, except for Pharrell Williams... Everyone’s promoting negativity. That’s what pays the bills.”

From this desire to promote positivity to those who have been influenced negatively, “hypergospel” was born. “I wanted to appeal to a certain demographic because I feel like that demographic doesn’t necessarily talk about God... I want to tell people, ‘Your friends might do drugs but you don’t have to do drugs... You can have a relationship with Jesus, and still be cool and still dress the way you want to dress...’ I’ve been making hyperpop-type music. I started having a relationship with God. I combined two things that were real to me. My music is a reflection of myself,” he explained.

The cover art for Saatchi’s latest album, titled *chosen*, features a cartoon image of himself pinned to a cross. Above the cross, “chosen” is written in Hebrew. When asked about controversies regarding the depiction of himself on the cross, Saatchi replied, “Everyone connects [the cross] with Christ, but also, it’s like a metaphor for dying on the cross with Christ, because when you do give your life to Christ, what happens is you’re born again... It’s a metaphor for me changing and evolving and growing and getting closer to God and becoming more like Jesus... It’s me saying I aspire to be like Jesus.”

In “is God real?,” the third track from *chosen*, Saatchi sings, “I know you want me to slay demons with your sword.” Saatchi believes hypergospel is part of God’s plan for him. “God’s telling me to do this stuff. Like I said, I’m not forcing any of this. God has a plan for me and what he wants me to do and how he wants me to—I don’t know if I’m going to say change the world because that’s a lot of pressure but—influence the world in a positive way,” he said.

With his new album, Saatchi hopes to draw fans into a world of positivity. Highlights include “savior,” featuring Young4n and “john the baptist.” But beyond just the music, if there is one message Saatchi hopes to impart on his listeners through *chosen*, it is this: “God won’t give you more than you can handle. God will give you exactly what you need to get where you need to go. And have faith. Trust in God. Keep God close to you, and trust in God’s plan. God’s plan is better than the plan you have for yourself.”

Matt Sakiyama '25 (msakiyama@college.harvard.edu) writes Arts for the *Independent*.

Photos from Mike Saatchi’s Instagram, @mikesaatchi

Art from album cover: @4.acid on instagram

POINT/COUNTERPOINT:

SHOULD RUSSIAN AND BELARUSIAN PLAYERS BE ALLOWED TO SHOW THEIR FLAG?

A DISCUSSION ON NATIONALISM AND POLITICS IN SPORTS AFTER THE 2023 TENNIS US OPEN.

BY LUKE WAGNER '26 AND JONAH KARAFIOL '26

Jonah: For the second straight year at the US Open Tennis Championships, neither Russian nor Belarusian players were permitted to play under their flags. Instead of the typical tiny flag pictured next to players' names on the screen, competitors from the two countries were given a blank gray box. Both finals featured Russian or Belarusian players—Russia's Daniil Medvedev in the men's championship and Belarus's Aryna Sabalenka in the women's—unable to represent their countries. The decision by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) and Women's Tennis Association (WTA) in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine raises the questions: *can we separate athletes from the countries they hail from? And how do we decide which flags to display, and which flags to censor?*

Luke: I think that the ATP, WTA, and US Open should not have the right to block out Russian players' flags and the countries that are allied to them. War and territorial disputes are not unique to Russia, and only recognizing certain conflicts diminishes the relevance and importance of others. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 received an exceptional international response, including heightened sanctions against Russia, military assistance from the US, and support for the Ukrainian government. But this international affair does not discount other ongoing geopolitical conflicts, such as the war in the Middle East and North-West Africa. In censoring Russian athletes, the WTA and ATP—which are both headquartered in London—have not only started to take a stance that backs Western ideology, but also posits the Russian-Ukrainian war as more pressing than any other global conflict.

