



ASP

ALBANY STUDENT PRESS

And the Danes
Go Marching
In
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Danes
Down
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Milo Votava / Albany Student Press
Michael Sam, the first openly gay man drafted in the NFL, spoke to over 400 students as part of the University's Sexuality Month

NFL Trailblazer Takes Campus

By ILLENE ROTHMAN

Strapped with a message of perseverance, former NFL player, Michael Sam, shared his emotional life story during the University at Albany's Sexuality Month.

The Texas native took the Campus Center Ballroom stage Tuesday night to discuss how he remains positive despite

the adversity he has faced both on and off the football field. Sam, 27, started pursuing football more fervently in high school when he discovered that football could be a way out of his hometown.

"A lot of people think my story began when I came out as a gay football player. That's not true at all," Sam said to an audience of over 400

individuals.

During his presentation Sam shared the tragedy of his childhood, his experiences with publicly coming out as gay before the 2014 NFL draft, and reflected on his life since being released from the NFL.

Sam was born in Galveston, Texas and during his presentation, "I am Michael Sam," he

intimately shared details of the abuse he faced from his older brothers during his childhood.

Once in high school, Sam began to find solace on the football field from his unstable home life.

He went on to play college football at the University of Missouri, where he began to further exploring his sexuality.

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WINTER



UALBANY'S WILD WEATHER

By MILO VOTAVA

The weather in Albany this past week may seem like a direct effect of climate change, but it may not adequately explain why the Capital region is experiencing unusual weather patterns this year, according to a University at Albany professor.

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Christopher Pounds / Albany Student Press

BUDGET

Budget in Jeopardy Pending Fee Vote

By TYLER MCNEIL

Should the student activity fee become optional with next month's referendum, the Student Association at the University at Albany is prepared to slash over half of its budget.

Passed on Wednesday, the first ever contingency plan would be a \$1.9 million budget reduction from this year, the largest budget drop in recent history. Under the plan, most SA expenses -- notably student group budgets -- would be scrapped.

The only expenses met are bylaw mandated. This includes providing one cent for every SA recognized student group in one fund; in total, this would be less than \$2.

Out of the \$541,000 plan, the bulk of funds would come from next year's student activity fee. However, the bill's sponsor, Austin Ostro, senate vice chair, expects SA to muster much fewer from the fee than estimated.

"It's not pretty," Ostro told the senate last week. "It's not fun."

Ostro said that he plans to shock officers into supporting the mandatory vote at Tuesday's budget town hall with the contingency plan.

Officers for Middle Earth, the second highest budgeted student

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MUSLIM BAN

Students, Faculty Feel Brunt of Chilling Order

By LINDSEY RIBACK

On Thursday, the U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the decision to prevent President Donald Trump's executive order to temporarily restrict immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries, yet students and faculty at the University at Albany are still grappling with the order's intentions.

Just a week after taking office on Jan. 20, Trump issued an executive order temporarily banning immigration from seven countries: Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya. Individuals in the U.S. with visas who under regular circumstances would be able to travel to their home country and return to the United States were also banned from re-entering.

Additionally, under what has been coined as the "Muslim ban," refugees would not be

admitted into the United States for 90 days and all Syrian refugees would be banned indefinitely.

At UAlbany, there are 35 international students and several faculty members who come from the countries included in the ban, and although none of the students were abroad while the ban was issued, it had and continues to have a lasting effect on the UAlbany community.

Ali Alaei, a visiting scholar, encountered trouble when he tried returning to the U.S. with a J1 scholar's visa on Feb. 11. He was returning from a visit to his father in his home country of Iran. His brothers Arash and Kamiar Alaei are both faculty members at UAlbany where they also serve as co-directors for the Global Institute of Health and Human Rights.

Ali, an associate dean at Kermanshah University's School of Architecture, was

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HIGHER ED

Free Tuition Proposal

By LINDSEY RIBACK

Free tuition may become a reality for University at Albany students if Gov. Andrew Cuomo's proposed Excelsior Scholarship is passed.

The plan was first announced on Jan. 3 during Cuomo's first state of the state address at LaGuardia Community College in Queens, and the campaign began Tuesday at Buffalo State College. If the plan is approved, by the fall of 2019, all college-aged children whose households make under \$125,000 will be eligible for free tuition at

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Tyler McNeil / Albany Student Press

ON CAMPUS

Mideast Expert Decries US Foreign Policy at Campus Discussion



Ariah Emille / Albany Student Press

By ARIAH EMILLE

University at Albany students filed into the Campus Center on Wednesday for a discussion on ISIS led by an expert from at the Institute for Policy Studies. During her 60 minute address, Phyllis Bennis, the director of the new internationalism project at the D.C. institute, displayed her knowledge on understanding the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the war on terror, and the issues that this “very different political moment” could bring to the Albany community to 35 students. “The notion of reclaiming that name as a slogan or this presidency is a rather problematic notion, it implies a kind of pull-back from political engagement, economical engagement, and especially diplomatic engagement; what it doesn’t include is military pull-back,” said Bennis, referring to the World War II slogan of “America First.” Although details are still unknown about what the Trump foreign policy is going to look like, according to Bennis, it is clear that it will not take up the question of how to deal with what are widely understood to be global

problems. The director said that it would still be a problem if we are only concerned about people in our own country and not about the rest of the world, being that we are by far one of the most wealthiest countries. Additionally, there is a global war on terror that hasn’t changed. President George W. Bush gave that name to the war that he was waging after 9/11. However, what changed the world and the United States was not 9/11, according to Bennis. Instead it was the day after the attack when the president announced that the response to this crime would be to take the world to war. Although the wars changed during former President Barack Obama’s term and were no longer based on deploying thousands of troops, but on using air drones, air strips, and small numbers of Special Forces instead, they were no less deadly for the people in those countries. As a result of the US -NATO war, Libya is also a complete catastrophe, according to Bennis. Libya has three competing governments, none of whom are recognized by anybody in Libya,

and “the good guys” have largely been defeated, killed, arrested, and driven into exile. A similar issue can be seen in Syria where ISIS still is in control of large amounts of territories. Those who were once involved in the heroic popular uprising of people against a repressive regime have now been taken over by international sectarian religious forces, Bennis said. “This notion that the U.S. is supporting the good guys against the terrible government simply isn’t true,” she said. The director hopes that people will get rid of the mentality that ISIS is a lesser evil; there will always be more people facing those challenges, and that way we’d never get rid of them. Bennis said one last action would be to stop the wars that create refugees. “Refugees don’t just happen; nobody gets up and leaves their country for a terrifying two, three years in a refugee camp without running water, electricity, snowstorms with no real protection, unless they are desperate,” she said. “We must slash the military budget and end wars.”

BAN

Continued from Page 1

returning to the U.S. as a visiting scholar to lecture at UAlbany, specifically on the influence of Persian architecture on the architecture of the university’s uptown campus, according to his brother Kamiar. With the help of UAlbany, Albany Law School, and local congress members, Kamiar said that the Alaei family was able to “highlight how important it is to have Ali back based on national interest,” and the younger brother was able to return Jan. 7. The fear that the Alaei brothers had of being unable to reunite with their younger brother, has been a similar concern for students and other faculty members from those countries as well. One Iranian student, who is majoring in urban and regional planning and spoke with the Albany Student Press on the condition of anonymity, expressed worry about being reunited with her family. “I will not have my family around me for my graduation ceremony in May and I did not know how to tell my mom that she cannot visit me anymore,” she said. “This was the first effect.” In the weeks following the announcement of the ban, she began feeling scared and noticed how the ban was affecting her daily life. “I really could not focus on my courses or on my job; I spent a lot of time following the news ... I feel like I am experiencing a completely different country in just three weeks.” The inability to focus was also a concern of an Iraqi student who is pursuing his Ph.D. in literature at UAlbany. “Whether international students



