

INSIDE

News, page 2

SGA Talks Bucks, B-Ball, and Fin. Aid

Barnard's Student Government Association convened Monday evening to discuss pressing issues such as the state of Barnard's endowment and its implications for student financial aid.



A&E, page 8

Pianist Makes Music You Can Move to

The first in a series of profiles of Barnard Dance Department musicians. A Juilliard-trained pianist, Michael McFrederick inspires and encourages ballerinas.

A&E, page 8

Spec Fashion Week Coverage Continues

Shipley & Halmos' spring collection, while not short on style and creativity, hinted at a cold and bleak future characterized by grey, black, and the show's robotic repetition.

Opinion, page 4

Keeping the City In Check

Columnist MaryAlice Parks evaluates the costs and benefits of various proposals that seek to soften the economic fall of New York City.



Sports, page 6

Basketball Prevails Despite Injuries

The Columbia men's basketball have an impressive 5-3 record in the Ivy League. Several injuries have threatened, but not prevented, the team's success this season.



Sports, page 6

Light Blue Seek to Improve .500 Record

After a crucial three-point win over Harvard on Saturday, the Columbia women's basketball team hopes to carry that momentum into its upcoming games.

ONLINE

Your Source for News Around the Clock

Just like you, the news never sleeps. Check out our Web site 24/7 for campus and city news that matters to you.

Quick Facts on Meningitis

Statistics on the Disease

- Between 3,000 and 5,000 people in the U.S. contract bacterial meningitis each year, and between 20 and 25 percent of these cases are fatal.
 - Adolescents and young adults account for nearly 30 percent of all cases of meningitis in the U.S.
 - Roughly 100 to 125 cases of meningococcal disease, which can lead to meningococcal meningitis, occur on college campuses each year, and approximately five to 15 students die as a result every year.
- Sources: Center for Disease Control, American College Health Association

Symptoms and Resources

- Indicators of meningitis, and where to seek help

Patients experience flu-like symptoms, including:

- headache
 - stiffness
 - drowsiness
 - fever
 - joint pain
 - vomiting
- Columbia Primary Care Medical Services is located on the third and fourth floors of John Jay Hall. Primary Care can be reached at 212-854-7426, and 212-854-9797 after hours. Barnard College Student Health Services is located on the lower level of Brooks Hall and can be reached at 212-854-2091, and 866-966-7788 after hours.

CU Warns of Meningitis Risk Fencers May Have Been Exposed at UPenn

BY ALIX PIANIN
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Columbia students who have come into contact with students from the University of Pennsylvania this month may have been exposed to bacterial meningitis, Health Services at Columbia and Barnard said in e-mails sent Monday afternoon.

Representatives from Health Services offices at both Columbia College and Barnard College sent several messages to inform students that individuals who "had direct contact" with Penn students recently may be at risk for infection. Members of the Columbia

University fencing team—which participated in the Ivy League Fencing Tournament just over a week ago—were each sent an e-mail from Health Services on Monday morning requesting that they come in for treatment. Several fencers from Penn were infected at the time of the tournament. Columbia's fencing team was one of the groups sought out by medical services on Monday, though the University would not identify others, citing patient confidentiality.

Marcy Ferdtschneider, associate medical director of Columbia Health Services and Brenda Slade, director of Barnard Student Health Services signed a joint e-mail to the fencers

recommending they seek medical attention. Barnard and Columbia health care made arrangements to provide the fencers with prophylactic doses of ciprofloxacin—a powerful antibiotic that can protect against meningococcal meningitis.

"The most contact we have with the fencers is usually at the end of matches when we shake their hands, so it was minimal exposure," said one Columbia fencer who wished to remain anonymous due to the sensitivity of the subject matter. "Every fencer who was at Ivies received the antibiotic."

Health Services will provide

SEE MENINGITIS, page 2

GRAFFITI ART



Alyssa Rapp for Columbia Daily Spectator

A WORK OF STREET ART | Graffiti artists fill up a wall at 5Pointz, a Long Island City street art installation. 5Pointz is curated by Meres One, a world-famous graffiti artist who has painted for the Knicks and Joss Stone. See story on page 8.

