NOVEMBER 19, 2026

HARVARD INDEPENDENT

VOL LVIII ISSUE 12

THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969

The Game





CONTENTS अनुक्रमणिका

3. Crew Dog is Back for The Game
by Natalie Cooper ’28

4. Survey Results Indicate the Class of ’26 Experienced More Free Speech. The Administration Says It’s Not Enough
by Courtney Hines ’28

6. Tears in Heaven
by Noah Basden ’29

7. A Critique of Cuffing Season
by Anika Gupta ’30 & Salma Gheith ’30

8. Honeypot Meets Jackpot
by Anika Gupta ’30 & Salma Gheith ’30

9. Christmas? Already!?
by Anna Gunko ’30

10. Spinning Flags and Catching Tosses
by Ellie Guo ’29

11. Drag Me to Adams House
by Taylor Thorne ’28

Evolution of a Bulldog
by Ellie Guo ’29 & Sam Park ’29

12. Hit It Out of the Park
by Emma Crago ’28

14. A Day in the Life of a Typical Bulldog
by Excerpts from the Diary of Rayne Gascone-Fry ’28

It’s in the Zoup!
by Noah Basden ’29

15. The Price of Keeping the Peace
by Paige Cornelius ’28

16. School IS a Fashion Show
by Anika Gupta ’30 & Salma Gheith ’30

17. For the Love of the Game
by Venus Dastidar ’30 & Wisdom Omolayo ’29

The Wrong Y
by Sophia Gonzalez ’28

18. Ten Thousand Seniors of Harvard
by Hafeezat Ghaffar ’29

19. The Intertwined History of Violence and The Game
by Kathleen Shovlin ’29

20. The Bet on Sports
by Meena Behringer ’27

21. Holding Out for a Hero
by Tyler Dang ’28

22. Weekly Sports Preview: November 19–26
by Lucy Duncan ’28

23. On Sports and Faith
by Elliot Hunter Chung ’29

24. The Green Monster
by Emma Crago ’28

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NEWS

Crew Dog is Back for The Game

A conversation with one of Crew Dog's founding members, Kiernan Liberman.

By NATALIE COOPER '28

Last November, Crew Dog came to Harvard's campus in velour. The Yale student-founded apparel brand made its retail debut at the Harvard Cooperative Society during the week of Harvard-Yale, selling hand-drawn college mascots stitched in intricate embroidery. A year later, they are back for The Game 2026. This year's standout item is a rivalry design, featuring a Yale and Harvard mascot brawling over a football.

The brand launched in the spring of 2023. Constantine Polychronopoulos, a Yale lightweight rower, wanted his team's custom T-shirts to feel more personal and visually appealing. He and fellow rower Coby Wagonfeld, along with Yale classmate Kiernan Liberman, expanded their bulldog rowing-gear brand into a multi-institution apparel company.

"This year's standout item is a rivalry design, featuring a Yale and Harvard mascot brawling over a football."

Now based in New York, the three co-founders split the work based on their strengths: Kiernan Liberman on product development, Polychronopoulos on events, strategy, branding, and marketing, and Wagonfeld as the overseer of operations.

The mascot design process goes something like this: First, in-house designers draw a black-and-white sketch for each university's licensing directors. Then, they revise it until it fits the school's culture and brand guidelines. Only after these steps can the designers decide what clothes the drawn mascot will don.

"That's something that's really fun for me and the team to do. What pieces do we want to put the mascot in?" Liberman explained. Finally, the drawing is colored and digitized so each part becomes stitches for the embroidery machine.

A year after its debut, Crew Dog's Harvard mascot design was licensed, according to Liberman, a founder and the head of product development. "We're now able to do really fun rivalry graphics," he said in an interview with the "Harvard Independent."

Since its inception, Crew Dog has been a form of merchandise "counterculture." Crew Dog was uniquely positioned as a startup focused on craft and community at an institution that typically favors post-graduate corporate careers. According to the "Yale Daily News," approximately 30% of Yale graduates pursue finance or consulting. Students who do take the startup route tend to chase venture-backed tech. Crew Dog built a model around something more tactile: carefully fashioned clothing, designed with care. A year later, the brand moved to New York and expanded onto over 90 college campuses around the United States. Yet the founders are working to ensure their once-homegrown brand preserves its identity despite expansion.

And company size is not the only thing changing. The garments themselves have also evolved over the years. In 2024, some Crew Dog pieces were printed and lighter. "Now you can really tell the premium quality from the actual feel of the lining," Liberman said. "We now use over 50,000 embroidered stitches per design, which really makes a difference."

Because the Crew Dog founders lacked a background in design and production, they had to leverage their market knowledge while learning the industry. "I designed the collection last year with minimal design experience, just graduating from Yale and studying economics," Liberman said. "It was definitely a learning curve." The iconic velour became one of their first milestones; matching velvet-like sets rode the 2025 Y2K revival, capitalizing on trends while generating steady profit.

The 2026 collection is now intended to dive deeper into the Ralph Lauren bear aesthetic that has become popularized across American and international fashion—especially at Ivy League schools like Harvard and Yale. Last year, Harvard was one of the only schools on their website not to feature an embroidered emblem due to the nebulousness of "Crimson." But this year, Liberman made it clear their merch would feature a Harvard mascot.

"We finally got approval for this past spring … the past few years we haven't had any mascot collections because Harvard we never had a mascot." Approval was only the first step; once their design was authorized, Crew Dog had to envision brand representation for a novel character. The company team took on that challenge to create a recognizable symbol, a teddy bear dressed in the classic H sweater, that would make students feel like part of the "crew."

Though The Game is one of the biggest weekends of the year for both schools' communities, its economic rewards are short-lived. In other words, though the Harvard-Yale collection looks like a flagship, ultimately, it does not pay the bills. "I think Harvard-Yale is very minimal and—the overall profitability and financial success of the company—I think it's more of a marketing play," Liberman said. Creating a dedicated line for The Game lets the brand market strongly at one of the nation's most prized college sporting events while also keeping the founders connected to their alma mater.

The Harvard-Yale collection adds nostalgic tradition that is meaningful to Crew Dog as a brand. The Harvard-Yale line also reinforces their "Made by students, for students" ethos, as described in their interview with the "Harvard Independent" last year. "Having the roots when we started at Yale still being nurtured, I think is beautiful, and it keeps the story very raw and authentic," Liberman noted.

The annual collection also functions as a test run. Last year's heritage design, a football with a school crest inside, performed well with HY buyers. Now, Crew Dog is rolling a similar design out to other universities across the nation, including American University, the University of Arkansas, Bucknell, and more.

Liberman has discovered that taste varies by region more than by specific school. "I think it's more of a Northeastern regional thing versus the South versus the West Coast," he said. "I need to understand, okay, what does the southern consumer want?"

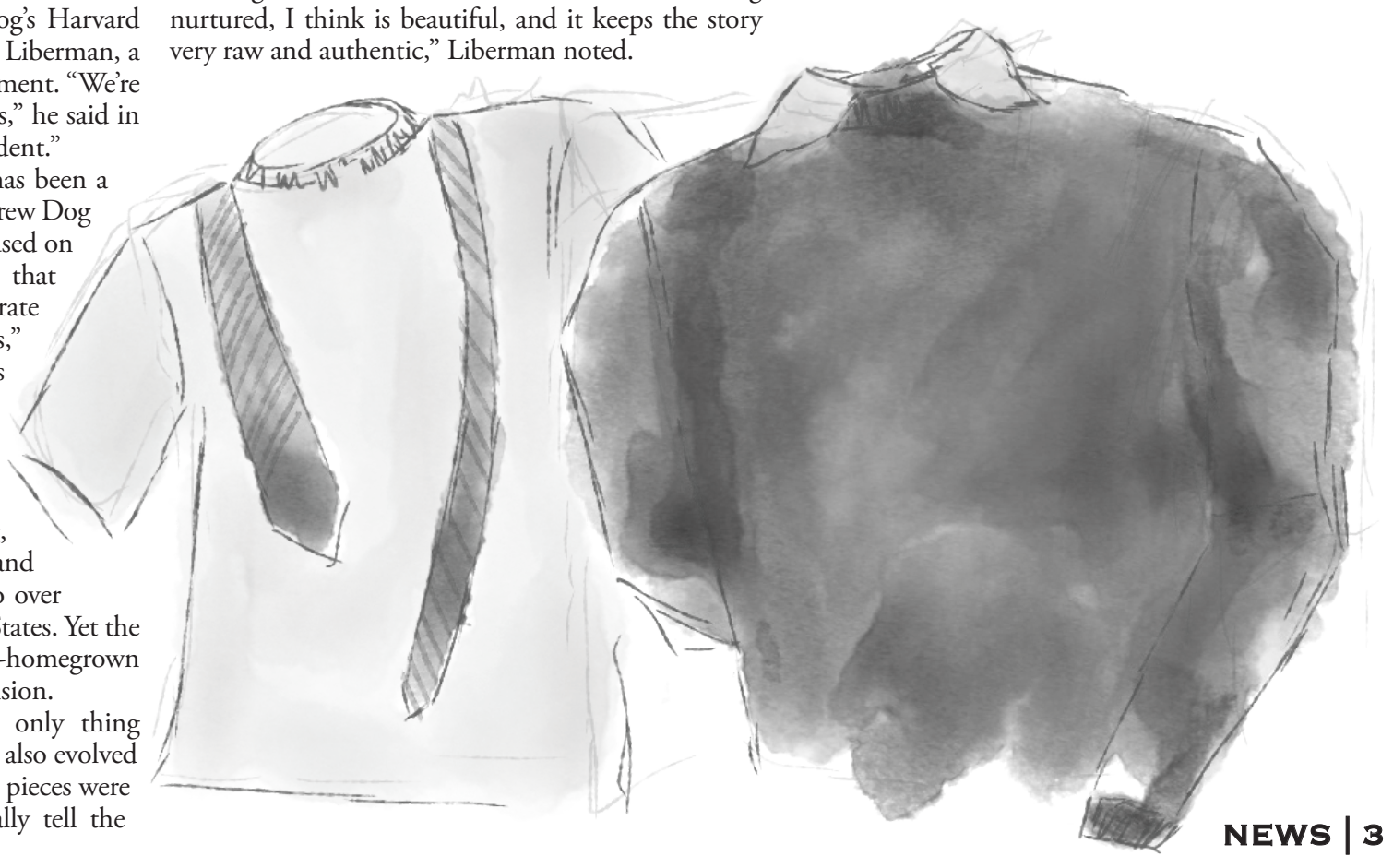
To learn what college students want, he realized he needed to understand the southern student as well. "These schools are filled with people who are not from the South. So, what does that also, you know, how does that also tie into the collections that I design?" These are all questions being asked during the design process—which is still relatively foreign to the Crew Dog team as they expand into unfamiliar business territory.

Regardless of the challenges, Liberman's motivation to persevere is rooted in the people he built the brand with. Watching the company grow alongside peers from college has been more than fulfilling. "It has also been very rewarding as a business owner to be able to see your own company and baby grow with people you really trust. I have an amazing team."

Liberman said moving to New York helped the brand most because he could count on mentors and industry networks close at hand. "You just have to put yourself in the right places, at the right time."

Natalie Cooper '28 (ncooper@college.harvard.edu) has already picked out her Crew Dog fit for The Game.

Graphic by Sarahluna Sassine '29



Survey Results Indicate the Class of '26 Experienced More Free Speech. The Administration Says It's Not Enough

Last year's seniors, the Class of 2026, reported feeling more comfortable expressing opposing views than in prior years, but conservative seniors remained less comfortable.

By COURTNEY HINES '28

"I feel like people here are pretty open to hearing everyone's perspectives," Kai Thoma '30 told the "Harvard Independent."

That sentiment might surprise some: the University has long been under scrutiny for lacking conservative representation, especially after Donald Trump's presidential win in 2024. On the night of the presidential election, conservative students faced backlash on the anonymous social media platform Sidechat: "Accept the consequences of your beliefs. Want lower taxes, take social alienation," one user wrote.

Now, Thoma is among a Harvard class that entered the University amid its response to these criticisms as it pushes to engage with more conservative students' voices on campus.

Harvard College's Senior Survey, released Nov. 10, included responses from more than 97% of the graduating class, the College said. This year, the annual audit found that 54% of seniors said they felt comfortable expressing opposing views on controversial topics in their courses, up from 43% in 2025. Responses on a separate question, whether students felt free to express personal beliefs, split by political orientation: 63% of liberal seniors said they did, compared with 32% of conservative seniors and 43% of moderate seniors.

The small number of right-leaning students on campus willing to speak on their views means many students are not even able to identify their conservative peers. "I really don't know who I'm talking about when I talk about conservative students on campus," Brandy Figueroa '28 said.

This phenomenon may be because conservatives are a minority at Harvard: in 2026, 66% of the student body self-identified as progressive, while only 10% identified as conservative.

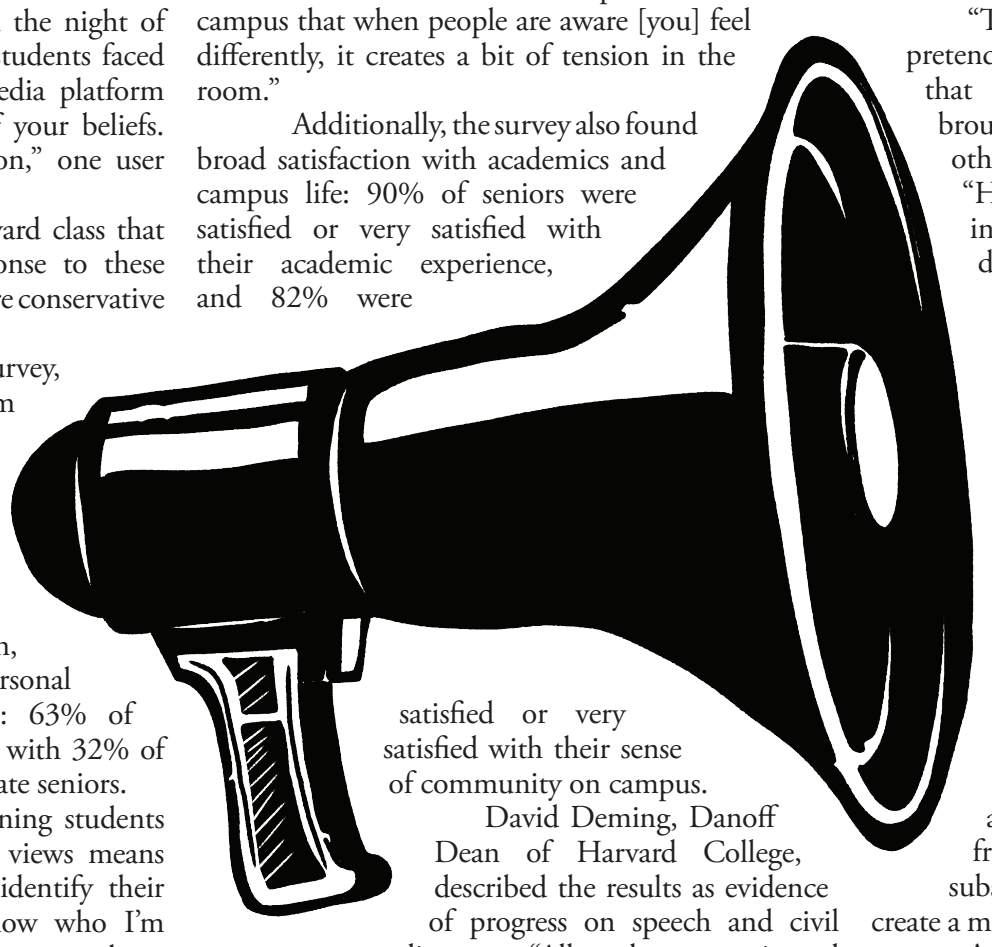
For some students, the dominant political culture seems to create right and wrong answers to political questions. "You wouldn't want to say something that you know is going to be viewed as a wrong answer," Figueroa said. "I think, in reality, there's still not much discussion on [controversial topics]."

"Deming's analysis contrasted with some students' accounts of campus political culture."

"There still is definitely a slant where people who are part of the majority will feel much more willing and able to speak up about what they feel," former Harvard Undergraduate Association co-president Caleb Thompson '27 said in an interview with the "Harvard Independent." "There's still people that are in the minority that are willing to, but they often catch a lot of flak for it."

Still, while conservative undergraduates have reported more discomfort discussing their views on campus, students on both sides of the political spectrum still feel unable to express their political beliefs at times. Yassin Mohamedy '29, who identified as liberal, has found that his viewpoints could be difficult to communicate depending on his environment. "I have also felt in spaces I am in on campus that when people are aware [you] feel differently, it creates a bit of tension in the room."

Additionally, the survey also found broad satisfaction with academics and campus life: 90% of seniors were satisfied or very satisfied with their academic experience, and 82% were satisfied or very satisfied with their sense of community on campus.



David Deming, Danoff Dean of Harvard College, described the results as evidence of progress on speech and civil discourse. "All students experienced similar increases in perceived freedom of expression and civil discourse over the last year, regardless of their political beliefs," Deming wrote in an email accompanying the survey results.

Deming's analysis contrasted with some students' accounts of campus political culture. "At least among freshmen first-year students ... I feel like people are more outwardly liberal," Thoma said.

Current seniors recounted the broader political turbulence that shaped previous classes' student life in ways later years may not understand. "I think our class has experienced a lot of controversy through our time being here, because of some of the things that have happened at the federal government level, within the University," Thompson explained. "Something that might explain what happened last year with [the Class of 2026's survey] is they faced a lot of the same experiences as us."

Comfort is only one dimension of growing free speech on campus: the share of seniors who said they had expressed opposing views when they felt it was important also rose from 44% in 2023 to 67% in 2026, according to Deming.

These figures arrive amid renewed attention to ideological diversity at Harvard: since 2023, the College's administration has worked to engage conservative undergraduates more through meetings, events, and policy changes.

"In the years around the pandemic, some faculty began to feel that they could no longer teach certain topics or assign certain works for fear of controversy or cancellation," Amanda Claybaugh, Dean of Undergraduate Education, wrote on the official website of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. "At the same time, some students felt that they had to censor themselves both in and out of class."

Some faculty members voiced their own opinions on the institution's shortcomings in including right-leaning representation: Kenan Professor of Government Harvey C. Mansfield published "Where Harvard Went Wrong: Fifty Years of Commentary That Fell on Deaf Ears" in May 2026.

"The way to regain public favor is not to pretend to be nonpartisan but rather to see to it that the one dominating party—the left—is brought to agree to the active presence of the other side," Mansfield said in an interview with "Harvard Magazine." "This needs to happen in the admission of students, the selection of deans, and especially in the hiring of faculty."

University administration responded to these concerns by launching the "Intellectual Vitality" initiative. Led by the Student and Faculty Advisory Boards, the initiative seeks to implement new methods of promoting free speech in classrooms and residential life.

In addition, the Standing Committee on Undergraduate Educational Policy, made up of College faculty, held town halls and private meetings to create a case for improving open dialogue within the community. This eventually led to the formation of the Classroom Social Compact Committee, which produced a report on how students shy away from controversial topics. The document subsequently outlined how Harvard could create a more "transformative" education for students.

A semester later, in the fall of 2025, faculty began attempts to implement the report in their classes: Eric Beerbohm, director of the Edmond & Lily Safra Center for Ethics and co-chair of the Open Inquiry and Constructive Dialogue Working Group, lectured incoming first-year students—who had just arrived on campus for orientation—on intellectual vitality.

"For some students, the dominant political culture seems to create right and wrong answers to political questions."

Beerbohm attempted to "strike the register that works" for students, never directly referring to intellectual vitality but encouraging them to make friends among those with whom they disagree.

This approach mirrored how students commonly engaged in controversial conversations on campus. "I don't explicitly talk about politics," Figueroa said. "We more so talk about ethical issues or issues relating to philosophy, which would [then have] political implications."

Beerbohm, among other faculty, went on to say these strategies were effective in getting students to participate more in the classroom and in their residential communities. Claybaugh wrote on the FAS website, "First and second year students don't

really understand what I mean when I ask if they fear being canceled for their views."

Still, accounts from first-years seem to complicate the administration's understanding of growing dialogue. "People really keep their identities, like political ideologies, private," Thoma said.

