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# THE CUPOLA

“LET THERE BE LIGHT!”

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## More than Faculty Housing: The Class of 2026 Sixth Form Gift

By Matthew Chirumbolo

With the start of spring, the Class of 2026’s Sixth Form gift is kicking into high gear. This year’s gift is the renovation of one of the newly acquired Twin Lakes homes. The renovation will allow Salisbury a chance to expand its faculty/staff housing.

Assistant Head of School for Institutional Advancement Mr. Peter Gilbert described the decision to go with faculty housing as the gift, saying, “We have seen a cycle of success with putting more faculty homes online and having these opportunities. For example, the Farmhouse Neighborhood near Route 44, the Childs Neighborhood, and now the purchase of this property that would ultimately have four different faculty families living there.”

Mr. Gilbert continued to portray the importance of this gift by stating, “The cost of living in this area has gone up. It’s really hard for somebody on a full salary to buy a house. So having these residences on campus in such a beautiful area, on such a great campus, has been a focus and a goal for the Board of Trustees, along with its development.”

Though this appears quick and easy, there are countless steps that go into the process. Director of Family Giving and Engagement Ms. Kendra Percy explained the process, saying, “Typically, the Business Office gets together with Head of School Mr. Webb, along with Mr. Gilbert,” Ms. Percy said. “They look at the needs of the school... we need faculty housing.”

She furthered her explanation by run-

ning through how they selected this year’s gift. “We looked at the different properties and had to come up with a budget, so we knew which property we could renovate for a certain amount of money,” Ms. Percy said. “We have to look at it in terms of participation because we strive for 100% parent participation, but we’re not always going to get that.”

This is all completed before the start of the school year so that the Board can allow families enough time to gather their donations. Ms. Percy noted that Ashley and Thomas Bradley P’26 and Stephanie Hessler P’26, ’29, the chairs of the project, have been an immense help in getting the form and school to their goal.

Not only will the property serve as an area for faculty housing, but it will also serve as an area for science classes to further enrich their curriculum and engage students on a deeper level. Students will now be able to conduct research for their classes using the various wildlife amenities that the property offers.

Head of School Mr. Will Webb expressed his excitement about the new property and what the future could look like for it. “I don’t foresee us building more in terms of residences, but what I do foresee is, after really focusing on the housing piece of that puzzle, creating ways in which we can really increase and leverage student use of that space,” Mr. Webb said.

He also explained the school’s vision for how to maximize the property.

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## The Lasting Impact of the Walter Billingsley ’82 Memorial Lecture Series

By Kobe Brown

Nearly 40 years ago, a man by the name of Walter Billingsley ’82, a graduate of Salisbury and uncle of Latham Billingsley ’24, sadly passed away in an automobile accident. Beloved by many, the Walter Billingsley ’82 Memorial Lecture Series was created specifically to provide a time and place for individuals to speak to the student body and inspire the next generation.

“We have this tremendous opportunity every year to keep Walter Billingsley’s memory alive and spread his interests and passions with current students,” explained Instructor in Archival History Mr. Jonathan Siff. Every year, speakers ranging from politicians, artists, and historians to adventurers and world-recognized champions are invited to speak about their experiences. Each year, students and faculty are empowered and deeply motivated by these lectures.

“My favorite was probably Wes Moore; he was incredibly impressive, very engaging, and his story is an amazing one,” said Mr. Siff. Wes Moore, now the governor of Maryland, was incredibly favored among the student and faculty population. He spoke during the 2018–2019 school year.

It’s not just about the accolades of the speakers, though. It’s about bringing inter-

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## "Have Some Grit:" Mr. Mayer's Lessons in Math, Wrestling, and Life

By Istvan Szecsei

Each time Chapel concludes, several students stay not because of another prayer, but to head to class in the basement. Instructor in Mathematics Mr. Adam Mayer, who once had a dream of becoming a Navy wrestler, teaches down there. Life took him in a different direction, though, and now he puts his efforts into teaching his students math and wrestling.

"I wasn't a great wrestler; wrestling was great for me," said Mr. Mayer. In his career, wrestling played a bigger role than "just" a sport. Life threw a lot at him at a very young age; he had to carry the weight of being the oldest child in the family while his mom had substance abuse problems. He found something that helped him push through the hard times.

"This world of wrestling made me better as a person," said Mr. Mayer.

Being a wrestler wasn't easy in any sense. He still remembers Jason Rogers from Carver, Massachusetts, when they wrestled against each other. After a full period of Rogers' dominance, tweaking Mr. Mayer's shoulders and neck and dislocating his elbow at the end of the second period, with the score at 15-3, his confidence was shaken. "I wanted to quit at that moment," Mr. Mayer described.

But he didn't.

"Fake it." This was his high school coach's advice to him. He shook his head, popped up, and ran out to the mat for the last period. Mr. Mayer pulled himself together, just to get pinned a couple of seconds later.

"I'm honored to be beaten by those guys because it's humbling, and I learned a lot about myself," Mr. Mayer said. "I learned to hold myself accountable, and I learned to give myself a little credit, too, identify my growth points, and be a better teammate and a better person."

This mentality built up in him and

followed him through high school. Being a Navy wrestler became his dream.

After four years of hard work, the Naval Academy told Mr. Mayer that he should retake his SAT because of his low English scores. At the time, he thought he had been rejected and never tried to retake the test. He became familiar with the University of New Hampshire, as he grew up in Durham, New Hampshire, so he ended up going to college there instead.

