

JUNIORS AND SENIORS BATTLE IT OUT IN POWDERPUFF ‘24



Photo by Jenna Espinoza and Kasey Lee

AT ONE OF THE SENIOR POWDERPUFF PRACTICES, the players line up to run a play on the grass in front of the quad.

By **Victoria Matz** and **Kyleigh Zvara**

After a successful spirit week and a wonderful season of training, all students came together to celebrate the school's long-awaited tradition, Powderpuff.

"I wanted to be involved in something that everyone was a part of and everyone goes to," junior Riya Mistry said.

This year's Powderpuff will be held at Calabasas High School, April 26 and will be the perfect end to another fun spirit week revolving around such a vital school event.

"Powderpuff has always been one of our biggest events and I think it is the most fun to participate in," junior Nimran Singh said.

The spirit week will last from April 22 to April 26 and consist of interactive and fan-favorite events like Minion Monday, Tropical Tuesday, Greek Life Thursday and Blue and White Friday. On Friday, students wear blue to support the senior team and white to support the juniors.

"I feel really excited because the team has really been working together," junior Lauren Gilder said. "We've done a lot of team

bonding and I think that if we can do what we did at practice, we'll be okay."

Players as well as coaches and cheerleaders have practiced for lengthy hours, while impatiently waiting for the big day to arrive.

"We have practice twice a week but since it's been raining on our practice days, we've had one practice on the weekend and we only practice Monday-Wednesday," senior Tarryn Macias said.

Powderpuff is an annual tradition that all students and staff look forward to each year and spend days preparing for the event.

After the initial date was pushed back four days due to conflicts, players as well as everyone participating were relieved to receive additional practice days.

"I thought I was ready but I realized I wasn't. I'm happy that we pushed it four days back so now I feel like I'm ready to play," Macias said.

The whole school will come together to support our junior and senior players in this fun, school event.

"I'm really excited to see how it turns out," Singh said. "But no matter what, I know I'll have fun."

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The rapid decrease in college acceptance rates



Photo credentials to Ashley Kenney/Assistant Photo editor

By **Sophie Apolaya Diaz** and **Sydney Keane**

Graduating students applying for college this year were shocked by the decrease in acceptance rates for colleges all over the country.

In light of the recent abundance of rejections that many students today have to face, there has been a stark disparity in terms of today’s college acceptance rates versus those of the past. In the past, students had higher chances to get into colleges, and the only colleges that were truly low in acceptances were Ivy Leagues, such as Harvard and Brown.

In recent years, there has been an increasing drop in the rates around the world, even with colleges that would have once been considered ‘safety schools’, which are schools where

many applicants are guaranteed a spot in the school based on their academic profile. New York University (NYU), for example, has dropped a whopping 20% in acceptances since 2017 going from 28% down to 8% of applicants being accepted. The majority of students today need to put in extra effort and do 10 times as much work to get into a school that would’ve been easy to get into in the past. What changed?

In early March 2020, every student’s life had changed. COVID-19 caused mass destruction to society as schools had to close, jobs were remote and everyone was required to be locked in their houses. Colleges around the globe realized the impact that this lockdown would have on test availability and scores, and wanted to extend a helping

hand to students. So, in May 2020, the University of California (UC) Board of Regents voted to stop requiring the American College Testing (ACT) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for college admissions, and many other non-UC colleges followed suit. Now, in 2024, these policies have been amplified. UCs are now ‘test blind’, meaning that the ACT and SAT are not considered during the application process, even if submitted. This has felt like a weight off the majority of students’ shoulders, as they do not have to worry about underperforming on these exams. But, for others, this has been a major disadvantage in the UC system as they may rely on their test scores to boost their application. Other schools, such as Yale and Harvard, have announced standardized test

scores must be submitted once again starting in 2025, and the future of test requirements will vary based on the school.

Extra curricular activities are heavily encouraged for out-of-state and UC schools. It shows a well-rounded and hardworking student that colleges would like to see on their campus, as well as seeing if their interests match the major they are interested in. However, in recent years, it is advised to take around 20 extra curricular activities, as well as having high positions or staying consistent with them throughout high school. This expectation has been hard for many students to keep up with, along with rigorous courses.

This year, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) has been modified and created a lot

of issues for incoming college students. Many struggled with the new form and corrections were only opened in April. In years past, the amount of financial aid was released in March, so it allowed students to properly prepare their financials before committing to a college. Although colleges have been aware of this issue, it isn’t clear whether the issues with FAFSA played any part in the mathematical aspects of the amount of students colleges could offer admissions to. Despite the large decrease in acceptance rates, students are using all the opportunities given to them to help them succeed in the future.