"It is pretty accurate to say that people actually aren't that comfortable expressing controversial views because there is a high standard for people's rationales,"

> ***"I really don't know who I'm talking about when I talk about conservative students on campus."***
>
> ***- Figueroa '28***

Figueroa added. "Often, the expectation is that you follow [the] status quo."

These efforts by the College have drawn differing responses from conservative students, some of whom have questioned whether the changes are substantive. The Administration's push to include conservative voices also played out against the recent history of the conservative student publication "The Salient." In March 2026, students spoke out against the journal's revival after it had paused operations amid controversy over past material. This backlash mostly arose from a Sept. 2025 draft article by David Army '28 that included lines closely mirroring rhetoric from Adolf Hitler's 1939 Reichstag speech.

In December of 2025, "The Salient" subsequently rebuilt its board and condemned Army's statements. "There is no place for antisemitism, misogyny, bigotry, or any kind of hate at the Salient—or in the conservative movement that it seeks to uphold," Jason Morganbesser '27, the newly appointed managing editor of "The Salient" following the incident, said in a statement to the "Harvard Independent" in 2025.

"I speak for the whole of the Salient's editorial team when I say that we apologize to our readers, the entire Harvard community, and conservatives everywhere for allowing Harvard's sole conservative publication to become a platform for hate."

Sarah Steele '26, former president of "The Salient," argued in the spring that conservative students often felt isolated on campus by the time she graduated. "'The Salient' has served as a home base for students to learn, digest, and apply conservative thought on a campus where such opportunities are scarce," she wrote. Some students welcomed the publication's return, but others questioned whether it had meaningfully grown from its discourse.

Figueroa recounted a recent conversation she had with her friend about "The Salient." "A person that they knew joined 'The Salient' because of that incident," she said. "I'm assuming in hopes to change the way conservatives are viewed on campus."

While Figueroa found the student's interest in improving "The Salient" to be a meaningful step towards reconciliation, to her it did not erase what the publication had previously publicized. "I like to hope that people are not doing anything in bad faith, but obviously I still have a hesitant/reluctant distrust of conservative students on campus."

Importantly, the survey does not explain why students feel more or less comfortable speaking, or whether they interpret "controversial topics" in the same way. It does show that 46% of seniors still did not agree or strongly agree that they felt comfortable expressing opposing views in courses.

"I still think in classroom settings people are very cagey and very hesitant to share, just because you really don't know what the fallout of that will be socially or how people are going to interpret what you say," Thompson said.

The survey also did not provide comparative data for student speech beyond the base left-right spectrum, though each student interview conducted by the "Harvard Independent" for this article named the Israel-Palestine conflict as one of the most contentious topics on campus. It particularly influenced interviewees' experiences with speech at Harvard, especially the current senior class, the Class of 2027, who witnessed related student protests their first year on campus.

"Freshman year, it was just a very vivid memory because there was the encampment right outside of Holworthy, which is where I was living," Thompson recounted. At the time of the encampment, which students built at the center of Harvard Yard in support of Palestine, he recalled being optimistic about students' ability to hold difficult conversations. "I was able to play cricket with a lot of people at the encampment, and I saw their humanity and where they were coming from."

He then explained that sentiment did not survive on campus. "I heard about friends of mine, or people that had known each other the first couple weeks of school, that weren't talking to each other as much as a result of that issue. I know that a lot of those divides have persisted to this day."

Mohamedy recalled how discussing the conflict led to an uncomfortable moment in one of his classes. "I called Israel a fascist state in response to something someone said," he explained. The class quickly changed topics, but the atmosphere of the room remained tense.

Figueroa believed the Israel-Palestine conflict was, in some ways, even more difficult to discuss than many other political topics. "If someone says they're fiscally conservative, people will roll their eyes, and it's like, okay, whatever," she said. "But when it comes to things that are more social or humanitarian, differing opinions are very uncommon."

In Jan. 2024, Harvard President Alan Garber announced two task forces to examine campus bias: the Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias and the Presidential Task Force on Combating Anti-Muslim, Anti-Arab, and Anti-Palestinian Bias. They released their final reports in April 2025.

Almost a year later, in March 2026, the Trump administration's Justice Department sued Harvard, alleging it failed to protect Jewish and Israeli students from discrimination; a federal judge dismissed the case in August.

Harvard College's required 2026-2027 online training module, "Harvard University Policies and Resources: Non-Discrimination, Title IX Sexual Harassment, and Other Sexual Misconduct," covers the University's nondiscrimination policies. Harvard's policy FAQ lists "verbal abuse or use of antisemitic, racist, sexist, homophobic, anti-Zionist, anti-Arab, Islamophobic, anti-LDS, or anti-Catholic slurs or hostile behavior" as an example of conduct that may violate the policy; it also names excluding Zionists from open events as an example, provided the policy's requirements are met.

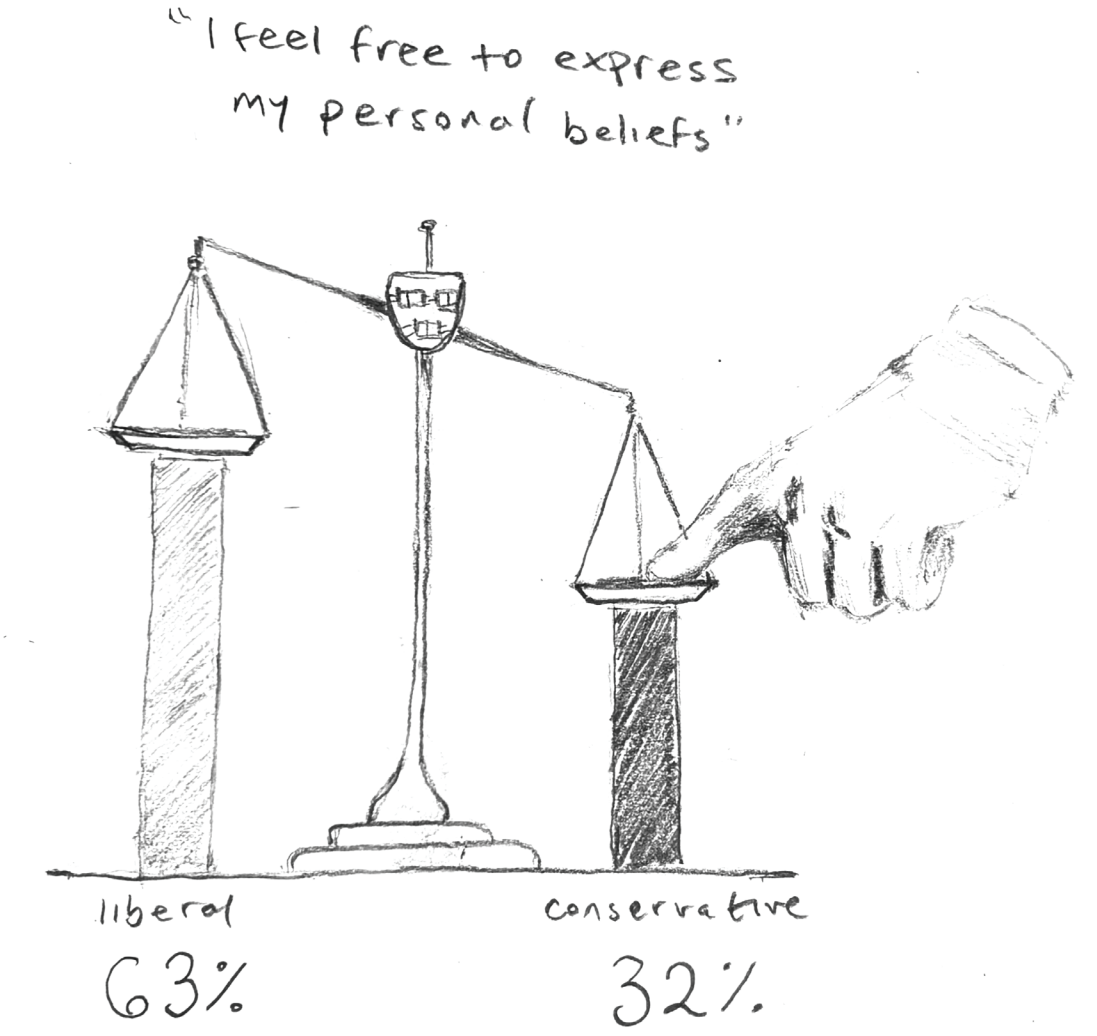
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>
> ***- Figueroa '28***

In his message on the survey, Deming said he strove for the entire student body to feel comfortable voicing their opinions on controversial topics one day. "As a campus leader, I feel a strong duty to get these numbers as close to 100% as possible, and I am not satisfied with our progress," he wrote.

Still, Thoma pointed to larger national and international divides beyond Harvard. "I think it's just a reality that we see on campus, but I don't know if it's really that different anywhere else," he said.

Courtney Hines '28 (courtneyhines@college.harvard.edu) is the News Editor for the "Harvard Independent."

Graphics by Tess Harris '30 & Linden McCarl '28



FORUM

Tears in Heaven

A young man's thoughts on growing old.

By NOAH BASDEN '29

I was recently "put on," as the kids say, to a beautiful song by Eric Clapton called "Tears in Heaven." Upon my first listen, I didn't know the piece was written as a love letter from Clapton to his young, deceased son, Conor. The first line is a simple question from a grieving father: "Would you know my name if I saw you in heaven?" It's a gut-wrenching opening, but an honest one. Would his son know his name, given that he tragically passed away at the age of four? The answer is ambiguous, and that is exactly what makes the question so heartbreaking. At age four, children typically know their parents as "Mom" and "Dad" rather than by name. So, Clapton seems to wonder whether that connection would be enough for his boy to recognize his father's name when they eventually meet in the afterlife.

It is a question I have been pondering myself recently, albeit in reverse. My great-grandmother, my Nana, is 103 years old, and her memory is fading more and more between visits. I have gone from being a face and name she recognized to just a face. Now we're unsure exactly who she thinks I am, but it's clear she knows me and, with a little prodding, conveniently remembers I am the most handsome of her great-grandsons … I wonder who put that thought in her mind!

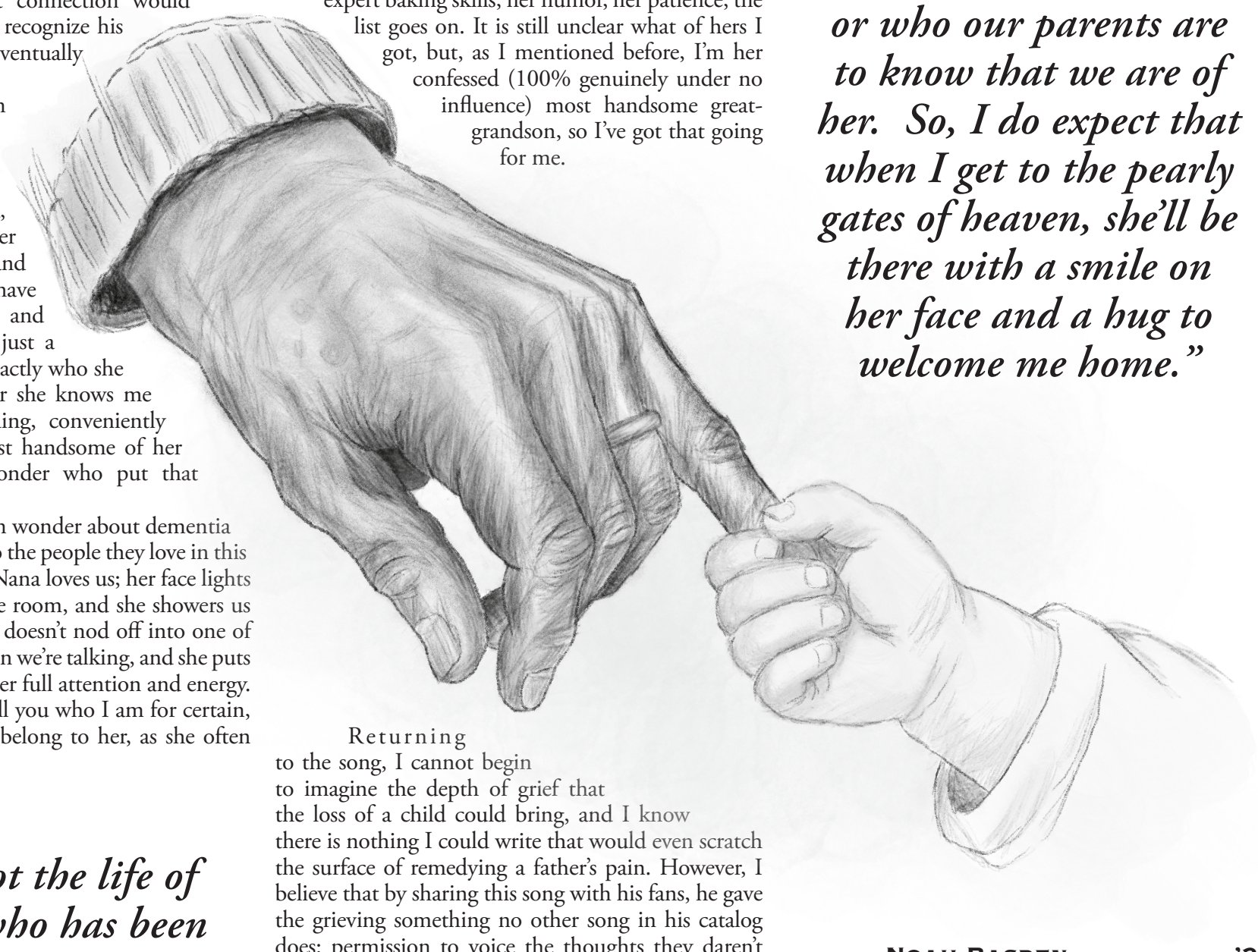
Jokes aside, I often wonder about dementia patients and their access to the people they love in this life and the next. I know Nana loves us; her face lights up when we walk into the room, and she showers us with hugs and kisses. She doesn't nod off into one of her unscheduled naps when we're talking, and she puts in a real effort to give us her full attention and energy. She may not be able to tell you who I am for certain, but I know she knows I belong to her, as she often reminds me when I ask if she knows my name, saying with a smile, "Hush hush, you are all my babies!" A cop-out if I've ever seen one, but at 103 years old, I let it slide.

"That is not the life of a woman who has been forgotten."

Despite all this, I ask myself: Would she know my name if I saw her in heaven? The answer is obvious to me: yes. It is the redeemed soul, not the body or the mind worn down by time, that enters the kingdom of heaven. That is the most beautiful part of it all. A four-year-old only knows his father as "Dad," but he knows his "Dad" is kind, keeps him safe, and picks him up when he falls. That was all a Dad had to be. In grief, we often ask ourselves hard questions that our minds, in the moment, cannot comprehend, but our hearts already know the answer. Of course, he would know his father in heaven; it was never a matter of knowing his name, but of recognizing love and care from his first day to his too-early, unfortunate last day.

I find this to be true of my Nana. I have spent many of my visits in the wrong frame of mind, worrying about what she has lost instead of appreciating what she had and still has. She has an army of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and even a great-great-grandchild, though he speaks mainly in babbles at the moment—all of us ready to bring her a fresh cup of coffee at a moment's notice. She has the love and admiration of generations and can revel in knowing she is older than over 100 countries.

That is not the life of a woman who has been forgotten. Each person who gets to call her Nana, as I do, carries with them a piece of her. For some, it's her expert baking skills, her humor, her patience; the list goes on. It is still unclear what of hers I got, but, as I mentioned before, I'm her confessed (100% genuinely under no influence) most handsome great-grandson, so I've got that going for me.



Returning to the song, I cannot begin to imagine the depth of grief that the loss of a child could bring, and I know there is nothing I could write that would even scratch the surface of remedying a father's pain. However, I believe that by sharing this song with his fans, he gave the grieving something no other song in his catalog does: permission to voice the thoughts they daren't say aloud. An enduring bond between a loving parent and their child is consecrated at birth. A loving parent knows their child from the moment they set eyes on them, and a loving child knows their parent, not by name but by the arms that cradled them and the voice that sang them lullabies at night.

"Would she know my name if I saw her in heaven?"

This is the thought that changed how I view my Nana when she says, "Hush hush, you are all my babies," because that statement holds something deeper. She speaks as a mother who has known her children, and in particular my grandmother, by sight for over eighty years. She simply has widened her circle to include all of us. She needn't know our names, or where we live, or who our parents are to know that we are of her. So, I do expect that when I get to the pearly gates of heaven, she'll be there with a smile on her face and a hug to welcome me home.

"She needn't know our names, or where we live, or who our parents are to know that we are of her. So, I do expect that when I get to the pearly gates of heaven, she'll be there with a smile on her face and a hug to welcome me home."

Noah Basden '29 (nhbasden@college.harvard.edu) needs to focus on what's in front of him (midterms) and not what's above his head.

Graphic by Cara Cronin '28

A Critique of Cuffing Season

Free yourself!

By ANIKA GUPTA '30 AND SALMA GHEITH '30

As the weather cools and the leaves begin to fall, Instagram can't help but circulate images of couples' costumes, matching pajamas, and baking dates. At first, the images seem sweet and innocent. After all, what's wrong with Hallmark-movie romance during the coziest months of the year?

But these seemingly innocuous trends deserve a closer look. The idea that winter is not complete without a relationship points to something bigger: a culture that teaches everyone to feel incomplete without a partner.

"It's time to stop waiting to be picked."

Cuffing season is not about the weather; it's about how society has taught us to treat being picked as a goal in itself. A life without a partner is framed as the worst-case scenario, but what we should really fear is a life without purpose or self-fulfillment.

Romance is not inherently bad, but romance born out of wanting a relationship, rather than wanting a person, causes us to stop putting energy into passions, friendships, and the things we care about. Left unchecked, that kind of romance transforms into an unhealthy fixation. Cuffing season teaches us that the fixation is not only normal but expected during certain months of the year. It's time to stop waiting to be picked.

From a young age, romance is framed as the reward. Movies, songs, and social media often end when the couple gets together. But a story that ends after "being chosen" says nothing about who you are after the credits roll. The term "cuffing season" describes the cold season when everyone is coupled up or seeking to be. The language surrounding it ("cuffed," "locked in," "secured") frames the goal as claiming a person, which is incongruent with the bones of a healthy relationship. The word gives itself away: to be cuffed is to be restrained, held in place, kept, sometimes unwillingly.

Women in particular are conditioned by society to understand their value through male validation and romantic attention. That societal conditioning teaches women that their "value" rises when they're chosen, and that single women are "left over" or desperate, permanently in search of a relationship.

This logic turns a woman into the object of another person's choice rather than the subject of her own life. Being picked is passive; it happens to you, not because of you. Choosing, whether it is a person, a passion, or yourself, is something you control.

This is where the real problem with "cuffing season" lies. Social conditioning, which treats romance as the pinnacle of one's life experience, crowds out the love and joy that come from investing in ourselves. Focusing on your own passions and goals creates space to nurture yourself. Without that, you lack a focal point for knowing yourself beyond how others perceive you, making finding a partner the only way to feel validated. We see ourselves solely through the eyes of whoever chooses to see us.