Law School Considers New Grade Scale

BY MINJI REEM
Spectator Staff Writer

Columbia Law School's grading system may be up for a makeover.

The news that Harvard and Stanford Law Schools are revamping their own grading systems has sparked a series of discussions over whether it is time for Columbia Law School to follow suit. There is currently greater support among students for the existing grading system than for the systems recently adopted at Harvard and Stanford.

Yale, Harvard, and Stanford Law Schools' grading systems consist of three passing grades—Honorary/High Pass, Pass, and Restricted Credit/Low Pass—and one failing grade, No Credit/Fail. None of the grades are modified by pluses or minuses. On the other hand, Columbia Law School's grading system constitutes of five letter grades, all of which are modified by pluses and minuses.

Columbia Law School has lower curves compared to neighboring law schools. For example, at NYU, 31 percent of an average class will receive A-range grades, and only six percent will receive below a B-. Columbia's figures, meanwhile, are 24 percent and 10 percent, respectively.

Prior to 1994, Columbia had a system much like the one Harvard and Stanford have adopted. During this period, Columbia had five grades—excellent, very good, good, pass, and unsatisfactory. According to David Schizer, dean of Columbia Law School, "students were concerned at the time that a system of this sort did not provide enough information." Columbia instituted its current letter grade system largely in response to these complaints.

The grading system has a few unique features. Unlike the systems used at Harvard and Stanford, incoming students begin with an intensive three-week introduction to law known as Legal Methods, which is graded on a credit/fail standard. According to Schizer, "these elements of our system allow students to acclimate when they arrive without the pressure of letter grades and then to receive detailed and nuanced feedback from faculty in subsequent classes. We view these as important strengths of our current approach."

Whichever decision the administration makes, some students feel the current grading system could bear some improvement. "In my experience, I would say that the student opinion is split. I do think actually that a lot of students complain about the system because it is arbitrary,"

said Evie Spanos, a first-year law student at Columbia.

If the grading system does change, it will go into effect only after the current generation of law students at Columbia graduates. "This situation has an interesting dynamic," Spanos said. "Whatever gets changed won't affect the students here, so it is a question of whether current students would be willing to debate over an issue that won't affect them."

Columbia Law School has empaneled a faculty committee to consider the need for any refinements in the current grading policy. In a recent article entitled "Law School Grade Reform – Not So Fast," Columbia Law School professor Katherine M. Franke wrote that "the Columbia faculty is considering alternatives to the Yale, Stanford, Harvard model—perhaps making the first semester of the first year pass/fail or increasing the number of courses overall that students may take pass/fail."

Given the importance of grades, the law school is approaching the subject very carefully. "Our process of deliberation on the issue is not yet complete, and we will continue to solicit student and faculty input," Schizer said.

news@columbiaspectator.com

Students, Faculty Press Bollinger in Gaza Letter

BY MAGGIE ASTOR AND SCOTT LEVI
Columbia Daily Spectator

More than 200 faculty members and students have signed an open letter to University President Lee Bollinger. The letter, delivered to the president's office on Monday, calls on Bollinger to publicly denounce Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip, which the signatories see as a threat to academic freedom.

The letter is the latest flare-up in a series of tensions between the president and faculty, which tend to crystallize around allegations of bias on Middle Eastern issues.

The letter recalls Bollinger's usually vocal support for free speech and urges him to act on that principle by releasing a statement on the situation in Palestine. Bollinger has previously faced criticism from faculty on his responses to a variety of Middle East issues, from his condemnation of the boycott of Israeli universities in summer 2007 to his controversial introduction of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during his September 2007 appearance on campus to his handling of allegations in 2004 that Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures (MEALAC) professors intimidated Jewish students.

"He has remained silent on the actions by Israel that deny that freedom to Palestinians," anthropology professor Brinkley Messick wrote in an e-mail. "We expect President Bollinger to issue a public call to his fellow presidents to stand up for academic freedom in Palestine."

Bollinger was unavailable for comment at press time.

The departments with the most faculty members signing the letter were Anthropology, English, History, and MEALAC.