Despite the fact that he has not wrestled competitively since high school, Mr. Mayer found other goals in his life. "I didn't want to impact people in a way that my mother impacted us, so I transferred my desire to help people," he said.

Community service and helping people became his fulfillment, whether it was buying cigarettes every Sunday for an old man with paraplegia or playing piano and eating ice cream with his long-retired high school teacher with Alzheimer's. "I have no idea how to play the piano, so I would just play whatever, and she loved it," Mr. Mayer said.

Mr. Mayer also felt comfort in the certainties of math. When a lot of things were unknown at his home, he knew math was certain, and his desire to help people continued as a teacher.

Nikhil Parikh '27's favorite Mr. Mayer quote from class is simple: "Have some grit," something that transfers to the classroom. "He is usually not the guy who'll just explain it to you," Parikh said. "Going head-on at a problem" helped him learn to grind through problems rather than asking for the answer.

Struggling with the AP Calculus AB curriculum last year, Parikh needed some help. Staying after class and going to get assistance early in the morning "showed me the character that he has and the willingness to help his students succeed," he said.

Parikh, who claims to be Mr. Mayer's "favorite" student, described him as

### Sixth Form Gift (cont. from page 1)

"What a great place to bring the whole Sixth Form and have a day off. We can go down there, with the big old fields, and play football and other activities," Mr. Webb added as a potential use of the space.

This project is more than just a faculty housing property; it's for all of Salisbury to enjoy for years to come. It will be viewed as the mark that the Class of 2026 left.

a "super great guy." Spending two years so far in his math class has given Parikh a lot of good memories. "For my birthday, he took me out to go paddleboarding with a couple of my buddies," Parikh said.

Vincent Valcin '28, meanwhile, sees Mr. Mayer in a different space: the wrestling mat. "Something I've learned from him the most is positivity," Valcin said. He described Mr. Mayer as the "good cop" on the mat beside Coach Adam Bunce, who is the "bad cop."

Valcin feels humor helped make their relationship stronger. Mr. Mayer often asks, "How is your face doing?" when Valcin's morale is low on the mat. "Because it's killing me," Mr. Mayer always says, answering his own question.

Teaching is about "these shared experiences that we are blessed to have," Mr. Mayer said. No matter the circumstances, he always tries to share a little bit about who he is. It means a lot to him to grow together and build relationships with the students, either in class or on the wrestling mat.

"Whenever we mess up, he always says, 'you're still a good person,'" Valcin said.



## Billingsley (cont. from page 1)

esting, talented people to Salisbury's isolated campus, enriching the "student experience and the quality of education," as well as carrying on the legacy of Walter Billingsley.

A lead member of the Billingsley Lecture Committee, Director of Planned Giving and Stewardship Mrs. Electra Tortorella spoke about the true meaning of keeping Walter Billingsley's interests in life alive. "We are trying to create men who have an impact on the world. We are bringing in positive role models to show how different people have gone out and followed their dreams, been true to themselves, and have been leaders in what they do," Mrs. Tortorella said. The Billingsley Lectures play a pivotal role in the Salisbury experience, just as the Billingsley name should be remembered.

Embracing the adventurous side of the Billingsley name, the Salisbury community had the pleasure of hosting someone who embodies everything Salisbury stands for as this year's speaker. Mr. Colin O'Brady, a 12-time world-record holder, New York Times bestselling author, speaker, and entrepreneur, spoke about his life experiences. From rowing across Drake's Passage to completing a solo trek across the landmass of Antarctica, there were no limits to his exciting story.

Mr. O'Brady shared his experiences not only with the community, but also with *The Cupola*. "The world records and the external success are really just a by-product of curiosity for pushing those limits... but I invite people to explore what's really in their heart," Mr. O'Brady said. "I have found the people that do that have also been even more successful in the world."

Mr. O'Brady has accomplished many things in his life, but his pursuit of the unthinkable was illuminated during this interview. "I'm actually curious to feel the full breadth of the human experience, and one way I've found to do that has been these expeditions."

After speaking with many students throughout the day, Mr. O'Brady was inspirational, to say the least. Awestruck students lined up afterward to shake hands and talk with him about their own experiences. The post-lecture conversations lasted well over an hour.

The Billingsley family, gathered off to the side in the theater, sentimentally watched as their beloved Walter Billingsley lived on through all those young men.



## Salisbury Seniors Reflect on their Experiences Ahead of Graduation

By Luke Walkauskas

With May 22 right around the corner, graduation is approaching for the Class of 2026. Everyone on campus is looking forward to what is to come but is also reflecting on their past years on the Hilltop.

For Ben Van Wormer '26, who has been at Salisbury since freshman year, these final few weeks bring a mix of emotions. "It feels good knowing that I pushed through and made it all the way, but at the same time it's kind of sad looking back at all the memories and friends I've made," Van Wormer said. "I'm excited for what's next."

To him, those memories are not just big events, but the everyday moments that now feel more meaningful. "You try to enjoy everything more, even the small stuff, because you know you won't get it back," he said.

Van Wormer said he is trying to slow things down and take everything in during these final few weeks. With only a short time left, he wants to make sure he appreciates the people and experiences that shaped his four years at Salisbury before moving on to college.