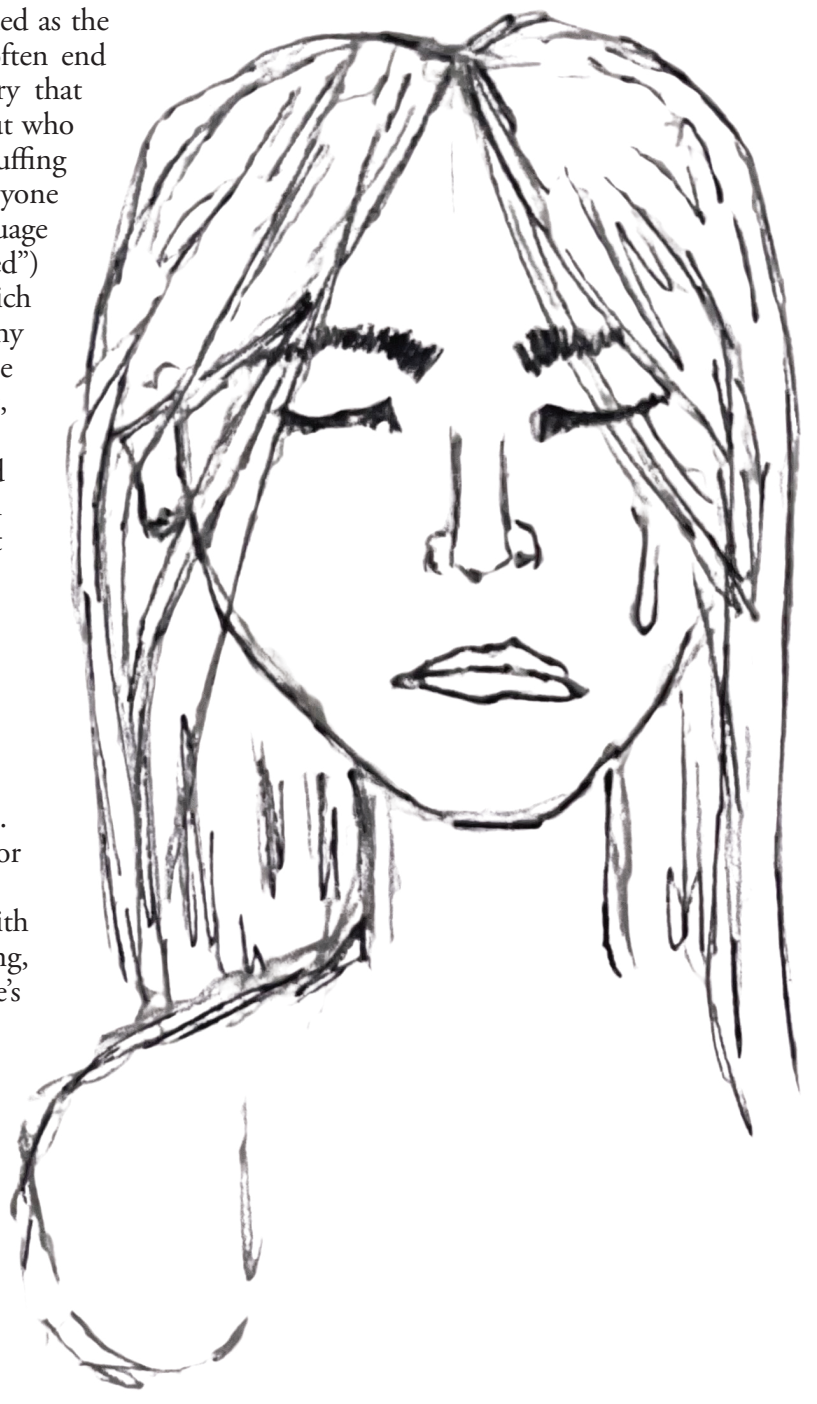
Winter is a cold, dry, and sometimes lonely season. With chilling temperatures, there is less going on outside and more time is spent indoors, leaving an emptiness that could be filled by reading that book you've been meaning to pick up or finishing that long-overdue assignment, but is instead open to intrusive thoughts like, What if I snap them?

Cuffing season steps into that silence and offers a short, easy, and comforting answer: fill the emptiness with a person. A person cannot do the work of a purpose. The loneliness of winter is not a sign that we need someone else, but rather a sign that we may need ourselves.

When was the last time you did something alone? When was the last time you did something just for you? Doing things by yourself is not only good for building a self-concept, but it's also great for your mental health, and it reminds you that you matter without anyone's approval.

Often, pining for a relationship leads to one that isn't right for you. Convincing yourself that you will be unhappy until you're dating someone treats a relationship as something to be acquired rather than experienced. Misery loves company, and the company misery finds is rarely the company we would choose if we felt whole. Two individuals trying to fill a space within themselves often end up sharing the same problems rather than solving them. And when spring has sprung, and the relationship is out of season, we're left exactly where we started, only now convinced we were left behind.

When your life is full, romance becomes something you add to it, not something that you need to feel complete. A full life is not defined by a kiss count or how many "I heart my boyfriend" t-shirts you have, but by the friendships and passions that make you who you are. These are real relationships in and of themselves, and unlike many "cuffing season" flings, they don't end in March. They ask more of us than waiting around; they ask us just to show up.



Some will raise the fair argument that wanting someone to cozy up with by the fire is just human. And they're right. Wanting human connection is natural. The critique of cuffing season doesn't claim that humans don't want connection, but that it pressures us to treat being picked as the end goal. There is a difference between wanting to share a life with another person and needing someone to give your life meaning. Romance should come from a full life, not substitute for one.

"The loneliness of winter is not a sign that we need someone else, but rather a sign that we may need ourselves."

This winter, pick yourself first. Being picked was never the point; choosing is. The beauty of choosing a life that is defined by what you love is the freedom to experience everything this holiday season has to offer for yourself and the people you care about. Bring back the matching pajamas and baking dates—this time with friends, or on your own, no cuffs required.

Anika Gupta '30 (anikagupta@college.harvard.edu) and Salma Gheith '30 (salmagheith@college.harvard.edu) would rather be handcuffed to each other.

Graphic by Annabella Burton-Boone '29

Honeypot Meets Jackpot

Jensen Huang and the failure of corporate morality under late-stage capitalism.

By ANIKA GUPTA '30 AND SALMA GHEITH '30

Former Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang wrote to Nvidia employees after multiple affairs were revealed: "I was unfaithful to my wife. My actions hurt her and our children. There is no excuse for what I did. I am deeply sorry."

A personal apology combined with a juicy scandal to create what seemed like a classic story of an executive stepping down after being deemed immoral. Yet Jensen Huang's fall from grace has less to do with a corporate ethical awakening than with what happens when liabilities are ignored in favor of prioritizing profits.

In late October 2026, reports surfaced that Nvidia co-founder and CEO Jensen Huang had

"His decision to leave is not a matter of moral obligation but is driven entirely by capitalist strategy."

an extramarital affair with Alice Huang, a Chinese national and former executive at Singapore-based "neocloud" firm Megaspeed. Intelligence officials in Singapore and the United States suspect she was recruited by Chinese intelligence, calling it a classic "honeypot" operation to gain access to restricted AI chips.

Megaspeed's assets grew from $33 million in 2023 to $3 billion in 2024, and its Malaysian subsidiary, Speedmatrix, allegedly imported around $4 billion in Nvidia-equipped hardware, raising alarms about illegal chip smuggling into China. Huang had also been lobbying Washington to ease semiconductor export controls on China.

On Nov. 11, the "New York Times" revealed that Huang also had an affair with Kimberly Powell, Nvidia's VP of Healthcare, who reported directly to him. Hours after his exit, a third relationship with another Nvidia employee was exposed.

On Nov. 12, Huang abruptly resigned as CEO, president, and director after 33 years, with CFO Colette Kress stepping in as interim CEO. The FBI, DOJ, Nvidia's board, and Malaysian authorities have launched probes, and Huang has agreed to testify before Congress. Meanwhile, Donald Trump, Elon Musk, Bill Ackman, and a nearly 100,000-signature "Stand with Jensen" petition have rallied behind him, and the "Financial Times" reports Huang is already considering a comeback.

Huang's string of affairs is frankly ridiculous: not only was he somehow tricked by an alleged Chinese spy (Silicon Valley's worst nightmare), but he also hooked up with multiple employees. Cheating on his wife of over four decades and crossing lines with direct subordinates is indefensible, and the consequences of an affair are far worse when they involve a suspected intelligence asset tied to a $4 billion chip-supply partner.

But why are these relationships being revealed now? Top U.S. officials, including Marco Rubio and CIA director John Ratcliffe, had known details about the affair since 2025, and a classified memo warning about the relationship was drafted in May 2026 by Rubio. The memo was based on an underlying CIA report from electronic surveillance of Alice Huang, which Rubio, a prominent China hawk, recast in "his own more assertive terms." But the information in this memo was only publicized in late October and November.

The timing is suspicious: the details of Huang's sex life only became relevant once his push to expand chip trade with China began threatening Washington's national security hawks. Huang also was not pushed out by the company's board until his affairs began costing the company, despite the odd workplace dynamics they contained. As long as stock was growing, Nvidia reportedly brushed off what is now being framed as a national security red flag, calling it "nothing out of the ordinary." His decision to leave is not a matter of moral obligation but is driven entirely by capitalist strategy.

Huang's downfall is not necessarily a grand conspiracy theory of the government taking him down to assert its own interests. Instead, his series of affairs reflects the inevitable consequences of unchecked shareholder capitalism. For a $4 trillion company like Nvidia, maintaining its growth trajectory meant keeping high-end exports flowing to massive markets like China, despite attempted U.S. export controls. Nvidia's shocking growth turned Huang into an untouchable monarch, allowing him to maintain a relationship with a potential spy and cross workplace boundaries without fear of accountability or retribution.

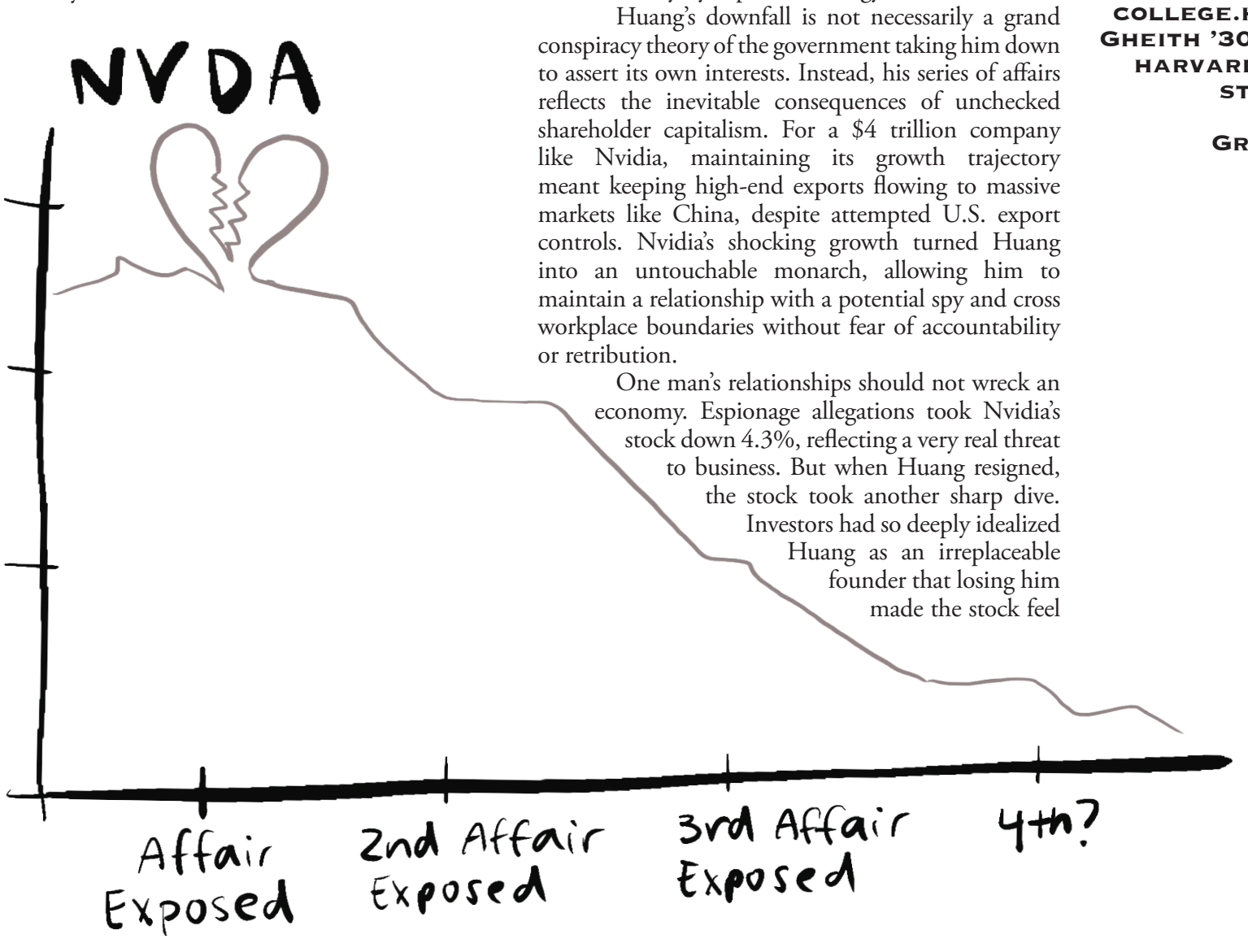
One man's relationships should not wreck an economy. Espionage allegations took Nvidia's stock down 4.3%, reflecting a very real threat to business. But when Huang resigned, the stock took another sharp dive. Investors had so deeply idealized Huang as an irreplaceable founder that losing him made the stock feel vulnerable, and Wall Street panicked over whether Nvidia, and the broader AI boom, could maintain dominance without him. These stock crashes reflect intentional ignorance that favors growth and the fetishization of a founder, keeping companies vulnerable.

The concept of personal morality as a benchmark of leadership is appealing because it is simple. Everyone understands a scandal. Export controls, board governance, and chip supply chains are much harder to follow. That simplicity is precisely what makes it dangerous. In Huang's case, the affair was used selectively as a yardstick. Nvidia's board reportedly ignored it while the stock climbed, but the moment Huang's lobbying became inconvenient, it was suddenly the straw that broke the camel's back. A standard enforced only when it is useful is not a standard—it is leverage.

"One man's relationships should not wreck an economy."

None of this means Huang should walk away clean. But a CEO's affairs do not inherently determine his ability to run a company, and few tech CEOs are pinnacles of kindness and humanity. Yes, he may have fallen for an intelligence trap. However, he should still have been able to save Nvidia and work with the government, especially given his close relationship with President Trump. Although Huang did not name a reason for his departure, it followed scrutiny of him, his character, and Nvidia's durability following the espionage scandal. But his resignation is not proof that corporate America finally found a moral compass; it shows only that, in modern capitalism, personal ethics matter when they become a financial liability.

Anika Gupta '30 (anikagupta@college.harvard.edu) and Salma Gheith '30 (salmagheith@college.harvard.edu) are buying Nvidia stock now, while it's low.



Graphic by Clara Lake '27

Christmas? Already!?

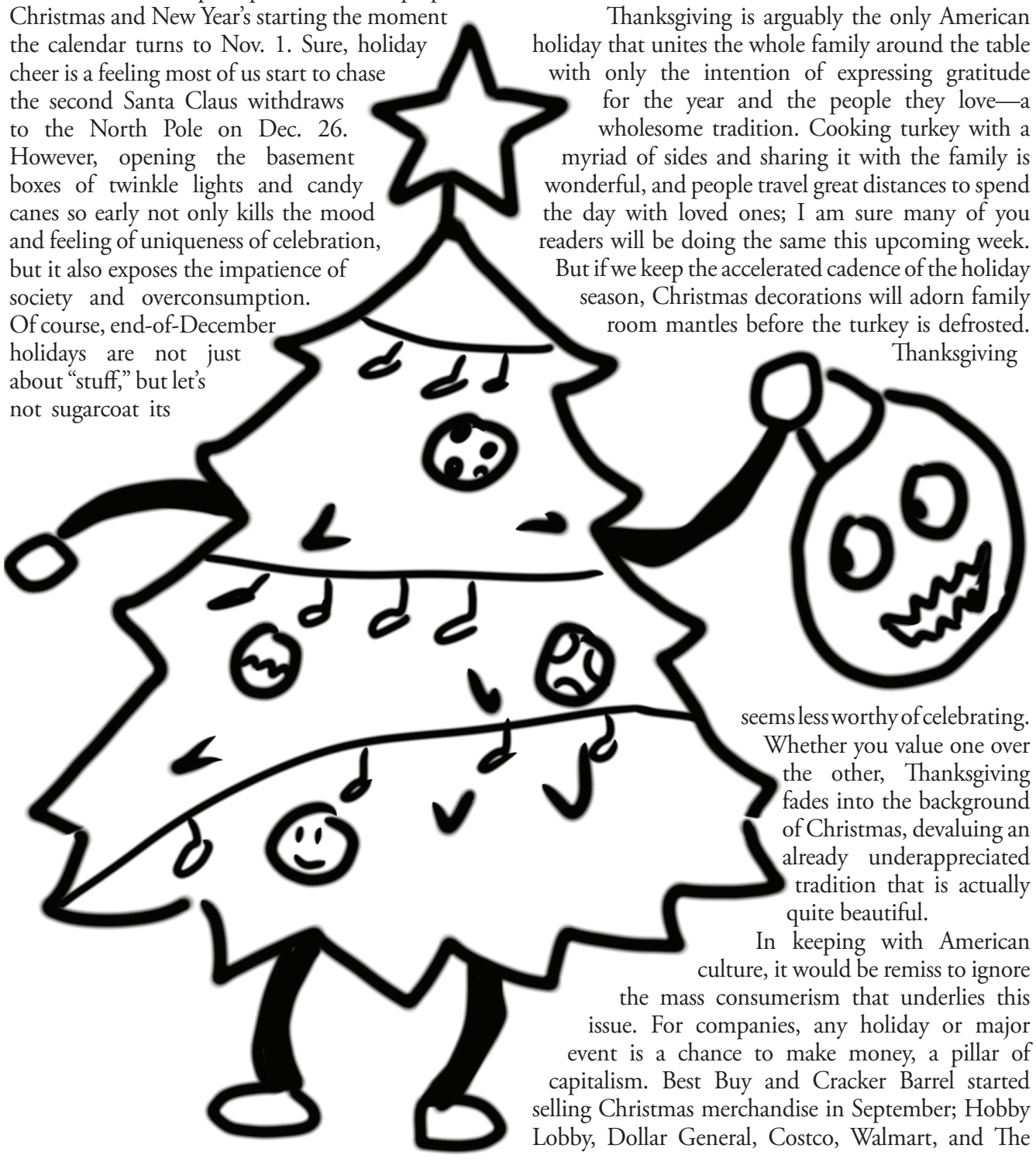
When is it appropriate to start putting up the stockings?

By ANNA GUNKO '30

Every year, right as we turn from October to November, it seems as if everyone immediately forgets about the spooky season and catches a festive holiday fever … Here on Harvard's campus, I remember walking through Brattle Street in late October and turning my head to see that MUJI had already installed a Christmas tree. Or take the quick switch in theme at LoveStruck Books & Cafe. Before Oct. 31, you could see witchcraft-inspired decorations: cauldrons, herbs, and ghosts. However, it felt like as soon as the calendar date changed to "November first," it all turned, by its own witchcraft, into red-and-white candy canes, snow, pine trees, and presents. The CVS in Harvard Square hung up a letter to Santa Claus of Nov. 1 asking him to drive away the bats and spiders, and Santa took the request so seriously that he cloned himself and stood guard over the displays for the rest of the month.

"I see it as quite problematic to prepare for Christmas and New Year's starting the moment the calendar turns to Nov. 1."

I see it as quite problematic to prepare for Christmas and New Year's starting the moment the calendar turns to Nov. 1. Sure, holiday cheer is a feeling most of us start to chase the second Santa Claus withdraws to the North Pole on Dec. 26. However, opening the basement boxes of twinkle lights and candy canes so early not only kills the mood and feeling of uniqueness of celebration, but it also exposes the impatience of society and overconsumption. Of course, end-of-December holidays are not just about "stuff," but let's not sugarcoat its manifestations in modern society.



The spirit of the celebration is the most important part of any holiday. When we think of Halloween, we immediately think about carved pumpkins, harrowing monsters, decorations with lights, candy corn, and intricate costumes. When we think of Easter, most envision a bunny and pastel colored eggs. Christmas brings visions of family warmth, sparkling evergreen trees, red and green ornaments, and, of course, a fireplace with stockings. This process makes one thing clear: curating the correct vibe is the key to a successful holiday, no matter if it is Kwanzaa, Christmas, Hanukkah, St. Patrick's Day, Halloween, New Year's, Eid, Diwali, Navaratri or your birthday.

However, it is hard to keep up when the so-called "holiday season" starts two months before the holiday itself. If the decorations are up at the beginning of November, and Mariah Carey's iconic voice echoes from dorm doors, the vibe is great for a week or two, even for a month. But this excitement inevitably fades within a few weeks; what was once celebratory becomes mundane—and almost annoying. For most of us (excluding the die-hards who host Christmas in July), we somehow lose the drive of the holiday season everyone awaits with such impatience. How is it beginning to look a lot like Christmas when the leaves have not yet fallen off of most northern trees?

