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# The Quill

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Robbinsdale Cooper High School

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# HAWKS SOAR AT STATE FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

Cooper makes its first appearance at state in football since the 1996 season



Photo by NOLAN ANDLER

Members of the Hawks football squad hoist the trophy celebrating their state appearance at U.S. Bank Stadium.

By NOLAN ANDLER  
Quill staff writer

The 2021 season for the Cooper Hawks football team is one that will forever be in the history books. It was a slow start that presented the team with a lot of adversity, but they found themselves, came together and went on a postseason run that will be remembered for years to come. The team finished the regular season with a 6-2 record, won a Suburban Gold Conference championship and secured

home field advantage for sections. That set up a Hawks playoff journey that led to the Minnesota state football tournament.

#### Section 5AAAAA Tournament

The Hawks started their postseason run with a semifinal matchup against Minneapolis Southwest on October 30. With this being the first game of the postseason, the coaches knew they needed to keep the team ready for a fight.

"The Southwest game was a must-win. We knew that they

would be ready to play because it was a playoff game, but our players played well and executed the game plan to perfection," assistant coach Mr. Patterson said.

The Hawks eventually won this match-up 49-14 behind quarterback Joe Russell's (12) productive day. Russell was 11 of 17, throwing for 254 yards and five touchdowns. Also having a big day was running back Camden Royal (12), who had 16 carries for 150 yards. After the Hawks went into halftime with a 42-7 lead, it was basically

smooth sailing through the second half.

The victory over Southwest gave Cooper their fifth straight appearance in the section championship game. The Hawks were looking to finally break through and go to state, but in their way was a rematch with the Armstrong Falcons on November 5. Cooper beat them 49-14 week three of the regular season, so the Falcons were out for revenge.

"We knew that Armstrong was a good team and it was going to be a fight for both teams,"

Patterson said.

Cooper jumped out to a 14-0 lead at the half thanks to great work by David Connors, Jr. (12) and Danari Connors (11). However, as the game went on, Armstrong started to mount a comeback. The Falcons just kept shutting down the Hawks offense and they cut the 14-0 deficit down to 14-7. Linebacker Jaxon Howard (11) said he knew that, in a game like this with everything on the line, he had to make sure that the players kept giving their best as the score got tighter.

"On the field, I had to make sure that everybody knew, 'Hey, this is not done until that final whistle,'" he said.

Although Armstrong got another touchdown in the fourth quarter, a huge block on the extra point by David Connors, Jr. kept the lead for the Hawks. Then, on Armstrong's last drive, two false-start penalties led to a fumble that Hawks safety Andre Reese (12) recovered.

The fumble sealed the 14-13 win for the Hawks and the team's first section championship win since 1996. The celebration that took place on the field was a redeeming moment for a Hawks team that had to go through so much adversity during last year and the offseason.

#### 5AAAAA State Quarterfinals

Cooper came into their first state tournament appearance since 1996 with a good test

STATE FOOTBALL continues on page 3

# New superintendent brings energy to Robbinsdale

Mr. Engstrom faces the many challenges related to COVID be staying focused on the needs of students, staff

By SHENG VANG  
Quill staff writer

Mr. Engstrom rolled into office on July 1, 2021 as the new superintendent of the Robbinsdale Area School District.

"I'm really honored that I got to be chosen to be the Robbinsdale Area superintendent because, to become the superintendent, the board of education hires you," Engstrom said. "I've been in education for 27 years and I started by being a teacher at Champlin Park High School."

The superintendent position was open in the Robbinsdale Area School District after interim superintendent, Ms. Burrage, assumed a new job as the Deputy Education Commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Education on June 23. Burrage had been named interim superintendent when the former superintendent, Mr. Jenkins, left Robbinsdale after five years to become the superintendent of the Madison school district in Wisconsin.

At the start of 2021, the Robbinsdale school board conducted a search to find the best fit for the open position. With the help of a search firm, applications were looked at and the best candidates were presented to the school board for an interview. Through this process, Engstrom was eventually selected.

After starting his teaching career in Minnesota, Engstrom and his wife moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado to be closer to his wife's family. Engstrom got a teaching job at Colorado Springs and over the years, was promoted to an assistant principal, a principal, an executive director, an assistant superintendent and then a deputy superintendent.

"For 20 years in one school district, I advanced and learned more about how to impact education," Engstrom said.

According to Engstrom, one reason he decided to pursue the Robbinsdale position was because he is from Minnesota. He said he "always had [his] eyes back on Minnesota." Although he knew it was up to the school board to determine if he was the right fit to lead the district, he still applied and took his chance.

Since Engstrom has been away from Minnesota for so long, one of the biggest

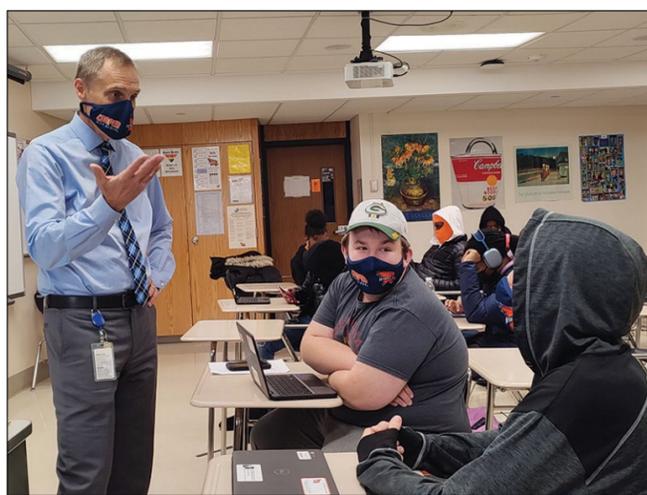


Photo by SHENG VANG

Mr. Engstrom said a highlight of his job is meeting with district students.

changes about the transition from Colorado to Minnesota for him has been the colder weather.

"I'm still getting used to this, saying, 'How did I grow up here?' I just wasn't ready for this big winter we are going into," he said.

Jokes aside, though Engstrom was a deputy superintendent before, he said "that is a different work form" from his new job of being the superintendent.

"A deputy superintendent is always making sure that they are supporting the work of the superintendent and the school district," he said.

NEW SUPERINTENDENT continues on page 2

# Annual heritage month celebrates Native American culture

Various local, national events were part of this year's recognition of America's indigenous people

By NAIMA HUSSEN  
Quill staff writer

Cooper students and staff recently took part in events and learning opportunities related to Native American Heritage Month. This annual celebration, which takes place every November, is also known as American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month.

"The equity leadership team sent out a newsletter that focused on Native Americans and the district had a lecture series that focused on the real meaning of Thanksgiving," Ms. Calvillo, Cooper's equity spe-

cialist, said of the November events.

Native American Heritage Month is designed to be a time to celebrate rich and diverse cultures, traditions and histories of Native people. Additionally, it is intended to acknowledge the important contributions of Native people to the world.

According to Calvillo, Native American Heritage Month is also an opportune time to educate the general public about Native tribes and their struggles. Some specific struggles that members of these groups still face today are access to clean water and violence against women and children.

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed a joint resolution acknowledging the month. According to *The New York Times*, the goal of this resolution was to "enhance self-esteem, pride and self-awareness to young Native American Indians."

Calvillo said she believes that teaching more about Native American history in schools would better celebrate Native American Heritage Month.

"It is important to celebrate and acknowledge the heritage of Native Americans to educate people and to empower the Native American community," Calvillo said.

## PSEO program helps students attend college

Hawks can attend area institutions to earn college, high school credits at same time

By RICHARA BULLOCK  
Quill staff writer

The experience of distance learning during the start of the pandemic led some students to realize that they are good at learning independently and managing their own time. Some of those students decided this year to put those new skills to the test by signing up for PSEO, or post-secondary enrollment options.

“PSEO is when students at Cooper take classes at a college while still in high school,” student counselor Ms. Hough said. “The students that participate are earning college and high school credits at the same time, all for free.”

Students who take part in Cooper’s PSEO program typically take classes through North Hennepin Community College or Hennepin Technical College. Hough added that some Cooper students have attended the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities or Minneapolis Community and Technical College in the past.

The PSEO option is open to all Cooper juniors and seniors. Some students will take all of their classes through their chosen college, while others will take some of their courses at college and some at Cooper. The variety of classes available is one advantage of PSEO according to Hough.

“There are more options for classes,” she said. “For example, instead of the grade-level English, like English 11 or 12, students can choose either writing or literature classes. Also, it’s a good opportunity for students to get a feel for what college is like before becoming a full-time college student.”

Another advantage to taking the college classes relates to the cost of tuition when one eventually goes to school.

“Students can earn college credits for free so they can get a head start on their college goals,” Hough said.

While there are many potential benefits to PSEO, Hough cautioned that students need to be careful about going that route.

“Any poor grades earned in college classes go on student’s high school transcript as well as their college transcript. Also, if a student fails a class at the college, they’ll be behind in credit to graduate from high school,” Hough said.

In light of these possible risks, Hough said that students enrolling in PSEO should be good with time management and deadlines because “they’re pretty much on their own” when taking the college classes.

“As counselors and staff at Cooper, we’re not able to access grades or see how they’re doing. Parents can’t access either. Students should be able to navigate the resources the colleges have because the courses being taken won’t be aligned with what’s being taught at Cooper,” Hough said.

Additionally, the fact that the PSEO classes are at college means that the high school students are expected to perform at the level of college students.

“The classes are going to be challenging,” Hough said. “A commitment to doing the work is required.”

One Cooper student who is taking PSEO classes this year is Connor Brynteson (11). Brynteson is taking his courses through North Hennepin Community College.

“I have really enjoyed the freedom that it gives you,” Brynteson said.

While this freedom has been a highlight, Brynteson mentioned that time management has been something he has needed to keep in mind when it comes to his college classes. As for qualities students should have to do well in PSEO, Brynteson said a commitment to learning is key.

“I think some things that make you a good fit for PSEO is really just being driven and understanding what you need to do for school,” he said. “Another thing is just wanting to do well.”

Another student who is currently in PSEO at North Hennepin Community College is Yelitza Hernandez-Guitron (11). She said her independent nature and time management skills have been

**PSEO PROGRAM**  
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## Kindness Campaign designed to raise spirits

The annual campaign was expanded to two weeks that featured theme days and a toy drive among other events



Photo by SHENG VANG

The Big-to-Little Toy Drive gave students a chance to select free gifts to give to their younger relatives.

By SHENG VANG  
Quill staff writer

Cooper’s 2021 Kindness Campaign, which took place in December, was an event that promoted and spread awareness of kindness.

“The Kindness Campaign started seven years ago as a way to promote kindness in the building and community,” Mr. Nelson, Cooper’s administrative intern, said.

According to Nelson, since there is an increase in behavioral issues in schools each year before winter break,

“the Kindness Campaign is a reminder to students, staff and teachers to be empathetic and kind to the people around them.”

Although the campaign started seven years ago, it still lacks awareness and promotion among many students. This has been noticed by Lily Chang (11), a member of Cooper’s spirit committee.

“I don’t really remember anything that happened that month. I remember the dress up days but there weren’t a lot of activities,” Chang said.

Due to the pandemic, last year’s

campaign also did not have as much promotion, as many activities were limited. According to Naima Hussen (12), another member of Cooper’s spirit committee, this was due to the fact that the campaign had to be done over distance learning.

Despite the lack of awareness and other limitation, the Kindness Campaign has impacted Cooper in many ways.

“Whether spreading kindness has a positive effect on others or has a positive effect on the person being kind, it is helping someone,” Nelson said.

Similarly, Chang said she noticed

there has never really been any bullying at Cooper, which might be a result of the Kindness Campaign.

Another impact the campaign has had on the Cooper community is getting students and teachers involved in the campaign’s main activities, such as the Big-to-Little Toy Drive.

“I remember the toy drive,” Chang said. “I liked it because there were free toys for little kids and it’s an idea for a Christmas gift for younger siblings. I hope they keep the toy drive because a lot of people participate in it.”

Likewise, Hussen said the toy drive is a memorable event.

“One activity I have enjoyed in this campaign is the toy drive because students have the opportunity to get toys and give them to their family members,” she said.

This year, the campaign started on December 6 and ended on December 17. New activities were promoted during the first week of the campaign. This included door decoration and candygrams. There was also a kindness tree filled with nice comments written by students and staff, which was then displayed in the hallway.

The second week of the campaign promoted activities that had been done in previous years, such as the dress up days and the Big-to-Little Toy Drive. The usual High-5 Friday, however, was omitted to reduce physical contact due to the ongoing pandemic.

Ms. Geise, who oversees Cooper’s spirit committee, said the entire series of events is designed to change the atmosphere of the school.

“We hope [to] spread the message that kindness is contagious because a little bit of kindness goes a long way,” she said.

## Healthy eating is important during one's teen years

From making smart food choices to maintaining proper hydration, there are many factors that go into a proper diet

By DAMARIUS HAMILTON  
Quill staff writer

Eating well is an important part of a healthy lifestyle for teenagers. This is especially critical during the winter months, when the weather makes it less likely that people will exercise outside and when illnesses like the flu are spread around in public places like schools. Learning healthy eating habits at a younger age is also important because it can set teens up for being healthier adults, which can reduce the risk of health problems that come with getting older.

Healthy eating during one’s teenage years is important as body changes during this time affect an individual’s nutritional and dietary needs. According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, “many adolescents experience a growth spurt and an increase in appetite and need healthy foods to meet their growth needs.” Since teens eat more meals away from home than younger children, they may be more inclined to eat too much of the wrong types of food, like soft drinks, fast food or processed foods.

“Good nutrition is important for



Photo by SHENG VANG

Lunch is one of the three meals during which a balanced diet is key.

a teen because of the physical and psychological growth that is happening,” Cooper health teacher Mr. Rooney said. “Their body depends on the food and beverage choices they make to supply energy to the body on a daily basis. The better food choices, the more energy it creates.”

John Hopkins Medicine has several suggestions for how to put together a

healthy diet. First, they suggest increasing fiber in one’s diet and decreasing the intake of salt and sugar. Another primary piece of advice is to consume more fruits and vegetables. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen or dried, and may be whole, cut up or pureed. Meanwhile vegetables should include dark green, red and orange vegetables; legumes like peas and beans; and starchy vegetables.