UAlbany Photos

leave the US or not in fear of being banned from re-entering, it has a psychological impact on them and it makes them worried about their future,” Miaad Mahmood said. Upon Trump’s announcement of the ban, UAlbany’s International Employee services advised one Iranian professor to postpone any travel abroad until things have been settled with the ban. Despite having a green card, the professor, who requested to remain anonymous, cancelled his summer trip to Iran and his plans to visit Europe in the fall as a visiting scholar as a safety precaution. He also acknowledged the implications the ban would have for his family and colleagues. “On my parents’ and family’s side, they used to make regular U.S. trips to visit me on visitor visas, but with the ban, they would not be able to do so ... I also feel bad for all my Iranian colleagues in Canada and Europe who regularly attended the conferences we went to annually, and they will not be able to come to the U.S. for those conferences anymore,” he said. The ban posed several professional implications for the Alaei brothers as well. At GIHHR, Arash and Kamiar partner with universities across the world, specifically in the

Middle East, to improve access to healthcare. Their institute aims to bridge the gap between health and human rights throughout the world. Their research, which focuses on HIV/AIDs prevention and substance use, and preexisting partnerships are particularly important in this region because there are not many scholars doing research on these topics in the Middle East. Kamiar noted that while the immigration ban has been suspended, there has been talk of another ban being implemented, raising more concerns for the brothers and their work. “We don’t want those scholars in the Middle East to have a misunderstanding that academics in the U.S. are closing their doors to them,” Kamiar said. “We are independent and want to open the door for them because those young scholars are the ones who change the future in their own country.” A similar concern for the future of international collaborations was shared by Kamiar’s older brother Arash. “How can we say that these countries can improve our programs and be a part of the worldwide network when we discriminate against them?” he asked.

CUOMO

Continued from Page 1

any of the state’s SUNY or CUNY’s two- or four-year programs. “In New York, education was always the great equalizer, but today, far too many young people have been deprived of the advanced degree they need to get ahead, compete in the global economy, and secure the jobs of tomorrow,” Cuomo said in a statement. “The Empire State is sending a message loud and clear that under the Excelsior Scholarship program, students’ dreams of higher education will be realized no matter how much money is in their pocket or the neighborhood they come from.” At UAlbany, where an estimated 80 percent of undergraduate students receive financial aid, the proposed changes are welcomed by faculty and students alike. Following Cuomo’s early January announcement of the proposal, UAlbany’s Interim President, James Stellar, issued a statement of support. “The governor’s plan to provide free tuition to thousands of SUNY and CUNY students is a powerful endorsement of higher education in New York State,” he said. A similar response was found among the student body. “I think it’s a good solution to a problem [rising student debt] that we don’t need to be dealing with,” Zack Cuzo said. Paying off already accumulated loans is a concern for Cuzo, who will be graduating from the school’s journalism program at the end of the fall 2017 semester. The first phase of the Excelsior Scholarship would begin next fall and would be available to students whose households make

\$100,000 or less a year. In the fall of 2018, the program will expand to include those whose families make \$110,000 annually, before reaching \$125,000 at the beginning of the fall 2019 semester. UAlbany junior, Rachel Eager, also supports the proposed changes, but remains skeptical. “I think free college is extremely important for giving all students opportunities,” the biochemistry and molecular biology major said. “I am just a little worried about its execution and how the government will be paying for it.” This concern is understandable. Cuomo’s office predicts the plan will cost \$163 million per year once it is fully phased in, but the cost will combine the state’s preexisting \$1 billion Tuition Assistance Program with federal grant funding, and then fills whatever is left over. Another concern that has been raised is what implications this may have for families whose children are enrolled in the state’s private schools. Private universities may be forced to lower their tuition in hopes of retaining students who may be incentivized to attend a public university in the state once tuition is covered. But the governor’s office does not foresee this as being a problem, and neither do some students. “Although I am not personally affected by this, I commend the governor’s efforts to make higher education affordable to more families,” Andrew Parnes, a senior at nearby Union College, said. Since 2011 the state has provided more than \$2.4 billion to private schools and roughly 90,000 students receive state grants to help pay for their tuition, according to Cuomo’s office.

CRIME BLOTTER

IDENTITY THEFT 3
Dutch Quad- Stuyvesant Tower
2/3/2017
Report of a stolen TD Bank Debit Card.
CRIMINAL NUISANCE 2
2/3/2017
Indian Quad- Oneida Hall
Report of a male student leaving a leaving a burning hookah pipe in his room.
PERSONS ANNOYING
2/3/2017
Podium Tunnels

Report of intoxicated students in the tunnels.
EXPOSURE OF A PERSON
2/4/2017
Roadways- Bus stop
Report of a male student urinating in public. A referral was made.
UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF ALCOHOL
2/4/2017
Indian Pond
Report of two under-age male students in possession of alcohol, forged IDs and marijuana. Re-

errals were made.
CRIMINAL POSSESSION CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE
2/4/2017
Indian Quad- Adirondack Hall
Report of a male student in possession of marijuana, marijuana paraphernalia and a controlled substance. A referral was made.
DOMESTIC INCIDENT
2/4/2017
Alumni Quad- Waterbury Hall
Assisted subjects in

a domestic dispute.
CRIMINAL POSSESSION CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE
2/6/2017
Freedom Quad FQ D-Lazarus Hall
Report of a male student in possession of marijuana, marijuana paraphernalia and a controlled substance. An arrest was made.
CRIMINAL NUISANCE
2/6/2017
Empire Commons- B Cluster

Report of an under-age male student in possession of alcohol and marijuana paraphernalia. A referral was made.
UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA
2/7/2017
Dutch Quad- Stuyvesant Tower
Report of a male student with a forged ID and in possession of marijuana and marijuana paraphernalia. A referral was made.

UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA
2/7/2017
Colonial Quad- Livingston Tower
Report of two male students in possession of marijuana and marijuana paraphernalia. Referrals were made.
MEDICAL INCIDENT
2/7/2017
Podium- Chemistry Building
Report of a female student with a burn from a chemical. Transported to hospital by 5 Quad.

GRAND LARCENY
2/8/2017
Podium- Social Science
Report of a stolen laptop.
UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA
2/9/2017
State Quad- Eastman Tower
Report of a male student in possession of marijuana and marijuana paraphernalia. Referral was made.

BUDGET

Continued from Page 1

group this year, are already alarmed by the coming vote. Much of Middle Earth’s funding goes toward intern compensation and programming. Lacking SA support, Danielle Haft, Middle Earth’s equity and diversity chair, said that the program would likely be unsustainable.

“Without SA, none of [our programs] would be possible,” said Haft. “We really, really need this funding.”

The Jamaican Student Association mirrors a similar sentiment. Along with programming losses, Shenelle Minto, JAMSA president, worries that a voluntary vote would bar the

organization’s dance team from competition.

“If you don’t get [SA funds] then you have to fundraise more,” said Waithe. “This is \$2,000, which is a lot to get.”

Beyond student groups, most SA internal operations (97 percent of the contingency budget) would come to a halt. The possibility of a Dippikill purchase -- now under legal review -- would reach a halt. Programming such as Parkfest would likely be stalled for the next two years.

Without debate, the contingency budget sailed through the senate, 24-4-0.

“That’s like worst case scenario in case the vote goes voluntary, but I’m more than confident in the student body’s judgement that they’ll make it mandatory again,”

said Brandon Holdridge, senator-at-large.

However, the student body has not made the fee mandatory on the first vote in four years. While the fee is rarely waived under referenda throughout the SUNY system, it was voted voluntary two years ago. SA later called for a re-vote, stating that the original vote was invalid, a decision that fell under question.

SA again fell under scrutiny after passing a \$10 fee increase, with faulty communication between student groups and university officials late last semester. The fee was later moved to fall after SA leaders learned that the spring push failed to comply with SUNY and university policy.

In an effort to bridge



Tyler McNeil / Albany Student Press
Senate Vice Chair Austin Ostro presents the 2017-18 contingency budget at last Wednesday’s meeting

communication with students before the referendum, SA assembled a student activity fee task force last semester. Currently, the task force has only met informally.