Another senior, Austin Moore '26, said the reality of graduation didn't fully hit him until just recently. "It didn't really hit me until last week... now I'm really starting to value every moment I have here," Moore said. Over his three years, Moore said his mindset has shifted, especially in what he considers important. "Now I value people and moments. I'm going to be sad, but I love the moments that brought me here," he said.

Moore also mentioned how the brotherhood has played a huge role in shaping his experience at Salisbury. "The brotherhood here, it's like a second family," he said. "That's what really made me love this place."

Sixth Form Dean Mr. Chris Phelps has watched the same emotional shift happen for years. In his 16 years at Salisbury, Mr. Phelps said one thing that has always stood out is how emotional seniors become at graduation.

"All of a sudden, they realize this is my last time doing something," Mr. Phelps

said. He notices students spending more time together in simple ways: walking to the lake, sitting on the football field at night, or watching the sunset with friends. "Guys who never do that suddenly start doing it," he said. "They realize we're never going to do this the same way again."

He also explained that senior year comes in two different stages. Early in the year, students are focused on college applications, visits, and the stress of waiting for decisions. Once acceptances come in, that pressure changes, and seniors begin to relax and think more about enjoying their last months on campus. According to Mr. Phelps, that shift is when students start realizing graduation is



no longer far away; it is right in front of them.

He believes traditions like graduation and events such as Knights of the Long Table help bring the class together. "There aren't many adults down there, mainly just the students, sharing their experiences together," he said.

As graduation approaches, seniors are beginning to realize that their time is limited. With only a few weeks left, the mindset has shifted from getting through the year to making the most of every moment before it's over.





## The Backbone of Salisbury Athletics

By Rowan Kornylak

Salisbury has a long-standing tradition of athletic excellence. For 125 years, elite athletes and legendary coaches have instilled a culture on the Hilltop that is unmatched. But what many students leave unnoticed are the people who make all the rivalry games, pristine fields, and grueling practices possible.

One of these people is Mr. Cristian Bonett. As the school's equipment manager, Cristian plays a crucial role behind-the-scenes, handling everything from uniforms to repairs across every sport on campus. His work ensures that athletes can focus on performance. "I want to make sure you guys look good in games. Even if you play badly, you still look good in my uniforms," he said.

Beyond his responsibilities, Cristian has become a trusted person for many students. Unlike a lot of teachers, who have to deal with discipline more, Cristian has built genuine relationships through his willingness to talk about anything. "I'm pretty down to earth, and I'm willing to listen... we just talk about real things that are happening in the moment," he added. In many ways, Cristian represents the backbone of Salisbury athletics.

Another key figure working behind the scenes of Salisbury athletics is athletic trainer Mr. Grady Congleton. As a trainer, Mr. Congleton's role extends far beyond taping ankles and making ice bags. He is the first to evaluate players' injuries, builds recovery plans that allow athletes to return safely, and makes sure Salisbury's athletes are at the top of their game. "We are actually fully licensed healthcare professionals, and we work under doctors and nurse practitioners," he explained, pushing back on the common misconception that his job is closer to that of a personal trainer.

But what often goes unnoticed is the

emotional responsibility that comes with the role. When an athlete is sidelined, the damage is not just physical; it can feel like a loss of identity, routine, and purpose. Mr. Congleton understands this on a personal level, having experienced injury himself, and he approaches those moments with care and empathy. He is often the first person athletes turn to, not just for diagnosis, but for reassurance during some of their most frustrating moments.

"The best thing that you can do is just to be there for that person... actions speak louder than words," he said. Rather than offering empty reassurance, he focuses on presence, recognizing that support often matters more than words. At a school where athletics are taken so seriously, Mr. Congleton provides something different: stability and empathy. His work ensures that athletes are not only physically prepared to return, but mentally sup-



ported while they are away from the game.

A student perspective reinforces just how important these behind-the-scenes roles truly are. Grafton Reilly '27, who has spent the last three years on the Hilltop, has seen firsthand the impact of Salisbury's athletic staff. "The athletic staff, they're always there for you if you need help," he said. He emphasized that their presence is constant, not just during practices and games, but outside of the athletic center.

Reilly pointed specifically to Mr. Congleton as someone whose contributions often go unnoticed. After dealing with a knee issue during football season, Reilly experienced that impact directly. "He figured out I didn't tear my MCL and just told me to take it easy, relax, ice... I didn't have to go to the hospital and get MRIs done," he explained.

His experience highlights the trust athletes have in the staff and the value they bring to Salisbury. Whether it's preparing uniforms, managing injuries, or simply being someone to talk to, the athletic staff forms an essential part of the culture of Salisbury athletics.

## Spring in Motion: How Students Spend the Season

By Alexi de La Giraudiere

As students crawl out from the dark ages of the winter trimester, they are excited to move on to the spring. With excitement building each day, everybody on the Hilltop has something to look forward to.

Student Body President Zach Gill '26 has a refined idea of what springtime should look like, even though it's only his second year on the Hilltop. For Gill, the spring trimester will be "a cruiser" now that the demanding hockey season is over for him and in the rearview. It's time for Gill to "kick



it with the JV golf guys, look forward to events like Brothers & Barbecue, and focus on keeping my grades in the green."