“Eating a variety of foods, especially fruits and vegetables, is vital so they can get all of the vitamins and minerals they need,” Rooney said.

Rooney also suggests that teens eat three balanced meals a day.

“Eating three balanced meals usually gives teens a well-rounded diet of nutrients that is needed for growth and development,” he said.

Rooney added that one concern with teen eating habits relates to snacking. Teens who do not stick to the routine of three meals a day will often eat many unhealthy snacks throughout the day, which can have an impact on their health.

“Teens will oftentimes make poor choices when it comes to snacking,” he said. “They eat things that are high in fat and sugar and provide hardly any nutritional value. It also makes them feel full so they don’t eat a meal.”

Another important part of one’s diet is hydration. Drinking water is the key method teens should use to stay hydrated. John Hopkins Medicine urges teens

**HEALTHY EATING**  
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## NEW SUPERINTENDENT BRINGS ENERGY TO ROBBINSDALE

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Now, Engstrom works with the district’s central administration, principals and teachers to make an impact on students. He also works with the school board, seven community members who hold the district’s leaders accountable and make sure they are doing a good job for the community.

“I know what it’s like to work in the central administration, working with schools, working in schools, but that’s a big change to make sure they are informed, how to make sure that our work is aligned to what we believe in. Also, making sure that we are putting the right thing in front of them in order to make decisions and base them on the needs of students,” Engstrom said.

In addition to the transition from Colorado to Minnesota, the biggest challenge Engstrom has faced during his first few months on the job is the pandemic. The pandemic has impacted the number of staff returning to work and now the district is facing a shortage of staff members.

“The problem we hear about the most is the shortage of bus drivers. During the pandemic, when we weren’t running as many bus routes, there were a lot of bus drivers who

just left, and now that we are back to running buses again, they didn’t come back,” he said.

Beside the shortage of bus drivers, the district is also facing a shortage of teachers, custodians and substitutes. This combination of staffing shortages is impacting what people are doing on a daily basis as teachers and administrators will have to fill in, which means other work isn’t being done. The solution Engstrom came up with is that they need to tell their story and show the community that there is a purpose in working in the school system.

“What is important is when we are trying to recruit people to work for us, that it’s not just a job working for the Robbinsdale School District; it’s an opportunity to impact students’ lives. I can’t always match the pay that people get working somewhere else, but I know that when people at the end of the day go home, they go, ‘I know why I am on this Earth and I have purpose in what I do,’” Engstrom said.

Though the biggest current challenge is the shortage of staff, the biggest opportunity Engstrom has identified in the district are the people and staff members who are already

working in the school district. Every time he goes to a school, he sees examples of the dedication of staff and the dedication they have to the vision of the Robbinsdale District. According to Engstrom, staff members say that they are rich when they look through a classroom and see every shade of skin color. Engstrom said he appreciates how well the teachers know their students and how they provide an “education that is personalized to them.”

“I see the dedication. There are places we can improve, but it starts with dedication and belief, and I see that everywhere at the schools,” Engstrom said.

According to Engstrom, a typical day in the life of a superintendent means spending most of his time in meetings with adults “to create alignment in [the] school district system.”

“Superintendents have cabinets, that have principals, that have teachers, that have students. Students are four levels away from me. So, I am working up here to make sure that we have a system in place to help address the needs of the students,” he said.

When possible during the work day, Engstrom said his biggest joy in life is the time he gets to go to schools

and see teachers working directly with students. He wishes he can say that 90 percent of his day is seeing what adults are doing with students, but that’s just not the reality of the position. He said the position is stressful and it makes him worry since he is responsible for 12,000 students. He is worried about whether they are doing the right thing to support the students. With this huge responsibility, the way Engstrom copes with his stress is watching sports and exercising.

“The first thing to reduce stress is when I get to watch sports,” he said. “I love it when I get to watch our students participate in many types of competition. Not just sports; if it was a speech competition, I would love to see that. That just kind of gets me into a real happy place: seeing our students competing against others, just seeing how well they are doing in a kind of real-world environment,” he said.

As for exercising, Engstrom said he is “one of those really weird people who like to exercise.”

“I know that’s not for everybody and yet I like it,” he said.

**SUPERINTENDENT**  
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# New teachers reflect on first semester

The switch to in-person learning after a year of remote teaching is one of many challenges faced by new Cooper staff

By MYRA SINCHI  
Quill staff writer

There have been several new teachers who have joined the Cooper staff since the start of the pandemic. They each came from different backgrounds that brought them to Cooper. For these new teachers, the challenges of being new to Cooper were made even more extreme by the difficulties of teaching during the time of COVID.

Mr. James, a math teacher, started his first official job as a teacher at Cooper last year; before that, he student-taught at Hopkins and Minneapolis. James said he loves helping people and teaching gives him the perfect opportunity to help people and teach math.

Due to the pandemic, James started his first year of teaching online.

"It's been challenging coming back from the pandemic and being online. I think it's been hard to get our attention span back and to find our work ethic again, but I'm confident we can get back to where we used to be," James said.

Over his first year, James said he has enjoyed his time at Cooper.

"So far, my favorite thing at Cooper has been the students. They never fail to make me laugh, and I really enjoy getting to know them all individually," he said.

Another new teacher is Ms. Fremont, a tenth- and twelfth-grade English teacher. Fremont first moved to Minnesota for college from California. She previously taught English for three years at Brightmont Academy, a tiny

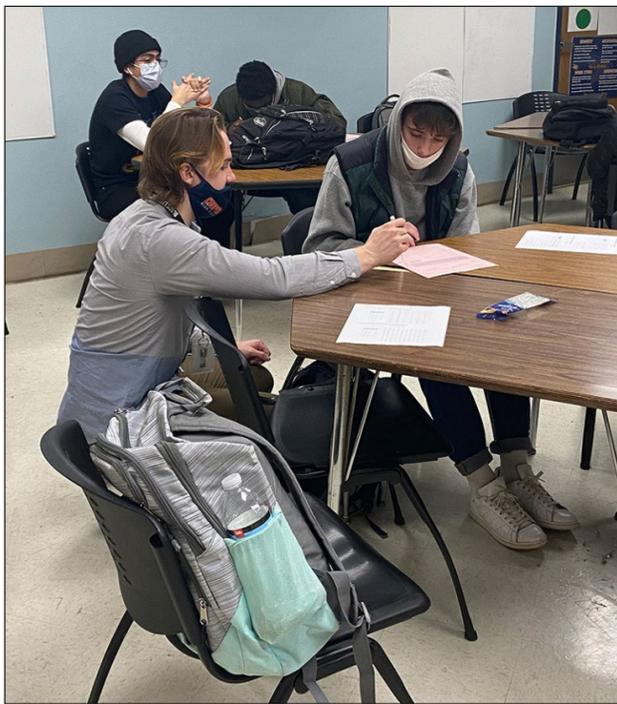


Photo by MYRA SINCHI

Math teacher Mr. James started teaching during distance learning.

school in Plymouth.

After coming to Cooper, she said she has loved the energy after a year of distance learning.

"I've really appreciated getting to be in person with the wonderful staff and students here. Even though Cooper is much, much bigger than my previous school, I've seen a strong sense of community here. I also love walking by the

murals every day," Fremont said.

The biggest challenges so far for Fremont have been the 7:20 a.m. start time and a few issues with technology. Despite that, Fremont said she knew she wanted to be a teacher due to the amazing teachers that made school welcoming and exciting for her.

"Teaching lets me share some of my favorite stories and, even better, it

gives me the opportunity to constantly learn new ideas from my students," Fremont said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Martinson started his third teaching job at Cooper this year. Before Cooper, he taught English and worked in special education for three years, and before that, he taught English for three years to students who were incarcerated at juvenile corrections centers. Martinson said he knew he wanted to be a teacher after his freshman year teacher suggested that he had what it takes to be a great teacher.

"Teaching allowed me to interact with people and talk about the ideas in English that I always thought were so relevant to life," Martinson said.

Martinson grew up in Appleton, Wisconsin, and is a big Packers fan. He said he has enjoyed forming connections with his students during his first year at Cooper.

"I have enjoyed the energy and enthusiasm of the students in my class. It is obvious that Cooper students take pride in their school and their school community. The welcome from the staff and administration has been amazing," Martinson said.

The biggest challenge for Martinson so far has been splitting time between two schools. He teaches at Cooper in the morning and finishes his day at Armstrong.

"It's been a unique experience and I think it will only get easier as I get used to the schedule," Martinson said.

## STATE FOOTBALL

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against the team from Alexandria on November 13. During the first half, Alexandria made more plays than Cooper, while the Hawks struggled.

"In the first half, we couldn't get anything going offensively," Patterson said.

Among the key plays for Alexandria during the first two quarters were a kick-off return for a touchdown, an interception in the end zone, and a field goal after a blocked Cooper punt. Thanks to these plays, Alexandria eventually went into halftime with a 17-7 lead.

The second half was much better for the Hawks. Cooper marched right down the field and scored a touchdown to make it 17-14. Later, in the fourth quarter, David Connors, Jr. had a touchdown called back. However, Alexandria fumbled the ball deep in their own territory and defensive back Josh Gonleh (12) recovered the fumble, which soon resulted in an interception by Reese, who moved over to running back for this game.

Alexandria made one last drive to stay alive, but after they reached the red zone, they lost the ball and Cooper got it back. Much like the Armstrong game, that turnover sealed the win for the Hawks.

One thing that helped the team in the second half was the motivational talk that Russell gave during halftime.

"When the second half came along, after Joe gave us the pep talk in the locker room, it gave us a whole new mindset," Howard said.

Statistically, the trio of Russell, Reese and David Connors, Jr. helped the Hawks dominate the second half. Russell was 13 of 29 for 178 yards and one touchdown. Meanwhile, David Connors, Jr. had five receptions for 104 yards, while Reese had 18 attempts for 50 yards and a touchdown as running back. On the defensive side of the ball, Gonleh had a big day with 13 total tackles.

### 5AAAAA State Semifinals

The 2021 Hawks enjoyed another milestone, not only making it to state, but also making it to the semifinals at U.S. Bank Stadium on November 19. Unfortunately, injuries cost the Hawks as they eventually lost to Mahtomedi 34-7. However, aside from the final score, it was an unforgettable experience for the team.

First, on their way to the stadium, the team got a police escort. The West Metro Fire Department even joined in on the action. Once at the stadium, the team had the chance to play on the U.S. Bank Stadium turf, where so many great NFL players have played before them.

"Playing at U.S. Bank was an awesome experience for our players. As we entered the game, we knew it would be tough given the injuries that we experienced. We didn't accomplish our goal that day, but it definitely gave us the motivation to get back there next year," Patterson said.

As for the game itself, one thing that hurt the squad was an injury to Russell, who was deemed out for the game. Howard was asked to come in as his replacement at quarterback. Even though the result of the matchup was a loss, Howard said he knows that the team took away many positives from the game.

"The whole experience was pretty good for me and especially my teammates," he said.

While the playoff run didn't end the way the team wanted, there were many positives for the Cooper squad. After state, the duo of Russell and Royal went on to play in the state all-star game at U.S. Bank Stadium on December 4. Additionally, multiple Hawks made *Star Tribune's* All-Metro Team this year. Perhaps most importantly, this team did something that none of the past Hawk teams have done: play at U.S. Bank Stadium for a shot at the state football title.

# HAWK tickets play role in promoting positive behavior

Students may be recognized for demonstrating honesty, accountability, work ethic, kindness during the school day

By RICHARA BULLOCK  
Quill staff writer

The return to in-person learning has brought with it the expanded use of HAWK tickets. HAWK tickets have been used at Cooper for the last five years as part of the school's MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) initiative to provide positive recognition to students.

"Teachers and staff use HAWK tickets as a positive reinforcement for students," Cooper assistant principal Ms. Smith said. "Students seem to appreciate and work to display HAWK values in order to gain this reinforcement."

HAWK tickets are designed to support the concepts represented by the HAWK acronym: honesty, accountability, work ethic and kindness. When teachers see students behaving in a way that connects to any of these areas, they are encouraged to give those students a ticket.

According to Smith, the HAWK tickets provide students with specific feedback and acknowledgment for positive behaviors. The tickets also remind staff members to provide frequent positive acknowledgments, thereby improving relationships with students.

"They reinforce desired behaviors



Photo by NOLAN ANDLER

After shifting to a digital format last year, physical tickets returned for '21-'22.

and increase the likelihood that students will meet our expectations," Smith said.

In order for students to receive a ticket, staff members must notice them demonstrating one of the HAWK behaviors. For example, the "honesty" trait might be demonstrated by a student who does their own work despite the temptation to copy from a classmate.

When a staff member witnesses a HAWK behavior, Smith encourages

them to praise the student's action either verbally or through an electronic message. After that, staff are asked to fill out an online form on which they indicate the student's name, their action and the HAWK behavior that action connects with. Once the form is filled out, the staff member is asked to inform the student that they have been given a ticket.

"For some of our students, this reward system is definitely an incentive

that they find beneficial. Not all students buy into this positive reinforcement, but a majority of our students display HAWK values regardless of the potential for a reward," Smith said.

The names of every student who has received a HAWK ticket are placed into a monthly drawing for prizes. The winners are then announced in advisory and in the school's family newsletter.

"Some prizes include certificates, Cooper items [and] treats," Smith said.

Teachers who have given students HAWK tickets said that the system is valuable in helping celebrate and support positive behaviors and attitudes in students. For example, social studies teacher Mr. DiSalvi said he has used the tickets to encourage students who might be struggling during class.

"I have had some success using HAWK tickets as positive reinforcement. Earlier this year, I had a student who had had been behaving inappropriately in class and did not have much academic success. However, he did one task pretty well and I gave the student a HAWK ticket and explained why he earned it. Since then, I have seen a lot of positive changes in this student in the classroom," DiSalvi said.

# Cooper staff members balance being teachers, parents

Some of the same skills that help teachers in the classroom can also be of benefit to them at home

By MYRA SINCHI  
Quill staff writer

Cooper students come to school every day and go through eight different teachers. However, most students do not realize all the hard work our teachers do to balance their families at home and their work at school.