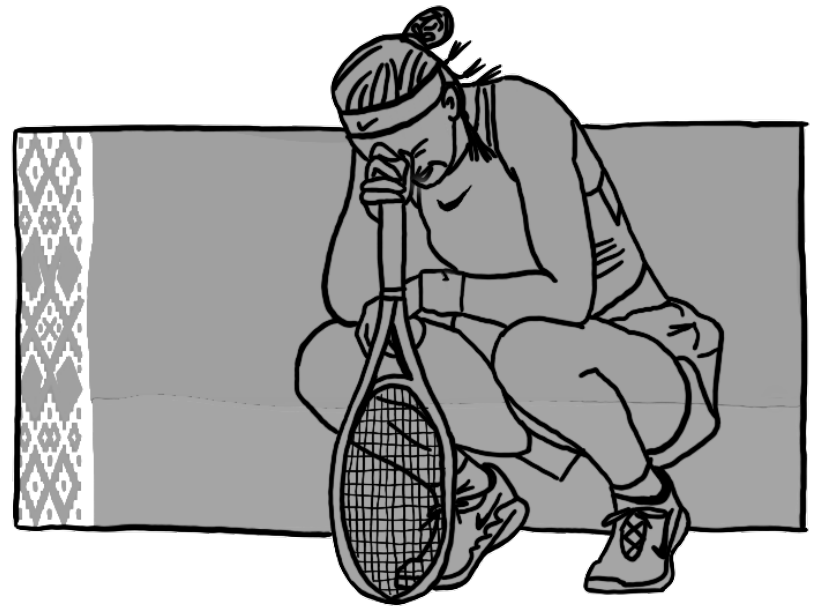
Jonah: I wouldn't accuse ATP and WTA with the same trajectory as the US

Open administration. While the ATP and WTA have taken a concrete stance against Russia, they have not forced any athletes to support Ukraine over social media or at any fundraising events. While they've historically remained impartial to other global conflicts, they draw the line with countries who have invaded and attempted to annex others.

Luke: Your bias towards invasions disregards the death toll that other wars often yield. Over 4.5 million people have died in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, and Pakistan from post-9/11 wars. Yet no one has called for the United States Flag to be grayed out. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been committing mass genocide in Yemen since 2015, yet players from those nations are still allowed to compete under the flag of their countries. I think that if the ATP and WTA are going to not let players support their flag because of violence, then they should hold all countries who commit violence accountable.

Jonah: While I agree that the actions of these countries are terrible, I don't believe that we can effectively hold all countries accountable for each and every act of violence that they commit. If we start holding all athletes from war-stricken countries accountable, we will strip national pride from all sporting events. What about the allies of these countries? What about refugees? It seems like a very difficult line to draw and one that would leave a large proportion of athletes flagless.

Luke: I think that athletes and people alike should be able to separate the actions of the military and diplomats from their nationality. I personally do not support the American involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran during the past couple of decades, but I would still feel prideful to play under the American flag. American military decisions and geopolitical involvement should not define our athletic careers, and the same logic should be applied to players from Russia and Belarus as well as any other country at war.

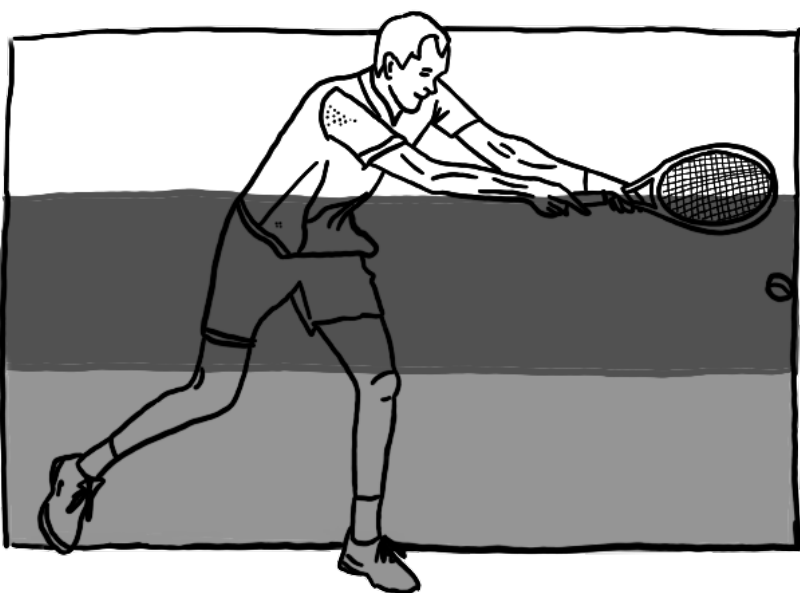


25-year-old Belarusian tennis player Aryna Sabalenka has been forthright about not supporting the war in Ukraine as well as the current agenda and decisions of the current President of Belarus. Yet in stating her political views, she also recognizes that she is *not* a politician, but a tennis player, and should therefore be treated with respect regardless of where she is from. Sabalenka pulled out of two press conferences this year, explaining to reporters, "I felt really disrespected, and I felt really bad... I just tried to focus on myself, on my game." I think that the ATP association also places far too much pressure on Russian and Belarusian athletes, constantly ridiculing them and calling them out over something that they cannot control.