“We’re just going to hear out the student’s needs and if we don’t think mandatory is the way to go, we won’t go that route,” said Kelvin Collazo, first year senator-at-large and member of the student activity fee task force.

For some students, such as Paul Otty, freshman computer science major, the fee is burdensome for non-involved students. He believes that the fee should be mandatory for students involved in groups and activities covered by the student activity fee.

“Why do I pay for this if I’m not doing any of these activities?” he said.

WEATHER

Continued from Page 1

Wednesday experienced a high of 44 degrees and then roughly a foot of snow accumulated by late afternoon on Thursday, the first actual snow storm of the season. Last winter was the warmest winter Albany has had on record since 1932, with an average of over 13 degrees, according to the National Weather Service. This change is concerning, as the global temperature has only risen on average 1 degree annually since the 1950’s, according to NASA calculations.

This change is concerning, as many local farms as well as the maple syrup industry are already having to adapt to the changes in weather patterns. Winters have been becoming cold much later in the season, as late as January, and warmer spring temperatures have also been happening earlier in the year, before becoming very cold again.

This fluctuation in weather and seasonal onset has led to differences in the times that maple syrup and other agricultural products can be grown and expected to flourish. Maple syrup can now be harvested as much as three weeks earlier than it has been able to be in past years, but this leads to a far lower grade of syrup later in the year.

And many flower crops as well as fruit trees, two other important agricultural exports of New York, flourish in the short period of springtime weather, only to die when the cold reappears, leaving that year’s crop much lower.

Paul Roundy, professor of atmospheric and environmental sciences at UAlbany, said that while climate change is a concern, it is not the cause of the unusual winter weather patterns that Albany has been experiencing over the last few years.

While last year had the

warmest winter weather in recent history, and this year’s weather seems to follow that trend, the blame is not on climate change, but the El Niño system that occurred last year, according to Roundy, who studies atmospheric waves.

The El Niño system is a naturally occurring, periodic warming of the Pacific Ocean that occurs and raises the temperature to many degrees above average, sending out disturbances in the atmosphere around the globe that can last for years afterwards.

But what both El Niño and climate change increase is the variability in weather patterns themselves.

Although Roundy and other scientists have not figured out the exact reason why, there is evidence that backs up the claims of global climate change and El Niño increasing the unpredictability of weather patterns on a whole as their effects increase.

For winter weather, Roundy said that Albany will “more likely experience warmer winters going forward, but that the El Niño variance is not certain enough to say that there will be no more cold winters, just enough to suggest more warmer winters in the future.”

Roundy also wishes that both scientists and people that do not believe that climate change would “be honest with each other about what we know.”

While climate change has real and measurable effects, it is also something that “affects the climate with incredibly small impacts in many places, not something that could bring about the end of the world in a matter of years,” Roundy said.



Chripstopher Pounds / Albany Student Press

NFL

Continued from Page 1

Prior to the start of his sophomore year, Sam had confirmed to himself that he was different than most of his teammates. He was attracted to men.

“I was so scared because I didn’t know what to do now. Should I come out? Should I tell someone?” he said.

Originally the football player decided the best thing to do would be to wait to come out until he was done playing football like

other former NFL players such as David Kopay or Wade Davis.

However, Sam then began dating a fellow Mizzou athlete, Vito Cammisano. His decision to remain closeted put tremendous stress on their relationship.

Prior to breaking up, Cammisano asked Sam who he saw when he looked in the mirror.

“I thought the person that looked back at me was just a pretender, just someone pretending to be Michael Sam,” relayed Sam.

Sam then took steps to becoming more comfortable with himself. In the summer of 2013, he attended Pride St. Louis,

where he found that the LGBTQ community was accepting of him and did not care about his football player status.

With a newfound confidence, Sam had the courage to come out to his teammates at the start of his senior year of college. Ever since then Sam has worn a rainbow silicone bracelet that is imprinted with MU Pride on it.

“It was the first time I truly was Michael Sam,” he said.

On Feb. 9, 2014, Sam publicly addressed his sexuality to the sports world. His announcement came just months before the 2014 NFL Draft.

Sam was drafted by the St.

Louis Rams in the 7th round. The rookie player experienced an extreme amount of media attention due to his sexuality and status as a professional football player. Even former President Barack Obama released a statement congratulating Sam.

Yet, despite all of this media attention, Sam’s NFL career was short-lived.

Sam made sure to clarify to the audience that he is not bitter over the abrupt end to his NFL career.

“I owe everything to football; football gave me an education, it taught me about discipline, it taught me how to be a man, and it opened a lot of doors for me,”

Sam said. “It saved my life; I owe everything to football.”

Sam concluded his presentation by going over his healing process. He started by forgiving those who had wronged him in the past.

“I don’t know if my purpose was ever actually meant to play football, even though I want to,” he said. “But maybe it’s not meant to play football, maybe it’s to help others.”

That desire to help others was displayed at the end of the night. After the presentation, Sam remained in the ballroom until every student who asked him for a photo or to autograph an item had their request granted.

Good at drawing? Have something to say? The ASP is looking for a political cartoonist.

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SCIENCE

Michael Sam Comes With Message of Hope

By ILENE ROTHMAN

LGBT football player, Michael Sam, addressed the University at Albany community on Tuesday night with a message of perseverance.

Over 400 students attended Sam's keynote speech during the 34th annual UAlbany Sexuality Month. By the end of Sam's presentation students had various opinions on his short-lived NFL career, his status as an icon in the LGBT community, and his positive outlook on life.

Prior to the start of Sam's speech, he allowed members of UAlbany's student media to interview him.

Troy Farkas, a junior history major at the university and the current Albany Student Press sports editor, had the chance to interview Sam prior to the presentation. Farkas thinks that the attention the media gave Sam on his decision to publicly come out as gay in college altered his career in the NFL.

"The media ruined his NFL career by talking about him all the time and making his sexuality a bigger deal than it actually was," said Farkas.

Sam was drafted in the 7th round of the 2014 NFL draft. During his speech Sam revealed that he thought he would be picked earlier in the draft instead of being the 249th pick.

"I was the sack leader that year and SEC Defensive Player of the year. So I thought with my stats alone I would get late 2nd or early 3rd," said Sam during his presentation.

Sam was cut from two NFL teams, the St. Louis Rams and the Dallas Cowboys during 2014.

Despite Sam's dream of playing in the NFL coming to an end, the positivity that Sam regards his future with resonated among UAlbany students.

Student Association President Felix Abreu, who introduced Michael Sam prior to the start of the presentation, found Sam's life story extremely motivational.

"You can see that despite having to overcome obstacles, Sam continued to pursue his dream and not only that, he continued believing in himself, something I hope everyone that attended the event was able to take away. It's all about personal perception and Sam exemplified what it means to be true to yourself," said Abreu.

When Sam was speaking of his difficult childhood he became emotional when he revealed the abuse he suffered from the hands of his older brothers, the impact that his father abandoning his family had, and how he became the second child out of his eight siblings to graduate from high school.

"The proudest moment in my life was when I was walking across that stage and I looked in the stands and I saw my mom in my tears," said Sam about receiving his high school diploma.

Also in the audience that night was Anthony Castro, a junior computer engineering major. Castro was surprised that Sam was able to work past his childhood struggles.

"Dealing with the kinds of tragedy he dealt with at home is alone a difficult task, and it is impressive that he was able to rise out of hardship and become the first of his family to attend college," said Castro.

As far as his status as an LGBT icon, students who attended the presentation

admired his courage for being an openly gay athlete.

Claire McCulley, a sophomore majoring in Public Policy and Management and minoring in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, feels that it is crucial for queer athletes to be open about their sexual orientation.