It seems to me that the reason is simple: people like Christmas a lot. This desire compels them to start celebrating earlier. As the days shorten and rain instead of solar rays blanket the darkening concrete, people crave Christmas magic. But autumn is not the time for "Frosty the Snowman." What is left for winter then?

Thanksgiving is arguably the only American holiday that unites the whole family around the table with only the intention of expressing gratitude for the year and the people they love—a wholesome tradition. Cooking turkey with a myriad of sides and sharing it with the family is wonderful, and people travel great distances to spend the day with loved ones; I am sure many of you readers will be doing the same this upcoming week. But if we keep the accelerated cadence of the holiday season, Christmas decorations will adorn family room mantles before the turkey is defrosted. Thanksgiving seems less worthy of celebrating. Whether you value one over the other, Thanksgiving fades into the background of Christmas, devaluing an already underappreciated tradition that is actually quite beautiful.

In keeping with American culture, it would be remiss to ignore the mass consumerism that underlies this issue. For companies, any holiday or major event is a chance to make money, a pillar of capitalism. Best Buy and Cracker Barrel started selling Christmas merchandise in September; Hobby Lobby, Dollar General, Costco, Walmart, and The Home Depot started putting up Christmas collections in August! Even the U.S. Postal Service started "Operation Santa" on Sept. 14, launching the season early.

The holidays provide an opportunity to produce endless streams of themed merchandise: decorations, plushies, flavors, and aromas, depending on the field the company occupies. The longer certain time-specific themes trend and stay on the market, the more merchandise will be sold. If they don't sell, the corporations could face major profit losses. It doesn't take a genius to see that, for these businesses, it is advantageous to extend Christmas as much as possible; this gives people more time to buy the new trendy items. Still, this wears on consumers' patience.

"As the days shorten and rain instead of solar rays blanket the darkening concrete, people crave Christmas magic."

Yet, despite everything I said before, I do not believe that this commercialization is entirely bad. There are some benefits in starting the Christmas season early, including sales. Many stores run sales on major holidays like Christmas. This allows people to shop for gifts early without worrying that the delivery will be late. This also lets ordinary people save on basic household needs that are discounted.

Still, this shifts the timeline of the holidays. Go-getters fall prey to these early sales, stocking up on decorations and gifts while the weather is still in the high seventies to avoid high prices and long lines. And for those who want to dedicate their mid-to-late December to such preparations (as designed), shelves are picked over by mid-December, thanks to the large number of people who want to bring the magic of celebration early. Target holiday pajamas are on clearance by Dec. 20, and Old Navy is readying their spring collection before the ball drops in New York. The last-minute rush that often characterizes this holiday is now gone.

Thinking about celebrating Christmas early? The verdict is simple—don't. It ruins the vibe; the drawn-out festivities feel like nothing special by the time the rest of us in society pull out our lawn reindeer. And Thanksgiving dinner will be overshadowed quite literally by the tree looming in the foyer. So as you drive past the glowing sleighs and snowmen staked into front lawns or catch a glimpse of discount ornament packs at your local supermarket, stop for a second, and remember Thanksgiving and the bliss of short-yet-rewarding holiday seasons. Don't let the red-nosed reindeer overshadow the turkey … at least until the first (of December).

Anna Gunko '30 (agunko@college.harvard.edu) is finally a member of the "Harvard Independent."

Graphic by Nuala Mernin '29

ARTS

Spinning Flags and Catching Tosses

A conversation with the founding member of the Harvard University Band Color Guard.

By ELLIE GUO '29

At every home football game, the Harvard University Band takes the field for its halftime performance. As they move from formation to formation, you might notice several performers who carry flags instead of instruments. While the band fills a massive stadium with sound, the color guard fills it with pops of color.

Color guards descend from the military tradition of soldiers carrying banners or flags of their regiment and traditionally traveled with the military band. The legacy lives on in civilian color guards, which toss wooden rifles and plastic sabers.

"While the band fills a massive stadium with sound, the color guard fills it with pops of color."

After World War I, America saw the growth of competitive collegiate marching bands, which eventually became a staple of football games and culture. Although public universities and high schools often have robust guards that compete nationally, Harvard is one of only three Ivy League schools with a color guard. This was a recent addition to the University's marching band, established in 2025 and completely student-organized—from the choreography and supply management to the initiative to start it.

To learn more about the budding organization, the "Harvard Independent" spoke with its founding member, Khang Nguyen '27.

What do you think is unique about color guard?

KN: To me, guard on the field has always been a very musical thing, except you don't technically play an instrument. There is a very cool thing about formations being there for the marching band in general, with all the different instruments and marching in rows. While that is visually cool, I think adding more colors and more dynamics to that with color guard and all the different kinds of equipment that they have, too, it adds a really nice visual element to the musical aspect.

Why did you feel like Harvard needed a color guard?

KN: I did color guard in high school, and I thought it would be really cool to include it here. When I was an incoming first-year student, I was looking at the band website, and there was no color guard mentioned.

On my very first game that I attended here, it was the Harvard-Brown football game my freshman year. There was one baton twirler. The thing is, I don't think she went to Harvard even, but she was basically the visual element of the band at the time. And I thought, well, that's a really cool thing, and that is something that guard could also do.

What was it like founding the color guard?

KN: I knew a lot of people just across the years in the band. Some were from classes, some were roommates, some were just teaching fellows in courses I took, and being in the band, they always wanted to have more people. But I personally don't play any instrument in the band, and I'm a very strong advocate for the color guard. The thing is, there was not that strong of a color guard presence at Harvard. The equivalent of a guard, I would say, is the prop crew, but they don't necessarily do these formations and these moves in the same way.

Forming the guard itself, it was difficult because I couldn't really find undergraduate guard interest. It wasn't until I realized that there are also graduate members of the band that I looked into the graduate level, and there was some interest in the design school, the ed school, even the medical school. And so we gathered a group. The very first guard that we had was primarily graduate students. They've all since graduated, and now it's primarily undergraduate. But we still have graduate students come back for some games that the alumni show up to.

How do you see the color guard evolving after you graduate?

KN: I hope, wishfully as always, that the numbers will go up, and the interest remains. I find, when I think about this, I think of myself entering college. It makes me feel a lot better that there is interest about this thing that I care about, this thing I enjoy.

I hope that people who choose to go to Harvard and did guard in high school realize that there is a community for them, and that that is something that they can continue to pursue alongside its academic interests. It's not something that they have to pick and choose.

What experience has been the most fun, memorable, or fulfilling?

KN: During the Harvard-Yale game, the band has traditions. We have student leaders, but the transition period is during the Harvard-Yale game. We recognize our old staff and thank them for all of their service and welcome the new staff during then. It's always a very fun time there, especially with all the good energy that Harvard-Yale brings.

Forming the guard, I've been able to make a lot of more new friends. And they're now [they're coming to guard from] all the different avenues in life, especially the grad students that I've met. Some of them were interested in guard, but actually never did guard. It's never too late to do guard, even though they didn't start it in high school. That was very rewarding to see all these skills develop, and then seeing people who appreciate it still, even after they've left college.

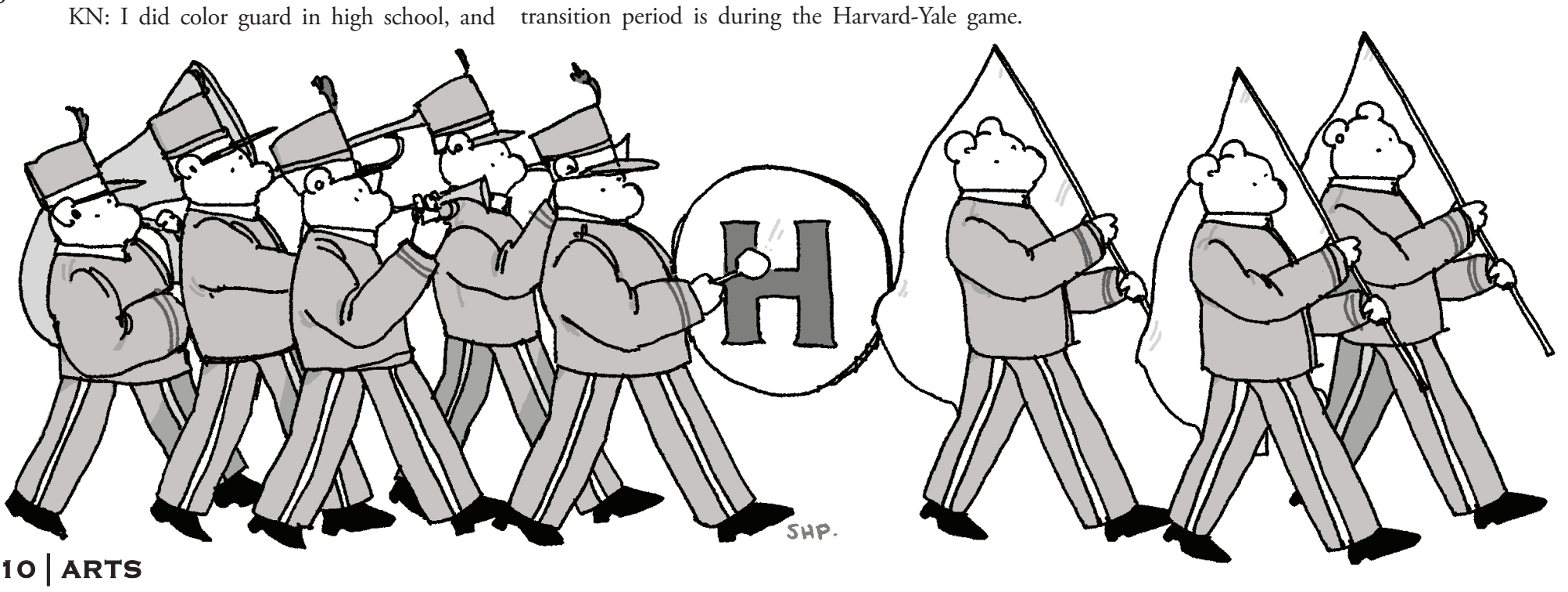
"I hope that people who choose to go to Harvard and did guard in high school realize that there is a community for them."

- Nguyen '27

One of the distincitve aspects of collegiate football is its close connection with the marching band and color guard. Unlike college football, the NFL rarely features marching bands during halftime. Yet a band and color guard—formidable in sound and striking in visuals—contribute more to team spirit than they often get credit for.

Ellie Guo '29 (eguo@college.harvard.edu) once played in her high school marching band.

Graphic by Sam Park '29



Drag Me to Adams House

A review of the Gold Coast House's annual tradition: Drag Night 2026.

By TAYLOR THORNE '28

"What Happens When Texas Turns Blue" flashed across the screen as two cowboys danced around in the signature drag lip-sync style. In another act, a marriage proposal turned raunchy as the bride-to-be laid out her demands to her future husband. This and more took place on the evening of Nov. 12, when the Adams House dining hall transformed into a dazzling space of creative expression as it embraced the art of drag. A red carpet lined the path to the stage, and over 300 students packed the space. A high-energy buzz of excitement filled the air, especially as most of the crowd dressed up in drag and other costumes alongside the performers.

The Adams House annual "Drag Night" is an event beloved by both Adamsians and the broader Harvard community. With free admission for all, the yearly tradition invites students to experience a night of performances by both professional drag queens and student groups. However, Drag Night's more obvious associations with Adams House today are the product of a complex history.

In the 1980s, Adams House was known for its LGBTQ+ and arts-oriented residents, who self-selected the Gold Coast dorms for upperclassmen. This was before the random lottery process, intended to dismantle identity-specific housing patterns, was implemented. One day, an Adams student was reportedly gay-bashed by a group of Kirkland students outside of what is now the Sea Hag restaurant. Adams House, outraged by this horrific display of homophobia, decided to throw a "drag ball" in protest as a mockery of the other Houses' black-tie formals. At the ball, dates showed up in clothes their partners could wear, and even the House's "jocks" came in drag to support their fellow Adamsians.

"Adams Drag Night is not only a reminder of this historic event, but it is also a celebration of the right to exist freely as you are, without fear of retaliation over your sexuality, skin color, or religion."

Over the years, this tradition has evolved from a "drag ball" into "Drag Night," and its purpose has modernized as well. Adams Drag Night is not only a reminder of this historic event, but it is also a celebration of the right to exist freely as you are, without fear of retaliation over your sexuality, skin color, or religion.

The Adams House Committee chairs, Millie Clark '27 and Malachi Miller '27, recounted this message of inclusivity at the beginning of this year's show before introducing the emcee of the night and first drag queen, Miso Chic. Adams was eager to welcome back Miso Chic, the MIT grad student and a fan favorite from last year, for a second year. This year was just as fantastic as the last, and during her second performance of the night, Miso used one lucky student's phone to record herself strutting down the red carpet to the beat of "Runway" by Lady Gaga and Doechii.

Besides Miso Chic, two other drag queens also delighted the audience at Drag Night. The event hosted Rhode Island's top new local drag performer, Gigi Von Shee, who crossed state lines to stun us here at Harvard. To the ecstatic cheers of the audience, she had not one, but two costume changes during her first performance. Her blue ensemble wowed spectators as she lip-synced to "For The Gaze [Gays]," the hit number from the Broadway musical "Death Becomes Her."

"What an honor it was to come out for my first performance in [Cambridge]," Von Shee said in an interview with the "Harvard Independent." "Queer events and queer spaces are so important for college-aged kids."



Memorable moments didn't end there. Adams HoCo outdid themselves with the third drag queen of the night: Briar Blush. The name may sound familiar, as Boston's pinup princess appeared on season 18 of the hit television series "RuPaul's Drag Race." Her first performance was nothing short of extraordinary: she lip-synced to "My Heart Belongs to Daddy," the Cole Porter classic famously performed by Marilyn Monroe in the 1960 film "Let's Make Love," and delivered a routine reminiscent of old Hollywood. The crowd cheered in awe over her moves and glamorous attire.

The entertainment extended beyond the wonderful queens, with seven student groups also performing throughout the night. Among these groups were several particularly striking routines, such as "What Happens When Texas Turns Blue," performed by juniors Kadyn Allen '28 and Natalie Luera '28. Their routine combined recent Congressional midterm results with a Brokeback Mountain-esque plotline, following two Texas cowboys who got into a bar skirmish and, during their dance-fight, fell in love. They ended up "Choosin' Texas," and each other, as they slow-danced to the Ella Langley song and finished with a lengthy smooch.

Other student acts included a group "Trolls" performance where students donned colorful full-body paint and matching wigs. Additionally, a Dolly Parton sing-along tribute act, "Twerkin' 9 to 5," involved the entire audience. Performers in tall blonde wigs, large balloon breasts, and micro shorts danced across the stage, singing "I twirl and whirl and bring those gays to life."

"It puts pride in the spotlight, showers it with support, and brings together a community of love and appreciation."

There was even a group of "Magic Mike" performers who showed off their Channing Tatum-style moves and invited volunteers on stage for a sexy lap dance. "It felt so fun and liberating to take on the persona of a male stripper," Anmol Grewal '28 told the "Harvard Independent."

As expected, Drag Night 2026 was a massive hit, and it remains one of Harvard's most well-loved house traditions. It is so much more than simply exhilarating performances and provocative dance moves. It puts pride in the spotlight, showers it with support, and brings together a community of love and appreciation.

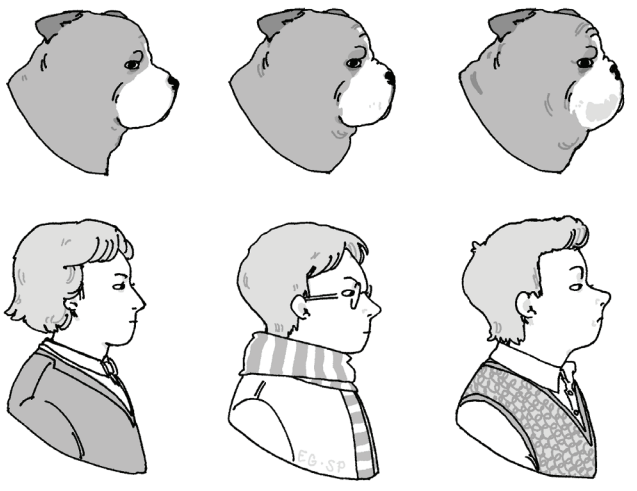
Since this happens only once a year, I encourage everyone to make it a priority to attend at least once during your time at Harvard. And next fall, if inspiration hits, grab a group of friends and choreograph your own performance or short skit. You won't regret it (trust me).

Taylor Thorne '28 (taylorthorne@college.harvard.edu) loves her house and will perform again at Adams Drag Night next year.

Graphic by Justin Ma '29

Evolution of a Bulldog

By ELLIE GUO '29 & SAM PARK '29



Contrary to the increasingly flatter snouts of the English Bulldog, the bulldogs of New Haven have only turned their noses up higher.

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A Day in the Life of a Typical Bulldog

An exclusive look at the other side of the age-old rivalry.

EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARY OF RAYNE GASCONE-FRY '28

Wake up.

I check my watch (Grand Seiko, by the way—it's like Seiko but cooler (and $11,000)). I see it is 11 a.m. Damn. I slept through my "Art and Myth in Greek Antiquity" class again. How am I going to convince my Quinnipiac date tomorrow that I have a lot of character parallels to Greek tragedies? It is fine—I saw "The Odyssey," and I basically look like Matt Damon.

I need to hustle, though—the boys and I are getting lunch at Commons at noon to discuss our new housing arrangement. Thankfully, we snagged an elite off-campus apartment in Crown Towers. It is only a 10-minute walk from Old Campus (easy first-year access) and one of the safest neighborhoods in New Haven; only five apartments on our street were broken into last semester.

I grab my favorite tweed jacket for a classic larping lunch, and the boys and I set off. None of them went to class this morning either. That is the beauty of having no grade cap—although the faculty is already talking about instituting one. "Obviously ours will be better and more sophisticated. Just because Harvard did it first and everyone was talking about it and knows more about it than about ours does not mean it is better," my good friend Wyath points out. I couldn't have put it better myself.

Lunch is alright. Thankfully, our dining hall workers have the sense to stay employed. We would never tolerate all that nonsense over in Cambridge. We run our dining halls with an iron fist, just like when that dangerous dishwasher smashed those supposedly "racist" stained-glass windows, trying to erase the proud history of Calhoun College. Of course, they fired him and charged him with felony criminal mischief. But, showing grace and humility, the university dropped the charges and called the new window "Broken is Mended." Though obviously, we did not hire him back.

Before our evening festivities can begin, Quentin and I have a section for our game theory course. I haven't made it through a single reading or lecture without falling asleep yet. Thankfully, as long as you say "elasticity," "utility," and "strategy" enough, our TF will nod and go off on a tangent about the USSR and the Cold War. I think the tweed jacket goes a long way, too.



Afterward, Claude can easily handle the p-set. Really, I'm just using the resources I will need to survive in the workforce. Without Claude, I would never have enough time for my daily three-hour a cappella rehearsals with the Spizzwinks, which I absolutely cannot miss. I had to grind my way up from the bottom, from singing with the Society of Orpheus and Bacchus, even to get an audition with the Spizzies (as we like to call ourselves). If I am lucky, I might even make it into the Whiffenpoofs senior year!

After rehearsal, I meet back up with the boys for dinner. Naturally, we decide on pizza (New Haven's greatest claim to fame) and spend 30 minutes arguing over where to go. Personally, I'm a Sally's fan. I don't actually care that much about the pizza, but I'm a feminist (5'9", by the way). Our friend Algernon, who joined us for dinner, suggests Pepe's, and I immediately agree and insist I actually liked Pepe's more the whole time. Algernon is in the Wolf's Head society—one of the historic eight secret societies. I've dreamed of attending one of their naked parties at their tomb since my first day of first year, and I desperately need him to tap me this spring. I figured out he was the only senior friend I had in one of the ancient eight, so I dropped all the other seniors I knew, and I made sure I could see him every day.