Despite his relaxed plans, Gill understands his responsibilities as Salisbury's head student leader. This means it's important for him to have an active presence on campus and within the community. "I don't really get the luxury of leaving every weekend like some of the guys," said Gill. Even so, he is excited to orchestrate Domain of Dominance among the student body on these last Fridays on the Hilltop. Gill believes that

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“some great memories are going to be made playing spikeball, lacrosse, and hacky sack.”

For Ty Moynahan '27 and fifth formers alike, the spring trimester isn't exactly a cakewalk to the finish line. Being a junior in the last trimester of the year at Salisbury means maintaining a tight grip on grades, signing up for standardized tests, and finding the right university. Additionally, as the college office shifts its focus from seniors to juniors, things don't get any easier.

“This trimester isn't exactly the most exciting or relaxing, but it's important to a lot of guys. Luckily, the teachers tend to notice the added pressure and cut us a little slack,” said Moynahan. On the other hand, Moynahan is excited for the spring weather because it brings the energy the Hilltop missed. “You go from being cold and in your room all day to walking around in flip-flops and playing spikeball,” he said.

Owen Hellman '26 is a little more sentimental about his last spring trimester after four years on campus. Like many, he's making every effort to be involved in the brotherhood that Salisbury has to offer. “I'm excited for all the home games this year and to make some more memories in the student section,” said Hellman. He also touched on Brothers & Barbecue and the return of the Sarum Sprints, which are “some of the best traditions at Salisbury,” according to him.

For Hellman, the spring trimester is a time of transition. “After four years at Salisbury, I always felt like graduation was so far off, but now it's right around the corner,” he said. He also noted how fast the experience has gone by and how much he has grown socially and personally from his time there. “I'm forever grateful to the friends who helped me become the kind of person that I am today. They've been there for me at my lows and my highs,” said Hellman.

While he does feel a bit nostalgic, he's also excited about the opportunity for a fresh start in the next chapter of his life in college. “It's sad, but it's also exciting,” he said. “This is the beginning of the rest of our lives.”



SALISBURY SCHOOL



## Why Some Seniors Choose the Junior Varsity Level

By Matt Murphy

On the Hilltop, students are offered the opportunity to play a wide range of sports at varying levels of competition. Among these options is one often overlooked: seniors on junior varsity teams. This is not necessarily a reflection of their skill or ability, but rather a personal choice.

For some seniors, playing JV provides a more relaxed and enjoyable environment, and a fun time playing sports they like during their final year. Mr. Dylan Sanchez '18, JV football and basketball coach here at Salisbury, talked about coaching seniors on his teams. “It's great. Some seniors come in and see playing JV as a bad thing, but I think playing a different sport that may not be your main focus is always fun,” he said.

Mr. Sanchez also described seniors as role models to the younger players and how having upperclassmen can be a benefit for coaching. He strongly emphasizes that just because you're playing a JV sport doesn't mean you're bad at it. “I remember being a freshman playing JV basketball, and there was a lacrosse PG named Brad Voight who went on to play at Syracuse, and he was a stud basketball player. I just remember him going out there and balling every game; he didn't really care that it was a JV game. He was just competitive,” Mr. Sanchez said.

Charlie Putnam '26, who has played JV sports all four years at Salisbury, is proud to play at the lower level. This past year, he suited up for both the JV hockey and lacrosse teams. “I found that JV was serious enough to where I felt like I was playing for something, but at the same time I wasn't getting up at 6:30 a.m. or having to practice for three hours a day. It's a good balance of competitiveness and more of a relaxed feel,” Putnam said. Having also played varsity soccer in the fall, he has the perspective of both levels and knows what it takes.

“As I've gotten older, my role has kind

of been to reassure those younger kids that it's not the end of the world not making varsity and show them how great of a time JV is,” he said.

Mr. Jonathan Siff, who has been at Salisbury for 10-plus years and has coached multiple JV sports, has seen many instances of seniors playing on JV and having a blast. He recalls his own advisee Nate Broll '26, saying, “who knows if he could have made varsity hockey, but he chose to play JV so that he could be a key guy and have a leadership role... I think it really helped shape the last year of his Salisbury experience.”

As a huge advocate of sports, Mr. Siff wants to see kids playing sports for as long as possible. “Not everyone is going to play college athletics. I believe that you should participate in athletics for as long as you possibly can because once you hit adulthood that ship sails,” said Mr. Siff. “You don't have the opportunity to put on a jersey and go out and compete with a team, and that's something people miss.”

Mr. Siff notices all the bonds and brotherhoods that are formed while playing sports, and he encourages seniors to experience it even if it's not at the highest level. “In conversations that I've had with them [seniors], none of them have regretted it,” he said.





## Salisbury vs. Brunswick: A Rivalry That Defines the Hilltop

By Jordan Rittenberg

Salisbury vs. Brunswick is one of, if not *the* most prominent rivalries on the Hilltop. Whether it's in hockey, lacrosse, football, or even rowing, it is always a day circled on the whole school's calendar.

On the gridiron, Varsity Football Head Coach Chris Phelps attributes that deep rivalry to consistency. "I think one of the reasons why Brunswick was and has maintained the rivalry is because we have continued to play them year after year... it's one of the few schools that I've played in all 16 years that I've been here," Coach Phelps said.

Another reason why this rivalry is so strong is due to a large percentage of Salisbury's student body being from the southern part of Connecticut, near Brunswick's Greenwich campus. This creates a natural rift between families and within the two schools. Add in the fact that both schools are all-boys with rich histories, and quickly the picture becomes clear.