The decreasing quality of air globally

By **Sylah Hill**

With climate change and carbon emissions becoming growing concerns in the world, many countries have become riddled with some of the world’s worst air pollution.

In countries, such as Vietnam, air pollution has become a significant issue particularly in the capitol, Hanoi. Parents have become increasingly worried for the health and safety of their children and their

youth. Many Hanoian citizens have even prohibited their children from going outside unnecessarily, thus exemplifying the severity of the issue. In Vietnam, the dismal air quality has become the cause of around 60,000 early deaths per year. The leading cause of the significant decrease in air quality in Vietnam is their rapid industrialization which, further leading to air pollution in the rest of the globe.

Additionally, air pollution

in India is a serious issue for residents. Specifically in Delhi, the air pollution continues to worsen every fall season when winds and temperatures weaken, allowing for pollutants to become trapped in the atmosphere.

Indian farmers burn excess straw around this time of year to make room for the upcoming crops, adding to the pollutants in the air. The pollution has worsened to the point of being visible in NASA’s satellite imagery. It

is assumed that many Indian residents will die almost eight years earlier than their original life expectancy.

With their monsoon season arriving later, the farmers’ burning of crops stretches into the Hindi holiday of Diwali which is celebrated with fireworks, in turn causing more air pollution in the country. In attempts to combat this, firecrackers were banned during the Diwali celebration, but very few obliged, leading to air pollution increasing even more.

The severity of the issue is by no means new, but it has continued and will continue to worsen, with Delhi being ranked as the world’s second most polluted city.

With last year’s summer being deemed as the hottest of all and temperatures only continuing to climb, India’s smog does not help with the world’s surge in high temperatures.

Laufey releases new album, “Bewitched: Goddess Edition”

By **Sophie Apolaya-Diaz** and **Sylah Hill**

Icelandic jazz-pop singer, Laufey, released her new hit single “Goddess” and is following with the release of her album, “Bewitched: Goddess Edition,” April 26.

The talented artist Laufey has led the revival of the jazz genre as of late with grace and creativity. Her sophomore album, Bewitched, was released September 8, 2023. With its enchanting melodies and even her own rendition of the classic jazz standard, “Misty,” it received an abundance of praise and acclaim. She even was the recipient of best Traditional Pop Vocal Album at the 2024 Grammys. The album has a well-rounded and

masterful mixture of multiple genres that makes it a significant step up from Laufey’s debut album, “Everything I Know About Love”

The “Bewitched” album has recently gone viral on social media, with songs like “From The Start” and “Promise” garnering 50 million streams on Spotify. It has also been the subject of numerous trends, eliciting an emotional response from fans and casual listeners alike. This fame only rose more once Laufey had announced Bewitched; The Goddess Tour set to happen during Spring and Summer 2024. The dates had sold out in a matter of minutes. The Los Angeles date set for August 7, 2024 has been upgraded with the addition of the Los Angeles Phil-

harmonic at the Hollywood Bowl. There is no doubt that this tour will be fresh and a time to remember.

Laufey released her single “Goddess,” March 6 and gained exponential popularity and attention. Dubbed by the artist as “the most honest song [she’s] written yet,” her single quickly gained traction and resonated with Lauvers, the fandom’s name. With powerful lyrics, incredible orchestral components, and her own aweing voice, “Goddess” was first performed February 21 in Brussels, Belgium during the beginning of the Bewitched Tour. Since the unofficial release, Lauvers have been obsessed with her new music.

Following the hit single, Laufey also announced the

release of the deluxe version of her sophomore studio album, dubbing it “Bewitched: Goddess Edition.” The deluxe album is set to release April 26 and will contain the single “Goddess” as well as four additional, new songs, exciting avid listeners.

The album is available for presale on all streaming platforms and the vinyl, CD, and cassette versions are available for presale on her website. In addition, various forms of “Goddess” related merchandise are available also for purchase on her website.

Lauvers all around the world support Laufey as she continues her tour and continue to anticipate the release of the deluxe album later this month.

“Arthur the King” ventures onto the big screen

By **Victoria Matz**

“Arthur the King” took on his next adventure, heading for movie theaters March 15, 2024.

This fast-paced film features the story about a team of athletes competing one last time in the Adventure Racing World Championship, located in the Dominican Republic. Their goal is only first place.