We spend so long deciding where to go that we were almost late to our Wednesday night Leo chapter meeting. We used to be SAE, but we had to disaffiliate from our national chapter after the "bulldog bonding time" affair last year—definitely not because we could not afford national dues. Although we are not a fraternity, we are basically an exclusive secret social club (which is honestly cooler). Thankfully, no other institution has exclusive historical social clubs that used to be fraternities and still function like fraternities—this is completely a Yale invention.

The meeting does not go very well. Everyone's split on whether the weekend move is crashing a birthday party in New York City or actually hosting the white lies party we have been pushing on the first-year students. Personally, I will not actually talk to any women at the party, so I want to go to Manhattan (interchangeable with NYC, obviously) to meet someone who can actually get me an internship at Morgan Stanley.

Afterward, my roommates and I have an awesome night playing Leis back at our apartment. It is like pong, but we use paddles, and we can feel better than other people when they do not know what it is or how to play. We get pretty rowdy, and if you lose without scoring a single point, you get "Naked Lapped." That means you have to run across the street naked and knock on the sorority's door! It is pretty awesome (I'm worried my roommates are getting suspicious—I have been naked lapped the last four times we have played). The naked lap is yet another Yale invention found nowhere else in the world. God, we are awesome.

> *"Without Claude, I would never have enough time for my daily three-hour a cappella rehearsals with the Spizzwinks, which I absolutely cannot miss."*

Once I am all tuckered out, I do my nightly routine before going to bed. As my roommate Reginald tucks me into my blue sheets with my bulldog stuffy, I repeat my daily affirmations: 1) My dad makes enough money. 2) I will find my double-legacy wife. 3) I totally didn't get rejected from Harvard.

#SafetySchool

Rayne Gascone-Fry is an above-average junior at Yale College '28.

Graphic by Adriana St. Clair '29

It's in the Zoup!

By Noah Basden '29
Designed By Cameron Bernier '29



Breaking News: Remy catches the perpetrator responsible for the Harvard-Yale curse.

The Price of Keeping the Peace

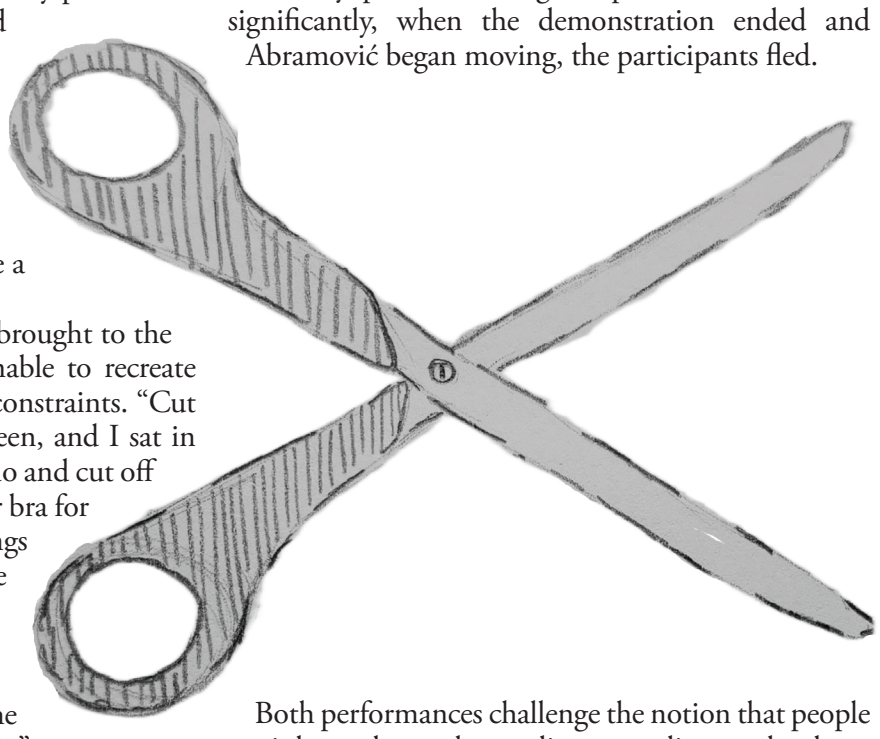
What Yoko Ono and Marina Abramović reveal about the exploitation of women.

By PAIGE CORNELIUS '28

I entered my "Women Creators in Music" class on Monday morning, excited to uncover female artists society has overlooked. Professor Brigid Cohen sat in the chair my professor usually occupied and was introduced as a musicologist and scholar who studies Yoko Ono. Ono is a singer, songwriter, and peace activist often discussed in relation to her late husband, John Lennon.

Cohen led our class in reenacting performances from Ono's 1964 book, "Grapefruit," which consists of "instruction pieces" meant to serve as forms of therapy or self-care.

My definition of art shifted as my peers and I played telephone and giggled while whispering into our peers' ears. We then walked outside, each lighting a match and watching the flame disappear as the stick shriveled. The class discussed these experiences, noticing that turning the mundane into rituals can become a sensory pleasure.



The next work of Ono's was brought to the class's attention, a piece we were unable to recreate due to both physical and emotional constraints. "Cut Piece" started playing on the big screen, and I sat in discomfort as a man walked up to Ono and cut off her blouse, revealing her sitting in her bra for the audience to watch. The piece brings up the tension of how women are expected to react to exploitation, and whether there is any truly liberating approach.

The directions for the performance, featured in "Grapefruit," are as follows:

- Performer sits on stage with a pair of scissors in front of him.
- It is announced that members of the audience may come on stage—one at a time—to cut a small piece of the performer's clothing to take with them.
- Performer remains motionless throughout the piece.
- Piece ends at the performer's option.

What began as a simple invitation to participate in art became an unsettling demonstration of what people will take when another person offers control. Some audience members cautiously removed strips of fabric, while others were bolder, cutting off

"What began as a simple invitation to participate in art became an unsettling demonstration of what people will take when another person offers control."

entire articles of her clothing. Notably, Ono remained still and silent as the performance unfolded, refusing to resist despite gradually becoming more exposed. Her silence is essential to the work, as it forces viewers to confront the consequences of giving others unrestricted access to another person's body. In this way, the piece becomes less about Ono herself and more about the people who choose to exploit her vulnerability. Some audience members giggle as they snip, and these sounds of mockery and abuse become the soundtrack to this societal commentary.

Ten years later, Marina Abramović conducted a similar, though more extreme, experiment. In her 1974 performance of "Rhythm 0," Abramović placed herself beside a table containing 72 objects, ranging from a rose and a feather to knives and a loaded gun. The objects were carefully chosen to include items of pleasure, pain, and even some capable of causing death. Abramović described the performance as "six hours of real horror." The public cut her with a knife, drank her blood, carried her around half-naked, and eventually put a loaded gun up to her neck. Most significantly, when the demonstration ended and Abramović began moving, the participants fled.

Both performances challenge the notion that people are inherently good, revealing unsettling truths about human behavior. When given unrestricted power over another person, some individuals choose cruelty rather than compassion. In both pieces, not every participant engaged in harmful acts of mistreatment, yet they were complicit as bystanders. What started as small snippets for Ono or doodles on Abramović's skin turned into more unthinkable acts that other audience members allowed to happen.

While both pieces point to broader patterns of human behavior, their creation and performance by female artists complicate the gendered aspects of social relationships. Although neither performance proves that women are uniquely vulnerable to cruelty, they reveal how these dynamics of power and exploitation reflect broader gendered expectations about women's passivity and endurance throughout all of society. By placing their bodies at the mercy of strangers, Ono and Abramović exposed the ease with which a woman's vulnerability can appear to others as opportunity.

Even more uncomfortable than watching "Cut Piece," however, was Ono's description of it. In an interview with the Museum of Modern Art, Ono explained that the performance was intended, in part, to reflect women's shared experiences of mistreatment. "We're all going through this, but don't fight, let it happen," she told Christophe Cherix, the MoMA's chief curator of drawings and prints. She reasons that "by not fighting, we show them that there's a whole world, which could exist by being peaceful."

Candidly, I walked out of the room when this discussion began, overwhelmed with the tension of how women are expected to respond to the horrific events that they experience. I struggle to reconcile advice that seemed to conflict with feminist empowerment and such a moving performance, exposing the exploitation of women's bodies. If women are already expected to tolerate exploitation, is encouraging them to endure it peacefully truly liberating?

Ono's intent is not to limit women, but to draw on the Buddhist idea of giving, in which generosity does not depend on reciprocity. In this way, Ono creates a situation where the act of giving reveals the choices and desires of those who receive it. However, the message risks reinforcing the historical expectations that have constrained women's autonomy. The expectation to create peace falls on the person being mistreated, suggesting that perpetrators can act without restraint while the victim must quietly carry the burden.

This is not to say that these performance pieces exemplify a woman who has lost all agency, as both artists intentionally surrendered physical control. Their vulnerability was not imposed upon them, but created by them. Through this lens, the women's apparent passivity was not an absence of power, but a deliberate exercise of it to expose behaviors.

In the complex circumstances of the real world, there is a distinction between a woman choosing not to resist and society expecting her not to. Women have long been socialized to be accommodating and agreeable, often at the expense of their own comfort. This makes responding to the inappropriate comments, unwanted advances, or sexual misconduct that women often face difficult, as many women feel pressure to remain polite rather than risk being confrontational. Even more deeply rooted is the desire to please others and remain well-liked, which leads women to engage in situations they are not comfortable in to "keep the peace."



It places women in a lose-lose situation. If they speak out, they are criticized as difficult and dramatic; if they stay quiet, they endure assumptions that they could have simply left or "just said no."

Perhaps the worst part of viewing these performances is that I was never shocked by the audience's behaviors. Disturbed, disgusted, and disappointed—but ultimately, unsurprised. We have witnessed people with political power and at elite institutions face allegations of sexual misconduct, while institutional failures and unequal power dynamics can make accountability difficult.

This class, therefore, gave me a new way to understand not only art and how it represents

"Their vulnerability was not imposed upon them, but created by them."

women, but also how women are expected to exist in society. Ono's activism demonstrates a striving toward a peaceful world, but it may undercut a woman's expression in the process.

I too wish for a society of peace and togetherness, but I will not argue that we'll achieve it by asking women to tolerate more. Instead, it must begin by urging men to take less.

Paige Cornelius '28 (paigecornelius@college.harvard.edu) is learning that keeping the peace may not always be worth it.

Graphic by James Foss '29

School IS a Fashion Show

A guide to the aesthetic quirks of each of the Ancient Eight.

By ANIKA GUPTA '30 AND SALMA GHEITH '30

Your annual (though fleeting) dose of Harvard school spirit—The Game—is fast approaching, and it comes with a key opportunity long-favored among Harvard students: judging others (and their outfits). Although all of the Ivy League schools have much in common, our style choices can set us apart. From Harvard to Yale and the rest of the Ancient Eight, we looked at the fashion trends and choices students enjoy.

Brown

Brown's style is the epitome of funky chic. They're wearing "thrifted" jackets they secretly got from overpriced consignment shops, styled with colorful, chunky bangles that don't really seem to match—but maybe we just don't understand the extent of their free spirits. Brown is a sea of wolf cuts and mullets, along with bad haircuts written off as avant-garde. You'll catch students pairing low-rise jeans with wired headphones and a beat-up Camus novel that they can wave around as they describe to you the major they DIY-ed (it's gender studies in the age of post-colonial anthropomorphism).

Columbia

When you compliment a Columbia student's bandana print cardigan, they'll smile, but they won't tell you where they got it—it's $3,000 from Alanui. Like Brown, the Lions are into vintage items, but they don't claim to go to thrift stores—they're Vinted warriors. Their shoe rotation includes Isabel Marant wedge sneakers, Tabi flats, and Golden Goose. Despite exuding an artsy, creative aura, you will not catch them with wired headphones; instead, AirPods Max dangle from Goyard totes and The North Face backpacks across campus. Their wealth signaling comes before staying niche.

Cornell

Cornell is basic, but at least they know it. They love their Lululemon and their Uggs (us too!) and their favorite stores will always and forever be Brandy Melville and Polo Ralph Lauren. Although their style might seem attainable, you will catch them in a Canada Goose jacket or the beloved Moncler vest the minute the leaves change color. They love Taylor Swift and the red Hermès Clic-Clac their parents got them for their 16th birthday, but their prized possession will always be their white Van Cleef Alhambra, which they wear with everything. They are obsessed with their collection of Peter Millar quarter zips and the singular pair of Loro Piana loafers that they find any excuse to wear.

Dartmouth

Dartmouth: the home of the lacrosse to finance to goldfish memory pipeline. The Dartmouth student lives in Vineyard Vines and dreams of summers in Nantucket (their family has a house there). While it may not be the most niche style, they'll maintain that it is classic. They don the Ralph Lauren American Flag sweater, their grandmother's pearls, and their grandfather's Rolex. In winter, they break out the Arc'teryx jackets (the water just beads off), and they can't wait to head even further "up North" for their annual ski trips. And we certainly can't forget about the more outdoorsy students. They love their Patagonia, and they would live and die in the Birkenstock Boston Clogs. When push comes to shove, they will eventually be caught sneaking around Hanover in a T-shirt with a whale on it, but it's not what it looks like—their mom bought it for them!

University of Pennsylvania

Penn students came out of the womb with a resume in Wall Street Oasis format and a Patagonia vest. You'll often see Penn students wearing their own school's merch, especially if they go to Wharton. When dressing casually, Penn students might pair Aritzia midi skirts with Tory Burch riding boots. They'll also pair any outfit with a trench coat or a tailored jacket to beat back Philly's treacherous weather. Even on a night out, Penn students can be caught wearing dress pants or trousers.

Princeton

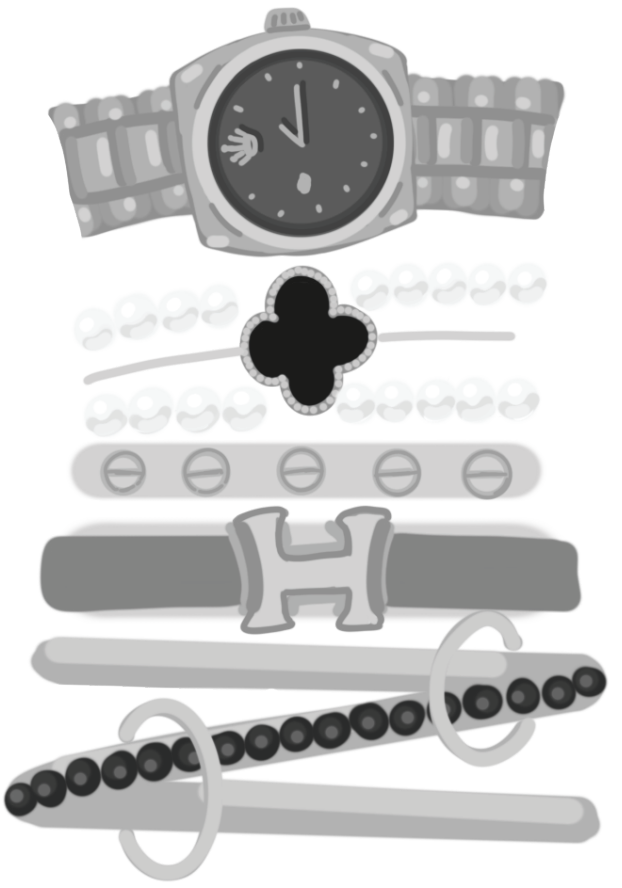
Princeton's campus is (unsurprisingly) across the street from Ralph Lauren, Hermès, and Burberry, and nearly every student in an eating club has a Rolex on their left wrist. Princeton students can be found layering tan and brown peacoats and sweaters, maybe throwing in a pop of orange in the form of an Hermès Clic-Clac or a woolen scarf. Their classically preppy outfits will be matched with anything from loafers to Superstar Golden Gooses as they trek between classes and slump over their p-sets; all you'll see is blown-out hair and knitted beanies.

Yale

Yale students might like to think of themselves as artsier, but you'll still see them dressing preppy, especially as fall and winter roll around in New Haven. Navy blue sweaters and scarves will dot campus, along with leg warmers and straight-leg jeans. Yalies do love a niche accessory, though, from a barrette to a lariat necklace, and you might see them wearing "alternative" jewelry pieces that secretly cost $500. On the day of The Game, Bulldogs can be found wearing Y sweaters (the sad sibling of the H sweater), blue cardigans, cream-colored knits, and Yale-themed beanies and caps—lest any glimpse of a warm color mark them as a traitor. Hopefully, they'll also be wearing frowns as they watch the Harvard Crimson beat the Yale Bulldogs!

Harvard

The best for last. Harvard students dress to impress, donning the classic H sweater in cream or crimson paired with a stack of Cartier bracelets, or a watch you somehow end up hearing the price of, despite not even asking. Harvard students are also often caught wearing merchandise from various clubs, sports, or events. (Check out the "Harvard Independent's" hoodies for The Game!) You'll also probably see T-shirts and sweatshirts from the various companies that they interned at over the summer. Another popular Harvard favorite is knee-high boots, often styled with cashmere socks underneath, to protect from the biting Cambridge cold. And of course, a Harvard outfit isn't complete without a massive bag (probably a Longchamp tote) full of textbooks, papers, and a Moleskine notebook.

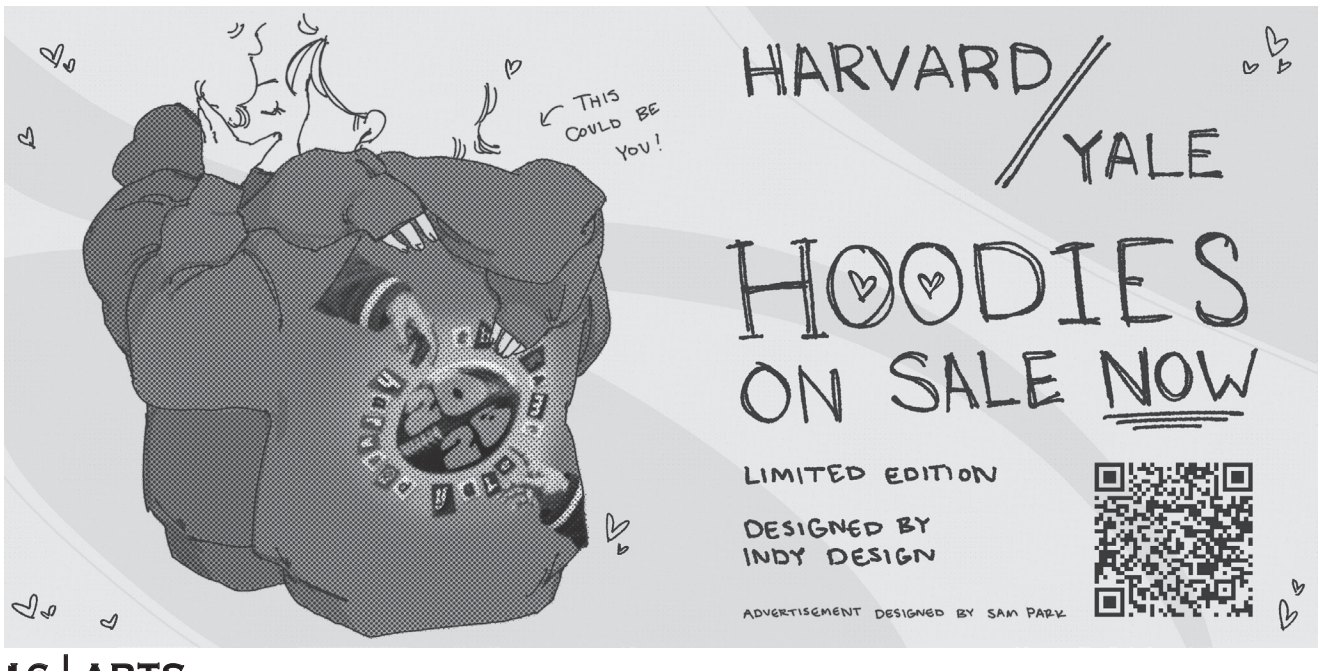


Of course, reducing eight student bodies to a checklist of Hermès bracelets and Arc'teryx shells is an exaggeration; plenty of students roll out of bed in thrifted clothes, old high school merchandise, or whatever was clean on the floor. But stereotypes stick for a reason. Ivy League campuses can look like they have an unspoken dress code, and style often signals where you come from or what your financial background is.