"I'm gay but I'm also white, so the privileges I have are very different from the privileges given to queer people of color. At least I can see people like me represented in media in a somewhat positive light, but LGBT people of color are constantly erased and eclipsed from mainstream media in favor of white people. For Michael Sam to be black, gay, an athlete, and out, is remarkable and moving. These are identities that don't typically mesh well in our society, so I love him for embracing his intersectionality and encouraging others to do the same," said McCulley.

Robert Lepelstat, a sophomore journalism major, is looking forward to the impact that Sam will have on the sports world. Sam was already awarded the Arthur Ashe Courage Award at the 2014 ESPY awards.

"Michael has singlehandedly opened the door for so many other professional athletes to follow in his footsteps and I think when we ultimately look back at Michael Sam and this decision in the future, hopefully we'll be confused as to why his coming out was such a big deal," said Lepelstat.

Michael Sam's honesty to share his identity with the world makes him a trailblazer in both the sports world and the LGBT community. Sam's confidence in who he is and his positivity towards life despite all of the suffering he has faced makes him



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a valuable icon. It is exciting to speculate on Sam's future career, whether it be in sports, motivational speaking, or something entirely new.

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MARCHING

And the Danes go Marching in

By TESSA SCHAAL

For years the University at Albany has had a pep band, but recently added to the many classes was marching band, known as, the UAlbany Marching Great Danes. Being a senior and founding member myself, I can easily say that if I hadn't joined marching band, my college experience wouldn't have been as exciting as it is. The people I've met and the relationships that have been created are one's that I'll cherish forever, but more importantly, I have found my second family.

When interviewing members of the marching band, I asked them why they joined. Joe Riccardi, baritone player and a senior at UAlbany, said that the reason why he joined was to "keep marching." Joe marched for five years in high school and has been an active member of the Fusion Core in Drum Corps Associates for the past three years, and this past summer was his first time marching with the Sunrisers, also in DCA. Justice Belton, who is also a senior and does color guard, said, "I did marching band in high school . . . I was looking for a school that had a marching band."

Music is something that these students care about and wanted to continue after high school, and UAlbany was one of the many schools that made that opportunity continue.

Many students who are an active member in marching band also do pep band. Just like any class, there are difficult obstacles that one has to overcome.

"For me, have you ever seen a tuba? That thing's heavy. The hardest thing in general is the limited rehearsal time we have to perfect our craft." Robert Houle, a student at the University at Albany, said, when asked what the hardest part about marching/pep band was.

Marching band, which is during football season, rehearses Monday's and Wednesday's from 5:45 p.m. to 7:05 p.m.; that's only the amount of time the class is given on an academic schedule. Outside of that, on game days marching band will rehearse anywhere starting from 8 or 9 a.m. until the game starts. But despite that, with hard work, working as a team, and dedication, the UAlbany Marching Great

Danes are able to create something that is well worth the hard work.

I also interviewed two recently graduated members of marching and pep band, Emily Schlierer and Dennis Szymanski. I asked them that now that they have graduated, what the one thing is that they miss the most about it.

Emily Schlierer, who now attends graduate school at George Washington University in Washington D.C., says, "I miss the friendships. I met people who have become my family in band and I know I wouldn't have found that if I never joined. . . I don't regret not joining another pep band or marching band because I had such an amazing experience at UA, that I feel like I would be just comparing and it wouldn't live up to my expectations."

Dennis Szymanski, graduate student at North Carolina State University, said, "I miss the spirit, the fact that everyone cared so much about one thing all at the same time. It's a feeling I really don't think I could get anywhere else, even another pep band."

Being a part of these bands not only shows how much these students care about their school, but how much fun it is and the relationships that are made are one's that have made college worth remembering. These students wouldn't have been able to find that at another college.

When asking fellow band members what their favorite memory was, many of them said that it was when we had the honor of traveling to the NCAA not once, but three years in a row, or Peter Hooley's buzzer-beating shot that advanced Albany into the first round of the NCAA and a four-time title as America East Champions.

Houle however, said that his favorite memory was, "Probably hearing my name on the PA system the first time we marched out the Star Wars show...my entire life's dream is to be a composer." The University at Albany's marching band and pep band made one student's dream closer to being reached. That's something you wouldn't be able to say anywhere else.

Like all classes, marching and pep band has taught every student something that he or she will take away. Leadership skills,



Source: Kevin Champagne

The marching band in full regalia.

working together as a team, and confidence are just a few examples of what student's gain from their experience.

"This experience with this band has taught me that the bond that musicians share when they play together transcends everything else," Houle said. When you spend basically every day together for an entire year, the bond that is created is one that's unbreakable. Marching and pep band has created a family, a family that is always looking more people to be a part of and make that bond stronger.

I also asked what advice current and previous members would give to those who are thinking of joining.

"Stick with it. I know that marching and pep can take up a lot of time and sometimes it's super miserable, but it's worth every second," Schlierer said.

Szymanski said, "To do it, because it was the best decision of my college social career. Not to mention awesome trips and experiences."

"For starters, join. Two, get as many people to join because the band will get awesome the bigger we become," said Riccardi.

Marching band and pep band is directed by Kevin Champagne, who when asked what it is he loves the most about his job said, "I love working with the college kids; they're fun and they're good."

Marching and pep band is always looking for new members; you don't even have to play an instrument. If you want to be a part of something that will change your life, marching band and pep band is the path to go. The people these members meet and the experiences they share are all a part of something to be proud of and each member makes sure that our school knows that, whether it's at games, on social media, or telling their friends. They are all proud to be a part of something that has made their college experience one worth remembering and you should too.

RESPONSE

Rebuttal: We Must Foster a Culture of Life

By NAOMI MCPETERS

In a powerful pro-life speech, abortion survivor Gianna Jessen testifies before Parliament in Victoria, Australia, saying: "If abortion is merely about women's rights, then what were mine?"

We, as women, are given the great responsibility and privilege of being the bearers of children. Yet, if our own empowerment is based off the destruction of another human life that could happen to be a woman as well, then what sort of empowerment is that? Would we destroy another human being because our life has been inconvenienced? Having the ability to choose does not mean having the right to choose. If we claim to fight for the marginalized and oppressed of society, then we must include the unborn lives in our definition of this. Otherwise, we are simply removing a human being's right to choose anything at all.

One of the arguments you make is that sometimes pregnancy is unplanned. You state: "Is it fair to place this enormous responsibility on someone because they weren't prepared enough? Is it fair to place this responsibility on someone who made a mistake, who didn't plan on getting pregnant?" You state that "a woman also has a right to do what she wants to her body." To this I would say, is it fair to place the penalty of someone's mistake on a developing human being who has as much of a right to live as the woman (and man) who created them? What about rape? To this I say the same, but with the deepest compassion for those who have undergone such an unacceptable violation. Is it fair to continue the cycle of violence and impose it on the separate, distinct, innocent life growing inside that woman's body?

How can we talk about human rights and leave out entire segments of society simply by refusing to call them human? Hasn't that been the rhetoric of injustice

towards marginalized groups throughout the centuries? With this in mind, let us consider some little known, or overlooked facts about abortion.

Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood and self-proclaimed eugenicist, wrote in the October 1921 edition of The Birth Control Review, that "the most urgent problem today is how to limit and discourage the over-fertility of the mentally and physically defective" (NYU.edu), especially targeting the black population living in poverty-stricken areas. Considering this today, black women have a higher rate of abortion than white women and women of other races. Over 30% of all abortions are performed on black women (cdc.gov), and abortion kills more black lives (363,705) (Guttmacher Institute) than all other causes of death combined (285,522) (cdc.gov). Where is the outcry over this?

Lastly, you note the inadequacy of the foster care and adoption systems in America to take care of all the children that need to be raised in a loving family. All I can say to that is this: as one of four adopted children, I am thankful that rather than taking my choice of life from me, my biological mother chose to put me up for adoption. I am sure it would have been more convenient for her to choose abortion, but I am thankful she allowed me to live. Because that's what this is really about, isn't it? Jessen says it much more powerfully than I can: "It has been an argument for so long in this human place that we live, that the stronger should dominate the weaker, should determine who lives or dies" (generationsforlife.org). I am thankful that my biological mother did not determine that my life was not worth it. I feel that gratitude every time I remember that for over 59 million unborn babies since Roe v. Wade (numberofabortions.com), the most fundamental human right of all—the right to life—has been taken from them, in the name of women's rights.