Social studies teacher Mr. DiSalvi said he faces the challenge of having to budget his time related to teaching due to his young child at home.

"I don't have as much time avail-

able after school to plan lessons or to grade. As a result, I have to use my prep hour very efficiently so that I can be present for my wife and six-month-old daughter, Tori," he said.

Being a parent can help impact relationships with students, especially when teachers' kids continue to grow older. Students can also help impact the way teachers interact with their own kids. DiSalvi said he thinks teachers gain a better understanding of both students and their own children through the process of working with both. For instance, DiSalvi

said he now understands the importance of being patient with students and preparing himself for anything, since kids will do things you do not expect.

"Because Tori is so young, I have very different interactions with teenagers and Tori. However, I suppose just the experience of having a child now makes me understand that children do things that you don't expect, whether they are infants or teenagers. As a result, I have found that I just need to be patient and understand that they don't see the world the same way I do, which means that

they are going to perceive things in a different way," he said.

Since DiSalvi is still starting his journey with his young daughter, he said his experience in working with older students will help him in the future to better understand what his daughter is feeling with school and friends.

Another teacher who balances the life of parenting and teaching is English teacher Ms. Prillwitz. Before Prillwitz's

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## The Quill

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## Students doing good job with COVID safety

Despite some people who struggle with complying, mask wearing has been largely universal

By ERIN CHUNN  
Quill staff writer

Coming back to Cooper from distance learning had a lot of people on edge, even though a few students came back for a few months last year. Since we weren't given the option for distance learning this year, the school has been fully occupied by all students. Coming back means we had to readjust to being around all of the people we hadn't seen since we left in March 2020. The fact that we haven't gotten sent back to distance learning shows the majority of students are taking the proper precautions to stop the spread of COVID, not only inside of school, but outside of school as well. Cooper students are showing their determination to stay safe from illness on a daily basis.

The whole mask debate has been completely blown out of proportion by the world, but at Cooper, it's not a terrible problem. There are masks given if a student tries to walk in without one and teachers enforce the "mask up" rule in classes. Seeing everyone wearing a mask, even when a "select few" are wearing their masks wrong, makes the environment equal and much more comfortable for everyone. Of course, it gets annoying wearing the mask all day, especially during a class requiring exercise or excessive talking, but the students have been doing exceptional with wearing masks.

Another way the school is relying on students to be responsible about COVID relates to vaccinations and reporting illnesses. Not only is Cooper not forcing vaccinations on students, they are also trusting students to stay away when they don't feel okay, even if it doesn't feel like COVID. It's good they aren't trying to force anything unnecessary on anyone. Instead, the school is just requesting that basic safety rules are followed. We are told to stay home as long as we need to recover and come back ready to learn. The fact that teachers are being patient with students who need to quarantine is also very helpful. This really shows how much Cooper cares about the health of its students.

The only place that is truly worrisome when discussing the potential spread of COVID at school is the hallways. In previous years, the hallways have been a place to walk and talk with your friends or stop by your locker. However, we can't afford that luxury now. The hallways are packed during major transitions like fifth period, when people are making their way to lunch, their HLL session or their cars. This is when COVID safety practices are most important and when some students have been slipping up. While Cooper has been trying to avoid large groups in tight spaces, the traffic in the halls is inevitable and hard to avoid. I hope that we can keep our masks up during these transition times.

In conclusion, the steps taken to prevent the spread of COVID have been adequate so far. Most of the students have grown accustomed to wearing their masks and there hasn't been too much fuss about it. The halls are still packed, but people are mostly masked up and try to distance themselves as much as possible. Also helping is that most students are calling in their absences when they need to quarantine and recover. I'm sure everyone is still nervous as we see the COVID numbers in our area fluctuating and all of these new strains of the disease coming out, but it's abundantly clear that Cooper is trying to stop the spread.

## Football team's success a boost for Cooper

A challenging first semester was made more tolerable by the ability of students to rally around the squad's state run



Photo by ANDREW HAGGE

Hawk fans flocked to the state qualifying game at Osseo High School despite the cold weather.

### From the Editors

It has been a tough year. After 18 months of distance learning, Cooper students are struggling with the reality of being back in a traditional classroom environment. Not only has that been an adjustment, so has the need to get work done on a strict schedule and follow an eight-period day. Added to those stresses is the reality of being in the same building with 1,500 other students every day and the various annoyances and conflicts that

leads to. One thing that was an important distraction from these negatives was the success of the Cooper football team. Their success in the state tournament was a much-needed form of inspiration for a school with students who are still struggling with life during the pandemic.

One positive aspect of the football team's success was the fact that it took students' minds off of the realities of their day-to-day school routines. Being able to look forward to each postseason game gave students something to focus on other than

school and work. In addition, the various pepfests and special schedules that took place around the big games were a needed break from the predictable grind of the school day. It was great for several weeks to think about something else other than deadlines and summatives.

Another highlight of the football team's success is that it allowed us to celebrate positive student accomplishments at the school. Whether it is the daily fights that seem to be breaking out at Cooper, the students who run around the building during

class time every period without seeming to get in trouble, or the vandalism that keeps resulting in the bathrooms getting shut down, there has been a lot of negativity at school this year. However, thanks to the football team, it was fun to watch Cooper students accomplish something that put the school in the area spotlight for positive reasons for a change.

Perhaps the biggest benefit of the team's success is that it gave Cooper students something to share in common. This is a diverse school in nearly every way possible, ranging from demographics, to family situations, to academic success, to life outside of the school. However, for one great month, we all had something in common. The sense of community that the football team's success brought to Cooper came at the right time and hopefully will provide positive momentum for the rest of the school year.

While Cooper students and athletes were understandably disappointed that the team did not advance to the final game, the journey through the postseason was not disappointing on any level. The players on the football team inspired everyone in the school just when we needed it and will hopefully serve as a spark to get the winter athletes motivated to perform at a high level when that season enters its playoff phase. More importantly, the football team gave Cooper students a chance to be proud of the school they have to be at five days a week.

## School speaker system is causing disruptions

New bell tones, fire alarms and announcements during classes are making it hard for students to focus

By ERIN CHUNN  
Quill staff writer

Cooper is not new to alarm and announcement systems being the most consistent and distracting events of the day. There have been plenty of times where I'm taking an extremely important summative worth 80 percent of my grade and my time is cut in half because students are smoking in the bathrooms, which triggers the new alarm system and a fire evacuation. On top of that, the administration struggles with properly managing the bell every time a change is made to the regular bell routines. The struggles with the bells have become worse and worse this year. And let us not forget the daily bus cancellation announcements during eighth period, which are necessary but bring class to a halt each day. All together, the random bells, the weekly fire drills, and the daily bus cancellation announcements are distracting during class.

At one point in early November, there were two different bells going off every single class period for a week and a half. Even worse, a few months ago, when we had a short day, we had a bell going off for the shortened schedule and another one following the regular schedule. The bells were very confusing because they were going off back to back. That confusion quickly turned to an annoyance.



Photo by ERIN CHUNN

Some of the issues are related to the new alarms put in this school year.

Although one interruption might be bearable by itself, when the fire alarm and bus announcements started happening together, I considered wearing ear plugs. Honestly, the bells and announcements have become a bigger problem than they should be.

Not only is the bell of concern, the new fire alarm system is also the literal worst. It may help the administration easily catch contraband in the bathrooms since the alarm is sensitive to smoke, but I liked it better when a few students smoking in the bathroom didn't affect everyone else in the building. The fire alarms were forgiven at first because it was warmer outside and classes weren't as intense

in the beginning of the year, but since we are nearing the middle of the school year with a consistent amount of school work and it's now freezing outside, let's not smoke in the bathrooms and inadvertently set off those alarms. Sooner or later, the alarm is going to go off and nobody will believe there's danger. The fire alarm going off is becoming normalized and that's an extreme safety issue.

It's a fact that the administration didn't have to worry about having students in the building for many months in a row last year. Although students came back for the last three months of last school year, it was not the same. But now that we are back in the building,

the alarm interruptions need to be reduced. While the fire alarm isn't the administration's fault because it's the actions of the students that set off the alarm, the bell troubles seem extremely unnecessary. How does no one know how to properly work it? If you know the bell will cause problems if messed with, then why change the bell during the school day? If it takes a few days for the bell to get on track, wouldn't it make more sense to make changes during a long weekend or break so it doesn't distract or confuse students during their classes? Since the bell has glitched more than once this year, you would think a backup plan would be made in consideration of that fact.

In conclusion, both the spontaneous bells and the consistent interruptions by the fire alarm are beyond bothersome. While it's unclear if the bell glitches are electronic in nature or that the administration simply doesn't have the skill set to fix the problem, it's obvious that some assistance is needed or a good plan needs to be put in place to change the bells when no one will be in the school. Beside the bell, the fire alarm is also infuriating. The sudden change to the fire alarm system gives the perception that it was made more sensitive intentionally but the negative results affect everyone in the building. It's apparent that changes need to be made to both systems.

## Hawks are experiencing issues with academic motivation

The transition back to in-person learning after a year at home has not been a smooth one for many students

By DEVIN GRAY  
Quill staff writer

Have you ever had an essay that is due 11:59 p.m. and you haven't even started it on the due date? Then, by the time you get halfway through, you decide to just not finish it? This is common among students in 2021-2022 as motivation is running low for everyone. At times, it seems that nobody likes let alone wants to do school work, even when their grade depends on it. So why is that?

I believe that the main reason

students don't seem to have any motivation is because the engagement with teachers and students was lost during the pandemic. Unfortunately, not many people had a smooth transition back into in-person learning. I know I haven't. I genuinely didn't even want to be in the proximity of human beings many times during the school year. However, something that has helped me was finding a good HLL, a good group and an after-school activity. This allowed me to get back to being involved with the school environment.

The second reason for lack

of motivation might be related to the engagement level of certain classes. During work time, barely anyone works together anymore. This causes people to doze off or just scroll through TikTok or Snapchat. Certain classrooms still have the pandemic feel. To solve this, teachers might want to give more engaging lessons as opposed to the teacher just talking at the students.

Finally, I believe that most students have a lack of help outside of school. Even though I see some teachers staying after school for a certain amount of time, this

is often not enough to help every student. I know I struggle to get work done at home and I know others who have this problem. Perhaps a study hall after school may help solve this issue.

All in all, the lack of student motivation is causing a big problem for Cooper's classrooms. However, study groups, teacher-to-student engagement and an after-school study hall may help solve these problems. If you know somebody who is struggling with this problem, be sure to reach out and help them. One helping hand can go a long way.

# Shang-Chi brings new hero to MCU

While the plot largely sticks to the Marvel formula, the focus on Asian characters is a welcome change for superhero films

By LUKE REKELA-JASPER  
Quill staff writer

*Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* was directed by Destin Daniel Cretton and is the 25th film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). It is the first Marvel Studios film with an Asian director and a primarily Asian cast. In the film, Shang-Chi, the successor to the Ten Rings organization, is forced to confront the trauma from his past as his father attempts to get him to return home to help him with an issue connected to what drove them apart in the first place.

Even if it weren't for COVID-19 concerns, I would have likely not seen *Shang-Chi* when it was released in theaters in September 2021. Perhaps the pandemic took part in this, but for the last year or so, I've found myself very fatigued with the comic book/superhero movie genre due to how similar and predictable each movie is. But after hearing *Shang-Chi* was received well by both audiences and critics, I decided to give it a watch a few days after it was released onto Disney+. Not to my surprise, *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* was just about what I expected it to be, although it did possess a few unique qualities that I'll mention shortly.

The first element of *Shang-Chi* I'll be covering is its non-linear narrative. To my surprise, this film had a lot in common with one of my favorite comic book movies, *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*, in that it jumps from the past to the present to tell its story. This causes the audience to be more engaged in the story as it mixes in what happened in the past and how it connects to what is going on in the present. I think if *Shang-Chi* was not told out of chronological order, then its story would have significantly decreased in quality for me since the audience would not have had the knowledge of everything surrounding the main conflicts. In effect, it would erase the impact those past events have on *Shang-Chi's* characters.

Furthermore, the second element I'll be discussing is the characters of *Shang-Chi*. Starting off with the titular character himself, I found the character and backstory of Shang-Chi to be the most compelling aspects of the film. Played by Simu Liu, Shang-Chi has a lot of depth and baggage for an MCU character, who are typically very witty and quippy people that have fun amidst the chaos. Shang-Chi was a surprisingly tragic character who has endured years of psychological and physical abuse as a child. He was trained into becoming a one-man killing machine by his father, Wenwu, a.k.a. The Mandarin, the main antagonist of the film.

As far as MCU villains go, they are pretty hit or miss. I feel that as an antagonist, Wenwu, played by Tony Leung, is



Photo courtesy of MARVEL STUDIOS

*Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* was recently added to the Disney+ streaming service.

decent. While I understand his motivations, they aren't wholly original to this franchise. If it were up to me, I would have liked to see the villain of *Shang-Chi* just be someone who is stereotypically evil, kind of like Emperor Palpatine from *Star Wars*. I would have really preferred if the MCU took a risk to make the antagonist of the film just a martial arts master who feels no remorse or regret for his awful actions.

As for the supporting cast, I thought they all did what they were supposed to do. Katy, played by Awkwafina, is Shang-Chi's best friend from America. She tags along for the ride and is the stereotypical fish-out-of-water human sidekick that makes MCU-level jokes. Meng'er Zhang plays Shang-Chi's sister, Xu Xialing, whose main purpose in the film is to fight bad guys, though, like her brother, she does have some trauma that is explored and detailed pretty well for the audience to get behind her motivations. Ben Kingsley reprises his controversial role as Trevor Slattery from *Iron Man 3*, and his main purpose in this movie is to provide comedic relief. I think Slattery's involvement feels very forced, as if the filmmakers remembered that the MCU needs to be a superhero-comedy movie, so he feels kind of out of place here.