However, do not let preppy norms control you. Developing your college style should not be about fitting a standard, but about trying a new identity, exploring different aesthetics, or honestly just surviving another brutal Northeast winter. In the end, whether you're in a Canada Goose coat or your high school track team sweatpants, the best outfit at The Game will be the one that keeps you warm enough to watch Harvard win.

Anika Gupta '30 (anikagupta@college.harvard.edu) and Salma Gheith '30 (salmagheith@college.harvard.edu) unfortunately do love preppy outfits.

Graphic by Sophia Jo '29



For the Love of the Game

At a school where everyone is playing to win, what do you do for the love of the game?

By VENUS DASTIDAR '30 AND WISDOM OMOLAYO '29

WO: One of the greatest blessings bestowed on young people is the ability to pursue their interests. To learn what intrigues them. To train at a game they love.

Toward the end of high school, brushing up on my philosophy knowledge for my Oxford Philosophy, Politics, and Economics application, I read a book called "Beyond Self-Interest" by Krzysztof Pelc. Pelc argues that happiness or success cannot be achieved through direct pursuit, only as a byproduct of other passions. He describes how all societies have had a "leisure class." This concept, introduced by economist Thorstein Veblen in "The Theory of the Leisure Class," holds that the amount of leisure an individual can pursue indicates his surplus. Hence, the trophies of sporting events and antlers of animals killed on voyage hunts, neither of which provides real value, were a signal of having more time and resources than one needed, which could be dedicated to the toil and practice of diversionary arts.

To this end, Harvard has built its modern student class around a reclassification of this concept. One thing I hold to be true is that the biggest sign of wealth is the autonomy to do things for their own purpose rather than as a means to an end.

In recent years, Harvard has built this wealth by associating itself with a certain type of student. Since academic prowess is a given, a Harvard student's bread and butter has been what they do outside of the classroom. The clubs they run, the sports they play, the art portfolio they've been working on since they were 14. From college admissions, this theme of a Harvard student's life outside the classroom has echoed in our minds and has only grown more vivid since we arrived on campus. Comps, auditions, and tryouts define one's first-year fall semester. But do students participate out of obligation, or truly for the love of the game?

In high school, I was told that Harvard's class culture was one of competition rather than collaboration. I'd argue students are drawn to what I call "soft competition." A silent pressure to look busier and more exhausted than everyone else. I've also indulged in the

"It's the new, interesting hobbies we pick up that build community and ease the pain of competition."

"downward spiral" of missing sleep to match my peers, and for what? To feel more fulfilled than my friends? To reassure myself that I'm not incompetent, that I wasn't admitted as a mistake? Why would we choose sacrifice as the measure for comparison? This surely can't be the way.

The moment we stop seeing the beautiful arts of this world as a means to an end is the moment Harvard becomes the place they sold us. Once we understand the tremendous resources we have at Harvard, not just to get a job but to meet new people, have fun, and take risks, fall semester might feel a little less bleak. Take that seminar you're interested in, not just because you want an easy A. Study a new language: learn about the culture and change the way you think. Play intramural sports! I'm hearing Adams House is looking for a new flag football quarterback—maybe give flag football a try.

It's the new, interesting hobbies we pick up that build community and ease the pain of competition. At a school where we endlessly drive toward professional ascension, let's take an afternoon a week to take our hands off the plow and take pleasure in something just for the love of it. For the love of the game.

VD: You might now be reflecting on your lack of hobbies and are hopefully fired up to change that. Look no further than our non-exhaustive list of quirky clubs and opportunities on campus to keep the hobbyist in you alive!



For the Athlete

Not every student here wants to commit to the 4 a.m. practices that come with trying out for a Division I athletic team, but thankfully, we have an abundance of intramural and club sports available. Of course, you have the expected Club Swim, Pickleball, Running, Tennis, Baseball, and then some. But there are plenty of other athletic activities on campus you may not know about. For dancers, we have the classic Asian American Dance Troupe and Harvard Ballet Company, plus free pole dancing classes with the Harvard Undergraduate Pole Dancers and the no-cut, traveling dance team, Harvard Ballroom Dance.

Harvard Futsal Club offers the fun of soccer on a smaller court, without the pressure of a full-sized field. If you're not a fan of coordinated body movement, touch grass after your p-set by joining a hike or excursion with the Harvard Outing Club.

For the Creative

If you're interested in the arts, consider going to shows by any of the dance teams we mentioned above! If dance isn't your thing, Harvard Art that Happens also puts on tours at the Harvard Art Museums every Saturday and Sunday. For a wide variety of theater, the Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club performs shows from Shakespeare to original student writing. If you would like to become a more involved patron of the arts without a heavy financial commitment, some shows are free to HUID holders!

If you want to create, not just watch, consider joining one of Harvard's many a cappella groups or help Harvard Eleganza put on a charity fashion show. For a more social vibe, Harvard College Baking Club holds celebrations, baking events, and fun activities.

For the Manic Pixie Dream Girl

If you're looking for a truly niche club that has everyone back home going, "You're in what club?" look no further than the Harvard Undergraduate Beekeepers. They've done everything from candle making to honey testing to donning full regalia (beekeeping suits) to tend to their hives of adorable bees. After a long day of bee stings, join the Harvard Undergraduate Wine Society for wine tastings.

Did you have a phase during the COVID pandemic when you wanted to paint on CDs, wear those Hot Topic frog earrings, draw trippy wavy rainbows, and turn the saturation up on every picture? Look no further than the Harvard Undergraduate Psychedelics. With this trinity of obscure clubs, you're sure to have a standout resume.

For the Finance Bros (who maybe don't completely understand the point of this article)

Perhaps you are not yet ready to develop a hobby you can't put at the top of the resume. We understand that everyone starts somewhere, so for all of you nerds, consider joining the Harvard Chess Club's weekly meetings, games, and competitions! If you're looking for something higher-risk, the Harvard Undergraduate Poker Club might be up your alley. They're open to all skill levels, with varying buy-ins across weekly games, tournaments, and galas!

We hope this article brought to mind things you loved in the past that you've since lost time for, skills you didn't have the confidence to try, or clubs you wanted to comp but dropped in favor of a pre-professional vibe. You probably got into Harvard by doing something you loved, and we never want you to lose that spark. Take time to nurture the hobbies that make you you, and ground yourself amid all the chaos of being a Harvard student. When deciding to take on a new class, job, or responsibility, ask yourself: Do I love playing that game?

Venus Dastidar '30 (vdastidar@college.harvard.edu) ran cross country for three years in high school for the love of the game and is confident you could still beat her in a 5K.

Wisdom Omolayo '29 (wisdom_omolayo@college.harvard.edu) joined the "Harvard Independent" for the love of the game.

Graphic by Mia Stewart '29

The Wrong Y

By SOPHIA GONZALEZ '28
Designed By CAMERON BERNIER '29



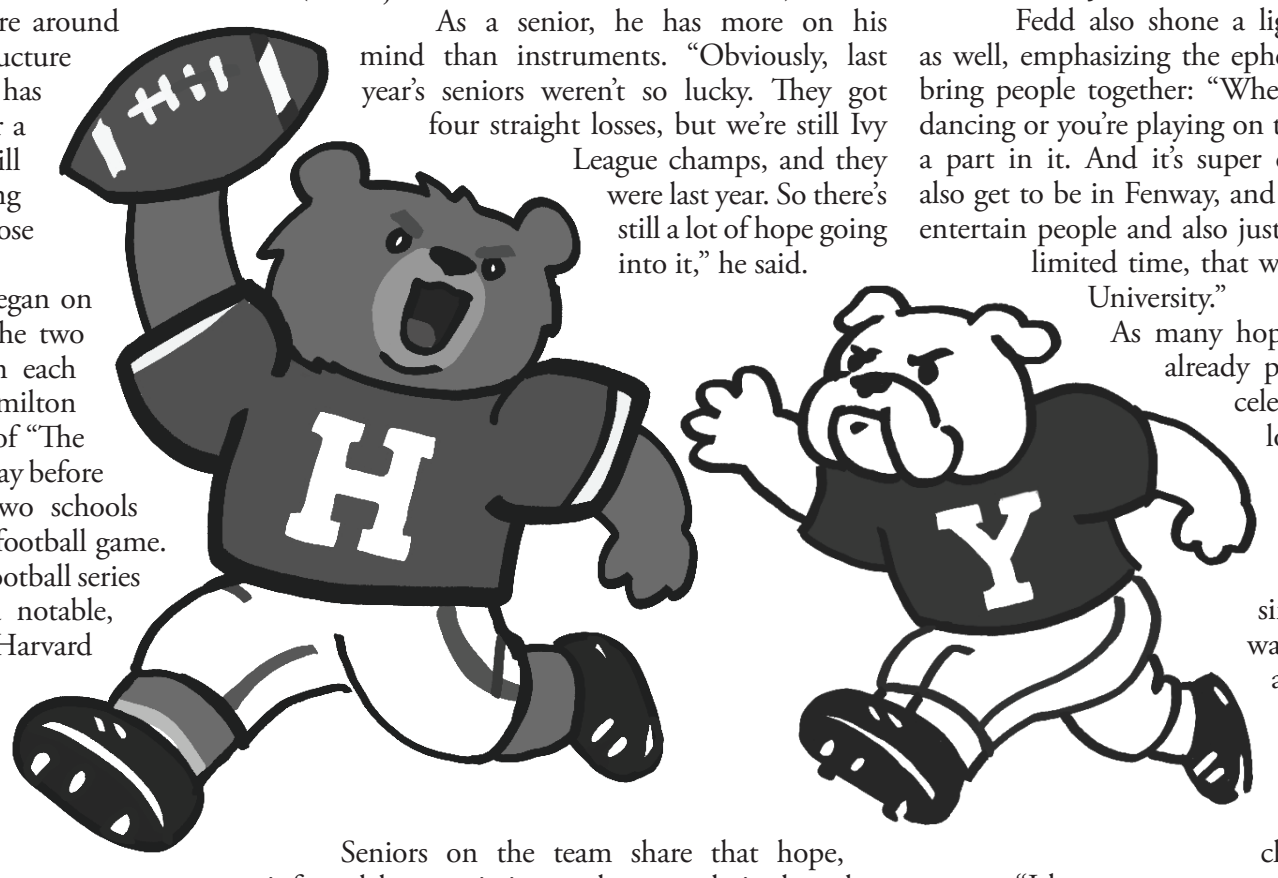
SPORTS

Ten Thousand Seniors of Harvard

The hope for victory at Harvard-Yale.

By HAFEEZAT GHAFFAR '29

Take one of the oldest rivalries in college football and place it in one of the most historic professional athletic sites. This weekend, the Ivy League is doing just that with the 142nd Harvard-Yale Game being played at none other than Fenway Park. The iconic park carries a distinctive charm, and so does the architecture around it. With its intimate green iron structure embracing the Boston ballpark that has been home to the Red Sox for over a century, the electric atmosphere will make what is already an entertaining matchup even more exciting for those watching in person.



The Harvard-Yale rivalry began on the football field in 1875, when the two schools first played. 15 men from each school dotted New Haven's Hamilton Park and created the first iteration of "The Game." Each year, on the last Saturday before Thanksgiving (since 1914), the two schools have competed in an all-American football game. As it stands, Yale leads the all-time football series against Harvard 72–61–8, with a notable, ongoing 4-game win streak. The Harvard College class of 2026 graduated without seeing the Crimson win against the Yale Bulldogs—a sour end to four years on campus. The class of 2027 could potentially suffer the same fate.

The statistics leave seniors apprehensive as they approach their last Harvard-Yale weekend, with last year's defeat still fresh in their minds. "I'm a bit worried. Last year, we came into Harvard-Yale undefeated, and I was at the tailgate, and I checked my phone: we're already down by like two touchdowns," Guy Aziz Yogo '27 said in an interview with the "Harvard Independent."

The Crimson finished the 2025 season 9–2 overall and 6–1 in the Ivy League, sharing the Ivy League title with Yale after netering The Game undefeated (with the second loss coming in the FCS playoffs). This year, the Crimson hold an 8–1 overall record (5–1 in the Ivy League). Qualifying for three consecutive years, the Crimson have already secured a spot in the 2026 FCS Playoffs.

"Football's quick-change nature can unfortunately end impressive seasons with devastating losses."

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Yogo has attended every Harvard-Yale game during his four years at Harvard. His feelings are especially poignant as a senior, witnessing three straight losses. "When we were juniors, we were all laughing at class of 2026," Yogo said, "Now it could be us too."

Students across campus share similar sentiments, with some relying on a radical optimism as the weekend approaches. "The band likes to say 'the band always wins,'" Izhaan Ahmed '27, a senior and sousaphone player, said in an interview with the "Harvard Independent." Ahmed's position on the Harvard University Band gives him greater insight into the preparations for each game. He revealed that the band sometimes practices its field show at Harvard Stadium to boost crowd energy on game day (in conjunction with the team, of course).

As a senior, he has more on his mind than instruments. "Obviously, last year's seniors weren't so lucky. They got four straight losses, but we're still Ivy League champs, and they were last year. So there's still a lot of hope going into it," he said.

Seniors on the team share that hope, reinforced by conviction and camaraderie, but they also know that the win will require them to continue practicing and performing at a high level. Like in 2025, the team already has a share of the Ivy League championship title. This win against Yale would secure it.

"I'd say it's really cool being a guy from Massachusetts to play at Fenway Park and get the opportunity to play there, but I think the biggest thing is just going [a] day at a time and building throughout the process to be able to execute at our best," football captain Xaviah Bascon '27 shared. "Obviously, it's a little bit bigger of a game when you look at it, but I think it's just the same thing going out: playing with my guys, playing with my brothers, competing with each other. I think that's just the biggest thing."

For defensive end Jack Crowley '27, this rivalry represents something personal. "I had an opportunity to go to Yale, but when Harvard came calling, I actually canceled my visit to Yale," he said. Since Crowley is also from Boston, winning The Game at Fenway would be a dream come true.

Despite the added pressure to succeed on home turf, Crowley is bringing appreciation to his last games as a senior. "[I feel] gratitude for the brothers for life that I've built in this program, gratitude as a Boston kid, and growing up in a scenario where my family always preached education, ... and just getting the opportunity to be here; it's not lost on me what a gift it is," he said.

The Crimson has had a spectacular run. "We are the first class to win four Ivy League championships, and we have the chance to win it outright and do it at Fenway. And it's not just any Harvard-Yale game. This is a really special one, and I know that the fans are going to take part in that and enjoy that much more as well," Crowley added.

Harvard has won or shared 21 Ivy League football championships, clinching its fourth in a row, from 2023 to 2026, with its win over Penn on Nov. 14. Crowley and his fellow seniors have cemented their legacy in Crimson football for decades to come, inspiring others on the team.

Regardless of the outcome, fan support is an aspect of the game that players universally touched on. "Whatever way that you want to enjoy it, Harvard-Yale is for everyone. It's a great experience. New people, and if this is your senior year at Harvard or Yale, have a ball, because you only get one of them," defensive end Josh Fedd '27 said.

Fedd also shone a light on the cheer team as well, emphasizing the ephemeral experiences that bring people together: "Whether you're cheering or dancing or you're playing on the field, everyone plays a part in it. And it's super cool to see the seniors also get to be in Fenway, and it's all one big effort to entertain people and also just enjoy the time, or the limited time, that we have here at Harvard University."

As many hope for a win, some are already planning how they will celebrate. Yogo would love to storm the field and repay Yale for the past three years. "They're like, 'What's a Crimson?' They're singing in front of us; I want to do that. 'What's a bulldog? What's a bulldog?' I want to rush the field. I want to be there with my friends. This is our last chance," he exclaimed.

"I hope everyone storms the field and brings their signs and says anything that they want to say. They deserve it after all this time, so I say storm the field. I'm gonna be right there with them," Fedd added.

The best and most memorable experiences of college are arguably the times that bring people together, across concentrations, hometowns, and friend groups. Harvard football seniors emphasized this: the importance of giving back to the program that shaped them. "I can tell you that I will always be back to support those guys because I consider them brothers," Crowley said.

"You want to be one of those guys that are remembered in these 152-year programs, right? Like this is Harvard University. You want to leave a legacy and be a part of something that's bigger than yourself," Fedd continued. This class of seniors is eager to carry on the Crimson legacy, even as alumni.

For Harvard Football, alum status is secondary to the deep bonds that form on the field. Many continue to return to Cambridge, supporting classmates for years to come. Bascon shares that ambition. "There is no doubt about that. I will, I will definitely be around for these guys as much as possible," Bascon stressed.

While "The Game" may bring big concerns about bragging rights in the year to come, seniors' perspectives on and off the field emphasize the unity that drives the Harvard team forward. Going into Saturday with hope and an appreciation for what the Crimson has already achieved is the best way to celebrate the bittersweet ending to our seniors' excellent four years, whatever the outcome.

Hafeezat Ghaffar '29 (hghaffar@college.harvard.edu) thinks that we should all be more hopeful.

Graphic by Karishma Kodali '29

The Intertwined History of Violence and The Game

From unsportsmanlike conduct to global wars, the two have always been linked.

By KATHLEEN SHOVLIN '29

Throughout history, sports have been widely seen as something that brings people together, allowing onlookers to escape the monotony of daily life, the uncertainty of global crises, and more. Harvard-Yale is no different. However, The Game has never been as isolated from the complexities of the outside world as spectators might hope. Since the rivalry's inception, public health, war, and politics have spilled into the tradition.

The Harvard-Yale rivalry Game has been held annually since 1875, with few exceptions. At the beginning of the rivalry, football was more a mix of modern soccer and rugby. Yale's style of playing football resembled soccer, while Harvard's mimicked rugby. When the schools first played, the match was played in Harvard's style. Yale preferred Harvard's style of football and soon adopted it. As this primitive version of the sport spread, it evolved away from rugby and toward the American football tradition we know and love today.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Harvard dominated in The Game, winning every matchup but one from 2001 to 2015. However, in recent years, the tide has turned, with the Yalies winning the last four installments of The Game. Given this recent track record, the upcoming Game carries even greater stakes than usual for the Crimson as we fight to reclaim our former glory.

Throughout this historic rivalry, Harvard students have worked to keep the tradition alive, even in tough times. In the weeks leading up to The Game of 1894, the excitement could be felt across Harvard's campus. Harvard students hoped for a comeback in the rivalry, since Yale had shut the team out for the past three years. From 1889 to the fateful 1894 Game, the contest had been held in neutral territory, at Hampden Park in Springfield, MA. Spectators were expecting a riveting Game, but they got a much more violent show.

Yale scored their first touchdown two minutes into The Game after blocking Harvard's punt. Their next touchdown came after the Crimson failed to punt the ball away from their end zone. Neither of Yale's scores came from their play; both resulted from Harvard's recklessness.