Jonah: A country's flag is more than just a decoration—it symbolizes a country's history, actions, and global presence. People might not (and often don't) support every political advancement or decision that their country makes, yet some actions (like invading another country and claiming sovereignty over it) are difficult to overlook. And while players' actions against their Russian and Belarusian peers are inexcusable, they are separate from the actions of the ATP and WTA. The alternative—ignoring a global war and pretending that everything is okay—might have garnered a worse response. Athletes might have been treated poorly and the silence could have made its own political statement.

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Graphic by Alma Russell '26



ATHLETE-STUDENTS OR STUDENT-ATHLETES?

WHAT DO STUDENTS SACRIFICE—IF ANYTHING—WHEN COMING TO HARVARD?

BY DECLAN BUCKLEY '24

Harvard University is the biggest sports school in the country.

This statement may come off as laughable to anyone who longingly watches ESPN's *College Gameday* from their common room every weekend, but it is technically correct. The school has 42 varsity sports, more than any other Division 1 program, with approximately 20% of the student body participating in one of them. Despite sports being such an outsized part of student life, Harvard's \$30 million athletics budget pales in comparison to the hundreds of millions other schools spend on their sports. This scenario begs the question: do Harvard athletes—many of whom could have competed for a much larger program—receive a true Division 1 experience?

Harvard's allure to athletes does not stem from purely athletics. "I really didn't want to sacrifice having a good education," said Daniel Falode '25, who competes in the Triple Jump for the Varsity Track & Field Team. "I came to Harvard because I felt they had a really good balance of both academics and athletics." Lightweight rower Ryan McCarthy '24 echoed the sentiment in even simpler terms—"I accepted their offer because you can't really say no to Harvard," he said.

While the academic opportunity Harvard provides is certainly appealing, it makes juggling between school and sports even more difficult. Falode praised his coach for helping him achieve this. "[He] sends out a form for all the people in his group at the beginning of the semester so that he knows when everyone has which class and plans practice times accordingly," Falode said. Women's Soccer Team captain Jade Rose '24 also highlighted the built-in support system that being on a team provides. "It's pretty normal that a senior or an upperclassman of any kind will pull aside all the freshmen and help them go through the course catalog—which we know is a mess—and help them pick classes," she said.

Harvard athletes may have sought out a more rigorous educational experience than they needed to, but that does not mean their desire to compete at the highest level ended when they arrived in Cambridge. Falode won his individual event and helped his team to the overall victory

at the Ivy League championships last spring, and both the Women's Soccer and Men's Lightweight Crew teams are consistently ranked among the best in the country.

Their facilities do not necessarily reflect these performances, however. Though Rose and McCarthy emphasized that they were happy with the resources provided for them, they also acknowledged room for improvement.

Rose's biggest gripe with the program is its lack of a soccer-specific field. "We play on Jordan, which is technically the lacrosse field, and the renovations were paid for by the lacrosse teams," she said. Jordan Field is made of artificial turf, a surface banned by FIFA for World Cup competitions due to safety concerns. Alternatively, the soccer team's grass option of Ohiri field does not serve them any better. "It's extremely bumpy. Sometimes it's honestly a hazard to play on and rolling our ankles could be a very real possibility," said Rose.

McCarthy's rowing career has given him a unique perspective on the state of Harvard's athletic facilities. He readily admitted that the recent renovation project of Newell Boathouse was well overdue but still praised the history the building holds. Though Newell has not yet reopened, the similarly redone Weld Boathouse (which the men's teams are temporarily sharing with the women's) elicited criticism from McCarthy. "I feel like they hired someone [for the renovations] that didn't know anything about rowing," he said. He specifically pointed out that their erg room had no ventilation and that their boat bays were extremely narrow. "It's not that you can't row or do what you need to do, they just could have thought through some of these things a little more," he said.

Falode was more universal in his praise. "I really think we have an excellent indoor facility, which we use most of the year because it's cold," he said. "The facility's always open, has a really good surface, a good jumps pit, [and] a good throwing area." He also

praised the training staff for helping athletes stay healthy throughout the season, something Rose and McCarthy agreed with. "I think the training rooms are great," McCarthy said. Rose also pointed to the marked improvements in other aspects of athletes' health since her first year at Harvard. "If you look at nutrition, sports psychology, or just psychology in general, I think there's been massive growth in that area," she said.