The next element I'll be discussing is the story of *Shang-Chi* and how the film's three acts are structured. Act one pretty much breezed by me, with the film starting off with a *Lord of the Rings*-esque exposition scene, and then cutting to Shang-Chi and Katy hanging out in America before being thrust into their adventure. The pacing of this film is decent and it is carried by its non-linear narrative. However, the first act in particular ranges

from being very slow at the start to suddenly lightning fast toward its end. Meanwhile, the film's second act suffers from the first act's pacing issues at first, but it slows down once Shang-Chi and company finally learn about Wenwu's evil plan, and it becomes a lot easier to consume. As for the third act, I liked the first half of it, but it quickly overstays its welcome when, as expected, it culminates in a giant, CGI final battle instead of just focusing on the feud between Shang-Chi and Wenwu. While I don't dislike any of the three acts, I think each of them has their own problems that I cannot overlook.

The fourth part of this review I'd like to dedicate to discussing a few minor aspects of the film that I both liked and disliked. I'm probably the last person to compliment this aspect of a film, but the realistic fight choreography in *Shang-Chi* is pretty solid, especially when the majority of MCU movies and shows heavily rely on CGI lasers, armored flight suits or magic in their action sequences. Another aspect I like is the amount of payoff some jokes and minor plot-points get, though the humor was pretty hit or miss for me. I understand that the MCU likes incorporating comedy into their films and shows, but it can just feel a bit much. For example, early on in the film, a fight breaks out on a city bus between Shang-Chi and some bad guys, and this random bus rider starts live streaming it and commenting like he's a sports announcer in the press box. In reality, he is less than 10 feet from being chopped in half with an antagonist's razor-fist and is feeling absolutely no fear. While I know the MCU is far from being a realistic take on the superhero genre, it's stupid moments like these that make me realize that I have gotten very fatigued

with the "Marvel formula."

Minor aspects aside, the fifth and final element of *Shang-Chi* I'd like to discuss is its Asian representation and cultural significance. Much like *Black Panther* was praised for its representation of African culture, *Shang-Chi's* story explores Asian culture. I think the filmmakers behind *Shang-Chi* did a very good job of exploring Asian culture through its characters and locations, and my hope is that its sequel (if it's happening) focuses on a current societal issue in America: racism toward Asian-Americans. Being that one of the plot points in the Marvel series *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* is the question of whether or not a Black man could be Captain America, I think the MCU should tackle the social issue surrounding hate crimes and attacks directed toward Asian-Americans. With Marvel Studios making billions of dollars each year, I think they should use their connections to so many moviegoers across the globe to highlight the importance of acting on issues that do exist in society.

Despite its terrific exploration of Asian culture, *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* does not do anything different to make it stand out among all the other superhero films, let alone the other installments in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. I give *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* three out of five stars. It's not a bad film by any means, but it feels like a safe entry in the MCU and that no risks were considered during the filmmaking process. As for the future, I am hoping to see Shang-Chi become one of the new major characters in the MCU. I think he could fit really well into the new roster of Avengers or whatever Marvel is planning next.

## Wasteland sees Hozier expand his songcraft

Irish recording artist continues to make music that moves listeners



Photo courtesy of ISLAND RECORDS

Released just before the pandemic, *Wasteland, Baby!* seems perfectly suited to our current times.

By TAJANNE JENKINS  
Quill staff writer

Andrew John Hozier-Byrne, known mononymously as Hozier, is an Irish musician, singer and songwriter. His music is drawn primarily from the soul, folk and blues genres. Hozier often uses literary and religious themes in his music. Hozier's most recent album, *Wasteland, Baby!*, was released March 1, 2019. The reason why this is my favorite Hozier album is because of the lyrics. Hozier's lyrics are poetic, which can especially be seen on the most popular song on the album, "Shrike," and the story it tells.

To understand why this album is my favorite, it helps to know more about Andrew, as his fans call him. Andrew was born on March 17, 1990 in Bray, County Wicklow, Ireland. He is the son of a local blues musician and he joined his first band at 15, playing blues, soul and folk music.

Andrew first rose to fame in 2013 with his most well-known song, "Take Me to Church," which landed him a major label deal and platinum certifications in 11 countries. He also won a Grammy nomination for best song in 2015. After touring and promotion for that album, Hozier came back to attention with the EP *Nina Cried Power*, which was also loved by millions of people all over the world. *Wasteland, Baby!* is his second full-length album and it hit number one in the U.S. and Ireland upon its release.

One of the best parts of the album is the literary themes that he uses. All the songs have a deeper meaning. Hozier's lyrics are known for being poetic in nature and you have to really listen to understand the meaning behind the things he says and the theme of the overall song, much like you do when reading a book.

Another thing that makes this album so great is the melodies and the harmonies. When combined with the lyrics, Hozier's songs make you feel exactly how he felt in the moment he was making them. The tracks are peaceful and each one takes you on the same journey he was on when he wrote it.

The best part of the album is the emotion and the time he put into it. One of the best songs on the album is "Shrike." This track has the most emotion and it takes you through the journey of loving someone and letting them go. It made me cry like a baby the first time I heard it. This track's combination of beauty and emotion is a perfect example of Hozier's ability to join poetic lyrics with catchy harmonies and melodies. It also shows his vocal strength. "Shrike" is easily the best song on the entire album.

*Wasteland, Baby!* is amazingly beautiful. It is a unique album and a true work of art. I think people should listen to it to experience emotions and witness something beautiful. It's a great album and I hope more people get to hear the magic that is Hozier. *Wasteland, Baby!* earns five out of five stars.

## Showtime finds Dizze Rascal at his musical peak

Classic album combines elements of hip hop, grime, punk and EDM into a unique-sounding whole

By PHILIP ROBERT  
Quill staff writer

*Showtime* is the second full-length release by east London born and bred rapper Dizze Rascal. This album shows Dizze Rascal talking about his newfound fame, which came after the success of his 2003 album, *Boy in da Corner*. Dropped in 2004, *Showtime* shows Dizze trying to move from the grime scene and into a more hip hop-like groove. For the most part, this effort is successful.

Right from the album's start, which sounds like hip hop if it was made by a guy who didn't care to sound like hip hop, *Showtime* is a unique album. The album features sounds that frequently are closer to punk rock and EDM music with a UK hip hop groove to it.

The opening track, "Showtime," welcomes listeners into this weird album with sounds you will never hear in a normal hip hop song. The sounds are from trash romplers and good samplers, which will remind listeners of the music made by Dizze Rascal's friend-turned-enemy,



Photo courtesy of XL RECORDINGS

Dizze Rascal's off-stage behavior helped grow his album's fame.

Wiley. The song's lyrics address how he started in the rap game: "This journey starts six years ago in a run-down housing estate in Bow East London, southeast UK. Was a young man. Let's call this young man Ray." Actually, the person's real name is Dylan, but Ray is easier to

rhyme with, and the rhymes help make this a great album opener.

The next song on the album is "Stand Up Tall." This track finds Dizze Rascal telling Londoners to wake up and do something original. Youngstar produced this beat on a Play Station 1 using a

game called *MTV Music Generator*. The choice of production makes this song a memorable one on the album.

If you skip forward a couple of songs, you will get to the infamous diss track "Hype Talk." This is a diss song directed at Wiley, who later responded with his own track, "Dylan on Tha Hype Now." Obviously, this song was part of an ongoing beef between Dizze Rascal and Wiley, which makes it fun to listen to.

The album also manages to address real-world issues like the problems faced by inner-city kids. This can be best heard on "Get By," a track featuring Vanya. This song finds Dizze Rascal talking about growing up in the ghetto and all the things he had to do to get by.

Overall, *Showtime* is a great mix of 15 tracks on which Dizze Rascal brags and reflects on his success and past mistakes. At the time of its release, the London scene was thinking that grime was going to die and not going to be big. Despite this challenge, *Showtime* proves that continued musical success is possible and how you deal with it can be rewarding. I give this album 3.5 out of five stars.

## COOPER STAFF MEMBERS BALANCE BEING TEACHERS, PARENTS continued from page 3

son was born, she said she spent a lot of time catching up on assignments and planning. She now balances her parenting and teaching by having to be more creative and using time management to get everything finished.

"Before our son was born, I used to spend many hours after school, at night and on the weekends doing grading and

planning. I no longer have that time free, so I have to be more creative in fitting in all the work that needs to be done," she said.

Prillwitz added that working with students has helped her understand the mind of kids, including her own.

"I understand the importance of structure, clear expectations and relation-

ships even more now," Prillwitz said.

Also, Prillwitz said that spending time with students will help her better interact with her son as he continues to get older. For example, as an English teacher, Prillwitz said she enjoys reading to her son, which he enjoys very much and it will hopefully help him have a good academic start.

"We started reading him books before he was even a week old, and now, as a two-year-old, we take him to the library once a week to check out new books. Being read to is one of his favorite activities, and we hope that will give him a solid academic start and be a source of lifelong joy for him," Prillwitz said.

## A Deeper Love will woo fans of urban fiction

The 2013 coming-of-age novel was written by former rap artist Sister Souljah

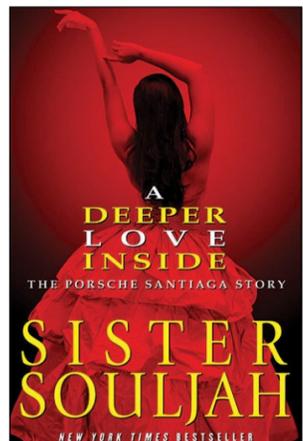


Photo courtesy of SIMON & SCHUSTER

A *Deeper Love* follows central character Porsche Santiago on her life journey from age nine to 21.

By TAJANNEA JENKINS  
Quill staff writer

*A Deeper Love Inside* is an urban fiction and contemporary literature novel written by Sister Souljah and originally published in January 2013. Set in Brooklyn, New York, the novel is written in the words and thoughts of Porsche Santiago, daughter of “hustler” Ricky Santiago and sister of Winter. The story follows Porsche as she fights to get her family back and survive the system and the plans it has for her. She’s brave, passionate and loyal, but most of all, she’s a Santiago, which means she’s a hustler and a survivor. This is one of the best books I have ever read. The way it is written makes you lose yourself in the book and never want it to end. It also makes you want to keep reading it over and over again.

In *A Deeper Love Inside*, we are taken through the life of Porsche Santiago from the time she is a child until she is an adult. At the start of the book, Porsche is taken to foster care, which she resents because she wants to go back home. She starts trouble with her foster families in the hope that she will get sent back to her actual family. During an accident that eventually occurs, Porsche ends up in a juvenile detention facility, where her life changes. She comes to the realization that she’s not going home, but she never gives up hope on finding her sister, Winter, and the rest of her family.

*A Deeper Love Inside* has many amazing things about it, but one of the best is the storytelling ability the author has. We are given many time jumps throughout Porsche’s life, from her time as a kid at age nine, to a teenager at age 15 and then to an adult at ages 19 and 21. Despite these jumps, everything fits together. For example, events that you think the author would forget about from chapter one return in the epilogue in a way that will blow your mind. This book also makes you want to see if this is about a real person because that’s how detailed it is.

Another appealing thing about this novel is the characterization of Porsche Santiago and her family. You see many sides to a family portrayed into one story: the family you make, the family you are born into and the family you create. *A Deeper Love Inside* is the perfect example of these family issues because Porsche is loyal to her family despite everything she goes through. Although everything she does is for them, Porsche becomes increasingly loyal to the people who stayed beside her as she explores life, helping her realize not all family is blood.

Perhaps the best thing about the novel is the complexity of its relationships, especially the one between Porsche and her mom. At the beginning of the story, Porsche wants to be back with her mother. She has all these ideas of who her mother is, but when she finally gets out of juvie and goes to find her mother, all of those realities come crashing down. However, Porsche still holds on to the love for the woman she had in her head instead of the one in the actual real world.

*A Deeper Love Inside* is an amazing novel written like an autobiography that will blow your mind. The story and the characters will make you fall in love with them and the world they live in. This book teaches you about loyalty, the importance of self-discovery, finding who you are and the nature of families. This book definitely gets five out of five stars.

## Red Dead 2 remains a landmark game

The 2018 prequel to *Red Dead Redemption* set a new standard for all action-adventure video games

By LUKE REKELA-JASPER  
Quill staff writer

*Red Dead Redemption 2* is an action-adventure Western video game published in 2018 and developed by Rockstar Games. It is a prequel to 2010’s *Red Dead Redemption* and is the third entry in Rockstar’s *Red Dead* video game series. The story is set in a fictionalized version of the United States and follows a gang of outlaws as they struggle to survive during the decline of the Wild West era and the rise of modern civilization in a rapidly changing America.

Back in the summer of 2021, I was looking for a new video game to play during my free time, having gotten a little tired of playing games that I had replayed more times than I could count. I barely knew anything about *Red Dead Redemption 2* going into the game, other than it was a prequel to the first game, which was one of the reasons I decided to give this game a chance, even though I had never played the 2010 video game and knew absolutely nothing about it. The other reason I decided to play *Red Dead 2* was that I was familiar with another game developed by Rockstar Games, *Grand Theft Auto V*, which I enjoyed for its engaging action sequences and memorable characters. But nothing, and I mean no other video game, movie or TV show, could have prepared me for the experience of playing *Red Dead Redemption 2*.

The first topic I’d like to discuss is the story and its impact on *Red Dead 2*’s vast cast of characters. The game opens with a gang of outlaws being led by their charismatic leader, Dutch van der Linde, through a snowstorm in the mountains following a botched ferry heist that has the law on the hunt for them. The first chapter of the game serves as an effective tutorial and establishes everything *Red Dead 2* is about. It starts off very slow and dwindles for quite a bit, filling the player in on important backstory and details, when, suddenly, the player is thrown into climactic shootouts, chases, robberies and other mischief. I’ve seen many reviews that call out *Red Dead 2*’s slow pacing, which is a criticism that I completely disagree with. I’ve always found the “slow burn” method of storytelling to be an effective one, which *Red Dead 2* uses in just about every mission. However, I will admit that this approach did become a little irritating after a while.

Once the first chapter concludes, the game’s story only gets better and better, largely due to developments with the game’s main characters. The game’s



Photo courtesy of ROCKSTAR GAMES

*Red Dead Redemption 2* takes a cinematic approach to its storytelling, acting, music and design.

protagonist, Arthur Morgan, starts to express his true personality and outlook on life as circumstances, mostly negative ones, cause the Van der Linde gang to experience setbacks to their plans of escaping the west and sailing off to a tropical paradise. One of my favorite parts of Arthur Morgan’s journey is his relationship with Dutch, a friend of more than two decades who serves as a surrogate father. In the game, Dutch’s mental state begins to slowly deteriorate as his overly ambitious expectations are not met. The pinnacle of Arthur and Dutch’s relationship comes when about half of the gang is stranded on a Cuban island after another botched heist. It is at this point that Dutch’s true, despicable self begins to tear itself through his charisma and butch demeanor. I find this segment of the game to be a particular highlight.