“A good newspaper I suppose, is a good nation talking to itself.”

— ARTHUR MILLER

MUSIC REVIEW

Big Sean’s “I Decided” A Towering LP

By ZACH PERRY

I had two New Year’s Resolutions going into this year. The first was to convince my roommate that ‘La La Land’ is a dumpster fire. The second was to convince him that the new Big Sean album would be the best album of the year. I’m hoping I’ll have an easier time with the latter.

The first prodigy of Kanye West continues to live up to his title, with the recent release of an inspiringly imperfect project. Sean’s new album “I Decided” represents the good, the bad, the ugly and the beautiful of the hip hop scene, but most importantly adds another distinguished title to his high-caliber discography. Like his contemporaries Wale and Big K.R.I.T., Sean is drastically underrated and rarely included on top 10 lists, which is reflected in his stunted record sales and scant supply of Grammy Nominations.

Before the age of 30, Sean’s career has already spanned more than 10 years, two facts that clearly pervade his music. Many artists, like Joe Budden and Royce da 5’9”, easily fall into obscurity at that stage in their careers, but Sean has consistently topped charts and continued to stay relevant without totally conforming to trends. His music still exudes the same energy from his days in the mixtape circuit and he carries a swagger lacked by rappers half his age.

The album opens with a skit that begins the loose story guiding the album, one about Sean feeling as if he got a second chance at life. “The Light” finds him spitting confidently over a sparse, elegant instrumental, recounting his trials and glories both as an artist and a Detroit native. Jeremih delivers a soulful chorus, one of his many additions to the project. “Bounce Back” could honestly have been released by anyone with a “Lil” in their name and a functional mic, so to this really shows the influence that artists like Migos and Future have had in the industry, and not just on impressionable newcomers who feel obligated to copy others in order to be successful.

On “No Favors”, Sean turns in an impressive verse on a dynamic and dark beat, but the verdict for this track leans on whether or not you have an acquired taste for Eminem. Anyone remotely familiar

with his music knows that it can be off-putting and offensive to some, so if that’s the case, you’re better off skipping this one. “Jump Out the Window”, a sobering relationship story told through gloomy chords and echoed 808’s, is decisively in the top 3. Sean’s strength at singing is what has elevated many of his songs and the case is the same here.

“Moves” belongs on a Drake mixtape, or preferably in the Trash of someone’s MacBook Air, which is where it currently resides on mine. “Same Time Pt. 1” is the latest of Sean’s collaborations with songstress Jhene Aiko, which are regularly the highlights of their projects (see “I’m Gonna Be” and “Déjà Vu”). The song is frustratingly short, but at the very least it promises that “Pt. 2” will be worth the wait.

The middle of the album brings two great tracks, “Owe Me” and “Halfway Off the Balcony”, with spacey arrangements and reflective verses on Sean’s past failures. However, they are followed by “Voice In My Head/Stick To the Plan”, a song that never quite finds its footing between beat changes and tempo shifts.

Three tracks at the end stand out, cementing Sean’s status as a lyrical talent and a veteran storyteller. “Sunday Morning Jetpack”, “Inspire Me” and “Bigger Than Me” boast heavenly instrumentals, weaving brutal drums and soaring piano riffs to create a veritable symphony. Sean touches on the best and worst times of his life, moving from his deepest fears to his love for his mother in between lines. Sean has never been shy about featuring his family on his songs (see “Nothing is Stopping You” and “One Man Can Change the World”) and the wisdom given by his mother is a moving way to end this story.

The features are near flawless, with the Migos circus act leaving a solitary blemish on an otherwise esteemed guest list. In addition to Aiko, Sean enlists The-Dream, a veteran singer who often steals the show on songs (see “Ultralight Beam” and “The Ride”). In solidarity with city of Flint, Sean showcases the Flint Chosen Choir on the final track, adding a powerful chorus of voices to this emphatic ending. On the bright side, no really quality beats were harmed by Migos here, though the track certainly weighs the back end of the album



down.

The influences on this album are apparent, as most of them have inhabited the charts for the past 18 months. “What A Time to Be Alive” and “Purple Reign”, from Olympic sellouts Drake and Future respectively, brought “mumble-trap” to new heights, mixing snappy 808 drums with moody synth orchestrations. A rising star in the genre, producer Metro Boomin, gained fame for his work on these mixtapes and in the past year has contributed to several high-profile records, including Kanye West’s “Father Stretch My Hands Pt. 1”. Metro has three credits on “I Decided”, but many other songs bear the mark of his style as well.

“Sunday Morning Jetpack” and “Bigger Than Me” sound right at home next to Chance the Rapper’s gospel-laced “Coloring Book” mixtape, which dropped in May of last year. Sean and Chance have collaborated twice before, on “Wanna Be Cool” and “Living Single”.

“I Decided” isn’t Sean’s most ambitious, consistent or exciting project, three titles that will probably always go to his 2011

album “Finally Famous”. It lacks the lyricism of “Detroit”, the depth of “Hall of Fame”, the orchestral gravitas of “Dark Sky Paradise” and the lavish production of “TWENTY88”. The quality of his projects has very slowly declined ever since his debut, perhaps due to the lessening participation over time of legendary producers No ID, Kanye West and Key Wane, who have been replaced by the likes of DJ Mustard and Young Chop.

Big Sean’s detractors will find unoriginality and blandness in most of the tracks. His fans will praise the growth he shows and his ability to evolve his sound without losing his essence. There are more than a few standout beats and a number of verses that make him a candidate for your top 10 list. Inspiration bleeds out of every track and more than a few moments will give you the kind of chills you only get after watching ‘It’s A Wonderful Life.’

But if none of that attracts you, then come for the Trump diss, Harambe reference and probably the only record that Drake won’t put his talentless hands on this year.

FILM REVIEW

“John Wick: Chapter 2” Shines as Both an Action Film and a Sequel

By DANIEL RUSSELL

Almost two and a half years after the success of the sleeper hit, “John Wick”, Keanu Reeves is back as the titular assassin in the follow-up, “John Wick: Chapter 2”. Picking up right after the events of the first film, “Chapter 2” finds John attempting to (once again) put down his gun and retire, only to be met with disastrous results. Because of events that occurred both before and during the first film, John finds himself needing to complete a task for an Italian crime lord named Santino D’Antonio. What starts off as a simple task escalates into a manhunt for the head of John Wick, and we follow him as he does whatever it takes to get revenge on those trying to kill him. The final result here is an action film with a healthy amount of substance and style, even if it does falter on occasion.

If the first film was just a hint at the lore of the world portrayed here, “Chapter 2” is a full-blown, and well-detailed explanation. Much of the first half of the two hour film details certain aspects of the world; such as the armory where assassins get their weapons, the tailors they go to for their apparel, and the Continental, a hotel where assassins stay, but no violence is allowed. Initially apparent in New York City, we see these aspects carried over when John finds himself in international territory, which gives a great sense of the scope of vision here, that the assassin’s organization is worldwide. Despite the rich assassin

world here, suspension of disbelief with the real world only becomes greater as the film progresses forward, with John getting into gunfights in many public situations. This change in environment can be exciting at times, but it really seems as if nobody in the entire public acknowledges that men are literally shooting each other dead here, and it gets a little distracting each time it occurs.

However, the action at the heart of the movie is what keeps the film fresh and exciting. Just like the first film, John Wick gets into shootouts where he’s taking down foes with pinpoint accuracy. As the film progresses, Wick’s violent shootouts get increasingly zanier, finding many different weapons and tactics to take down those who stand in his way. If you weren’t a fan of the chaotic gunplay and hand-to-hand combat found in the first film, you won’t find anything here to turn you over. But if you did enjoy these aspects of the first film, you’ll find yourself right at home here, as John Wick takes down foes in the same brutal fashion that he’s done before.