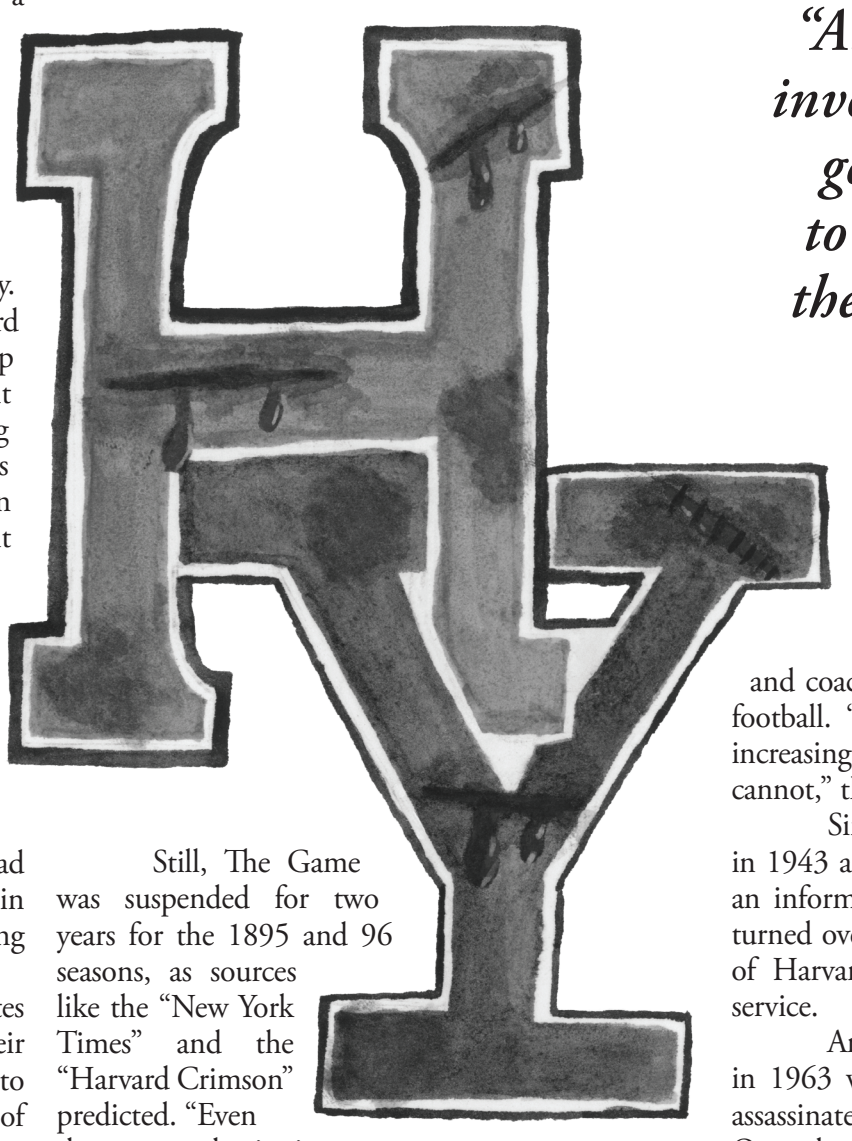
Later in the game, Harvard scored on a safety, but Referee Boviard disallowed the two points, claiming his whistle blew before the play. Referee Boviard disallowed another five points for Harvard in the second half. Harvard's only points came from a respectable touchdown, followed by a missed goal kick, which made the final score 12-4 Yale. After the game, it was generally agreed that Harvard played better but lost due to controversial referee calls and bad luck.

Over the course of The Game, Fred T. Murphy, Yale's right tackle, sustained a severe head injury that landed him in the hospital and started an unfounded rumor that he had died. Several players sustained head injuries, while others left The Game with broken legs, dislocated collarbones, and broken noses.

The 1894 game was later dubbed the "Hampden Park Bloodbath." "It was a game in which an unusual amount of bad blood and foul playing was shown," explained the "New York Times." "The players were less orderly and well-behaved, however, as scrimmages of all kinds were frequent occurrences, and fully one-half of the players suffered injuries of a more or less serious nature," the "New York Times" wrote.

"[T]he number of injuries caused by unnecessary roughness prolonged [The Game] far beyond the allotted time and acted as a severe damper upon the enthusiasm of the spectators," noted the "Yale Daily News."

While the injuries initially seemed severe, all was relatively well in the end. A doctor on the team described the injuries as "greatly exaggerated." The top priority seemed to be the players' ability to play in an upcoming match against the University of Pennsylvania later that week, and most injured players were judged to be fit to play by then.



Still, The Game was suspended for two years for the 1895 and 96 seasons, as sources like the "New York Times" and the "Harvard Crimson" predicted. "Even the most enthusiastic devotee of football admitted that the play to-day will do much to injure the game, and may call for interference from the college authorities," the "New York Times" speculated. The "Harvard Crimson" had similar speculations, publishing a short article titled "Football in Danger at Yale." The tradition resumed only in 1897, when Yale returned to face Harvard and tied at Soldiers Field.

The Game of 1894 is only a fraction of football's violent history. From 1904-1905, there were 37 player deaths and 296 serious injuries at all levels of football nationally. The forward pass, integral to modern football, was illegal until 1906. As in rugby, players gained yardage by moving the ball on foot or relying on lateral or backward passes. At the time, the game involved little protective gear, forcing players to put their bodies on the line to advance the ball.

Some argue that the construction of Harvard Stadium led to the legalization of the forward pass. During the horrific 1905 season, President Theodore Roosevelt, Class of 1880, called a meeting to establish safer rules to save the future of football. One proposal was to widen football fields by 40 feet to reduce pileup tackles.

Harvard immediately shot down this suggestion. The reason? Harvard Stadium had been built three years earlier and could not accommodate a wider field. The university's football team was so influential that the idea was rejected entirely. After more deliberation, the committee arrived at a different major rule change: legalizing the forward pass.

The Harvard-Yale Game continued annually until 1917, when it was formally suspended for 1917 and 1918 not because of intercollegiate rivalry, but because of World War I. To keep the tradition alive, however, only first-year students competed. For legal purposes, the team was called the "Informals." Unfortunately, the Informals lost to the Yale Newport Naval Reserves, 14–0.

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As the war progressed, more and more students went into the service. Those still at the college dedicated countless hours to military training. With so much effort devoted to fighting the war, students and coaches lacked the time to maintain collegiate football. "Can this time be spared from our ever-increasing efforts to win the war? Most obviously it cannot," the "Harvard Crimson" wrote in 1918.

Similarly, World War II suspended The Game in 1943 and 1944. Harvard athletics transitioned to an informal structure as the athletics facilities were turned over for military training, and, notably, some of Harvard's athletic coaches entered the military service.

Another disruption of The Game occurred in 1963 when President John F. Kennedy '40 was assassinated the day before the Harvard-Yale Game. Once the news broke, the Game was postponed, and officials from both universities said it was unlikely to be rescheduled that year. However, The Game was rescheduled a week later. It was held in New Haven, and Yale won 20–6.

The most recent canceled Harvard-Yale Game was in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2020, the Ivy League suspended fall sports, including football. That year, The Game did not take place for the first time since World War II.

Knowing the complex history of The Game makes the tradition feel more powerful, highlighting its importance to the Harvard community. Across centuries, Harvard students, like those attending the College today, have found pride and joy in the annual tradition. Even in challenging times, students have done all they can to keep this wonderful Game alive.

Kathleen Shovlin '29 (klshovlin@college.harvard.edu) is excited to watch The Game.

Graphic by Lola Selberg '30

The Bet on Sports

An introduction to the business behind the sports industry.

By MEENA BEHRINGER '27

The Harvard-Yale football game is arguably the year's most cherished tradition. Custom hoodies are everywhere, tickets sell out for the game itself and a slew of parties, and paraphernalia and merchandise show spirit. No other day can quite match the excitement and experience The Game brings.

Yet in those few days, a whole mini-ecosystem emerges without us realizing. Houses and organizations sell sweatshirts, food trucks and restaurants capitalize on the demand, and videos of The Game circulate on social media. The Game and student loyalty to Harvard become monetizable. This resembles—on a much smaller scale—the massive business behind the rapidly growing sports industry. While fans pay for tickets, concessions, and merchandise, sponsors pay to be associated with their favorite teams; sports teams themselves have become attractive investment opportunities with capital soaring in.

Over the past few years, sports teams' valuations have skyrocketed. In August 2026, Josh Kushner and Bob Iger bought the Los Angeles Lakers for a record $12.5 billion. Later that month, the Seattle Seahawks sold to the Khosla Family for $9.6 billion. This comes a year after the Boston Celtics sold for a valuation of $6.1 billion in August 2025, then the record price for a sports team, to a private equity investor, Bill Chisholm, alongside Sixth Street and other individuals. As valuations rise, the number of ultra-high-net-worth individuals who have the capital to buy them cannot keep pace.

It is a relatively recent phenomenon for sports teams to be opened up to institutional capital and private equity investors. The four major U.S. leagues (NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL) barred private funds from ownership until 2019, when MLB allowed for private equity ownership; the NBA and NHL quickly did too, and the NFL lifted its ban in 2024 and allowed investors to purchase up to 10% of a franchise's common equity as passive holders. Some teams are even publicly traded, including the Atlanta Braves, the New York Rangers and New York Knicks through Madison Square Garden Sports Corp, and Manchester United. The Green Bay Packers have been fan-owned since 1923, the NFL's only such team, though their shares are not traded on an exchange. Sports are now seen as their own asset class.

Teams are valued based on revenue multiples and primarily generate such revenue from ticket sales, sponsorships, and media rights. Media rights have been the biggest driver of rising prices. With a universal turn towards streaming, sports uniquely provide live, appointment-viewing content. That makes watching sports valuable for advertisers and distributors, who get consistent, attentive, and live viewership during games. Networks and streaming platforms therefore pay a premium for media contracts, which drive higher franchise revenues, player salaries, and team valuations. These contracts provide predictable, durable revenue streams, making it clear how much each contract will pay out per year.

MLB's deal with ESPN, Warner Bros. Discovery's TBS, and Fox is worth $12 billion over seven years and ends in 2028. The NBA's deal, which began in the 2025-2026 season with ESPN, NBCUniversal, and Amazon Prime Video, is worth $76 billion over 11 years, with games split across the platforms. The NBA's deal was previously worth $24 billion, with ESPN and Warner Bros. Discovery's TNT. The NFL's current deal with NBC, CBS, Fox, ESPN, and Amazon, which runs from 2023 to 2033, is worth $110 billion over 11 seasons. For context, the NFL's deals average roughly $10 billion a year, compared with the $8.7 billion cinemas in the U.S. and Canada sold in tickets in 2025.

Teams can further monetize logos, apparel, and other partnerships beyond event-day logistics, such as ticket sales and concessionaires. Many brands collaborate with teams, including Madhappy's recent collection with the Los Angeles Lakers, expanding reach and driving engagement. Social media has also given fans another way to engage with teams, from sharing video clips to interacting with players, reinforcing loyalty and capturing attention.

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In addition to predictable revenue streams and higher media contracts, fan bases are loyal and durable, with allegiance to a team typically based on family or where someone grew up. Sports viewership continues to rise, with the NFL hitting milestone numbers. Furthermore, in a world of artificial intelligence-powered automation, sports offer an emotional, human experience that machines or robots can never replace (and perhaps is now even more craved). And as artificial intelligence accelerates productivity, workers may have more hours to allocate to leisure, including attending or watching sports games. This accelerates teams' potential revenue and the investment opportunity.

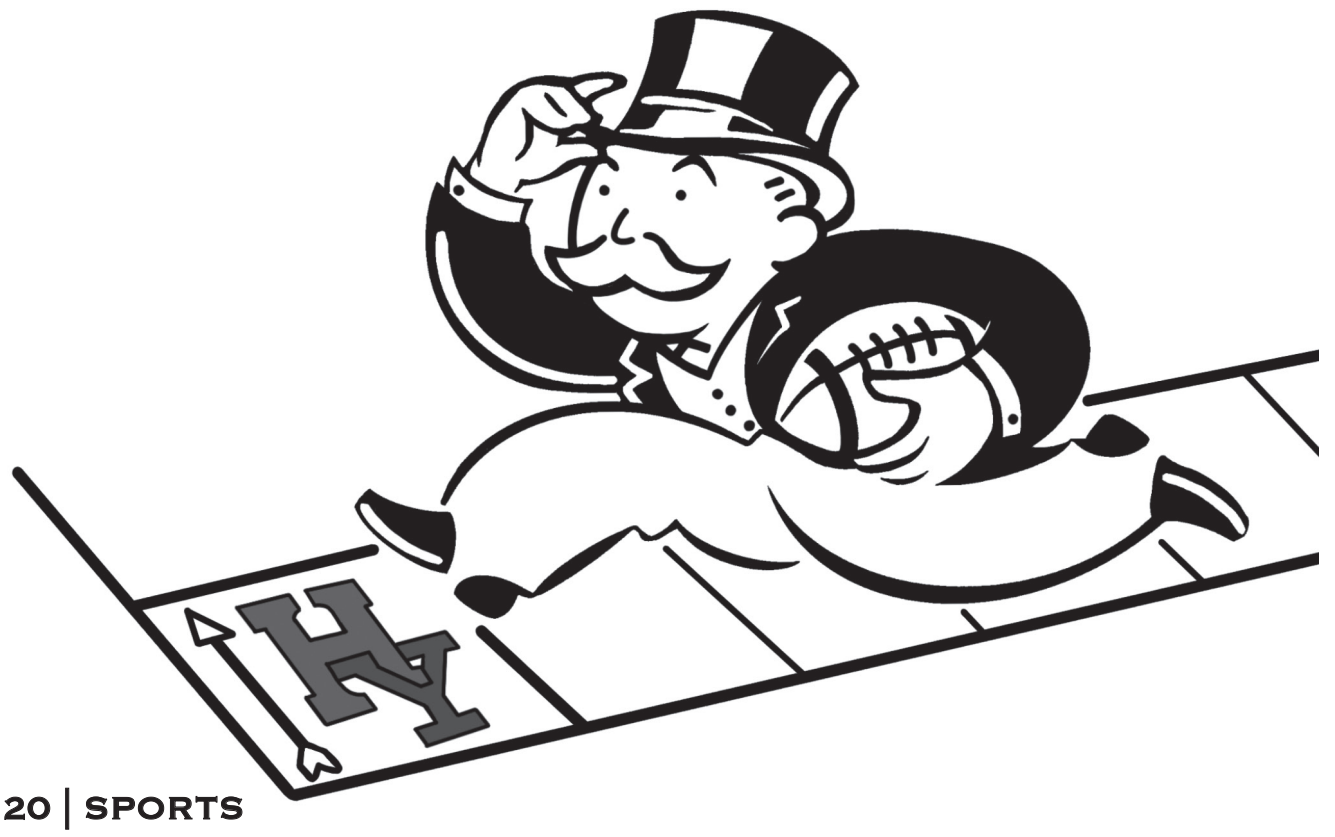
College sports might be the next target. In 2024, Weatherford Capital and RedBird Capital, sports-focused private equity firms, established Collegiate Athletic Solutions to invest in college sports in a 5-year deal with the Big 12 conference. The two are investing $12.5 million to develop sponsorships, media deals, and other ventures. College sports have seen similar monetization strategies since the Supreme Court ruled in 2021, in NCAA v. Alston, that the NCAA could not cap education-related benefits for athletes. Name, image, and likeness rules and later settlements then opened the way for pay, letting athletes move to schools offering more money. Certain colleges, however, have resisted this push toward institutional investment.

"The Game is a testament to the strength of the growing sports industry, as every ticket sale, merchandise purchase, and fan's excitement feeds the fervor and reinforces the business behind sports."

While outside investment does not seem to be approaching Harvard anytime soon, The Game is a testament to the strength of the growing sports industry, as every ticket sale, merchandise purchase, and fan's excitement feeds the fervor and reinforces the business behind sports. On Sidechat, Harvard-Yale tickets are selling for north of $130, even though they're free for Harvard undergraduates. House committees sell their own merchandise, and student organizations meet the demand by designing sweatshirts (including the Indy) and other items. Crewdog, founded by two Yale rowers, has also launched a Harvard-Yale collection and brought in Harvard students to help with its campaign. Ultimately, sports fans are loyal and eager to support their teams, and we are eager to support Harvard, which helps the business side thrive.

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Graphic by Evelyn Ferguson '29



Holding Out for a Hero

Should we look up to athletes as heroes?

By TYLER DANG '28

Like most other kids, I was fascinated with superheroes growing up. Watching Marvel movies or reading DC Comics, I believed such paragons of hope and strength truly existed, if only for a few hours. Naturally, I returned to reality when the credits rolled, but the excitement for these heroes never died.

When I first took an interest in sports, I was amazed by the talent and athleticism these professionals displayed on the field each week: bursts of speed reminiscent of the Flash, or feats of strength akin to the Thing. Beyond the fact that I was from a state with dedicated teams, seeing the physical talent and skill of the players ignited my passion for sports.

But why do we herald these athletes as heroes? What tenets and characteristics do they display that make them idols worth looking up to? How do we reconcile reprehensible off-the-field actions with the heroic qualities on the field?

Some of the most famous heroes in Western culture come from Greek mythology. Hercules is seen as a hero because he possesses strength and courage in the face of adversity. We learn his legend because of his grit, even when facing insurmountable opposition.

Similarly, many modern athletes demonstrate great strength and perseverance. Take Dennis Rodman, a five-time NBA champion forward-center. His father abandoned his family while Rodman was young. He worked as an airport janitor, was kicked out by his mother and left homeless, and was arrested for theft. Yet Rodman turned his life around: he went to college, was drafted at 25, won five championships, and became a Hall of Famer. Moreover, he used his platform to rebel against institutions he disagreed with, such as restrictive male gender roles and hostility toward the LGBTQ+ community.

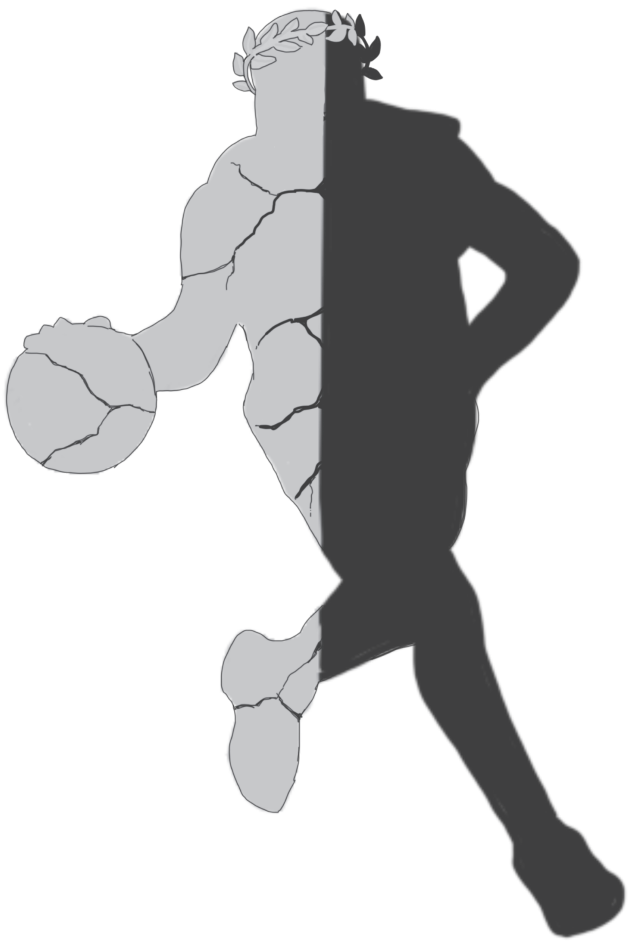
"In modern sporting culture, the issue arises when fans blindly follow and look up to athletes without recognizing their shortcomings."

For all intents and purposes, Rodman meets the requirements to be considered a hero. And yet, the illusion dissipates when the credits roll. For all his successes, Rodman has made many mistakes in his life. In his Hall of Fame speech, Rodman acknowledged his personal failings, especially with his children. He apologized for not being present in their lives; his three children were largely raised by their mother. That was in 2011. A decade and a half later, his daughter Trinity, a very successful soccer player, revealed that he put little effort into making amends.

Sure, Rodman was a talented player who triumphed through great adversity and used his platform for good. And yet, his personal shortcomings and failure to reconnect with the family he built make it hard to look up to him as a role model unthinkingly. Taken as a whole, good and bad cannot simply be netted out against each other; noble attributes don't outweigh flaws when determining whether someone should be considered a hero. However, we can identify these virtuous aspects alongside the imperfections. We can teach about the successes without promoting the person.

It's important to recognize that, even in myth and teachings, heroes are not perfect. In most depictions, Hercules initially sets out on the twelve labors as penance for murdering his wife and children (though incited by the gods). Many Greek and Roman myths show heroes facing a tragic end because of hubris. Even one of the Bible's most famous heroes demonstrates character flaws.

David, best known for defeating Goliath, eventually becomes king of Israel. One of David's most significant flaws occurs when he sees Bathsheba, a married woman, and desires her, summoning her to his palace. When she becomes pregnant, he tries to hide it and then arranges for her husband to be killed in battle.



Still, we can laud an action and its meaning without endorsing the person. We can respect and take inspiration from Rodman's perseverance and defiance toward restrictive social institutions without condoning his failings in his relationships.

In modern sporting culture, the issue arises when fans blindly follow and look up to athletes without recognizing their shortcomings. These followers still admire the displays of physical talent regardless of what occurs off the field. In fact, these fans often value athletic prowess so much that they actively dismiss players' mistakes and offenses.