Over the span of 10 days, the team has to run, mountain bike, kayak and navigate their way 435 miles through the jungle of the Dominican. On their way, they meet a scrappy, big-eyed dog with only love in his eyes and a kind heart. With no time to waste, the travelers

only have some meatballs left for the dog to give to him prior to their adventure.

After encountering a problem on the way, the group is reunited with the dog, who ends up saving their lives. Being welcomed as a friend and a teammate, the dog becomes vital to their adventurous victory. With that, he becomes Arthur, Arthur the King.

Based on a true story, viewers who watch this film are in awe, asking how a dog like Arthur found the group after nearly their entire journey through the jungle. This movie tells the incredible story of Mikael Lindnord and the stray dog he befriends during his greatest race in the Dominican

Republic.

Actor Mark Wahlberg stars as the lead in this movie alongside talented actors like Simu Liu, Nathalie Emmanuel and Juliet Rylance. All together, the actors blend very well creating a dynamic environment and storyline.

Reviews say that this film is extremely accurate and features astounding similarities, from the routes the real team took to the dog’s actual breed.

However, shockingly enough, the film received a 69% on Rotten Tomatoes and an overall rating of 7.2/10. While only a little feedback has been given surrounding this movie, it is definitely a heart-wrenching, adven-

ture-filled, shocking watch.

“Arthur the King” truly encapsulates what loyalty, kindness and friendship truly mean. The character development in this movie is great and the whole plot keeps viewers at the edge of their seat. A wonderful cast, with amazing acting and stunning views on a dazzling, silver screen.

After almost an exact tie, “Arthur the King”’s budget being \$19 million ended up being only 0.9 lower than their overall box office revenue, which was \$19.9 million.

A film about a dog may seem cute and silly but behind those trusting, loyal eyes, is much more than one person can tell.

The return of Godzilla x Kong

By **Estephanie Lopez** and **Isabel Rose**

The highly anticipated film, “Godzilla x Kong,” has finally arrived in theaters Mar. 29. The action/sci-fi movie centers around the famed Godzilla and King Kong as they meet a dangerous beast in Earth’s depths, fighting for the survival of themselves and that of the planet.

The movie, a sequel to the popular “Godzilla vs. Kong,” is the fifth film in the movie franchise and has become the fifth-best Easter weekend of all time, with the top four being “Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice,” “Furious 7,” “The Super Mario Bros. Movie” and “The Fate of the Furious.” “Godzilla x Kong” has done fairly well in terms

of reviews, with the box office reporting an earning of \$362.9 million since its release. Additionally, a Rotten Tomatoes Tomatometer of 54% with an audience score of 92%.

The new film is directed by Adam Wingard and stars Rebecca Hall, Bryan Tyree Henry, Dan Stevens, Kaylee Hottel, Alex Ferns and Fala Chen. The process of the movie took about 2 years to complete, with a lot of the filming taking place in the Gold Coast, AUS.

It premiered three years following the release of “Godzilla vs. Kong,” which came out in 2021. Many take note that even solely based on the title “Godzilla x Kong” the film automatically tends to break away from the popularized genre of drama and instead allude to an awaited spectacle of

two titans brawling at one another. The film’s high classification and ranking tower over the majority of its former films seemingly because of its massive destruction-driven battles, its playful mindfulness, its feelings of nostalgia and plenty of action-filled scenes that keep viewers on their feet.

As the group embarks on a treacherous mission into a phenomenal yet unexplored terrain, unmasking keys to the titan’s very beginning and humanity’s existence, a menacing conspiracy puts both creatures, evil or not, in fatal danger; a life- or-death struggle where both humans and animals have to work together to keep the only place known to have life—Earth, alive and well.

Although some express feel-

ings of discontent and confusion at the alternating and in-depth storyline that links the animal kingdom, many voice a sense of intrigue as well as a captivating curiosity to keep up and decipher what is going on. Others continue to watch these films because they are said to possess a classic monster movie feel that never gets old.

While Kong’s close association with humans evolves with human technology, the evolution of Godzilla in the film becomes the major change that transforms the cliché of the sequel. By taking a more organic approach Wingard believes that it allows for greater possibilities and therefore future films on the two iconic giants.

THE ROYAL COURIER SPRING 2024

The Royal Courier is El Camino Real Charter High School’s student-run and student-led newspaper publication. The Royal Courier has been publishing news for the school community since 1970.