Moreover, what makes Arthur Morgan not just my personal favorite character in *Red Dead Redemption 2*, but my favorite protagonist in all of gaming, is his physical and psychological journey toward redemption. Arthur starts off as a two-bit outlaw and hardened killer, until circumstances transform him into the person he really is: a heroic and honorable man. Arthur’s new motivations lead into another favorite character of mine, John Marston, the protagonist of *Red Dead Redemption*. Arthur’s journey becomes a defining experience in John’s life, with him further emphasizing the importance and

responsibility John has to his family, who he has been neglecting to Arthur’s annoyance.

Roger Clark, the actor who portrays Arthur Morgan through performance capture, rightfully deserved to win “Best Performance” at the Game Awards in 2018. Benjamin Byron Davis and Rob Wiethoff, who portray Dutch van der Linde and John Marston, respectively, also hit it out of the park once again as returning performers from *Red Dead Redemption*. A few other characters who I think deserve to be acknowledged are Charles Smith, a loyal member of the gang who develops a strong bond with the Native American Wapiti tribe; Sadie Adler, a traumatized widow that transforms into a ruthless gunslinger; Hosea Matthews, Dutch’s right-hand man, whose role in the story becomes even more apparent to the player once his story reaches its conclusion; and Micah Bell, one of Rockstar’s most devilishly crafted fiends, who proves to be an extra sharp thorn in the sides of *Red Dead 2*’s protagonists.

The second topic I’d like to discuss is *Red Dead Redemption 2*’s gameplay and its massive open world. The gameplay is almost identical to Rockstar’s previous entry, *Grand Theft Auto V*, so adjusting to the game’s mechanics was not a huge issue for me. However, the gameplay section leads to some of the issues I do have with *Red Dead 2* as a whole. First, the camera movement in

all Rockstar Games I’ve played feels very restricted and unpolished. Next, the cover system, which implies the player will hide behind something to not be shot at, is almost never effective. Finally, the missions often start with about three-minute-long horse rides to your destination. These flaws, although minor, started to irritate me during my first playthrough and were something I had to adjust to.

These issues aside, where *Red Dead Redemption 2* shines is in its massive open world, which is in constant motion, operating on an “80-second rule,” which implies that, after about a minute of adventuring, something of interest will catch the player’s attention. Whether it be a stranger asking you if you’ve seen his friend Gavin, you stumbling on a house that was just hit by a meteorite, or you spotting some poor sap get their leg clamped in a bear trap, *Red Dead 2*’s open world is truly the “Wild West” of open world games, with so many oddball characters to meet and interesting areas to explore.

The third topic I’ll be discussing is *Red Dead Redemption 2*’s writing. Dan Houser, Michael Unsworth and Rupert Humphries, the writers of *Red Dead 2*, make this fictional world feel real, especially with how well and in-depth the game’s characters are written. While

**RED DEAD 2**  
continues on page 7

## Spider-Man 2 is an underrated superhero movie

With *Spider-Man: No Way Home* now in theaters, it is a good time to revisit 2012’s *Amazing Spider-Man 2*

By KEN WARD  
Quill staff writer

*The Amazing Spider-Man 2* is a movie that first hit theaters on May 2, 2014. Directed by Marc Webb, it remains one of the best Spider-Man movies. It’s a sequel to 2012’s *The Amazing Spider-Man*, which was the first Spider-Man movie with Andrew Garfield playing Peter Parker after three Sam Raimi-directed Spider-Man movies starring Tobey Maguire. While *The Amazing Spider-Man* introduces the Marvel villain Dr. Curtis Connors, also known as The Lizard, into the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* brings in another big villain from the Marvel comic books into the MCU: the villain Electro, who is played by Jamie Foxx. The performances of Foxx and Garfield, along with an interesting plot, make this a great Spider-Man film.

As usual, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* takes place in New York City, where there are always regular crimes in the street that Spider-Man must solve. Early in the film, he comes across a high-speed chase and saves a guy named Max Dillon (Jamie Foxx) from a truck that is about to run him



Photo courtesy of SONY PICTURES

*Amazing Spider-Man 2* was Andrew Garfield’s second outing as Peter Parker.

over. Max is one of Spider-Man’s biggest fans and supports everything Spider-Man does. Later, Max, who is an electrical engineer and lineman, is repairing a power line when a freak lightning accident causes a mutagenic change that transforms him into a living electrical capacitor. He soon takes the name Electro and turns to the life of a professional criminal. Electro blames Spider-Man for not being there to save him, since he mistakenly thought they

were “partners,” which sets up one of the central conflicts in the movie and most of the film’s excellent action sequences.

The dynamic between the Spider-Man and Max characters is one element I like in the movie. Andrew Garfield and Jamie Foxx do a good job bringing the two characters to life and making the motivations of both characters believable. Jamie Foxx is especially great in the movie, making both Max and Electro characters that viewers can

connect with.

While the performances are good, one issue with the movie is that the plot has a lot going on. Instead of leaving the conflict between Spider-Man and Electro as the movie’s main focus, they bring in additional problems. The main one involves Peter’s friend Harry Osborn turning into Green Goblin. Harry Osborn starts to hate Spider-Man because he won’t give Harry a sample of his blood so it could “cure” Harry of his genetic illness. While this storyline is interesting, adding it to the already complicated plot involving Electro makes the movie feel uneven. While the structure problems don’t keep the movie from being entertaining, they are noticeable.

Overall, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* is sometimes disjointed due to its many subplots. However, that doesn’t mean viewers should skip it. There are many reasons why this is not just a fun movie, but a great Spider-Man flick that attempts things that no other Spidey movie before or after it has tried. Whether it is the chemistry between the lead actors or the fluid action scenes between Spidey and Electro, there is a lot to love about *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*. Spider-Man fans will enjoy this four-star film.

## NEW SUPERINTENDENT BRINGS ENERGY TO ROBBINSDALE continued from page 2

Specifically, Engstrom enjoys running and biking as a stress relief. It is something important to him because he knows that it actually works.

“Science shows that, when you are having the endorphins that are released from exercising, that actually washes the cortisone of stress away,” he said.

One of Engstrom’s “crazy goals”

is to bike on every single street in the school district. Engstrom started this effort in July thinking it was probably only 400 miles of biking. Now that he is at 250 miles, he realizes there is probably closer to 700 miles of road in the school district.

“That’s not a fun way to ride a bicycle because you are doubling back, having to do this, and when you

miss a spot, you have to come back over,” he said.

However, Engstrom added that he will be able to see every street, home and neighborhood, all at “the perfect speed of right about 13 miles per hour,” and that brings him joy and helps him relieve some stress. His biking goal connects to the emphasis Engstrom places on learning and

reflecting in life. This is something he hopes to instill in Robbinsdale students as well.

“My advice to students is always to be reflecting on, ‘What I am learning from this?’” Engstrom said. “I am 100 percent confident that our students can do it; they just have to be aware and be reflective on what those experiences are.”

## Staff adjusts to in-person art

Cooper's art teachers are making the most of their ability to work directly with students again

By MARIAH RILEY  
Quill staff writer

Art classes are designed to help students develop their creative skills, but the challenges of distance learning during the 2020-2021 school year saw Cooper's art teachers having to use their own creativity to figure out ways of teaching art to students remotely. Now that we are all back in the building, the art teachers have found themselves continuing to use some of the instructional methods they first developed last year.

Mr. Molitor, who teaches Photography 1 and Clay 1, said he used many different strategies to reach out to students during distance learning last year.

"I created and distributed, sometimes delivering to students' homes, clay kits that included a bag of clay and a small selection of tools. I demonstrated the processes in Google Meet during class time and then offered breakout rooms so students could get one-on-one feedback in a more private setting," he said.

Also trying things differently in 2020-2021 was Ms. Mielke, who teaches Painting 1 and Drawing 1.

"During distance learning, I encouraged students to create anything. I encouraged students to use art as a form of self care as well as some entertainment. Many students did projects inspired by TikTok videos. Students received credit for being creative in any way that was best for them including makeup, nails, photography and more," she said.

Much like Mielke, Mr. Willicombe, who teaches Drawing I, Drawing II and Photography, said choice played a large role in his teaching during distance learning.

"Depending on which materials they had available, they could complete different projects. I also took a lot of time to remake my project slide-shows to make them more user-friendly. I organized all of them so that, no matter which project you picked, all of the useful information was always on the same slides," he said.

Now that students are fully back in person, Cooper's art teachers agree that aspects of their job are much easier this year. Mielke pointed out that



Photo by MARIAH RILEY

Students in Drawing 1 can now get direct help from Ms. Mielke on their work.

access to materials is a big advantage this year.

"Students are able to get back to doing the art projects that we usually do in the courses. Also, it's fantastic for students to have access to the materials in the art rooms," she said.

Another positive is that teachers can interact with students directly this school year.

"It has been nice to be in person so I can see what students are working on and struggling with," Molitor said. "I can give more immediate and more frequent assistance and feedback when we are in the same room."

Although distance learning now seems to be in the past, each Cooper art teacher said they picked up new teaching skills last school year that they are still using with their students. For example, Willicombe said he is continuing to make sure students have access on Schoology to slides and other class-related information.

"It is really helpful with absences and making sure students know how to catch up on work. It really helps with students having to quarantine as well," he said.

Agreeing with Willicombe is Molitor, who has continued making instructional videos to post to Schoology.

"I am utilizing Schoology a bit more for tutorial videos and resources, but I've always done that to some extent," he said.

Also bringing to her teaching some new skills from last year is Mielke, who said she is now even more attentive to the different needs of her students.

"I started creating YouTube videos and am incorporating them into my curriculum. I also learned how to be more flexible with students' learning styles, due dates and creative expression that I will always carry with me for all of my years teaching," she said.

## RED DEAD 2 REMAINS A LANDMARK GAME continued from page 6

*Red Dead Redemption* was a story that focused on the importance of family, *Red Dead Redemption 2* is about the fall of a family in the form of the Van der Linde gang. The writers of *Red Dead 2* do an exceptional job of developing these characters and providing just the right amount of detail to them without telling you too much about who some of these people really are. They also do a great job of writing characters into corners, which reminded me a lot of *Breaking Bad*, a TV show that featured its characters getting into a lot of impossible-to-beat situations and getting out of them using their intelligence and wits.

Much like other Rockstar video games, the dialogue in *Red Dead 2* is on point. I'd compare the dialogue of *Red Dead 2* to the films *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*. Conversations can hold a viewer's engagement thanks to how quickly each character speaks and reacts

to what is happening in a scene. It isn't necessarily very realistic as to how human beings interact with each other, but it surely can keep the viewer engaged and invested in what is going on, whether it be an intense Mexican standoff or a friendly game of poker.

The fourth topic I'll be discussing is *Red Dead Redemption 2*'s music. For the longest time, my favorite soundtrack from a video game was from the (once) popular, online role-playing game *World of Warcraft*, but that changed when I heard *Red Dead 2*'s soundtrack. Music plays a pivotal role in *Red Dead 2*'s story, especially once you reach the conclusion to its sixth chapter. My favorite songs from the entire soundtrack of *Red Dead Redemption 2* are "Crash of Worlds" by Rocco DeLuca and "The Housebuilding Song" by David Ferguson, which I'd recommend you

refrain from listening to until finishing all six chapters of the campaign and the two-part "Epilogue" segment.

In conclusion, despite flaws that can be frustrating at times, there is no form of entertainment media to which I can compare *Red Dead Redemption 2*. It is a game that I've replayed three times since purchasing it back in July 2021 and I'll likely never forget my initial reaction after my first playthrough. Without a doubt, *Red Dead Redemption 2* deserves five stars out of five. It's not perfect by any means, but then again, I've never watched any movie or TV show that's been perfect, so I suppose nothing is to me. Even though *Red Dead Redemption 2* has some dings in its car door, I'd highly recommend this game to anybody with even the slightest interest in it, and I would consider this video game to be, in its own way, a masterpiece.

## HEALTHY EATING IS IMPORTANT DURING ONE'S TEENS continued from page 2

to "avoid drinks that are high in sugar," including fruit juice, which can have a lot of calories.

To prevent dehydration, teens are encouraged to drink fluid regularly during physical activity and to drink several glasses of water after the physical activity is completed, which is especially important for Cooper athletes.

"Water boosts energy [and] delivers important nutrients to all of our cells," Rooney said. "It keeps us hydrated, helps keep our joints lubricated and also helps maintain body temperature."

According to John Hopkins Med-

icine, exercise and everyday physical activity should also be part of a healthy dietary plan. In fact, they recommend that teens get "at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity on most days for maintenance of good health and fitness and for healthy weight during growth."

Unfortunately, many teens think that skipping exercise and using diets to maintain a healthy weight is a good plan. Some teens may feel pressure from peers to be thin and to limit what they eat. Additionally, both boys and girls may diet to make weight for a particular

sporting or social event. Rooney said this approach to one's health can be harmful to teens.

"As a teen is still growing and developing, it's important to get all of the nutrients that they need. Oftentimes, a teen diet is more about looks than being healthy and that's where it can be dangerous. Teens have a high propensity of bulimia and anorexia; it starts out as a diet and leads to a very dangerous eating disorder. So instead of dieting, eat three well-balanced meals a day, exercise on a regular basis and limit snacking," Rooney said.

## PSEO PROGRAM HELPS STUDENTS ATTEND COLLEGE continued from page 2

beneficial as she has gotten used to college classes. She added that her abilities as a student will be tested even more second semester, when she will switch over to the University of Minnesota.

"I have enjoyed the flexible schedule I have and the ability to get ahead with my high school credits. I also have enjoyed exploring different subject areas to help me narrow down what I want to do in the future," she said.

Agreeing with Hernandez-Guitron

that the ability to start thinking about the future is an important benefit of PSEO is Brynteson.