Perhaps the most crucial factor in an athlete's experience is whether they feel they have the opportunity to improve in their sport during their time at Harvard. Falode expressed that he did, but also explained that Harvard differed from other universities. "As you become a junior, as you become a senior...the focus moves away from athletics and onto academics. Whereas in some of these top D1 colleges, as you move in towards your junior and senior year and people are trying to make teams, trying to go pro, the level of training really increases," he said. Falode explained that this shift from academics to athletics in other schools can cause differences in results.

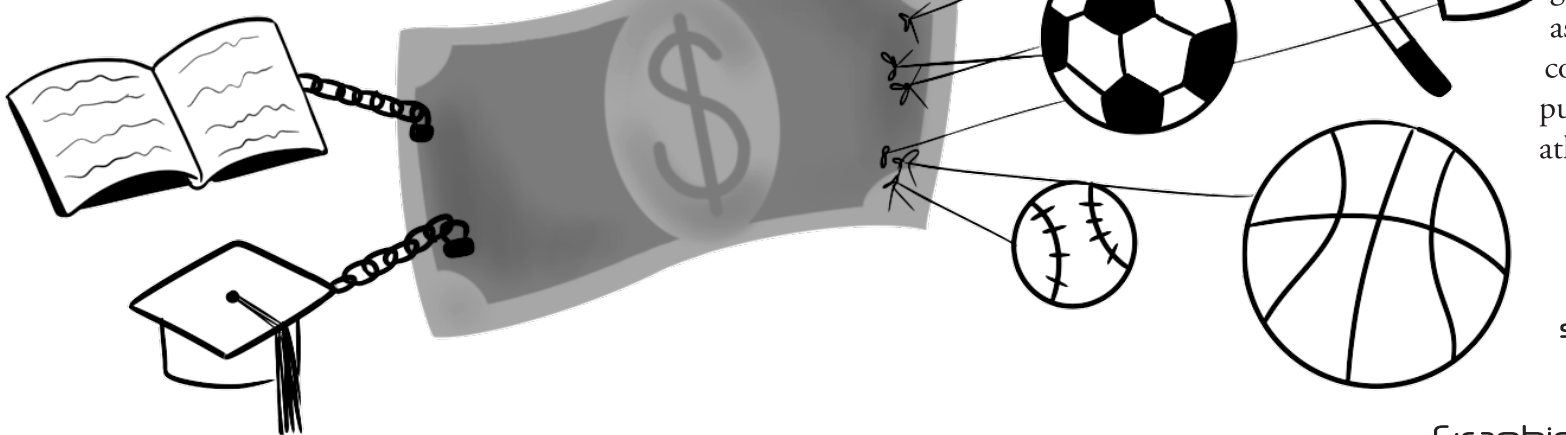
Rose agrees with this explanation while wishing those same opportunities could be provided for Harvard students. "Here we are very much students first and athletes second, and I think there could definitely be more of an even balance," she said. "Personally, I plan to go to Europe and play professional soccer until my body says 'no more.' And that's not to say I won't use my Harvard degree once I graduate. I do plan on hopefully going to law school when that time comes," she said. That time is still years down the road for Rose, and she expressed her wishes for her short-term plans to be taken more seriously.

All three athletes interviewed made their appreciation for their programs clear while also admitting that their experiences at Harvard are

a bit different. Like many aspects of student life at Harvard, public opinion of the sports department seems to be a mixed bag.

While the school may never boast the endless resources of more sports oriented universities like Ohio State, Alabama, or Michigan, the athletes interviewed—as well as countless more—will continue to push on in their pursuit of both academic and athletic excellence.