Coach Phelps loves to have the first crack at Brunswick each academic year and thinks it sets the tone perfectly. "There are so many non-four-year guys. During their first year, everybody told them, 'I'm supposed to hate Brunswick,'" he said. "Then they [the non-four-year guys] start to hate them in the sense of wanting to beat them and be competitive. After the first season playing against them, they say, 'Now I know what everybody feels like.'"

From the perspective of the Brunswick student body, they also see the rivalry as prominent. Sebastian Ball '27, a former Brunswick student, said not many schools rival Salisbury. "Maybe with Greenwich Country Day, but I would say Salisbury is a close second and competes in way more sports with them," Ball said.

As Ball reflected on his time at Salisbury so far, some of the most memorable moments in the rivalry have been both as a spectator and as a player. "I re-

member this fall, Brunswick vs. Salisbury football. There was a strong hatred towards Brunswick that game," Ball said.

A dual-sport varsity athlete in hockey and lacrosse, Ball has only had one crack at Brunswick as a player and did not miss his chance to make an impact in this winter's hockey game. "There was a tense rivalry. From the Salisbury side, we wanted to beat Brunswick, go down there in their barn, and put up a few points on them. From the hand of Brunswick, my buddies, they wanted to show that they could hang with Salisbury hockey," he said. Ball ended up scoring two goals in Salisbury's 6-0 win.

Caden Creech '26 also remembers this fall's football game, saying, "Watching this year's Brunswick vs. Salisbury football game was pretty fun. It was back and forth, and we had a solid team, but so did Brunswick. We really didn't know what was going to happen. We just came out there to support the boys, and it was fun to watch."

A three-year student and member of the Varsity Hockey and Lacrosse teams just like Ball, Creech learned about the rift quickly. "It's always been this unwritten rule that we don't like them, and they don't like us. There's some guys on the team that I don't really like, and they make it pretty obvious that they don't either... we want and need to beat them. I just think that it's always personal between them," Creech said.

Creech's lacrosse team has one of the most anticipated matchups vs. Brunswick on Friday, May 8, right here under the lights of Wachtmeister Field. Last year's playoff matchup went in favor of Salisbury, 10-5. "Obviously, we had a lot of good players on that team, and I think all those players stepped up to their abilities, and we were able to kind of crunch them," he said.

This rivalry has been enriched in Salisbury's history for years, and it's not going anywhere. Salisbury will continue to play Brunswick year after year, with each game adding more history.

## How Salisbury Shapes College-Ready Athletes

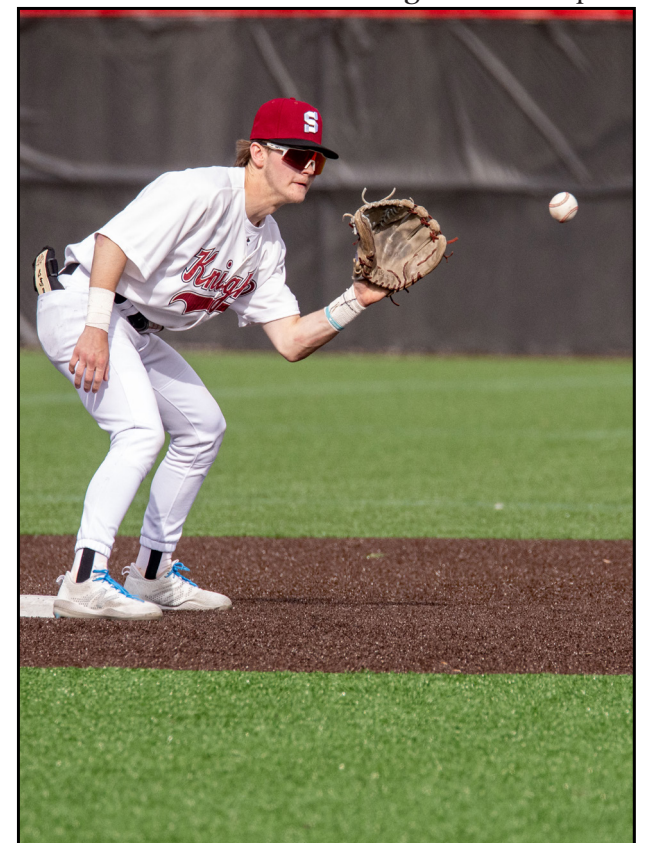
By Mack Brensilver

Athletics are a cornerstone of the Salisbury experience. Each year, dozens of athletes transition their athletic careers to college and professional ranks. However, the true value of being an athlete at Salisbury is the personal impact the school has on its players.

The camaraderie and competitive spirit within the teams prepare athletes for competition in college. Danny Rogers '24, a baseball player at Salve Regina University, reflected on this influence. "Just being surrounded by a bunch of great athletes, it kind of made me want to kick my performance to the next level," he said.

Living with other recruits in one's sport and being pushed by peers every day builds habits that last beyond graduation. This environment creates a culture of excellence at Salisbury that extends from the field to the classroom.

Beyond meaningful coaching, the faculty plays an important role in the lives of athletes at Salisbury. "I learned a bunch of stuff from all the teachers there as well, like Mr. Nichols, about just going through your daily life. He taught me more important lessons," Rogers said. "I learned so much more about being a better per-



son and knowing how to better myself."