"I would say that anyone that can do it should do it," he said. "It is just free college, and as long as you treat it as a class that you have to put more effort in than normal, then you will be fine."

However, Hernandez-Guitron added that PSEO students need to make sure to maintain some connection to their high school life as well.

"One thing to think about is if you like being involved in the Cooper environment and seeing your friends all the time. It is possible to see your friends and do PSEO, but it can take some time to find a balance," she said.

Students who are interested in their PSEO options are encouraged to speak to their grade-level counselor.

"If interested for next year, the conversation could start in late winter or early spring," Hough said.

## Premier Performers

The story of the musicians and artists who bring their talents to Cooper

### Kendra Kerner

By DEKU BRIGHT  
Quill staff writer

Kendra Kerner (12) takes part in many arts activities at Cooper, including choir, color guard and theater. While her first involvement in color guard and theater has been recent, Kerner's connection to choir goes back to elementary school.

"The start of my choir career was when I got into All-District Choir in fifth grade," she said.

Kerner said one shared aspect of her arts activities has been the way in which they have led to friendships.

"I have made some of my closest friends through these activities. It is something that can be used as a conversation starter or a way for people to bond in a unique way," she said.

Together with her fellow artists, Kerner has had many memorable ad-

ventures. She cited singing "Sisi No Moja" in her first World of Music concert and a football game at which she had to perform a final toss as two highlights. Additionally, her work on the musical *Ragtime* was another big moment.

"The crew was full of people who didn't have much experience in theater," she said. "Of course, the opening performance for that show had its hiccups, but being able to see it all come together and having that team feel with everyone involved is something I'll never forget."

Outside of school, Kerner works at an animal hospital and teaches swim lessons. As for hobbies, she enjoys longboarding and crafting.

Next fall, Kerner will start college, most likely at the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse. She plans on going into radiation therapy or business as a career.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

### Alex Kosloski

By DAMARIUS HAMILTON  
Quill staff writer

Alex Kosloski (12) is involved in Cooper band groups.

"I'm in both the Wind Ensemble and the Jazz 1 group, and I plan on participating in the pit for this year's musical," he said.

Kosloski has been in band since fifth grade.

"Playing has always been something that I've enjoyed, and I've realized that I want to do it as a career now, as either a performer or a teacher," he said.

Kosloski said he has enjoyed many things about his time in music.

"I've just enjoyed the people, meeting new ones and seeing old ones move on to bigger and better things than high school," he said.

Kosloski's favorite memories in

music vary from group to group.

"In Wind Ensemble, it would be the trip that we took to the University of Wisconsin. For jazz, it would be the opportunity to improvise and try out making my own music. In pit orchestra, it would be feeling like we're performing at a high level and accompanying the performers on stage," he said.

Not surprisingly, Kosloski said his favorite classes at school involve music, but that is not the only subject he enjoys.

"Math has always been something that has come easy to me," he said.

Outside of school, Kosloski works at Fleet Farm. In fact, he said he

may work for a year before college. "I plan on going somewhere in Illinois, but I'm most likely going to take a gap year, and then go to a community college to get my generals done," he said.

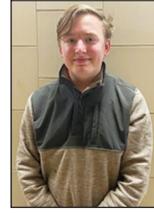


Photo by R. BULLOCK

### Van Nguyen

By NOLAN ANDLER  
Quill staff writer

Van Nguyen (12) is involved in Symphony Orchestra and Concert Choir. While she has been part of orchestra since fourth grade, the decision to join choir was a more recent one.

"By the time I reached my freshman year at Cooper, almost all of my friends had a choir class or participated in choir activities. They tried to convince me to be a part of choir throughout that entire school year, and by spring, I gave in and auditioned for *Bel Canto* and *Bella Voce*," she said.

Nguyen said a highlight of music is working on complicated songs with her classmates.

"Every time there is a new piece given in orchestra, I get extremely eager to tackle the difficult sections first,

which helps me have a good grasp of the piece," she said. "Similarly, I really enjoy the camaraderie within choir class and especially in my section because everyone is ready and willing to work together as a whole to solidify our music."

Nguyen's long involvement in music has led to her getting leadership responsibilities this year.

"I am currently co-president of the Orchestra Student Leadership Council," she said.

As for school, Nguyen said she enjoys her music classes the most. However, she also said French class is another one she is enjoying.

"I've known a majority of the people in my classes for years. Therefore, it's a very comfortable environment," she said.

Next fall, Nguyen said she is leaning toward being a finance major at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

### Silvia Omoke

By ANDREW HAGGE  
Quill staff writer

Silvia Omoke (12) is part of Cooper's choir program. Omoke said she first started singing in choir in a school setting during middle school.

"I started doing choir in seventh grade because I liked to sing and my parents were involved with singing at church, so I also wanted to do something with singing," she said.

Omoke said one highlight of being in choir is the sound that multiple people make when singing together.

"I've enjoyed singing with other people and combining voices because it sounds beautiful," she said.

In fact, working together with others connects to Omoke's favorite choir memory.

"My favorite memory was going

to Orchestra Hall during my sophomore year," she said. "It was a beautiful experience combining voices with other people and also the structure and scenery of the place made it 10-times better to sing in."

Outside of her music class, Omoke said she enjoys her AVID class and the many years of work she has put into that program.

"My favorite class is AVID because they've really helped us to prepare for college and a career after high school," she said.

Outside of choir and school, Omoke said she is into sports.

"I love playing volleyball and I recently played on the Cooper volleyball team for four years," she said.

Next fall, Omoke will be heading to college to major in nursing. She said she hopes to eventually become a pediatric nurse.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

## Pro soccer season comes to close with playoffs

While Minnesota exited early, there were other exciting matches to watch in the postseason

By ANDREW HAGGE  
Quill staff writer

The Major League Soccer (MLS) season came to a close on December 11 with New York City beating Portland in penalty kicks after the final score ended with a 1-1 tie. With a more normal season than last year, the MLS postseason featured many upsets and surprising results.

### First Round: Western Conference Minnesota vs. Portland

This matchup between the Portland Timbers and your hometown Minnesota Loons looked equal based on the seeding. However, the result was slightly lopsided with the Timbers running away 3-1 as the Loons struggled to keep up. The Loons scored first in the 11th minute, but after this promising start, it went downhill. Racking up a total of six fouls, and the Timbers with only two, it was easy to see how the Loons lost their temper and let in three goals to send them back home. Portland controlled just under half of the possession time but managed almost twice as many shots. Minnesota was undisciplined, coming away with only one save over four shots on goal. Additionally, the Loons had six shots on goal and a lackluster scoring percentage. In contrast, the Timbers organized some great defense with blocked shots and a massive five saves on the goal line by Steve Clark.

### Kansas City vs. Vancouver

Sporting Kansas City taking on an underwhelming Vancouver Whitecaps panned out exactly how it looked on paper with another 3-1 final. The scoring opened up in the first half with Kansas City taking a 1-0 lead. The Whitecaps fought back, trying to even it up before halftime, and eventually doing so in the 39th minute thanks to Cristian Dajome. From there, it was all Kansas City as they dropped one in during added time for the first half, taking the lead 2-1 and the momentum. Further opening up the game to a 3-1 margin was Kansas City as they scored in the 58th minute and held the Whitecaps down in all attempts to come back. After the third goal, three subs were put in within 15 minutes of the last goal by Kansas City and the struggles piled on for Vancouver, which tacked on three yellow cards in the last five minutes.

### Seattle vs. Salt Lake City

The Sounders started off the post-season with no goals in 90 minutes. Real Salt Lake didn't put any in either during the allotted time, but pulled off the unlikely upset in a penalty kick thriller. The final shot to send Salt Lake on in the playoffs banked against the far left post, barely past the goalkeeper, and rolled across the goal as it passed the line. Salt Lake had zero shots the entire game; absolutely none. Meanwhile, Seattle rocked a solid 2-1 at the net and three on goal that weren't blocked, but the keeper stood strong, blocking each one. No one would have ever guessed even halfway through the game that Seattle would never manage a single goal. This game is exactly what a crazy postseason upset should look like and we got it right away in the first round.

### First Round: Eastern Conference New York City vs. Atlanta

New York City FC faced off in the biggest toss-up match in the eastern conference against Atlanta FC. Surprisingly, it was a solid 2-0 showing for New York. New York only held 42 percent of the possession through the game, yet took advantage of that time. Meanwhile, Atlanta took nearly 58 percent and had twice as many crosses than New York in front of the goal. However, they failed to muster any scoring as New York combined blocking and goalkeeping to eliminate the opportunities given to Atlanta. Capping off the frustration also seen by Seattle and Minnesota, Atlanta managed a red card in the 93rd minute after Alan Franco got his second yellow card.

### Nashville vs. Orlando

Nashville, coming in with the upper hand, faced a hopeful Orlando squad that tried hard but to no avail. They managed just over half the time as they tried to beat Nashville and took nine corners

PRO SOCCER  
continues on page 9

# Winter teams embark on '21-'22 season

After a delayed start to the '20-'21 season due to COVID, winter athletes look forward to a full competition schedule this year

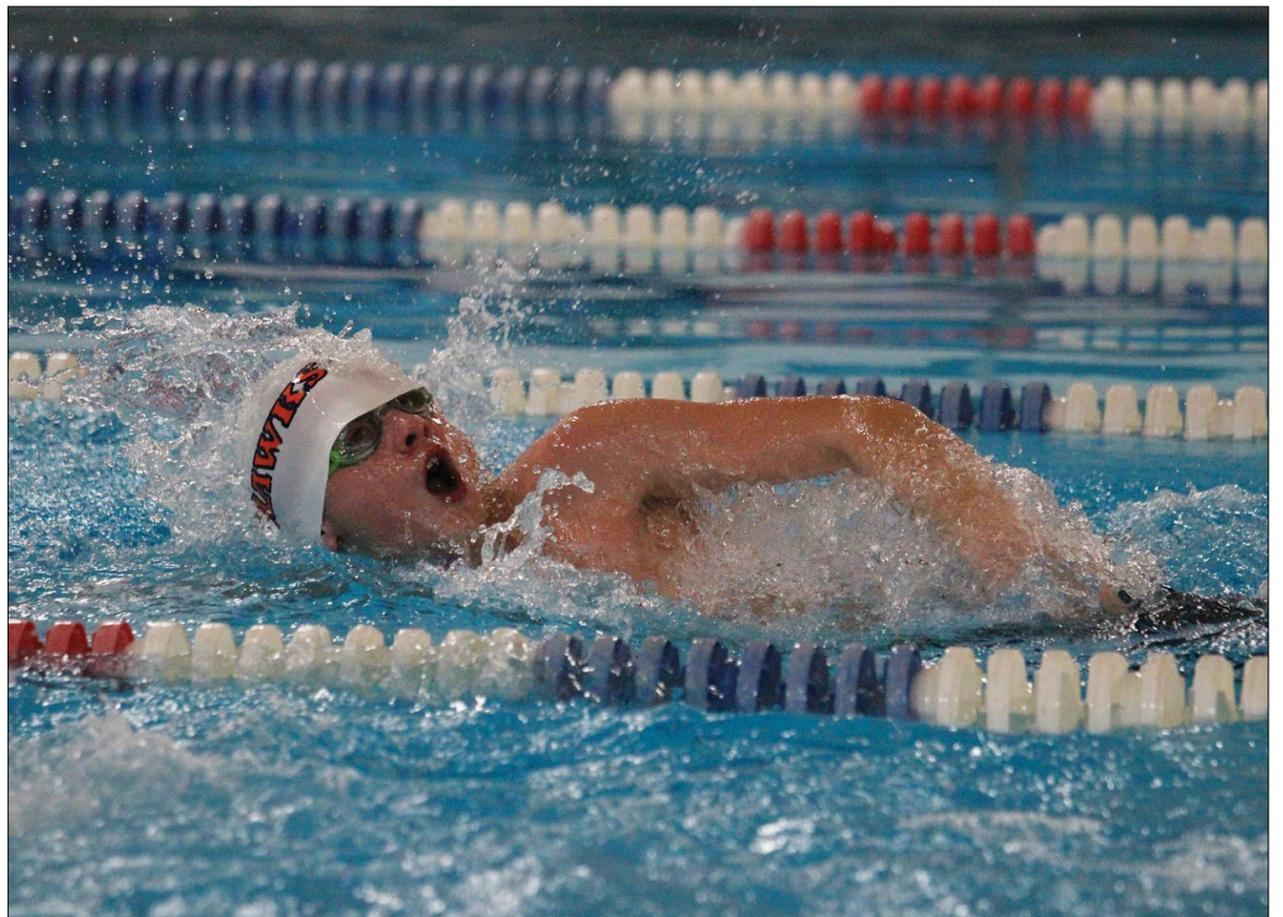


Photo by MS. BOSWELL

The Hawks boys swimming team has experienced a growing roster and increased success at state over the last five seasons.

By ANDREW HAGGE  
Quill staff writer

Winter teams have just gotten into the swing of things. In fact, most sports have already played games and had meets. Recruiting was a big part of this season for all teams following last year, which had a delayed start due to COVID. The biggest challenge now is trying to get winter athletes back to their old habits and to get new athletes to participate. Tacked onto those challenges are new issues, including bus problems that continue to grow and tamper with all teams. Despite all those challenges, each team looks to grow and come back better than ever.

### Boys Swimming

The boys swimming team ended last season with everyone cruising past their personal best times during sections. Rowan Tiemey (10), Ethan DeGroot (12) and Logan Voigt (11) were the teams leaders in points and speed.

Head coach Mr. Johnson said the daily routine of the swimmers sees them "gather, read through the daily timeline, warm up, work on a variety of skills, swim a main set and do other out-of-the-water conditioning" during practice.

Swim meets are head-to-head, dual events with only two teams facing each other at a time, except for sections and invites. The team with the most points after 13 events is declared the winner of the meet.

Johnson said there are many benefits to swimming.

"[It's] lots of fun," he said. "You get great friends, improved strength and life balance."

### Boys Basketball

The basketball team was just one game away from going to play at Target Center last year in the state tournament. The seniors were "hurt" by this close call because they will "never have a chance to get it again," said team member Majay Murphy, who is a 2021 graduate. Fortunately, Murphy said the team has "other returning, good players" this year such as Prince Appiah (12), Joe Russell (12) and David Connors (12).