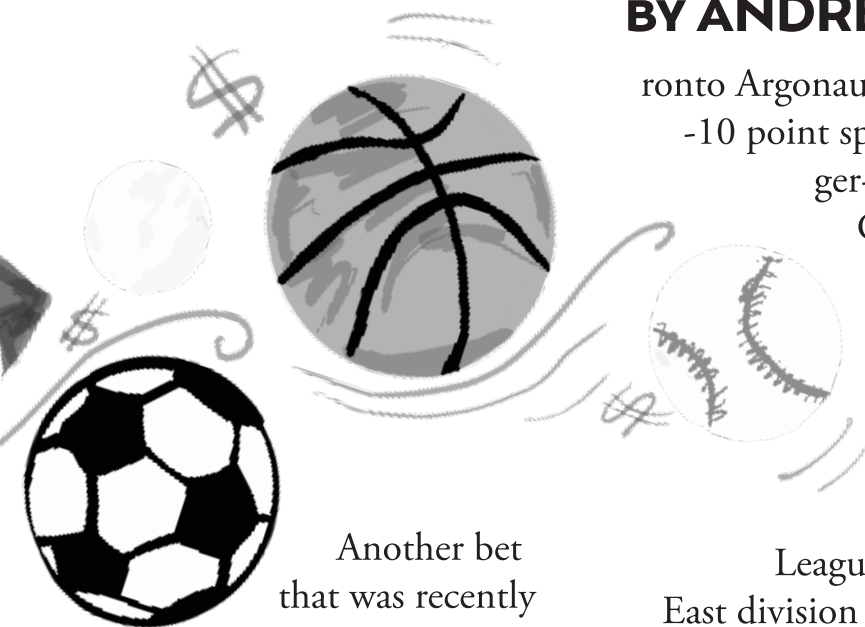
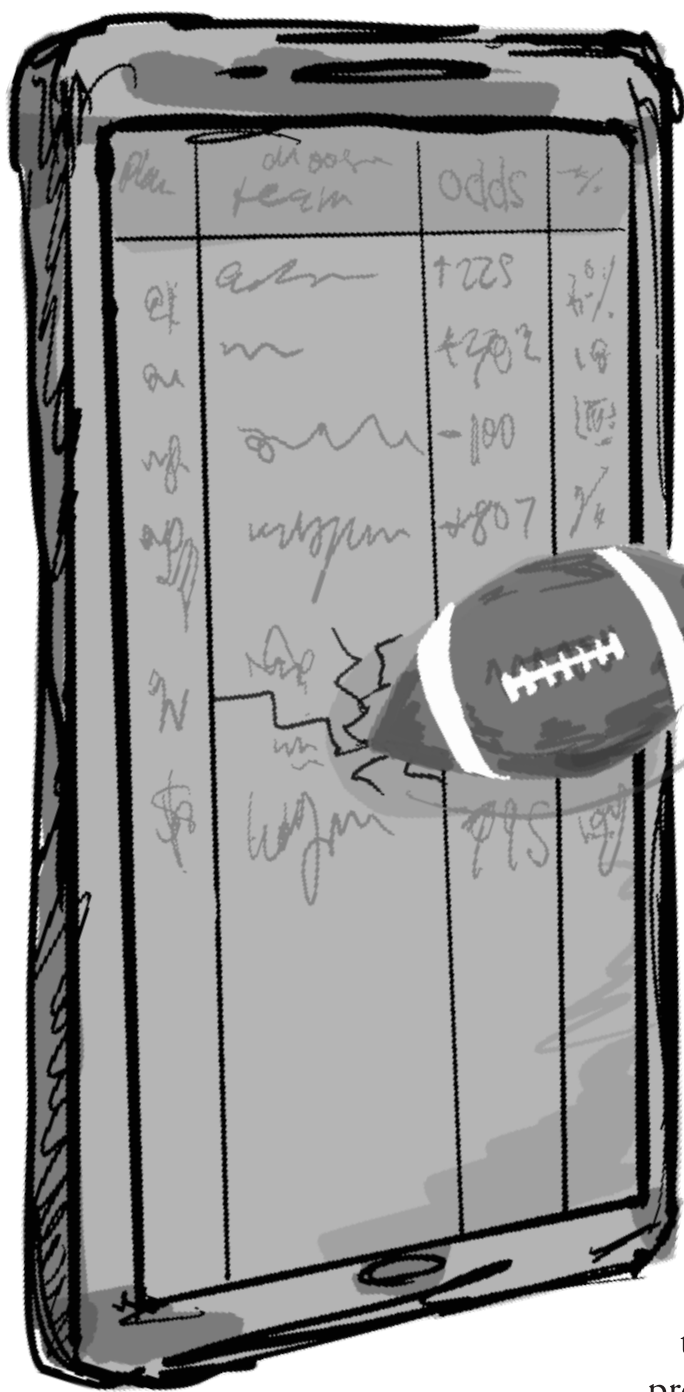
Declan Buckley '24
(declanbuckley@college.harvard.edu)
saw his sports career peak in high school.