Keanu Reeves is great here as John Wick; putting on more of a visual performance than a spoken one. A man of few words, Wick expresses himself much more visually and physically, but when he does speak, it’s usually very important. Ian McShane and Laurence Fishburne shine here as well, both in supporting roles as trusted affiliates to Wick that help him throughout his journey of vengeance.



Source:filmmusicreporter.com

One of the previous film’s weakest aspects was its ending, and for a few moments, it looked as if “Chapter 2” was going to fall into this hole as well. But in the last couple moments, the rug gets pulled out from under us, and what seems like a peaceful resolution turns into utter chaos as the film comes to a close. It leaves the film very open for the idea of another film, which has already been confirmed to be in the works. Whereas many sequels falter in the execution of progressing the storyline forward for

another film, “Chapter 2” does it very well, and puts the potential for a third film in an exciting place.

“John Wick: Chapter 2” succeeds very well as not only an action film, but an action film sequel as well. Through rich world-building and idiosyncratic action and violence, it doesn’t fall into the trap of being more of the same as the first film, and it’ll be great to see where it goes from here.

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CINEMA

“Silence” Among Scorsese’s Best



By ANDY GALLA

Martin Scorsese’s newest film, “Silence” has likely been his least advertised feature film in a long time. None the less, Scorsese fans have been waiting over forty years for this adaption of the famous 1966 historical fiction novel by Shūsaku Endō, and Marty himself has watched the film go in and out development many times over the decades. The cast of this movie has changed many times too, Daniel Day-Lewis, Gael García Bernal, and Benicio Del Toro were posed to star, but were replaced by Liam Neeson, Andrew Garfield, and Adam Driver. Either cast is stacked, and with Scorsese at the helm, there were more than enough people looking out for this movie. This movie cost about \$40,000,000 to makes, it’s made less than \$7,000,000 so far, and only got one Oscar nomination, so I suppose this is one of his flops. That is information worth knowing, in my opinion. To be sure, this was a very different film for Scorsese. There’s no drugs, no mobster butchering, no Muddy Waters music, no Joe Pesci. This film is dead serious about its themes, the morals of religion, how long you can and should remain faithful. So maybe it did get less attention than it seemed like it would if it was good, but rest assured, this is a very well-made movie.

The plot is interesting as it is based on history. Back in the 1600s, the Catholic church was finally able to spread their religion through the Portuguese who had cracked through Japanese isolationism

for trade rights. Naturally the Catholic church saw this as an opportunity for expansion, but the Japanese government saw it as a threat. This is about where the movie begins, with Japanese soldiers torturing Christian priests. One of them, Father Ferreira (Liam Neeson) is among them, and wrote back to the church. When his pupils Father Rodrigues (Andrew Garfield) and Father Garupe (Adam Driver) hear the news, they decide to travel to Japan to rescue him, despite desperate warnings from Father Valignano (Ciarán Hinds). Fast forward to their arrival, and they meet up with local Japanese Christians, who are consistently harassed by Government troops, and live in fear because of it. Many are burned alive or drowned just for refusing to step on a picture of Jesus Christ. The main characters are forced to live in complete secrecy, as it is obvious they are Christian, and this makes them begin to lose sight of finding Ferreira. It begins to rattle them until they are discovered. That is when the real test of faith begins, as Rodrigues and Garupe are separated and tortured psychologically and physically. That is when Herreira comes back into the picture, and that is when the film begins to truly answer some of the questions that it had been asking.

The entire cast was stellar in their performance, Issei Ogata was especially great as an old Samurai. But what truly made it worthwhile was the mise-en-scene, or essentially what’s on the screen, specifically the use of composition, but also the lighting and the visual effects. This was also aided

MUSIC

Squirrel Nut Zippers?

By EVE BREWER

In the mid-1990s, in North Carolina, the Squirrel Nut Zippers named themselves after a caramel candy and started playing music. Now, bandleader James “Jimbo” Mathus and drummer Chris Phillips have brought the band back with a brand-new nine-piece lineup. Last November, they brought their “revival tour” to the Egg to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the album Hot, which sold 1.5 million copies.

There were few empty seats in the room, and few members of the audience not tapping their feet or dancing in their seats. Though the Zippers’ set included some of their most energetic and danceable tunes, and Mathus called for the audience to “Get up and dance!” at one point and took a few turns with an usher at another, fire safety regulations limited the dancefloor to the stairs next to rows of seats. It was nearly impossible to dance without tripping, stepping on someone’s toes, or falling through a hidden door in the wall. Going to see a swing band and not being able to swing dance is somewhat disappointing.

By far, though, the band made up for it with an outpouring of energy and theatricality. The stage was lit in red, changing to blue during some of the slower numbers, and decorated with papier-mâché skulls and votive candles. The band members dress in an assortment of brightly colored thrift store finds and vintage clothing, sequins and gold trim in abundance. Mathus and fiddler/banjo player/musical saw player

Justin “Dr. Sick” Carr both never stopped moving, dancing frenetically and seamlessly switching between instruments. In the background, Tamara Nicolai spun and dipped her double bass like a dance partner as she played, even bringing the huge instrument forward at the climax of “The Suits Are Picking Up the Bill” for Jimbo to literally climb onto it and pose like a circus ringmaster for a few seconds.

Since their beginnings, the Squirrel Nut Zippers have gone through multiple lineup changes, but their swinging sound has stayed spectacular. They played old favorites, with a focus on songs from Hot. New chanteuse Ingrid Lucia has a powerful voice and a wide vocal range, and she was given plenty of opportunities to show it off. Dr. Sick “saws the fiddle and fiddles the saw” in Mathus’ words; his aggressive style of playing brings a new feeling to the familiar tunes. Bass, drums, brass and keyboard round out the band’s lineup.

One of the youngest fans there was Isaac, 9, dancing in his seat in a plaid button-down and straw trilby hat. He says his favorites are the love songs. There were children and grandparents in the audience, people dressed in hoodies and jeans and people wearing Cuban-heel stockings and flapper dresses. “Everyone has been so kind and joyful,” Jimbo said while taking pictures with fans after the concert; he capped off the concert by leading the audience out into the lobby, where the band played a raucous cover of the spiritual “Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho.” He hopes to bring the Squirrel Nut Zippers back to Albany soon.

So, you might be thinking, so this movie sounds great, looks great, has great acting, directing, and a well-written deep story, and it only got one nomination? To be fair, the nomination, which was for Cinematographer Rodrigo Paresto, was arguably the one the film deserved most. But still, Scorsese, Garfield, the production design team, and the sound mixing team could have totally notched a nomination, and best film as well. This movie is excellent quality, I’d give it 5 stars and recommend it to anybody moderately interested in it. It may have gotten overshadowed by the Oscars, but it will be appreciated over time as another strong showing from a living legend.



The Metropolitan Museum of Art has been digitizing over 300,000 works of art and has recently put them in the public domain. From time to time this semester we will beautify our pages with our favorite pieces from their collection.
Title: Piazza San Marco **Artist:** Canaletto **Year:** 1720

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FIELD HOCKEY

German Duo Setting NCAA Records

By CONOR O'BRIEN

Current NCAA leader in career points and goals, a three-time NFHCA All-American, and the 2014 NFHCA National Player of the Year.

A two-time NFHCA All-American and the record for the most career shutouts and wins in program history

These accolades seem to be background noise to Paula Heuser and Maxi Primus, two of the most decorated athletes in the history of the University at Albany's field hockey team. In a joint sit-down interview, the two women reflected on their careers at UAlbany as well as what their futures hold in store.