Matt Alberti '24, a former varsity hockey goalie for the Knights, also spoke highly of Salisbury's coaches. "Having the ability to play for both Coach Huber and Coach Will was an honor during my time at Salisbury," Alberti said. "Playing for Coach Will, I quickly learned that it takes small details to be great at something. Whether that was our fall workouts, coming back from break early, or long days at the rink, it was the idea of taking advantage of every opportunity to get better, while focusing on those small details, that helped me elevate my game."

Salisbury sets its athletes up for suc-

cess by combining physical training with personal growth. Living away from home in a supportive environment forced Alberti to develop more independence. “For the first time in my life, I had to learn how to navigate things, whether good or bad, by myself,” he said. This independence gave Alberti the knowledge of how to live alone before being almost completely on his own during his junior hockey career.

Head Football Coach Mr. Chris Phelps believes Salisbury’s greatest strength is its approach to developing athletes. “The way Salisbury impacts student-athletes in their preparation for college isn’t just what happens during practice or lifting,” Coach Phelps said. “Being a college athlete takes a lot of discipline, time management, and sacrifice. Our schedule and expectations encourage accountability and discipline from the classroom to the dorms to the athletic fields.”

A major part of that growth and preparation is learning to live away from home before you are on your own. Coach Phelps shared a story of a former player who called him early in the player’s collegiate career. The alum said he initially thought his teammates were “soft” because they complained about the workload, balancing academics and athletics.

“Then I realized I was just like them,” the player told Coach Phelps. “But I did all my complaining when I was at Salisbury, and you guys pushed me through it, and you supported me.” As a result, he had already overcome the transitional struggles before the rest of his teammates.

This combination of independence, accountability, and personal growth gives athletes the true Salisbury advantage once they step onto their respective college campuses, allowing them to fulfill their academic and athletic potential.

## The Little Moments That Make Salisbury

By Jonathan Chiarenza

Salisbury is a place that everyone who attends knows offers endless opportunities for activity, entertainment, and connection. These opportunities are often pushed and marketed through major events like the Winter Classic or huge rivalries.

Though these things often lead to some of the biggest moments of the year and are always places where students and teachers alike can bond, the Salisbury experience, under a microscope, shows that it’s built on simpler moments than these.

Current sixth former and Ward Prefect Finlay MacDermott ’26 mentions something that happens every day at Salisbury: check-in.

“I find a lot of joy in checking in the dorm... coming down at 10:15, seeing people down there, there’s always something happening, there’s always so much life,” he said.

MacDermott explains how there’s a kind of natural beauty to a task that seems so minute. “I really just enjoy sitting there

from 10:05 to 10:20, watching everybody filter in and talk and laugh, just interact before the dorm goes quiet again,” he added.

Some moments, though, aren’t as commonly found. MacDermott recalls freshman year and an old tradition, “first snow.” “We had an enormous snowball fight in the middle of the Ward common room,” MacDermott said.

He said, “Salisbury is very rooted in traditions. A lot of stuff we do, from chants to birthdays at school meetings, is all rooted in tradition.” He also added, “That’s the part of Salisbury you can’t really put on the website, photograph, or put in an admissions pamphlet; it’s completely different... It’s those little things we do that make us, us.”

Fifth former Aidan Cuff ’27 speaks on a tradition that he has been a part of with the football team for the past two years in the annual burning ceremony.

“I think one of the biggest traditions was at the end of the football season with the burning ceremony, where the seniors burn a special item that’s related to their Salisbury career. That made us all really close,” Cuff said.

Getting to share those sensitive, sentimental moments instantly bonds a group more.

He gave another example, saying, “One of my most fond memories of Salisbury last year was in the spring, after getting through football and the academic grind of the winter, going down to the pond with a bunch of the boys and going fishing,” he said.

The experience of going to Salisbury alone is one that Cuff says brought him and people that he now gets to call his friends together. “There’s nowhere in Canada I could have met a lacrosse player from Indiana, an Army-commit football player, or my roommate from Hungary.”

All of these factors play hand in hand with each other to create an unexpectedly unique environment, making moments that can only happen in a place like Salisbury.

Four-year senior Liam Colley ’26 added to this by saying, “You’re with people that you met a few months ago; you didn’t really know who they were or where they came from. You get a different kind of diversity at Salisbury, and spending those times with the boys... is something you’re not realizing how special it is.”

Colley thinks back to one of these moments he had. “Last year in math class, we took a break one day and went down to the lake, and we just paddleboarded. Being able to do that with your teacher out of class was special,” Colley said.

“Whether it’s a home hockey game or just hanging out in the dorms... that’s what adds to the little things of Salisbury,” he said. “It’s something they [students] look back on later in life and remember the good times and how they became better human beings in their time at Salisbury.”

Not everything at Salisbury has to be as large as the renowned sports teams the school has, the events that are hosted, or the decades of history behind the school; it’s the smallest daily occurrences that really bring the Hilltop its beauty.

## Opinion: We Need to Consume Less Energy Drinks

By Jason Choi

Oftentimes, students are up late at night preparing for exams or doing homework. Personally, I am always surprised that during exam periods, when I go to buy an energy drink because I am tired, the shelves are often completely empty.

When I asked my friends, I heard that some guys even chug three energy drinks a day. If we drink high-caffeine beverages like Monster or Alani Nu like water and constantly rely on heavy, strong coffee, there is no way our gut will survive unscathed.