INDY SPORTSBOOK: BAD NEWS WITH POPULAR BETS?

WHEN NOT TO FOLLOW THE CROWD.

BY ANDREW CHRISTIE '26



Another bet that was recently promoted was a same game parlay on the Vikings vs. Eagles on Thursday Night Football. It was Philadelphia moneyline, Justin Jefferson and AJ Brown to both score touchdowns, and under 49.5 total points scored. Three out of four of these bets did not hit. Admittedly, these are only two examples of these promoted bets. But if these are any indication, we would advise steering clear of promoted bets.

Many of you are familiar with the classic saying “the house always wins,” and it appears to hold true in sports gambling. Often, when the majority of the public all chooses the same bet, it seems like that bet is now jinxed and does not cash. It happens time and time again: the pre-match broadcasters all select the same teams, and that team ends up losing. This phenomenon of the heavily-bet teams gave birth to the idea of “fading”—taking the opposite side of public-supported bets. Fading is a tried and trusted strategy, but when you fade the public you are still betting on sports that receive a lot of attention. If you are looking to escape the realm of these high-attention sports entirely, here are some picks on sports that are flying under the radar at the moment.

Europa League: While the return of the Champions League will be attracting most soccer fans’ attention, the Europa League is quietly getting underway as well. Leverkusen and Brighton enter the tournament with massive momentum from their respective domestic leagues and look to start their championship campaign off strong with an opening round win at home. They are both decent favorites at -550 and -330, respectively, and are expecting easy wins today.

Canadian Football League: To-

ronto Argonauts (-455 moneyline, -10 point spread) vs. Hamilton Tiger-Cats: While the NFL and CFB may be occupying the majority of your betting slips, if you are looking to stray away from the beaten path look no further than the Canadian Football League. The Argonauts lead the East division in the CFL with an impressive record of 11-1 and look to move to 7-0 at home on the season when they play the Tiger-Cats for the fourth time. The Argonauts have won by margins of 18, 16, and 13 points so far and they seemed primed to make it 4 in a row.

Premier League: Arsenal (-140) vs. Tottenham, 9/24/23: Arsenal vs. Tottenham is a historic rivalry. The last time Tottenham won away at Arsenal was in November 2010 and the time before that was 1993. It is safe to say that history is against them, and so are we. Arsenal have won five of the last six home matches against them, including the past three, and move into this game with serious momentum. We believe Arsenal to win at -140 is great value.

WNBA: While many basketball fans are waiting for the NBA and college basketball to return, they could instead be watching the WNBA and placing money on the New York Liberty (+150) to win the WNBA playoffs. The Las Vegas Aces come into the playoffs as the defending champions and as the top overall seed. However, the Liberty have assembled a title-contending roster spearheaded by a Big Three of 2021: MVP Jonquel Jones, Breanna Stewart, and Sabrina Ionescu and are looking to take the championship trophy back to the Big Apple. The Liberty have bested the Aces 3-1 in August, and will be confident in their win should this be the finals matchup.

Andrew Christie '26 (andrewchristie@college.harvard.edu) greatly enjoys betting on less conventional sports, and encourages you all to do the same.

Graphic by Annelise Fisher '26

Sports gambling is one of the fastest growing industries in the country. 21 states have legalized sports betting since the beginning of 2020, and more have legislature in place to do so. This creates an influx of new sports bettors that flock both to in-person sportsbooks, but also sports gambling websites such as FanDuel, DraftKings, and Bovada. These websites often promote “popular bets,” which are typically parlays that have low odds of winning.

These parlays usually fall in the range of betting \$10 to win \$150-\$200, by no means a safe bet. However, since they are so-called “popular bets” and you see many others across the country placing them, many people (new bettors especially) are tempted to follow the crowd and throw some money down on it. But in the end, you lose money because they seldom cash out. For example, this past Saturday there was a “popular bet” that a reported 37,057 people placed money on—a college football parlay that had Colorado -23.5, Texas -29.5, Tennessee -5.5, and Washington -16.5. This parlay did not come close to cashing. Instead of winning by four scores or more, Colorado needed overtime to secure a victory over state rivals Colorado State University,

COVER ART + LAYOUT BY PIPER TINGLEAF '24

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