Heuser and Primus, native Germans who are now best friends after adapting to college life in the United States, rarely mentioned the accomplishments of their illustrious careers. When asked if they're still involved with the team, Heuser said: "We are still involved with the team and we go to all the practices we can make. But maybe we will miss out on the occasional lift though," Heuser said with a smile. They both turned to each other to share a good laugh, something they always found time for despite drawing so much attention and pressure the past four years. Primus then added, "For international students, you don't just get to go home during the breaks, you end up staying with your teammates and spend the holidays with them. They end up becoming your family." It's no wonder the two Germans still spend time around the team despite the fact they'll never suit up in the purple and gold again. They aren't leaving a group of teammates or friends at the end of the semester--they are leaving a family.

Despite the individual accomplishments, Heuser and Primus don't define their success by them. The two spent four years playing unselfishly, trying to propel their team to victories rather than post record numbers. "I definitely feel like a high point was getting to the semifinals in the NCAA Tournament my sophomore year. Also, repeating back-to-back appearances at the NCAA Tournament." Primus smiled again, and the two appeared—for a moment—to flashback to their past triumphs.

The conversation developed as both Primus and Heuser shared their goals for the future. Primus hopes to return to Germany for graduate school but is yet to decide on a school. As a psychology major, she has a variety of options to choose from. While Heuser also intends to move back to Germany, she hopes to find an internship that complements her business major. She also plans to enroll in graduate school. More so than Primus, Heuser has a desire to further her athletic career in Germany, where she will look to join a local club team (there aren't any professional teams for women's field hockey). It will be no simple task as club field hockey in Germany will present stiffer competition than what she faced as a Great Dane. As for Primus, it's not to say she won't ever get back in the cage again, but is prioritizing her career first. She said that if the opportunity presents itself to play more, she will definitely take it.

But just because these two will never play for UAlbany again, it doesn't mean the field hockey team isn't set up well for the future. Head coach Phil Sykes has deep connections overseas, which is how he recruited Heuser and Primus in the first place. And since UAlbany has been a national powerhouse over the past few seasons, recruiting will certainly not be as difficult as it once was. Heuser and Primus are confident in the future of UAlbany field hockey, and Primus even offered some words of advice for future Great Danes. "You have to control the energy, be willing to work hard, and most of all, have fun," Primus said. She also emphasized the importance of not allowing the stress that comes with being a Division I athlete to carry over to the practice field or the weight room sessions.

Although Heuser and Primus are optimistic about their futures, it's apparent it will be a challenge to leave the place that welcomed them with open arms four years ago. "No one really likes to make a big change, it is definitely going to be hard," Heuser said. They clearly are excited about returning to Germany; it's their real home. It's where they grew up. It's where their family is. But leaving the UAlbany community is going to be, without a doubt, a bittersweet experience.



Source: ualbanyphotos.com

Top: Paula Heuser
Bottom: Maxi Primus

The Editor's Take:

By: Troy Farkas

Last Tuesday I had the opportunity to sit down with keynote speaker Michael Sam before he spoke to UAlbany students in the Campus Center Ballroom. Along with another student reporter and student photographers, we interviewed him and asked why he is now speaking at schools across the country, the message he hopes to share, and some of the lessons he learned from his football career.

For those of you who didn't see him speak or aren't familiar with his story, Michael Sam was selected in the 2014 NFL Draft by the St. Louis Rams. He was the first openly gay man to get drafted. He failed to make the roster at the end of the preseason and he continued to bounce around a bit, but he never stuck anywhere. He officially hung up his cleats last year and he is now going around the country speaking about his story, hoping to inspire young individuals that may be going through the self-identification issues he experienced when he was in our shoes.

I could write an article about the event or share some of the quotes he gave me, but I feel that wouldn't be right. It's clear he dislikes the media after the way it portrayed him. He didn't let the local media talk to him before he spoke and then he shooed them away before his speech became personal. I was really glad he decided to speak with some of the student reporters. After seeing how nice, genuine and positive Sam is, I've decided not to write a story about the hardships he's faced on and off the field. I don't want to throw any fuel to the fire and be a member of the media that made his story a distraction during his playing days. Instead, I want to spread his message.

For all the times I'm not proud of attending the University at Albany, I was really proud on Tuesday night. Student after student--gay, straight, black, white, it didn't matter--went to the microphone and shared a story, about family issues, self-identification issues, and other forms of adversity they've faced. These students weren't afraid to be themselves, just like Sam wasn't. As a white male in these divisive and discriminatory times we're living in, I was really proud to see students step up and show they're not afraid to be comfortable in their own skin. Everyone in that room came together Tuesday night. And that's exactly what Michael Sam wants us to do. He wants us to coexist peacefully despite our differences in how we see the world. We need to put the hate aside, because life is short and you never know when your last words to somebody may come. He preached acceptance and encouraged people to be themselves despite what others think. As long as you're happy and proud to be who you are, then that's all that truly matters. Forgive those who have wronged you and don't hold grudges. Be the bigger person even if that's not what you want to do. And most importantly, Sam urged us to be considerate of others because you never know what a person may be going through. You wouldn't know if Michael Sam were gay by looking at him. And that's the thing, you can never know what's going on in someone's life. But we can make a person's day by giving him/her a smile or just asking how his/her day is going. It's the little things that can make all the difference in the world, and that's what Sam wanted the students of UAlbany to know.

WOMEN’S BASKETBALL

On Snow Day, Hixson Dominates In Seventeen Point Victory Over Bearcats

By **OMAR NOUJOUN**

With snow blanketing the University at Albany campus, the Great Danes’ women’s basketball team remained hot, notching its sixth straight victory in an 80-63 win over Binghamton on Thursday night.

UAlbany’s senior guard Imani Tate (19.7 PPG heading into the game) struggled for most of the night. Luckily for the Danes, senior Bailey Hixson picked up the slack en route to scoring a career-high 20 points. She added nine rebounds, two steals and two blocks on the night.

“It was just a good night. I knew I had to come out and shoot well.” Hixson said. “Overall I think we did a good job shooting the ball and moving the ball tonight.”

The battle between Imani Tate and Binghamton guard Imani Watkins, the America East’s top two scorers, wasn’t quite as high-octane as the first matchup in early January. Watkins finished an underwhelming 3 of 19 from the field and Tate didn’t get in any sort of rhythm until the fourth quarter. In their previous meeting, the two combined for 44 points.

Before tallying 10 points of her own in the fourth quarter, Tate found ways to get other Danes involved, matching freshman guard Mackenzie Trpcic with a team-high five assists. Tate was a pest inside, grabbing seven rebounds, including three on the offensive end.

“It’s always great when you can finish out a game,” Tate said. “It was a team effort, everybody came to play.” Tate and Hixson shared a moment in which the two attempted to recall when the Danes last lost a game. A Jan. 22 slip-up against Maine marks the last time UAlbany didn’t come out on top.

UAlbany’s balanced approach on the offensive end was a big success, with four

Danes reaching double-digit points. With Hixson leading the way, Binghamton was unable to capitalize on holding Tate to just two points in the first half.

Trpcic had a sneakily productive night herself, pitching in with 10 points and 5 assists. She accounted for two of the nights’ best highlights. In the third quarter, she fought through a foul to make an acrobatic lay-up. In the fourth, she dished out a snazzy pass to sophomore forward Heather Forster for another layup.

“The last time we lost, I feel like we were all very disappointed in ourselves. I think that we don’t want that feeling anymore. I mean no one wants that feeling,” said first-year head coach Joanna Bernabei-McNamee.

Both teams came out of halftime shooting the lights out from deep, making a combined 6 of 11 3-point attempts in the third quarter after a lackluster 3-for-16 showing in the first half. Hixson played the role of catalyst from downtown, knocking down a game-high four 3’s.

The win solidified the Danes’ second-place standing in the America East with just four games remaining on their regular season schedule. They may not catch first-place New Hampshire by season’s end, but the Danes are catching fire at the perfect time.

Unlike the first matchup against Binghamton—in which the Danes rallied in the second half—UAlbany earned Thursday’s victory with minimal worry. The Danes never trailed.