So, what exactly is happening in our gastrointestinal tract? In light of the recently celebrated IBS Awareness Day on April 19, Ms. Hammond from the Health Center shared some professional insights on the subject.

Interestingly, Ms. Hammond noted that while stomach complaints are very common among students, actual diagnoses of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) are less prevalent. However, she strongly warned that the high-caffeine energy drinks we consume daily can destroy our gut microbiome ecosystem in the long run. If left unchecked, this continuous damage could potentially lead to chronic conditions like IBS.

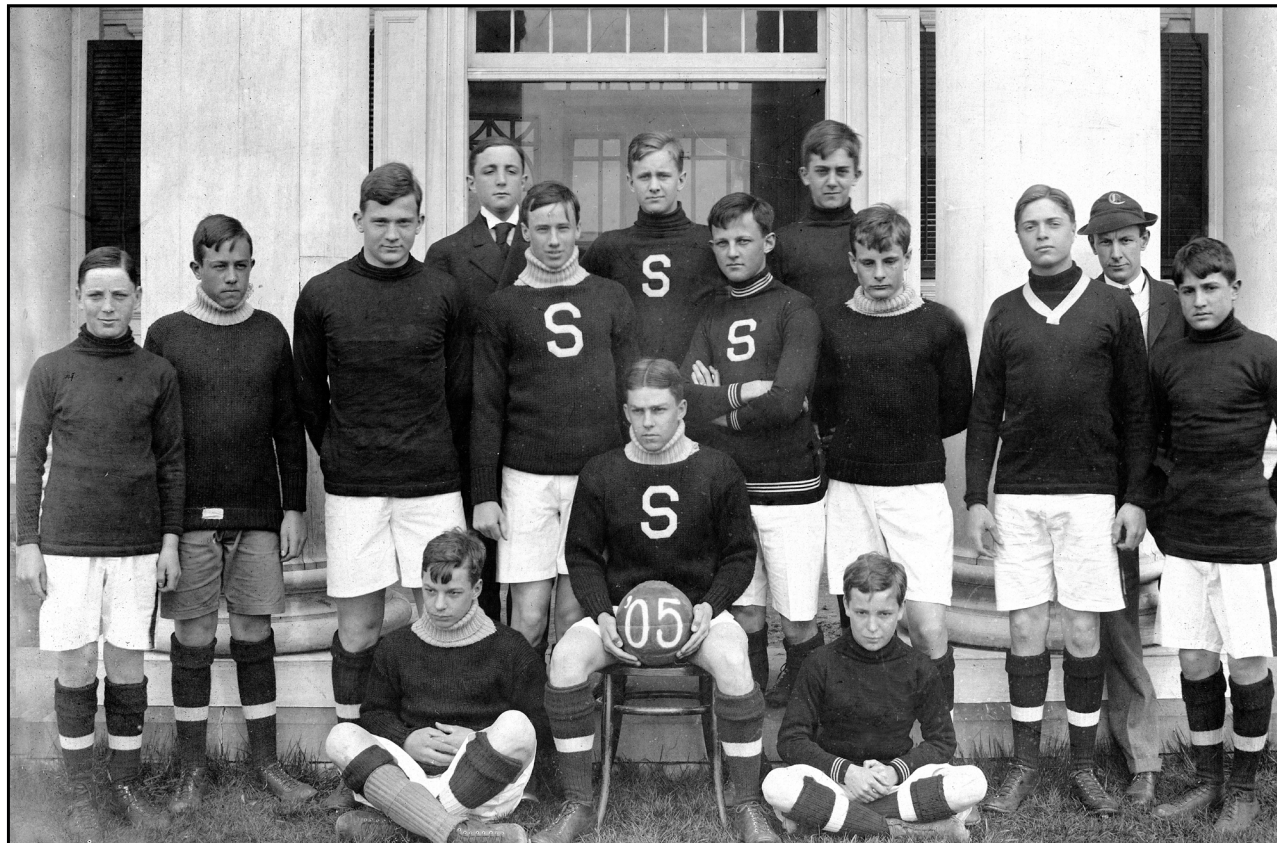
She first points out the important connection between the gut and the brain. “There is a direct connection between the brain and the gastrointestinal (GI) system, and the communication goes both ways. Stress and anxiety can lead to diarrhea and stomach aches, and conversely, GI symptoms can induce stress and mood changes,” she said. In fact, the Health Center often sees students complaining of stomach issues right before big exams.

On top of this, the energy drinks we chug are like adding fuel to the fire. Ms. Hammond points out that while moderate amounts of caffeine can be beneficial, energy drinks act as a stimulant and can increase acid reflux, diarrhea, and nausea. Specifically, she added, “Energy drinks tend to be high in sugar and artificial ingredients and can alter the balance of good and bad bacteria in the gut. The carbonation can also induce gas and bloating.”

What can we do right now to soothe a sensitive stomach and protect our microbiome? Ms. Hammond advised us to take full advantage of the healthy options in the dining hall. Limiting greasy, fried foods and building a diet around whole grains, vegetables like carrots and potatoes, and lean meats and fish is the surest first step to protecting our gut health.

For the sake of your gut health, which is just as important as your grades, how about grabbing a healthy meal at the dining hall instead of an energy drink from the school store this week?