A typical practice involves some free throw practice, conditioning and running plays with shots. Even though it sounds simple, Murphy said it is hard work that is going to "pay off."

Between teammates, Murphy said there is plenty of positive competitiveness that helps make each player better and pushes them to improve their skills.

"Incoming students will benefit from taking part in this sport," Murphy said. "It's fun and you make a family."

### Girls Basketball

A strength of the Cooper girls basketball team is that they tend to have "a big comeback when [they are] down," according to player Timiya Reese (12). Without some of their big-name players, who graduated last year, the team is looking to tap into the new recruit class of 2025. Reese said they want to keep a "positive mindset" without the go-to ath-

letes who graduated last spring.

A typical practice for the girls basketball team consists of key dynamics such as ball handling and being prepared to take shots when given the opportunity. The main goal is "working on [their] basketball I.Q. all together," Reese said.

For the incoming players on the team, Reese had one piece of advice: "Be ready to work at all times."

### Nordic Skiing

Starting out in a virtual practice format last year due to COVID, the cross country skiers had a "strange but hopefully fun" experience, according to head coach Ms. Hoffman. Their leaders stepped up and now look ahead to a full, in-person season in 2021-2022.

With a pretty small team over the past few years, Hoffman said she wants to emphasize recruiting more skiers and she wants to be more competitive in points with other teams. She added that they are specifically looking to find more boys to add to the team. Most new skiers don't realize how fast they can ski until the end of the season. As a result, Hoffman encourages people to join



Photo by MS. HOFFMAN

The Nordic team has seen a steady growth in its numbers in recent years.

early.

Nordic practices are weather dependent. If they are able to, they go around the Twin Cities area to ski at groomed trails.

"We spent a lot of time at Elm Creek, Baker and French Park," Hoffman said.

Competitions usually are waves of athletes doing a 5K, or 3.1 mile, race with other schools.

Hoffman said that new athletes should consider joining Nordic.

"Joining a sport results has the immediate benefit of connection at Cooper," she said.

### Alpine Skiing

Last year, the Armstrong-Cooper downhill skiers benefited from being able to get out and "ski together in the pandemic," team member Owen Smith (12) said.

Throughout last year's races, the events were split up into three smaller groups due to the pandemic. However, with the pandemic in the rearview mirror, Smith said "the team is looking pretty good going into the new season."

The team is looking to expand by

adding more Cooper students. Team practice is at Highland Hills, where they get ready in the chalet and split into two groups based on skill level.

For races, the team meets at Armstrong and gets on a bus with a trailer for equipment. They then travel to hills like Trollhaugen to ski against other schools.

Smith said downhill skiing works with your lower body strength and core muscles.

"Athletes would benefit because it's fun and you can stay in shape for spring sports," he said.

### Girls Dance

With some dancers graduating in 2021, the dance team looks to build on past success with new students this season.

"The highlight of the sport is seeing the finished product after weeks of practice," 2021 graduate Sophia Scheveck said.

The dancers begin practice with a warm up around the gym and some stretching, which they follow up with conditioning to work on their stamina.

"Then, we usually run the dance

team-bonding opportunities. Practices can vary between working on conditioning and working on technical skills.

For those players considering joining the team, Launderville said it doesn't matter what level you play in because you will get a "strong sense of support" no matter what. She also said the coaches are understanding and they will "know when to push you and when to let you take it easy and recover," especially if it is your first year on the team.

### Boys Hockey

The Armstrong-Cooper boys hockey team was excited to have a season last year after the delayed start due to COVID. With a bunch of seniors graduating in spring 2021, head coach Mr. Charleston said they "will be in a rebuilding year" in 2021-2022. He added that it will be "exciting" to see how the team will build upon itself for the next few years.

Varsity practices from 2:45-4 p.m. each day and then JV plays afterward until 5:30. During practices, Charleston said they try to hit everything, including "skating, shooting, passing, competition, special teams and [even] team play."

Most games are on Thursdays and Saturdays, but some throughout the season are on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Younger players are encouraged to keep playing with Armstrong-Cooper Youth Hockey Association "before joining the older players on the high school team," Charleston said.

### Wrestling

With a delayed start to last season due to COVID, there was a reduction in the number of wrestling matches and tournaments. Head coach Mr. Stanton said things should return to normal this year.

"My hope is that COVID will be in the past," he said.

Wrestling practices begin with a warmup led by captains, after which they work on wrestling moves they already know. These practices are designed to get athletes ready for their matches.

Stanton said that dual meets are hard for the team because they only can fill between eight and 10 of the 14 weight classes due to the Cooper team's small size. However, he said they really hope to be able to fill in more of those slots with newer athletes in 2021.

According to Stanton, the squad usually does really well among the classes they fill in, but without those other classes filled in, they usually lose the meet because they have to forfeit those points.

Stanton said that prospective athletes should know that no experience is needed to join wrestling and that new wrestlers just need to "come to practice every day." If they do so, Stanton said they soon "will be winning matches."

Athletes coming out for wrestling this season will "experience how to be disciplined, develop mental toughness, increase strength and quickness, have a chance to meet new friends and learn body awareness," Stanton said.

## Hawk signs for college lacrosse

Anna Palony (12) will be playing for Concordia University, St. Paul starting next year

By MYRA SINCHI  
Quill staff writer

Anna Palony (12) signed with Concordia University, St. Paul when Cooper hosted its own National Signing Day on November 10. National Signing Day is when high school seniors sign a letter stating they will be playing a sport at their chosen college.

Only one Cooper student took part in the November 10 event. Palony will be playing lacrosse at Concordia. Lacrosse has always been the main sport for Palony.

"I have been playing since third grade, so 10 years. My brother played so it inspired me to begin playing," she said.

Currently, Palony plays with Cooper's lacrosse team and is the captain. One of Palony's goals as captain is to grow the squad's roster before she graduates this spring.

"I am the captain of Cooper's lacrosse team," she said. "Right now, I am working on getting more players to join."

While playing lacrosse for the last 10 years, there have been many fun memories for Palony.

"I have enjoyed the opportunities for travel and cool experiences, as well as all the people I have met through the years," she said.

Palony added that joining sports is a great way to experience new places and meet new people.

As she looks toward next fall, Palony decided to commit to Concordia because she felt she belonged there. Specifically, she said the team and staff seemed right for her.

"The team culture and coaching staff felt like a really good fit for me," she said. "I felt at home and am



Photo by MR. OELFKE

Polony committed to Concordia during National Signing Day on November 10.

excited to play there for the next four years."

Aside from sports, Palony plans on majoring in occupational therapy and hopes to become a pediatric occupational therapist. Although balancing school and sports can be tough on college athletes, Palony said she has been doing it for many years.

"I am used to balancing sports and academics, but I know it will be harder in college. It will be tough at first, but I will get used to it," she said.

Cooper lacrosse coach Ms. Gel-

har believes Palony will be a great fit at Concordia because of the school's competitive lacrosse program.

"Anna is only getting stronger," she said.

Gelhar also mentioned that Palony is a good Cooper team member and should show that same trait at college.

"Anna has a deep understanding of the game and always brings that perspective to our team. She helps set the game pace and has great field vision," she said.

## PRO SOCCER SEASON COMES TO CLOSE WITH PLAYOFFS continued from page 8

with great chances. Nashville was much more dangerous with the same number of shots throughout the game, putting six of nine on goal. Not only did they dominate on offense, they stood their ground on defense with nine tackles and 30 clears. Nashville's Joe Willis only had to make two saves; although one got past him, Orlando didn't even have a chance to win. The final was 3-1.

### Philadelphia vs. New York

The New York Red Bulls lost in a tight match against Philly in the 123rd minute. Each team used all four subs as they went all the way through the added time. Near the end of the extra 30 minutes, Philly's Jacob Glesnes scored for the win. New York tallied up the majority of possessions and corners, yet failed to put one past Philadelphia. In fact, New York had five shots blocked and only needed one save from the keeper. Philadelphia struggled in the offensive zone with only four corners, a whopping six offsides and only 59 percent passing accuracy. They somehow outperformed New York 3-1 in shots on goal and 13-11 in total shots.

### Semifinals: Western Conference

#### Colorado vs. Portland

Colorado had the bye game since they held the top spot in the west. This didn't fare well for them as they fell to Portland by a close 1-0 score. Just like previous, tight playoff matches, this game was pretty uneventful with substitutions and the occasional foul. It was not until the 90th minute that the game broke open. Larry Mabiala, a defender, came up and scored past the Rapids to give Colorado the lead going into added time. Even with the Rapids having more possessions and passing accuracy, the Timbers managed to pass them in every category. They had 12 shots, including four on goal, and only two blocked shots, which was better than what the Rapids were able to put up. It was somewhat sloppy play as Colorado had three offsides and three blocked shots, which prevented them from breaking the tight score.

### Kansas City vs. Salt Lake City

Real Salt Lake held down the fort with 55 percent possession time and the majority of shots with 11. They put five of those on target and toward the goal, but Sporting Kansas City blocked a shot and made three saves. Even though the effort was there, not enough could be done by Kansas City to stop Salt Lake, which won 2-1 and moved into the conference finals. Kansas City tried valiantly to keep up with only five shots and two on goal, which were stopped. Salt Lake was dom-

inant, racking up more corners, crosses and a better passing percentage. What is more, Kansas City struggled and committed 18 fouls, while Salt Lake had only 14.

### Semifinals: Eastern Conference

#### New England vs. New York City

The first and fourth seed played each other for the chance at conference finals and the MLS Cup. New England and New York City started off red hot, each scoring in the first 10 minutes. After that, it was a chaotic mess of substitutions and cards. New York took most of the possession time and had more passing than New England. Each team took four shots on goal and also had three blocked shots. In addition, they both managed four corners in a very even game. One interesting statistic is that New England attempted 32 crosses, yet failed to sink any of them into the back of the net.

Still tied at the end of regulation, overtime was upon them. In the 109th minute, New York scored what looked to be the decisive game winner, but four minutes later, Valentin Castellanos of New York took his second yellow card of the game, which meant a red card. After he was sent off the field, New York let in a goal at the 118th minute, tying up the score and necessitating penalty kicks. New York sank all five into the net and New England only scored three, which sent New York to the conference finals.

### Philadelphia vs. Nashville

Philadelphia held even with Nashville through 120 minutes. Each team scored in the first half, Philadelphia in added time, and Nashville in the 38th minute. Both used maximum substitutes as they tried to break each other's defense and take home a win. Nashville had 14 shots to Philadelphia's 24. Nashville, however, put three on goal as opposed to Philly's two on goal. Ten of Philadelphia's shots were blocked and dangerous Nashville only had five. Even with more offensive possession time, Philadelphia couldn't put them behind the Nashville keeper and their defense. Nashville was much more efficient with their opportunities but lost in penalty kicks. Philadelphia put in two and Nashville scored none to send Philadelphia off to the conference finals.

### Conference Finals: Western

#### Portland vs. Salt Lake City

Portland was coming off a hot streak of beating both Minnesota and the top-ranked Colorado in full time. Portland showed their strength again, beating Salt Lake 2-0. The goals came in the fifth minute and in the 61st, but during the celebration of the second goal, a yellow card

was handed out for excessive celebration. Salt Lake's own Aaron Herrera picked up two yellows in the game, the second forcing a red card, which sent him off in the 79th minute and added to their frustration. Portland had double the shots and more than double the shots on goal than Salt Lake. Holding on strong with fresh legs in the last few minutes helped put the game away for Portland.

### Conference Finals: Eastern

#### Philadelphia vs. New York City

Philly was coming off a penalty kick win against Nashville, while New York was coming off a penalty kick win against top-ranked New England. This matchup was a thriller, with Philadelphia scoring off an own goal by New York City in the 63rd minute. Yet, it was not even close to over: within two minutes, New England shot one right back at Philly and tied up the score 1-1. However, it was eventually obvious who controlled this game with New York holding 65 percent of the possession time and taking five shots on goal. Tacking onto their dominance of possession time, New York was more than 80 percent in passing completion. Four attacks were wiped out due to offsides by Philly and they only had eight total shots. Ultimately, New York City won 2-1.

### MLS Cup

#### Portland vs. New York City

This game lived up to its hype. Ending on penalties after a 1-1 tie, each team proved why they deserved a spot in the final game of the season. New York opened up the scoring with a goal in the 41st minute by Valentin Castellanos. Throughout the game, they held 52 percent possession time and had seven shots on goal to Portland's five. With six more shots than New York, the Timbers could not get it past the defense. While the Timbers had the majority of corners and crosses, they also stopped themselves with three offsides. New York City did, however, take more fouls and yellow cards.

After two yellow cards, Portland tied it up in the fourth minute of added time, which sent this nail biter to extra time. Multiple chances went by for each team, but the game eventually went to penalty kicks. Portland failed on the first attempt, while New York dumped it in the back of the net. The second round saw unsuccessful shots by both teams. The next two rounds went by with each team burying the ball and going even, but then came the decisive fifth round, in which Alexander Callens won the game for New York City. This was the dramatic ending that MLS fans were hoping for.

## Cooper Competitors

The story of the athletes who strive for success in Cooper sports

### Tarnue David

By LLEWELLYN BOUTHIM  
Quill staff writer

Tarnue David (12) is in boys varsity soccer during the fall and boys varsity track in the spring.

"I started playing soccer a little later than others, but have been on Cooper's teams since I was a freshman," he said.

David said home games are his favorite part of playing soccer.

"I love playing at home games because there's a sense of Hawk pride, whether we win or lose," he said.

Of the many moments David enjoyed about the 2021 season, he said senior night was his favorite.

"I had a lot of my friends and supporters come out to support me and the energy was insane," he said.

Although he was not a team cap-

tain, David said he tried to be a senior leader this season.

"I played a leadership role among the lower levels. I would always step down to help play at their games if we didn't have the numbers and felt like I left a good impression of how a varsity player should play," he said.

In the winter months, David said he'll focus on preseason training for track.

"I'm the boys sprints captain for our track team," he said.

Outside of sports, David is an IB diploma candidate who cites Theory of Knowledge and Chemistry as his favorite classes. In his free time, David works on his YouTube channel, called Tarnue D.