"I thought it was essential for Columbia faculty ... to make a public comment on the fact that academic freedom is not respected in Gaza," classics professor Stathis Gourgouris said.

"I signed because I believe academic freedom is a value every free society has to defend," Barnard art history professor Anne Higonnet wrote in an e-mail.

History professor Richard Bulliet said he does not usually sign petitions but that this letter asked Bollinger "to express a view on academic freedom, and that seemed to me to be within the more narrowly construed parameters of academic activity."

The letter "didn't ask for a change in University policy, didn't ask him to do something that is not in keeping with his own positions on academic freedom," Bulliet said.

Bollinger's statements and actions on various issues have spawned divisions among students and faculty, some of whom allege that he has allowed subjective considerations to shape tenure decisions and that he has been selective in his defense of free speech.

"Although I feel like it [the letter] may be too gently

Letter to University President Lee Bollinger

Dear President Bollinger,

On a number of occasions since becoming president of Columbia University you have expressed your views in public on questions of academic freedom in the Middle East. Yet you have remained silent on the actions by Israel that deny that freedom to Palestinians.

These actions include Israel's continuing blockade of Gaza, the imposing of barriers, checkpoints, and closures around and within the West Bank that make academic life unworkable, the denial of exit visas to Palestinian scholars offered fellowships abroad or invited to international conferences, including scholars invited to Columbia, and the recent three-week war against Gaza that included not only the bombing of Palestinian schools and colleges, with great loss of life, but the widespread destruction of the material and social fabric on which academic life depends.

We, as Columbia and Barnard faculty, ask you now to make public your opposition to these actions and your support for the academic freedom of Palestinians.

—academicfreedomcolumbia.com



LEE BOLLINGER



RICHARD BULLIET



STATHIS GOURGOURIS

worded, I agree wholeheartedly that Bollinger can't continue with the extreme hypocrisy of making public statements about 'academic freedom' in response to calls for an academic boycott of Israel yet remain silent on the matter when the Israeli military specifically targets and destroys Palestinian academic institutions like the Islamic University

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EVENTS — FEBRUARY 17

Harriman Institute Lecture
Ana S. Trbovich of Singidunum University, Belgrade, will give a talk entitled “The Role of the EU in Stabilizing the Balkans, 1991-2009.”

1219 International Affairs Building, 12 p.m.

Columbia Classical Performers
Collegium Musicum and CCP will perform vocal and instrumental works by Bach and Hasse in a free concert, followed by a reception.

St. Paul’s Chapel, 8 p.m.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“We expect President Bollinger to issue a public call to his fellow presidents to stand up for academic freedom in Palestine.”

—Brinkley Messick

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Health Services Advise Calm

MENINGITIS from front page

consultations for anyone who thinks they might be at risk. Ferdschneider noted that the meningitis vaccine commonly given to students is not effective against this particular strain of meningococcus.

“We want to stress that the risk to Columbia students is minimal and limited to a small number of individuals who had direct contact with University of Pennsylvania students between Feb. 2 and Feb. 13, 2009,” Ferdschneider wrote in an e-mail sent to the Columbia student body. Ferdschneider said that at-risk students had already been contacted.

Slade sent a similar e-mail to Barnard students and explained that Health Services had already reached out to Barnard students who had direct contact with Penn students.

Three Penn students were hospitalized last week for meningococcal infections, the Penn campus learned Thursday, and two more were hospitalized with flu-like symptoms. Penn Student Health Service said on Sunday that the students initially hospitalized are recovering and that the two others are not critically ill. Nearly 3,000 Penn students were

given prophylactic medication over the course of the weekend, the *Daily Pennsylvanian* reported Monday.

Under New York State public health law, institutions must provide their students with information about the meningitis infection and vaccine. Meningitis vaccinations are not compulsory at Columbia, but Health Services requires students to formally indicate their decision online before registering for classes. Barnard Health Services has a similar policy.