# CULTURE



## Then and Now: How Salisbury Sports Have Evolved

By Brayden Belski

Salisbury Athletics has transformed so much since the school's inception. The present-day athletic programs most have come to know and love weren't always commonplace.

In the 1990s, Salisbury had a wider variety of outdoor sports like whitewater rafting, kayaking, and rock climbing, as well as five to six soccer teams and three football teams.

The Director of the Phinny Library and School Archivist, Dr. James King, introduced another side of Salisbury sports. "Back in 1901, when the school was St. Austin's, we had a photo of the cricket team... Cricket is generally only played in England, as well as rugby, but we developed and came out of the English boarding school tradition," Dr. King said.

Salisbury programs were not always "sporty," Dr. King added. "We also had a race-track nearby and built our own solar car... we beat schools like Dartmouth, MIT, and Penn. Unfortunately, the team slowly faded away, and we are always on the hunt for the original solar car," he said. This shows that Salisbury was ahead of its time, competing with and taking down some of the nation's top colleges.

Current students at Salisbury are not

only amazed by the former sports offered, but also somewhat jealous of what they had. Garrett Sullivan '27 is among them, saying, "We should add whitewater rafting and kayaking back. This would give me and some of my friends a perfect chance to have fun on the water and explore the environment around us." His reaction shows how important and cool these athletics actually were. Salisbury students want to get involved in the environment more than ever.

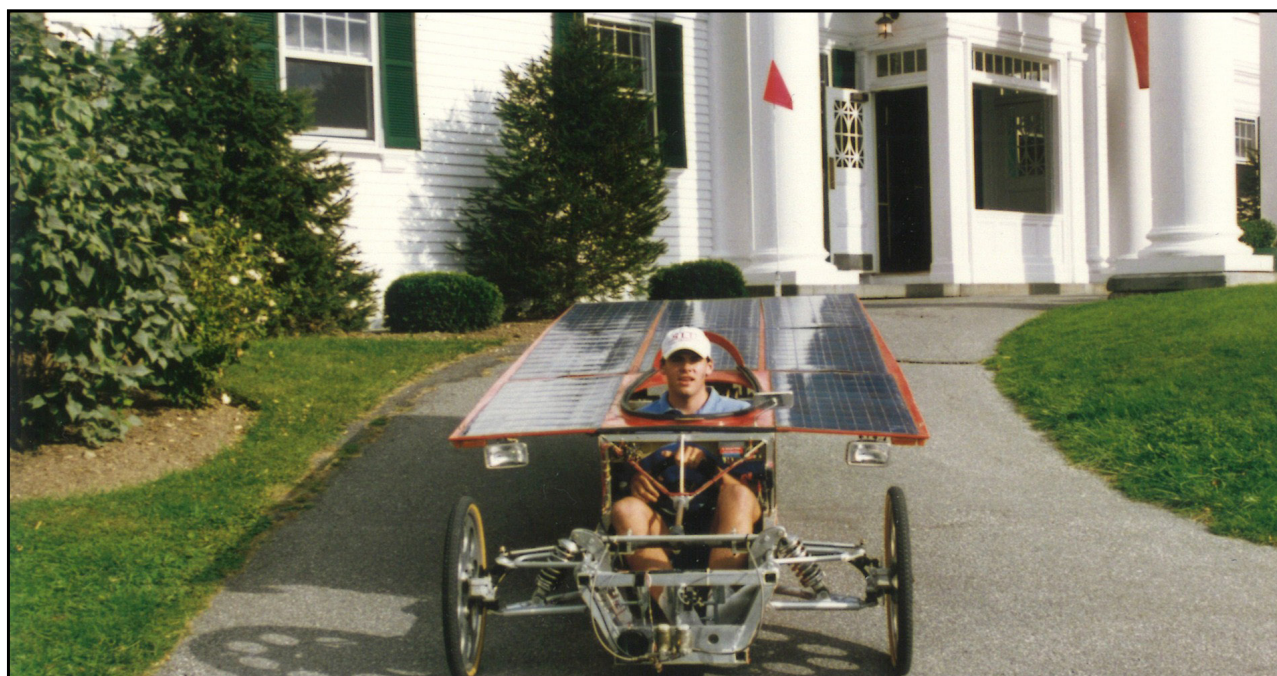
While the school no longer has kayaking, it does have livestreaming, a major benefit to the sports we have. Kayaking and rock climbing became liabilities because of how dangerous they are, putting an end to the programs.

"Having a livestream or a rec sport is so nice in the afternoons when you want to work out or do training for your main sport. It doesn't waste time on things you don't really need," Sullivan said. Although students at Salisbury always love to experience the outdoors, many want to spend most of their time on their main sports. Students want to make the most of their time, making this the only real negative to adding these sorts of teams back.

Salisbury has changed drastically in

many ways over the years, but hockey has always been a staple. "The Salisbury boys have been playing hockey since the school moved up here, part of why former Headmaster and Founder of Salisbury, George E. Quaile, really liked this location," said Mr. Jonathan Siff, an instructor in archival history. "It wasn't until the 1960s that they built the first artificial ice surface."

All in all, Salisbury athletics has changed so much over the last 100 years, and it continues to play a very important role in the community. Although some of the past sports have disappeared, new sports have taken over and continue to shape students into who they are today.



## The Cupola

The Cupola Staff, Spring 2026

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