UAlbany never could find an answer for Binghamton’s Alyssa James, who bullied her way into the paint all night to the tune of a game-high 21 points. The junior cen-



Max May / Albany Student Press
Imani Tate stupifies Binghamton defender in UAlbany’s 17-point win on Thursday.

ter, who leads the America East conference in blocks, sent three UAlbany shots back in the game

“Albany played very well. Give a lot of credit to them. Their role players and their secondary players came ready to play,” said Binghamton head coach Linda Cimino. The Bearcats had their modest two-game win streak snapped Thursday night.

If it seems like the Danes never lose at SEFCU Arena, it would be because they don’t, at least not often. The win over Binghamton on Thursday night moved UAlbany to 11-1 at home in 2016-17 and 36-3 since the 2012-13 season began.

Coming up next for the Danes is a road contest against UMBC on Wednesday.

FOOTBALL

Offseason Grind for Danes

By **DARNELL BENT**

“I personally find in season to be easier than off season,” said Neil Morrison, a senior linebacker from Marinar, Fla. for the University at Albany football team.

The offseason is a rigorous grind for most athletes here at UAlbany and especially for the football team, who finished the 2016 season with a 7-4 record, which barely missed a playoff berth. “There’s no real offseason. After the season ends we get about two weeks off and then we’re placed on a workout schedule during winter break,” Morrison said. He and the rest of the football team have to stay in shape and prepare for the next season right away as they fine-tune themselves and try to learn from their prior mistakes.

The team spends a lot of time in the weight room on the second floor of the physical education building located on the south end of campus. Led by new strength and conditioning coach Tony Tullock, the team grinds out early-morning workouts several days a week. Tullock is in charge of training five of the school’s 18 athletic programs and he believes UAlbany has a good system in keeping their players on task during a time where there are no games to play.

“We have a pretty good team here,” Tullock said. “The more people we have, the more organized we are, and that is evident in the way that we run our department.” Tullock recently became the football team’s strength and conditioning coach after replacing Conor Hughes, who left UAlbany in the first week of February for a position at Army.

Tullock has a tough duty with only having about eight hours a week per athlete to work with per NCAA regulations. During the offseason the NCAA has ruled that athletes can participate only eight hours a week on anything athletics-related with their teams. This is so they can focus more on their schoolwork to comply with being a student first and an athlete second. Tullock and his staff make the best with what they have and are very efficient in the way they train their players.

“In the offseason we start training with our athletes early in the morning,” Tullock said. “A typical day normally starts with warm-ups for about 10 minutes, and then stretching and core work, which then brings us into the actual strength workouts in the weight room.”

“What most people don’t understand is that as an athlete the work never stops. We have to balance going to class and then being in practice during your free times in between classes so we’re pretty much working all year round,” Morrison said.

Morrison and his teammates believe that the offseason can be just as if not more intense than the actual season itself.

There’s no doubt that whatever the Danes did last off-season worked. Since the move to the Colonial Athletic Associa-

PROFILE

Ex-Player Adjusts to the Sidelines

By **ROBERT LEPELSTAT**

Erin Coughlin was a four-time America East Tournament champion as a player for the University at Albany. And as a co-captain a year ago, she helped the Danes upset the Florida Gators in the NCAA tournament, the first win for the program at the Division I level. But one year removed from her dream-like senior season, Coughlin craves another title.

Except for this one, she will have to witness it from the sidelines.

Coughlin, who graduated in May 2016 with an English degree, is currently in her first season as a graduate assistant with her former team. So far, Coughlin is embracing every aspect of her new role on the Great Danes’ coaching staff. “It’s a different role being on the sidelines,” Coughlin said. “I’m watching things more, I have to see things and learn how to explain them to people as opposed to being able to do it myself. It’s definitely a different role but I’m enjoying it. I love being around the team and of course the sport.”

Not only has Coughlin had to adjust to the transition from player to grad assistant, but also a different system under a new coaching staff highlighted by first-year head coach Joanna Bernabei-McNamee (Coach Mac), who joined the Great Danes after three seasons as head coach at the University of Pikeville, a private liberal arts school in Kentucky that competes in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).

“It was a lot to learn but I feel like you just have to take it one day at a time. Mostly going from player to G.A. I had to make sure to tell our teammates that we aren’t teammates anymore,” Coughlin said. She added, “We’ve still known each other for so long so it’s different taking on that role. My relationships with them, it’s gone so smoothly we’ve all handled it really well.”

“They’re definitely different but they both bring a lot of great things to the table,” said Coughlin when asked about the coaching styles of former head coach Katie Abraham-Henderson and Coach Mac. “They bring in the same fast-paced type of game. They really want everyone to score and are really trying to develop shooters from players that may not have shot as much in the past.”

Despite the losses of Coach Abe, who left for a head coaching gig at the University of Central Florida, and Shereesha Richards, UAlbany’s all-time leading scorer now playing professionally in Spain, some things have stayed the same: the stellar play of senior guard Imani Tate, one of Coughlin’s best friends on the team.

“Imani has always been someone who leads by example. Imani is a winner. Imani is a gamer. If I had to pick anyone to be on my team, I would always want Imani,” Coughlin said. “You can’t tell someone to be a leader without having that drive and the way she’s able to lead because you can see every day she wants to win. She’s going to put everything she has into winning.”

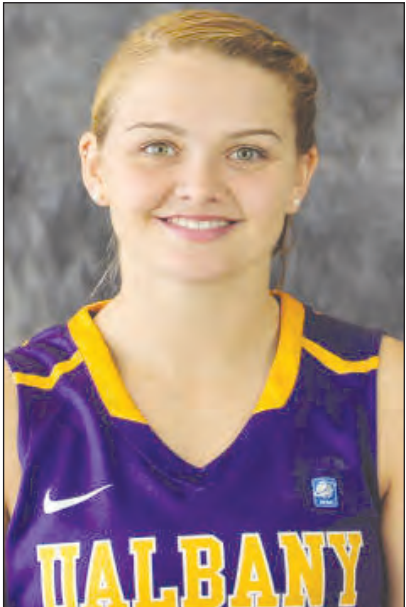
Despite taking a step back due to the departures of Coach Abe and Richards, the Danes the Danes have Coughlin believing they have what it takes to qualify for the NCAA Tournament for the sixth consecutive season.

“I definitely think they can achieve that goal. This team is so talented. They are a wonderful group of women. They work so hard in and out of the gym,” Coughlin said.. “This team knows how to win. The people who have returned, they only know winning. The seniors have three rings, the juniors two, sophomores one, and the freshman coming in- they can see the drive. They can see what we’ve built here as a program and they build off that so I think this team can still pull it off for sure.”

When she’s not on the basketball

court, Coughlin is working on earning a master’s degree in secondary education. She said she enjoys student-teaching and working with students. Regardless of what the future holds for Coughlin, UAlbany and the sport of basketball will always hold a special place in her heart.

“I love the sport. I’ve been around it my entire life and it’s brought me to so many great places and produced so



Source: albanysports.com

many great opportunities that I’m not really ready to let it go completely,” Coughlin said. “I have another year left in my program so I’m hopefully going to be around for a little bit and we can see where it goes from there but I hope basketball is in my future some way or another. I don’t know if I can just go cold turkey, that’s for sure.”

Every year Coughlin has been a member of the team, she’s won a conference championship. So it’s fair to suggest that UAlbany agrees and hopes she can stick around a little longer before moving on to the next stage of her life.

tion and the hiring of head coach Greg Gattuso, UAlbany has steadily improved each year. In the 2015 season the football team had a 3-8 record and didn’t find much success. In 2016 they finished 7-4 and were ranked as high as 16th in the nation at one point. UAlbany suffered a loss in a triple overtime

thriller to Richmond, who were ranked 6th in the nation at the time. The football team is about six months away from their 2017 season kicking off, but they are putting in the work now to gain those extra yards to grind out the wins that will hopefully lead to a playoff berth in 2017.