In 2003, Kobe Bryant was a three-time NBA champion. But that July, he was arrested and charged with felony sexual assault. Before the criminal trial, the accuser's identity was leaked and reported, leading to death threats from fans. Eventually, the accuser refused to testify, so all charges were dropped. Bryant later released a statement acknowledging that she felt as though there was no mutual consent.

While court proceedings were ongoing, Bryant was named an All-Star for the 2003–04 season through a fan vote. After Bryant died in 2020, many in the sporting world quickly lauded his legacy on and off the court. When CBS journalist Gayle King asked about the case regarding Bryant's legacy, she received swift backlash.

Similarly, NFL quarterback Ben Roethlisberger was accused of sexual assault twice, in 2008 and 2010. While no criminal charges resulted and he settled the 2008 civil suit out of court, the NFL originally suspended him for six games, later reduced to four. When Roethlisberger returned, Steelers fans cheered him on. Regardless of his off-the-field behavior, as long as he won games, many fans did not care.

I am not recommending ignorance of the court system's complexity and the muddled history of false accusations against athletes. However, unthinkingly following athletes because of their on-field achievements ignores an important part of what it means to be a hero. To call these athletes heroes without acknowledging their faults fails to hold them accountable and spur them to improve.

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We use heroes to teach the next generation how to interact constructively in society. We can encourage them to follow certain principles of these athletes while still cautioning them about their shortcomings. In this way, others can better learn what's right and what is wrong.

As we think of the players we see on screen, we cannot view their actions in a vacuum. We can admire certain aspects that contribute to success, such as tenacity and physical strength. We can teach how these contribute to success. But we must also discuss their shortcomings. We must recognize that these players are people and not otherworldly heroes. Each athlete may possess heroic qualities, but they are not perfect. As such, we should not emulate them exactly. Just as we learn from Hercules or David, we should learn from players' particular traits while acknowledging their failures.

After all, the appeal of superheroes is the hope that people have no flaws. And though these perfect people may not exist, we should still have hope. That hope means we want to improve and better ourselves. We should still look up to others for certain aspects of success, but we should also be aware of their failings to hold them accountable, as well as ourselves.

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Graphic by Ella Cohen '29

Weekly Sports Preview: November 19–26

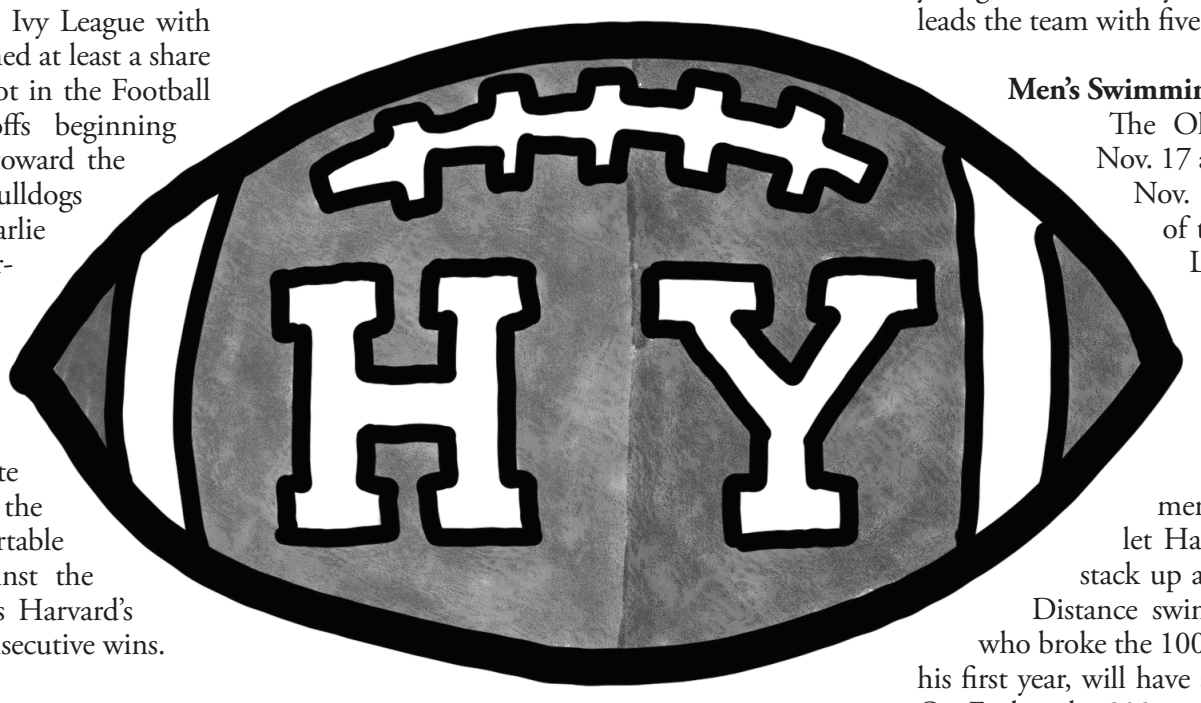
Your weekly what-to-watch for Harvard Athletics.

By LUCY DUNCAN '28

It's the last week of classes before Thanksgiving break, and the schedule is packed with Harvard athletics! Many of the Crimson's standout teams have entered their playoffs, and winter teams, now a few weeks into the season, are in full swing. And of course, this week marks Harvard's biggest athletic event of the year: The Game.

Football (8–1)

It is the titular match of the issue and arguably the most popular athletic event of the year, and it's in Boston in two days: the 142nd edition of The Game. Kickoff is Saturday at 3:30 p.m., and The Game is at Fenway Park for the first time since a 45–27 Crimson victory in 2018. Harvard leads the Ivy League with one game left and has already clinched at least a share of the championship title and a spot in the Football Championship Subdivision playoffs beginning Nov. 28. Spearheading the effort toward the Crimson's first victory against the Bulldogs in four years will be quarterback Charlie Smith '29, who matched his career-high three touchdown passes in the Nov. 14 victory against the University of Pennsylvania, and running back Xaviah Bascon '27, who rushed for a season-best 104 yards in the same game. Despite their dominance so far this season, the Crimson must not get too comfortable in this season-defining game against the Bulldogs; last year, The Game was Harvard's only regular-season loss after six consecutive wins.



"Despite their dominance so far this season, the Crimson must not get too comfortable in this season-defining game against the Bulldogs."

No. 1 Women's Rugby (7–0)

Women's rugby is National Intercollegiate Rugby Association championship-bound after a 55–19 victory over American International College in their Nov. 14 semifinal match. On Saturday, they face Dartmouth in West Point, New York. This is a historic rivalry—Harvard and Dartmouth have divided the last seven national Division I titles, with Harvard claiming the last three. The Crimson defeated the Big Green 31–7 on Sep. 25 during its perfect regular season and has its sights set on its fourth consecutive national championship.

Harvard's forward line has been dominant this season in mauls near the try line, with Courtney Taylor '27 and Neasa McLaughlin '27 as major scoring threats. Meanwhile, Morgan Gibson '29 and Gemma Ogoke '29 have used speed and sharp ball handling to drive offensive success in open play.

No. 3 Field Hockey (17–2)

For the second year in a row, the Crimson has clinched a spot in the NCAA semifinal. This Friday, No. 3 Harvard plays No. 2 University of Maryland in Louisville, KY. Maryland has won all four games in this series, but their last meeting was in 2022—this game will feature two entirely fresh rosters, and the Crimson is hungry for a program-first NCAA finals appearance.

Harvard clinched its spot in the semifinals with bracket-play wins over Old Dominion on Nov. 13, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst on Nov. 15. Goalkeeper Linde Burger '29 was the weekend's highlight, with back-to-back shutouts and a third-quarter save against UMass that kept the game from going to overtime. Captain Lara Beekhuis '27 scored the Crimson's only goal against UMass, while Sage Piekarski '27 netted back-to-back goals in the final two minutes against Old Dominion. Piekarski and Beekhuis lead the team's scoring this season and will be critical in the effort against Maryland.

Cross Country

Saturday marks the NCAA Cross Country Championships in Terre Haute, IN. After earning their first Ivy League title since 1976 on Oct. 31, the Crimson men's squad punched its ticket with a second-place finish at Northeast Regional Championships. Three Harvard runners earned top-ten finishes in the 10k at regionals, with Tam Gavenas '29 continuing to lead the Crimson's scoring efforts.

Men's Basketball (2–3)

On Friday at 7 p.m., Harvard plays at Holy Cross. Harvard leads the series overall and has won six of the last seven matchups, so this is likely to be a lighter in-state matchup to recover and tune up after a weekend of tough competition in Washington, D.C.

On Tuesday at 7 p.m., the Crimson host Boston University in the last game of a three-game stretch against in-state rivals. Last year's match was the first time these teams had met since 2017 and broke the Crimson's previous eight-game win streak in the series, so Harvard will look for a comeback win. Captain Thomas Batties II '27 currently leads the Crimson's scoring efforts with an average of 15.3 points per game.

Women's Basketball (3–2)

This weekend, the Crimson plays two Mountain West road games. On Friday at 8:30 p.m., Harvard plays Colorado State University. These teams have met only once, when the Crimson lost 52–59 to the Rams in 2021. This match will feature two new rosters, giving Harvard a fresh look at an unfamiliar team and a chance to stage a comeback.

On Sunday, Harvard plays at the University of Wyoming. This is the first time the two teams have met, so it will be an important test of how their on-court tactics hold up against an unfamiliar opponent. Harvard is vying for the Ivy League title and a spot in the NCAA tournament this year, and this weekend will test the team's cohesion. The tip-off time is not yet confirmed.

On Wednesday at noon, Harvard hosts Illinois State University in its last home game before Thanksgiving break. The Crimson won the first and only meeting in this series in 2024, with Abigail Wright '27 and Lydia Chatira '28 holding down the defense with two steals each. It's a yardstick of the Crimson's development over the last two seasons.

Men's Ice Hockey (4–3)

The Crimson hosts Bentley at 7 p.m. on Tuesday. Harvard boasts a perfect record in this series, so this should be a lighter match as the team eases back into play after a week off. The Crimson's Nov. 13 victory was highlighted by an overtime winner netted by captain Matthew Morden '27 and 23 saves by first-year goaltender Rudy Guimond '30. Aidan Lane '29 leads the team with five goals this season.

Men's Swimming and Diving (4–0)

The Ohio State Invitational began Nov. 17 and continues through Friday, Nov. 20. It's the first major meet of the season after a series of Ivy League dual meets. The event features six teams from the College Swimming and Diving Coaches Association of America's top 25, including No. 2 Indiana.

On Thursday, the men's platform diving event will let Harvard's divers show how they stack up against the nation's top talent. Distance swimmer William Mulgrew '29, who broke the 1000-yard free program record in his first year, will have a chance to shine in the 500. On Friday, the 200-yard freestyle relay will test team cohesion.

Wrestling

On Sunday, Harvard competes in the Pennsylvania Regional Training Centre Keystone Classic in Philadelphia. The host team, the University of Pennsylvania, is confirmed to be attending, and last year's competition included Rutgers, Virginia Tech, Michigan State, and Franklin & Marshall. At the season opener on Nov. 8, Coleman Nogle '27 defeated No. 25 Dario Lemus from Maryland to earn third in the 141-pound black pool, the event's most competitive bracket. Jack Crook '27 took second in the 149 red pool, the next tier down. Meanwhile, first-year Carter Shin '30 made his career debut with a victory in the 125 developmental pool.

"The Game" is not the only game Crimson athletics has in store this week! Whether at Fenway Park or the Harvard athletic complex, dress up in your favorite Harvard merch and cheer on your classmates as their seasons come to a close.

Lucy Duncan '28 (lduncan@college.harvard.edu) writes Sports for the "Harvard Independent."

Graphic by Maya Kodali '30

On Sports and Faith

How sports complicate a materialist picture of the world.

By ELLIOT HUNTER CHUNG '29

My roommate Garrick is a fan of Real Betis, a Seville-based soccer club with an eclectic roster that competes against household names like Barcelona and Real Madrid. Every time Betis plays, Garrick sits in front of our TV and yells a mixture of curses, cheers, and, most interestingly to me, prayers. He isn't particularly religious—he describes himself as staunchly atheistic until the definition of God is stretched so far it's nearly unrecognizable as traditional Abrahamic religion. Still, when Real Betis' forward, Troy Parrott, strikes the ball and it rips towards the opposing team's goal, a prayer escapes his lips.

I have observed something similar in many of my friends. They live largely secular lives, sometimes consciously, largely unconsciously, yet become spiritual in the domain of sport. As we approach the Harvard vs. Yale football game, the phenomenon seems to appear even more often. I hear people make assertions about the game based on nothing but faith. These appeals to a higher power take different forms: a quick look to the sky before stepping on the field, a strict game-day routine, or even the deep but unfounded belief that victory is destined.

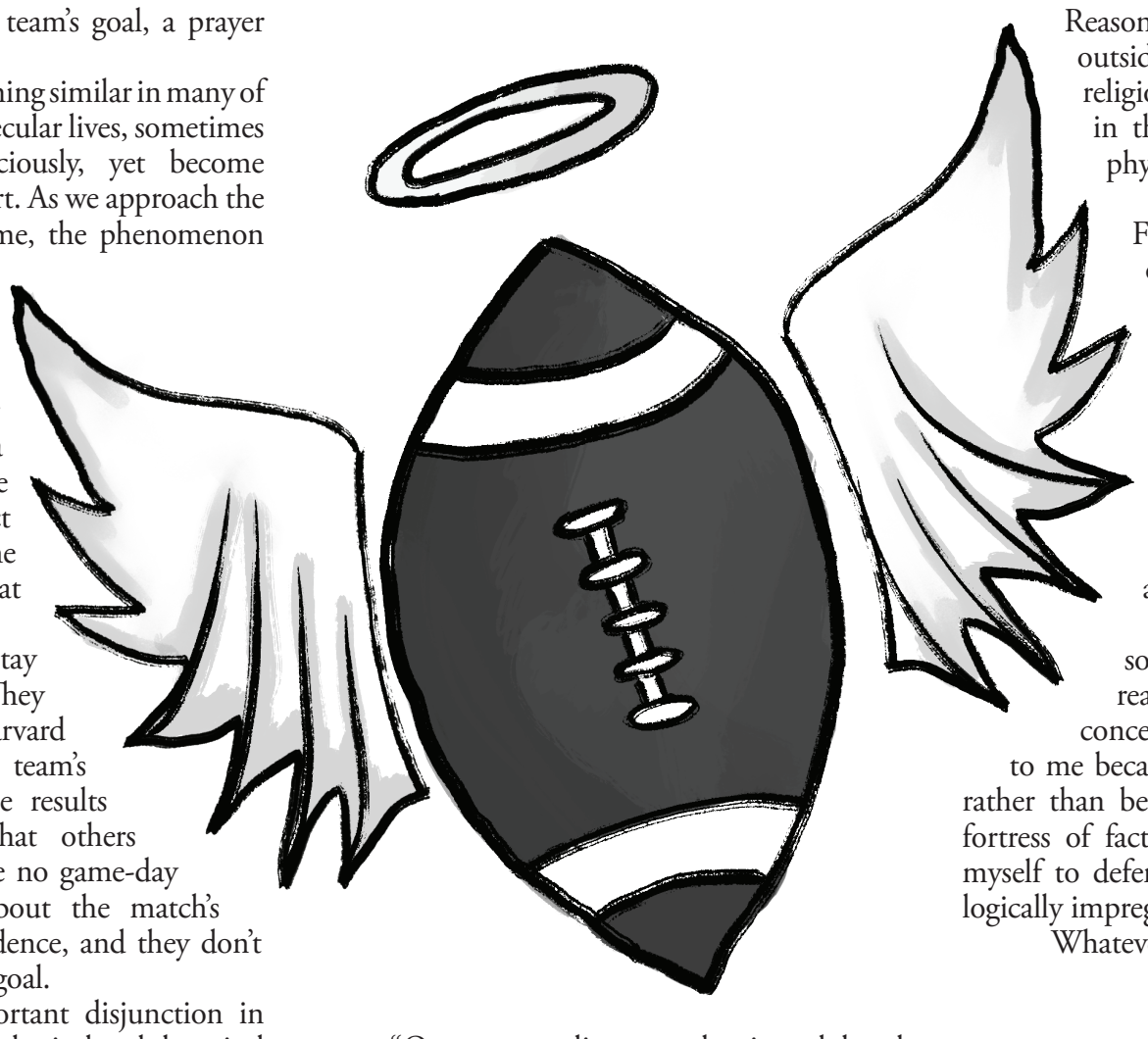
By contrast, others stay grounded in probability. They calculate the odds of Harvard winning based on each team's performance this season, the results of past matchups, and what others seem to be saying. They have no game-day superstitions, their belief about the match's result is explainable with evidence, and they don't invoke a deity on fourth and goal.

This betrays an important disjunction in our psyche between the rational mind and the mind that yearns for something to believe in.

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Global religious participation, which I use as a proxy for general theistic sentiment, has declined on average since the 1980s, largely driven by the Western world. This seems explainable by several factors, such as a more globalized world bringing about relativist theories of belief (i.e., exposure to different cultures makes us question whether there is only one "correct" culture), and the gradual degradation of religion through science. Many are more convinced by, and even comforted by, a rational and scientific picture of the world.

Carl Jung articulates this well in his book "Man and His Symbols." "There are no longer any gods whom we can invoke to help us. The great religions of the world suffer from increasing anemia, because the helpful numina have fled from the woods, rivers, and mountains, and from animals, and the god-men have disappeared underground into the unconscious," Jung writes. Scientific advancements, like Copernicus's proposal of heliocentrism (meaning the Earth revolves around the Sun, not the other way around) in the 1500s, have disarmed religion of much of its explanatory power and, in the process, damaged its credibility.



"Our present lives are dominated by the goddess Reason, who is our greatest and most tragic illusion. By the aid of reason, so we assure ourselves, we have 'conquered nature,'" Jung continues. In many ways, our conversion to the church of Reason has not been a leap from faith to logic, but instead a reallocation of faith. Rather than placing it in the hands of a metaphysically ambiguous being or force that we can never really know, we choose to place our faith in the scientists and researchers who can give us more tangible explanations for the world.

"Our present lives are dominated by the goddess Reason, who is our greatest and most tragic illusion. By the aid of reason, so we assure ourselves, we have 'conquered nature.'"

- Jung

Yet still, this supposedly silly, illogical faith that we are so sure we have outgrown persists. It pokes its tendrils out of our subconscious as the final seconds of the game tick down, and it surfaces when our team's quarterback throws a Hail Mary. Despite the increase in disciples of atheism, during times of uncertainty we still appeal to the gods we rebuke.

I wish I could say that this has pushed me to re-evaluate the validity of faith as a concept. I am embarrassed to admit that I pride myself on holding no faith and living a life guided entirely by rational decision-making or subconscious influence. Reason and logic feel objective, existing outside the individual. While every religion feels contestable, I find solace in the proven, irrefutable assertions of physics, biology, and chemistry.

Sometimes I do get FOMO, though. I become jealous of my friends who can experience something like true love as magical, rather than as a complex biological and chemical process. They watch a football game as if God is watching over their shoulder. They imbue these things with a sanctity that transcends the physical world, and I think the feelings they experience are much more potent as a result.

Perhaps Jung is on to something, and my confidence in reason is nothing more than well-concealed faith. Perhaps science is "right" to me because it is familiar and easy to grasp, rather than being objectively "true." Perhaps the fortress of facts and data I have erected around myself to defend and justify my decisions is not logically impregnable.

Whatever the case, I don't care to find out.

"They imbue these things with a sanctity that transcends the physical world, and I think the feelings they experience are much more potent as a result."

For the time being, I am content in my fortress, cold and void of magic as it is. I won't buy into superstition come game-day, and I won't say a prayer if the game gets close. Instead, I hope someone reading this studies this phenomenon and presents an explanation for why one or the other is right that my mind can comfortably wrap itself around.

Elliot Hunter Chung '29 (elliotchung@college.harvard.edu) is very confused.

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THE “HARVARD INDEPENDENT” PUBLISHES EVERY WEEK DURING
THE ACADEMIC YEAR BY THE “HARVARD INDEPENDENT,” INC.,
12 ARROW STREET CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

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