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Our main purpose is to (1) inform the students, faculty and community of school-related news; (2) broaden the range of thinking of staff members and readers; (3) provide a forum for readers; (4) train the students in the functions of the press in a democratic society; and (5) provide entertaining features of interest to the students. All editorials without a byline reflect at least two-thirds opinion of The Royal Courier staff but are not necessarily the opinion of the administration.

Letters to the Editor are welcomed and must be signed; however, names will be withheld for valid reasons. All contributions are subject for restrictions of libel, defamation, slander and obscenity. The Royal Courier staff reserves the right to edit letters without changing the meaning, and also reserves the right to reject letters for reasons of limited space, untimely material, or unbalanced coverage.

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Spring Break international excursion

By **Sylah Hill** and **Isabel Rose**

Over spring break, 20 students participated in a school trip to Japan, revealing a beautiful culture and allowing the students to experience and learn firsthand about the country.

The travel group, led by World History teacher Devon Knadle and chaperone Alec Sant, toured the country with a guide, Kaori, who gave overviews of the places and enhanced the understanding of the foreigners.

“I really enjoyed [Kaori’s] touring,” sophomore Sara Heffernan said. “I do wish we had more time to do our own things.”

Following the 10 hour flight from Los Angeles to Tokyo, the students experienced some jet-lag.

“When I was [in Japan], [the jet lag] didn’t affect me,” sophomore Helena Heshmatipour said. “But when I got back from Japan, after the trip, I slept really

late for three days after.” After settling down, they got to explore the surrounding mall and the convenience store, leading to the first few purchases in this new country.

Among the many culture shocks the group experienced, the most significant was the silence everywhere and the currency change, with 150 yen equating to one United States (U.S.) dollar. Food, snacks and drinks are far cheaper in Japan than in the U.S. and usually cost no more than a few dollars.

“I think one of the biggest culture shocks was how quiet everyone was,” Heffernan said. “While I expected it, the silence was completely opposite to what I was used to.”

Another new experience was the toilets, with features not generally seen in the U.S., including bidets, background sounds and automatic seat heaters.

In the following days, the

group traveled around Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka, visiting many shrines and temples daily. Some of the most fascinating religion-based locations were the Meiji Jingu, a shrine in Tokyo dedicated to Emperor Meiji, the Fushimi Inari Shrine, a famous Kyoto Shinto shrine featuring the 1000 torii gate climb and the Kinkaku-ji Buddhist temple, which included the beautiful golden pavilion.

“I really liked the shrines and temples,” sophomore Suriya Joseph said. “They were all beautiful and had so much symbolism.”

The group experienced the cleanliness of Japan which had only been heard of until then, a primary factor of which Japan is the lack of trash cans.

“That was pretty shocking, how clean it was, considering there were no trash cans around,” sophomore Alexis Charbonneau said.

In Japan, public transportation is a primary source of

travel. In addition to going places by bus, students took a two hour ride on the shinkansen (bullet train) from Tokyo to Kyoto. They had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the walkable streets and public transportation, as they were allowed free time to roam specific areas in groups.

“My favorite part of the trip was when we got two hours to walk around Kyoto and Osaka and spend our free time eating snacks,” sophomore Shreya Shetlur said.

The hours of free time were used by students to explore the country on their own and find small shops and areas they normally would have passed over.

“It made the whole trip less stiff and more enjoyable,” sophomore Benjamin Langlois said.

During their stay in Japan, the students especially enjoyed Kyoto, a far more quiet and immersive experience.

“[I liked Kyoto], not just because of the cherry blossoms, but because of the overall vibe it gave off,” said sophomore Abigail Prendes.

One of the highlights of the entire trip was the visit to Nara Park in Kyoto, where deer roamed in the areas surrounding several shrines and temples.

“My favorite part was definitely Nara Park,” Hashmatipour said, “when we went to see the deer and feed them.”

The students enjoyed their incredible experience in Japan despite their limited amount of time there and they are sure to treasure the memories from that trip for years to come.

“Having experience being in a foreign country...is really helpful,” Langlois said. “Being able to look back and say ‘I did that’...is actually mind blowing.”

April Program Highlight: Yearbook

By **Jenna Espinoza** and **Sydney Keane**

This April highlights the El Corazón and all the hard work the yearbook staff puts into creating a yearbook for students to enjoy and look back on for years to come.

“At the end of my freshman year, I, specifically, along with my co-editor, was approached by my English teacher, Mrs. Herrera, about joining the program,” junior and Editor in Chief Rebecca Margolin said. “She told me she was offered the position to teach

the class and she wanted me to help her write stories for the Yearbook because of my love for English.”