After high school, David plans to run Division 1 track at the University of Southern California and study there as a cinematic arts major.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

### Morgan Stromberg

By LLEWELLYN BOUTHIM  
Quill staff writer

Morgan Stromberg (12) is a three-season Cooper athlete. In the fall, Stromberg swims; in the winter, she does Nordic skiing; and, in the spring, she plays softball.

"I have been swimming with Cooper for five years and before that I had been swimming for about two years," she said.

Stromberg chose to swim because her sister had been a swimmer for a few years and she said she wanted to be just like her.

"I have really enjoyed swimming with the new girls this year and being able to hold a leadership position as a captain through this season," she said.

This year, she is also one of four captains for Nordic skiing.

"Last season went really well. As a team, we had a lot of fun and it was really nice being able to get outside and see others from our school. COVID changed the structure of our meets, so last season was definitely different, but it was still so much fun," she said.

In the spring, Stromberg plays softball. She said softball is a really important sport to her.

"Last season went really well," she said. "We had a few new girls come out who had a lot of talent and overall the season was a lot of fun."

In her free time, Stromberg likes to read books her friends recommend.

"I also really like being with my friends and family," she said.

Next fall, Stromberg will go to college and major in biology and minor in psychology on her way to becoming a psychiatrist.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

### Mimi Otu

By BRIGHT DEKU  
Quill staff writer

Mimi Otu (12) is a Cooper athlete who plays tennis in the fall.

"I've been playing tennis for three years," she said. "I chose tennis because I looked up to Venus and Serena Williams and joked with my friend about how cool it would be if we became the middle school versions of them."

Otu said there are many things she enjoys about tennis.

"What I like most are my matches. Although this wasn't the best season, being on court playing those matches helped me learn a lot about myself as a player and a person," Otu said.

Otu served a leadership role this season after being named one of two tennis team captains.

In the winter and spring seasons, Otu works as a team manager. She has managed the wrestling team during the winter and the track team during the spring in the past. Otu said she looks forward to track this spring.

"Last year, I pretty much only recorded and took photos of the team and occasionally helped out at meets, with hurdles and things like that. This year, I'm hoping to get an equal balance of managing and media," she said.

Otu's interest in taking pictures is reflected in her favorite class, which is photography. Outside of school, Otu said she enjoys the arts, spending a lot of her time writing poetry, short stories and songs.

For college, Otu wants to major in pre-law or social work with the goal of eventually being either a criminal defense attorney or a mental health therapist.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

### Timaya Reese

By DEVIN GRAY  
Quill staff writer

Timaya Reese (12) is a well-rounded athlete for Cooper. In fact, she is playing sports for all three seasons: volleyball in the fall, basketball in the winter and track in the spring.

Reese said she has been playing sports for quite a while. When it comes to volleyball, she said she has been playing since middle school.

"I have been playing fall sports since I was in seventh grade," she said. "What prompted me to play volleyball is I knew I was really tall and I wanted to find a way to use my ability of height for good use and not just sit around doing nothing."

Reese's height definitely helped her out in volleyball. This could be

seen this year, when she gained a big leadership role on the volleyball team as middle blocker.

When it comes to playing her sports, Reese said she's a woman of the people, enjoying her time with her teammates.

"What I have enjoyed most is my fellow teammates and the bonding time with them on and off the court," Reese said.

Whenever she isn't in school, Reese said she is working at her part-time job and playing her favorite sports. Reese said she doesn't plan to just stop her involvement in these activities at the end of high school. Instead, she said she plans on playing sports while attending a historically black college or university while simultaneously having a major in criminal justice.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

# College football season full of entertaining drama

As the college football playoffs reach their final stages this month, it is time to look back at the highlights and lowlights of the 2021 regular season

By NOLAN ANDLER  
Quill staff writer

The 2021 college football season lived up to the hype that was generated at the season's start, which featured big transfers, star players leaving for the NFL, returning talent, big incoming freshmen, big coaching hires, coaches on the hot seat and, most importantly, the return of fans. This was in contrast to the uncertainty of last season due to the pandemic. Although there were a couple teams that had their best seasons in program history during 2020-2021, there were a whole lot more that struggled last year. As a result, the sense of urgency to get back out on the field was real in 2021-2022.

## Week One

Right away, there were meaningful games that shaped the start of the season. The Big Ten had two important matchups to start the year. One featured Ohio State, a team that lost a lot of talent to the NFL, including quarterback Justin Fields. Facing off against this team to start the year was Minnesota, led by one of the nation's best running backs, Mohamed Ibrahim. The Gophers gave the Buckeyes a fight, but Ohio State reigned supreme in the end, winning 45-31.

In the second Big Ten matchup of week one, Penn State faced Wisconsin. Both teams had rough seasons last year and were looking to start 2021 off with a ranked win. Penn State's defense led them to a 16-10 win as the Badgers only scored a touchdown once in their eight visits to the red zone.

Additional big games of the first week were with SEC and ACC teams. The first one was in Atlanta between Alabama and Miami. The Tide continued displaying the excellence they showed in last year's championship season, rolling over Miami 44-13.

Meanwhile, the Georgia Bulldogs played the Clemson Tigers. This was Clemson's first game without star quarterback Trevor Lawrence and it proved costly as Georgia's defense reigned supreme, leading the Bulldogs to a 10-3 win.

The last big game of the day was LSU at UCLA. Both head coaches in this matchup, LSU's Ed Orgero and UCLA's Chip Kelly, were on the hot seat and needed this win to start the year off strong. It was Kelly's boys who got the job done as the Bruins won 38-27.

## Week Two

Since Washington's playoff appearance in 2016, the Pac-12 conference has been on a downfall. All the teams in that conference just beat up on each other and none of them can beat a good out-of-conference team. In week two, Oregon had a chance to change that with a road game at Ohio State. Although all odds were against them, Oregon got it done, winning 35-28 thanks to veteran running back CJ Verdell's big, 161-yard day. Overall, the Ducks offense was too much for Ohio State to handle.

Over in Ames, Iowa and Iowa State resumed their annual matchup for the Cy-Hawk trophy after COVID canceled it last year. It was one of the biggest games in this rivalry's history. Iowa, led by their punishing defense, came out on top 27-17.

In the nightcaps for this week, Michigan crushed Washington 31-10 in front of a maize-out crowd at the Big House, while Arkansas got an enormous win over Texas at home, 41-20.

## Week Three

Nebraska's head coach, Scott Frost, was hired to bring the Huskers back to national prominence, but in his three years as coach, Nebraska has missed out on bowl games every year. This team definitely needed a big win, and they had an opportunity for one by playing the Oklahoma Sooners on the road. Although Nebraska gave OU a huge fight, mistakes on special teams cost them as the Huskers came up short, losing 23-16.

On the other hand, Michigan State had been in a slump the last few years, but new head coach Mel Tucker and the trio of quarterback Payton Thome, running back Kenneth Walker and wide receiver Jayden Reed had the Spartans at 2-0 going into a week three test against Miami. Michigan passed the test, winning 38-17.

Perhaps the biggest game of the day was Auburn at Penn State. In front of a white-out crowd, the Nittany Lions won 28-20.

## Week Four

Notre Dame and Wisconsin played



Photo courtesy of UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA ATHLETICS

Despite their underdog status, the Minnesota Gophers beat the Wisconsin Badgers 23-13 week 13 to reclaim Paul Bunyan's Axe.

their neutral-site matchup at Soldier Field in Chicago. As hyped as it already was, it gained more hype when former Wisconsin quarterback Jack Coan transferred to Notre Dame after the Badgers moved on with sophomore Graham Mertz. In the game, both offenses struggled as the two defenses reigned supreme. But after the Badgers went into the fourth quarter with a 13-10 lead, they collapsed. A kick return by Notre Dame running back Chris Tyree, and two Notre Dame pick sixes, turned a 13-10 game into a 41-13 Irish win.

The other headlines of the day included Minnesota getting upset at home by Bowling Green 14-10. Meanwhile, during their annual matchup at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, Arkansas beat Texas A&M 20-10. Next, Oklahoma had another scare at home, barely beating West Virginia 16-13. Finally, the biggest upset of the day was North Carolina State's big win over Clemson by a score of 27-21.

## Week Five

After all the adversity that head



Photo courtesy of NCAA.COM

The last week of the season saw Michigan upset Ohio State 42-27, which knocked the Buckeyes out of playoff contention.

coach Jim Harbaugh and the Michigan football team has gone through in the last couple years, 2021 looked more promising. Harbaugh had his Wolverines sitting at a 3-0 record heading into their first road test at Wisconsin. They rolled over Wisconsin 38-17 after Badgers quarterback Graham Mertz left with a rib injury.

Over in Athens, the storybook Arkansas Razorbacks had their biggest test of the season at Georgia. Unfortunately, Arkansas got rolled 37-0. Meanwhile, in the Pac-12, Oregon got tripped up on the road at Stanford, losing 31-24.

However, the biggest storyline of the day was the game in South Bend, Indiana. The Group of Five has had plenty of teams go undefeated in the regular season, but none of them has made the playoffs because of their schedules. Cincinnati might have broken that barrier and their week five, 24-13 win at Notre Dame is exactly what they needed. Their win not only opened the door for them to make the playoffs, but it opened the door for other teams in their conferences to

make it as well.

## Week Six

This week featured the annual Red River Shootout between Oklahoma and Texas. OU had been escaping a lot of games that they should have easily won while Texas went on a three-game winning streak after their loss to Arkansas. In the first quarter, Texas was rolling after going up 28-7. With OU's quarterback Spencer Rattler struggling mightily, head coach Lincoln Riley benched him for backup Caleb Williams. That decision gave the Sooners life. OU was able to close the gap and get the game-winning touchdown with three seconds left from a run by Kennedy Brooks, leading to a final score of 55-48.

This game wasn't the only highlight from week six. BYU got upset at home by Boise State 26-17. Then, over in Iowa, Iowa won their biggest home game in history against Penn State 23-20. At one point, Penn State had a 17-3 lead, but after an injury to quarterback Sean Clifford, Iowa came back for the win.

Bell shredded the Iowa defense with 11 receptions for 240 yards.

## Week Eight

This week was more exciting than the one before it thanks to the victory of 2-5 Illinois over Penn State. In fact, they needed nine overtimes to decide the game. The game finally ended with both teams needing a two-point conversion and a stop on defense to win. Illinois finally outlasted Penn State, winning 20-18.

Some other big games included Iowa State upsetting Oklahoma State at home 24-21 and Purdue getting brought back down to earth with a 30-13 blowout loss to Wisconsin at home. Finally, Oregon beat UCLA on the road 34-31 and Ohio State throttled Indiana on the road 54-7.

## Week Nine

This week started with an exciting game in Madison, Wisconsin during which Wisconsin, led by 17-year old running back Braclon Allen, crushed

upset of the day was Purdue, which beat Michigan State at home 49-20.

## Week 11

During the first 10 weeks of the season, Oklahoma was barely winning games they should've rolled through. That finally caught up to them this week as they got upset 24-14 at Baylor. For the Bears, it was revenge from 2019 when they gave up a 28-3 lead against OU at home.

The other big storylines included Michigan getting a solid road win at Penn State 21-17, Ohio State beating Purdue at home 59-31 and Ole Miss getting a big 27-17 win at home against Texas A&M to keep their SEC championship game hopes alive.

## Week 12

Behind quarterback CJ Stroud's 432-yard day, Ohio State put the nation on notice by blasting the Michigan State Spartans at home 56-7. Meanwhile, Nebraska almost had a ranked win this week, but they were edged out by Wisconsin 35-28. The Badgers won behind running back Braclon Allen's 22 carries for 228 yards and three touchdowns.

Elsewhere, Arkansas almost beat Alabama on the road, but the Tide survived 42-35. Next, Cincinnati got a big win at home against SMU 48-14. Finally, Oregon was smacked 38-7 by Utah, which eliminated them from playoff contention.

## Week 13

Not only was this week filled with rivalry games, week 13 shifted the whole season around. The Big Ten had two games that changed the conference and playoff dynamics. First was the matchup between Ohio State and Michigan in the Big House for the Big Ten east title and a playoff spot. In probably the biggest game in the history of this rivalry, Jim Harbaugh and Michigan finally came through and beat the Buckeyes 42-27 for the first time since 2011. The OSU defense couldn't stop Michigan running back Hassan Haskins, who scored five touchdowns.

Over in Minneapolis, Wisconsin had a test against Minnesota. If the Gophers won, they would get Paul Bunyan's axe and Iowa would win the Big Ten west. If the Badgers won, they would retain the trophy and win the Big Ten west. In the end, the Gophers were more physical than the Badgers, stuffing their star running back Braclon Allen and exposing the Wisconsin defense en route to a 23-13 win. In fact, the Badgers' only touchdown was a pick six.

The last big story of the day was bedlam over in Stillwater. Oklahoma needed to beat Oklahoma State to advance to the Big 12 championship. In a back and forth battle, the Pokes came out on top, winning 37-33. In fact, this was their first win against OU since 2011. What is more, it knocked OU out of the Big 12 championship for the first time ever.

## Week Seven

Only a couple things were exciting this week. First, Texas gave up another big lead, this time at home to Oklahoma State, losing 32-24. Next up, Cincinnati steamrolled UCF 56-21 and Kentucky got a 30-13 beat down at Georgia.

Perhaps the most notable thing that happened during week seven was Purdue's upset against Iowa. The Boilermakers won 24-7 after shutting down Iowa's offense and wide receiver David

Iowa 27-7, getting them back in the Big Ten west race.

Also this week, Michigan and Michigan State played probably the biggest game in this rivalry's history. Michigan got out to a 30-14 lead, but Michigan State, led by running back Kenneth Walker's five touchdown day, came back and won 33-37.

Next up, Auburn upset Ole Miss at home 31-20. Then, to wrap up the night, Ohio State passed their biggest test so far at home against Penn State, winning 33-24.

## Week 10

This week saw Nebraska almost getting a huge upset win at home against Ohio State, but two missed field goals doomed the Huskers and OSU survived 26-17. Also this week, Illinois got another top-20 upset win over Minnesota 14-6, while Wisconsin dominated Rutgers 52-3. Next, Alabama barley beat LSU at home 20-14 and Oregon got a 26-16 win at Washington. Finally, the biggest