On a day to day basis, the students work on many different things depending on what role they have on the staff. It can range from photo editing, to writing stories to design editing while also improving their skills daily.

“We cover everything from [Navy Junior Reserve officer’s Training Corps] (NJROTC) to the English department to student council,” senior and Head of Copy Coleton Rice said.

“We cover it all and we try to make sure our yearbook is the best representative of the student body as it can be, no matter what.”

The yearbook staff is incredibly close with one another, which makes working together much easier and allows them to put as much love and effort into the yearbook as they do.

“Deadlines are super stressful but they also help me bond with my co-editor [Margolin] and advisor Ms. Conte a lot. It’s really special to spend that much time with people and you

just kind of get close automatically,” junior and Editor in Chief Sophie Blanc said. “Our last deadline is in April and the yearbook will be coming out in May.”

There are a couple different ways that students can buy a yearbook. To purchase it online, students can go to a website called yearbookforever.com or go through Instagram and find the ecryearbook account to access the link in their bio. From there, students can enter the school’s name and enter all of their information to purchase the yearbook.

To buy it in person, students can go to the student store to purchase it with cash or card. The price tends to change, but only gets higher as the end of the year approaches, so, it is best to buy it as soon as possible.

“If [students] have any interest in writing, designing online, interviewing or just connecting with the student body and administration, [they] should definitely join yearbook next year,” Blanc said.

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NJROTC goes to nationals in Pensacola, Florida



Photo by Ricardo Covarrubias

By **Kyleigh Zvara** and **Kaley Samiian**

The Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp (NJROTC) competed in the national competition at Pensacola, FL, April 3-8.

“I had a ton of fun on the trip and getting to [be involved in] a new type of competition was such a special experience,” junior Eden Hillel said.

The competition consisted of multiple events including personnel inspection and five separate drill events; color guard, unarmed and armed basic drill and unarmed and armed exhibition. NJROTC also competed in an academics test and three physical training events; push ups, curl ups and sprints.

“It was definitely very stressful especially when it

came to the personnel inspection,” sophomore Rhiya Ramanan said. “Despite the nerves, we were all very excited to compete in our first ever nationals.”

This competition marked the first time the school’s NJROTC qualified and went to a national meet. Even though this was their premiere in a country wide competition, they did very well, with some of the members placing very high in their categories.

“It was an extremely long day because there were 23 other schools there and everyone had to get everything done, but we got lucky with our schedule of events,” Hillel said.

The school’s NJROTC excelled overall, especially in the push-up competition with freshman Adrian Pham doing 127 to place third and

sophomore Lucius Kim doing 111 to place fifth.

“I learned about the capabilities of the other schools, and we also retained what we need to do next year to win first,” sophomore Viyana Merzai said.

The team ranked in the top 10 of the school NJROTC programs nationwide. They practiced for hours on a day-to-day basis to prepare, their commitment to the team contributed to their nationwide success.

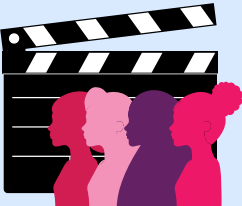
“I felt really confident throughout the day but everyone around us was stressed as we were all trying to manage each other and help one another get through our events smoothly,” Hillel said. “I was nervous and excited to compete and represent all the west coast.”



CLUB COLUMN

By Sophie Apolaya and Kasey Lee

Women in Film - Fridays at Lunch in S-4

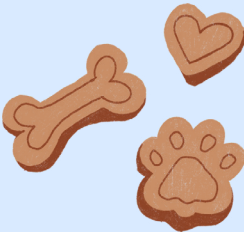


Women in Film club creates a relaxing atmosphere for students to learn about feminine presence in the film industry and share their interests about film.

“I’m really passionate about film and I’m a really big feminist,” club president and junior Sophie Blanc said. “I feel like it’s so important to spread the message that women [can be active in the film industry] and there’s so many great women in it already.”

At meetings the club members enjoy discussing new movies, talking about big events in entertainment and watching clips and movies.

Paws for Life - Thursdays at Lunch in Z-12

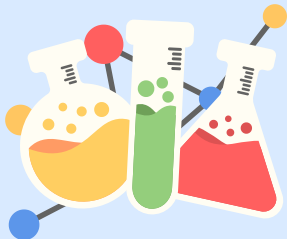


The Paws For Life club aims to raise money for the Paws For Life Rescue through fundraisers and fun volunteer events.

“We try to spread word of the rescue and what they do because they help prisoners train dogs,” club president and senior Emily Bowen said. “If they do leave prison, they get a job once they get out and those dogs come out fully trained like service dogs.”

The club not only has a great cause behind it, but also has lively and easy volunteer opportunities open to all students.

I Too Can Stem - Tuesdays at lunch in B-221

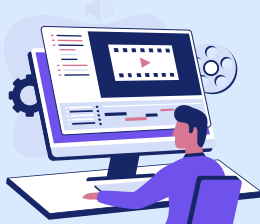


The I Too Can Stem club is a memorable and engaging club that extends a helping hand to elementary students interested in science.

“We plan STEM related events for elementary kids to give them access to resources in the field.” club president and junior Aneysha Khanna said. “We are very innovative and are open to ideas!”

The club is a great way to pass down a passion of science by introducing it to young scholars and encourages all to join.

Video Editing Club - Fridays at nutrition in T-34



Video editing club teaches members different methods of video editing using various editing programs, including Adobe Acrobat, Videostar and Capcut.

“I have a great passion for video editing and have done it for more than five years,” club president and sophomore Taye Sangkhae said. “It’s something that I want to share with others.”

At the meetings, members can share their interests and talents, and also receive different presets and video effects to use in their own videos.



Photo by Rebecca Margolin

A school without a library

By **Sydney Keane** and **Kasey Lee**

The loss of the school library and addition of a new media center opening April 15, receives both positive and negative attitudes from students and teachers.

“The library at the school was for students to get their work done,” sophomore Aarna Uppal said. “It was a quiet and calming place [and] it was

easy to get work done there.”

Alongside the other renovations taking place in the school, the library underwent a seven month transformation into a media center, made with the purpose of being a more comfortable, modern area, to enhance education for students. Since the beginning of the renovations, the library has been closed and unavailable for students to access. Without the library, students couldn’t

borrow books from the school or use the space to study.

“Libraries offer a wide range of texts to a wide range of people, regardless of class, income, familial exposure, or any other factor,” English Teacher Natasha Zwick said. “The accessibility of free, printed texts means that anyone who can read can access ideas from anyone at any time. Public libraries are essential to civilization as we know it.”

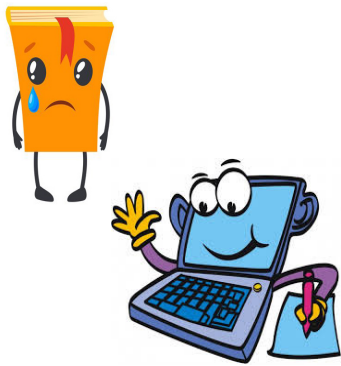
Despite not having access to books, the reason for the library closing and changing into the media center has been made to accommodate the new ways students learn and study. Due to most assignments being primarily on the school laptops, students don’t need to use physical books and can easily access the online versions. Supporting the increase of online tools for education, the media center’s new changes include charging stations, high speed internet access, televisions, and a new audio system. It’s also expected to have new seating, breakout rooms, whiteboards and more to improve collaboration and learning for students.

“I used to [use the library] to study, especially in the mornings, because I had a zero period, so on Wednesdays I would always be there,” sophomore Zahara Haque said. “I think it would be better as a study space [because] nowadays, people mostly get information online.”

Libraries are very important and have had a large impact on learning in the past. However, the current students haven’t had access to the books in the library so they have been using the library as a study space anyways. The transformation

to a media center and creating an elevated study space seems much more efficient for the students at this school. Some think that a school without a library seems strange and the controversy involving books in recent years make the renovations come at an interesting time. Nonetheless, hopefully the space is a calm and welcoming environment for students to use.

“I hope that we continue to encourage our students to make use of the public library system, to cultivate their own libraries at home, and to appreciate the printed word,” Zwick said. “There is something magical about holding a world in your hands, and that’s what we do every time we pick up a book. As Jane Austen has said, ‘There is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of anything than of a book!’”



Surprising success and disappointing turnouts: March Madness 2024

By **Kaley Samiian** and **Kyleigh Zvara**

The annual March Madness Tournaments held by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) ended for men April 8 and women April 7, crowning the University of Connecticut (UConn) and University of South Carolina (UofSC) as champions, respectively.

The men’s March Madness final game was a tough match-up between UConn and Purdue University, ending with a score of 75-60, UConn winning. The game was very close in the first half with neither team straying too far from the other’s points, but by the second half Purdue lost their momentum and UConn took on a more massive lead.

Purdue’s success in the tournament was pretty surprising to many fans because of their lackluster performances in the previous years. Most notably, Purdue’s loss in the first round of the 2023 March Madness to the last seed in their region.

The men’s tournament saw two number one seed teams in their Final Four, UConn and

Purdue, both of which were in their championship game. The other two schools, Alabama University and North Carolina State University (NCST) were fourth and eleventh seeds in their regions. First seed in the West (University of North Carolina) and first seed in the South (University of Houston) did not make it as far, as they both lost in the Elite Eight.

For the women’s tourna-

ment, UofSC was widely favored to win as they had an undefeated season and a much better record than the teams on their side of the bracket. However, Iowa’s side was more unpredictable with the competition of similar level teams. They beat the reigning champions and number three seed Louisiana State University (LSU) in the Elite Eight, and then the number one seed team UConn in the Final Four. The recognition for making it to the championship, despite the tough games ahead of them, went to Iowa point guard Caitlin Clark.

Clark’s in-game statistics has been acknowledged as the reason for this year’s NCAA tournament receiving 18.7 million viewers, the highest-watched women’s game in

history.

Clark also joined the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) draft shortly after the March Madness tournament ended. She was first pick in the draft and was chosen to join the Indiana Fever. Astonishingly to many though, her contract detailed a \$76,000 salary, a fraction compared to the men’s first pick contract usually offering \$10 million. Although the overall reaction was surprise, some people qualified her pay by saying that the WNBA doesn’t generate nearly enough revenue to pay Clark as much as the NBA.

A notable mention in the NCAA men’s Purdue versus UConn game was center Zach Edey’s performance. Even though his team lost the game,

Edey put up 37 out of Purdue’s 60 points.

With Purdue’s loss, UConn has gained their second consecutive NCAA March Madness title and their sixth overall. This was also the second consecutive time Iowa qualified and played in the NCAA championship, yet didn’t win the title. The face of their team, Caitlin Clark, will be entering the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) draft of 2024.



Boys volleyball team aces their season

By Estephanie Lopez and Oliver Yuval

Although it was a close match, the Highlanders of Royal High School defeated the school’s boys varsity volleyball team at their home game 1-3, March 7, leaving them hungering for a rematch. The school would soon make an unexpected comeback at Cal Lutheran leaving all including themselves in triumphant disbelief.

“The Royal game wasn’t our best performance but it also wasn’t our worst,” senior Jake Morales said. “We lacked some skills at first but we were not going to give up so fast.”

Coming in with confidence in their first set was not enough, Royal High School would end up taking the lead with a score of 25-14.

“We felt frustrated by some of the errors and that we couldn’t seem to make a comeback during the game,” senior Devin Johnson said. “[However] we kept it close and that’s what kept our energy up and motivated us to persevere and make it a challenge instead of a dispiriting thing.”

Losing the first set was a wake-up call for them to pick it up in the next three sets. Throughout the game, there were a few captivating and promising come-

backs made by our school’s team, which almost entirely consisted of blocks and a few defensive plays. Junior Jackson Riepe who played middle (M), Johnson who played outside hitter (OH) and Morales playing opposite hitter (OPP), all blocked their opponents successfully.

“We made sure to celebrate every point and stay in the game,” Johnson said.

Despite maintaining this positive mindset and attitude, in the last sets, El Camino could not catch a lead and was defeated with a finishing score of 25-20, only motivating them further.

“There was a tournament at Cal Lutheran and we played against Royal High School and they beat us [there],” senior John Paul Balon said. “We got our revenge and beat them in [the] finals and took first place. [That was] my favorite memory from the season, winning the tournament at Cal Lutheran.”

The team’s perseverance throughout the season would lead them to start winning games and the morale of the team going up. The performance of the boys’ volleyball team has been notable with a 5-2 record in league play. This puts them third in the West Valley Volleyball League, only behind Chatsworth

High School and Granada Hills High School in the standings. They are getting ready for upcoming playoff action which starts soon.

“I think that we are putting ourselves into a good spot for [the] playoffs and hopefully we can call it a big run at the end of the season,” junior Tyler Lee said.

Going into the playoffs the team has been on fire and their successes in the regular season can propel them to new heights. Good team performance comes from the perfect execution of their plays which help them win sets and eventually games, which also contributes to the team’s strong relationship.

“I’d say [the chemistry] is pretty good, most of my teammates are pretty good friends of mine,” Cruz said.

With everyone working together by holding each other responsible, connections are built between teammates which helps them bond and as a result execute better on the court. Being on the volleyball team has also helped the players build friendships with others on the team and create a leader out of every player.

“We could be better for sure. I think we have a lot of room to grow as well,” Varga said. “But we are always improving so there’s more to come.”

Track & Field reveal the key to making a winning team

By Sophie Apolaya and Jessica Khandouzi

The school’s track-and-field team ran against Taft High School April 4, winning overall when the different events the team ran were added up.

“There are field events like shot put, high and long jump, but there are also track events like 100 and 200 meters, sprint and distance,” sophomore Marielle Flores said.

The school adds points at the end, where they also get individual points based on each person’s placement. The team goes through a lot of training for every event, in hopes of earning more

points.

“[My training consists of] practicing as much as possible and overdoing your event so you build up to the time and speed you need to,” senior Zoey Igbinige said.

Each person prepares in the best way possible for themselves. Long distance works on their stamina, while short distance focuses more on speed. There are also physical and emotional tactics used by the team.

“[To prepare I have] to get into a certain headspace by jumping and shaking [my] legs to help get in the zone,” Igbinige said.

During this track season, there have been some strug-

gles for practices and meets due to field renovations, affecting some of the team. Since the field is currently being worked on, there is more of a pressure to find a space to work in.

“You have to make the extra effort to get to Calabasas after school to practice,” sophomore Sofia Galvez said. “You have to be ready to run everything that [the coaches] give you without question.”

Track-and-field competitions may initially appear to be individual sports, but the sport encompasses a team dynamic. From relay races to field events, the athletes frequently encourage and support one another, high-

Boys tennis team finds success after tough start

By Kasey Lee

After months of hard work and practice, the boys tennis team found success as they played throughout their season beginning in February and ending in May.

“[At the beginning of the season] it didn’t look like it was going to be great compared to last year,” junior Tristan Tran said. “Now we’re making a comeback and beating other schools the second time around.”

When their first matches took place, the team struggled with losses to schools like Eagle Rock High School, Taft Charter High School and Cleveland High School. Two months later, the team played them again and won all three games, showing the determination and dedication they put in.

“When it comes to practice what we really do is just play,” sophomore Roman Mosavi said. “Playing tennis is one of the best ways to improve in it. I would say that it has benefitted me positively in games because I can try strategies in practice matches and see how it’s best to implement them in actual games.”

The team’s success comes from them practicing hard everyday with guidance from new coach, Jason Grider, who has 15 years of tennis experience. Grider works hard with the team to improve their

skills in hopes of playing well in the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) playoffs this year.

“The coaching this year is really good,” Tran said. “[Grider] is really involved with us and he’s strict.”

With Grider’s strong coaching, the team has found many benefits from tennis which help motivate them to play hard.

“Tennis is a sport I enjoy and for me it has a lot of positive outcomes,” Mosavi said. “Playing tennis allows me to stay fit, spend time with my teammates, meet new people, advance my mentality and bring up my competitive spirit.”

Since they spend a lot of time with one another at games and practices, the team has formed a strong dynamic with each other.

“My favorite part [about tennis] is the friends,” junior Anshul Katakwar said. “Everybody there is cool and I think we all have a solid relationship with each other.”

Even though the players take practice seriously and put in hours of hard work, they are still able to have enjoyable moments together.

“We’re like brothers,” Tran said. “We all mess around with each other, but everyone’s always respectful. We make a lot of jokes but it’s all good fun in the end.”

lighting the value of teamwork in pursuing common objectives.

“Supporting the teammates around me and encouraging them during their race and cheering them on can have a big impact on how far they can push themselves,” Bowens said. “Track is an individual sport, but if you work together and help each other you can run faster and longer.”

Inspiration and longevity is a key factor in keeping the morale of the team alive, and the team makes sure to support every runner. While track may just seem like it is running there are a lot of misconceptions about the

sport to many.

“The sport is not easy,” Igbinige said. “Other teams have to run as a punishment while that is our whole sport.”

The track team’s most recent triumph over Taft demonstrates the value of resiliency and teamwork to the team. Their combined efforts and tenacity throughout the season have been an inspiration to everyone, showing the potential of collaboration in accomplishing amazing feats both on and off the track.

“A lot of the runners are committed and enjoy track,” sophomore Saveena Joseph said. “We still have pressure to go faster and keep up.”