Meningitis is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord, according to the Center for Disease Control. It is usually caused by a viral or bacterial infection. People with meningitis generally experience flu-like symptoms. Viral meningitis is usually less severe and can resolve itself without specific treatment, whereas bacterial meningitis tends to be much more serious and can result in lasting brain damage. While the bacteria that cause meningitis are not as contagious as the common cold or flu bacteria, meningococcal meningitis patients can spread the disease to those with whom they have had close or prolonged contact.

About 3,000 to 5,000 people in

the United States contract bacterial meningitis each year, and between 20 and 25 percent of these cases are fatal. Adolescents and young adults account for nearly 30 percent of all cases of meningitis in the United States according to the American College Health Association. Roughly 100 to 125 cases of meningococcal disease, which can lead to meningococcal meningitis, occur on college campuses each year. The ACHA approximates that five to 15 students die of the disease each year.

Ferdschneider said she could not recall any cases of bacterial meningitis at Columbia during her three years on campus. There were two cases of viral meningitis at Columbia in 2001, and both students recovered fully.

“People who are in close contact, such as people living in residence halls or any kind of group living in housing together, are at something of a higher risk [of contracting bacterial meningitis] because of the way it is spread,” Ferdschneider said. “I don’t think there is any cause in this particular case for people to be overly concerned. I think the risk to any of our students is minimal.”

Alix Pianin can be reached at alix.pianin@columbiaspectator.com

Spar Prioritizes International Programs

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS from front page

... [added] a more cohesive structure to our international initiatives.”

“International students currently make up around 45 percent of the student body. These are students who had to obtain some form of visa in order to study here,” Christina Kuan Tsu, dean for international student advising, said. “If you add in the students who have U.S. citizenship or permanent residency but live in countries outside the U.S., there are another 40 to 50 students.”

One of the initiatives, the Visiting International Students Program, just kicked off this semester. Under VISIP, between three and 12 international students attend Barnard for an opportunity to become familiar with American culture and experience a different learning environment. Barnard has developed partnerships with several foreign universities around the world.

“We will have somewhere around 10 or 12 partnerships all over the

world,” Link said. “Part of our international efforts includes internationalizing our community as much as possible.” This semester, there are four students from Denmark and one student from Italy.

Kiki Hahn, a 24-year-old student from the University of Copenhagen, described her experience at the Barnard program as enriching. “I absolutely love it here ... it’s very different in all fields,” she said. She added that she had picked Barnard’s program over another study-abroad, calling the chance to go to a women’s college “a wonderful opportunity.”

In some ways, Barnard is very different from what Hahn was used to in Denmark. “Coming to live here, there’s lots of things that are different—the whole thing of almost persuading your teachers to get into a class,” she said. And although she is several years older than most of her classmates, she said that “the age thing has not been a problem,” adding that “people are helpful and very eager.”

Barnard students, on the other hand, are travelling overseas to participate in the International Research and Exchanges Board and Sciences Po, study abroad programs for undergraduate and graduate students.

Some say the programs are a good way to expose students to different perspectives and points of view.

“It makes you more open-minded because you come into contact with all kinds of people,” Fatema Versi, BC ’12, said. “This might sound stereotypical, but Americans are very bad at geography ... By doing this, they might increase [their] awareness of the world around them.”

Deena Elkafrawi, BC ’12, also praised Barnard for its international initiatives. She even suggested that Barnard should use its relationship with its neighbor as a selling point.

“If you’re going to attract students from [the] Middle East ... stress that you are going to meet guys at Columbia,” she said.

news@columbiaspectator.com

SGA Discusses ‘Pink Zone,’ Financial Aid

The Barnard Student Government Association talked money and basketball Monday night as council members sounded off on financial aid, club funding, and the upcoming “Pink Zone.”

SGA president Sarah Besnoff, BC ’09, and Junior Representative to the Board of Trustees Daphne Larose, BC ’10, reviewed the presentation concerning student opinions on BC financial aid that they had given to the Barnard Board of Trustees on Wednesday. Students polled by the SGA said that the Barnard Office of Admissions should remain need-blind and financial aid need-based, though it was acknowledged that tuition increases would be necessary if Barnard were to make more financial aid available. Besnoff and Larose said that the Trustees were receptive to their presentation.

Some council members wondered whether the need-blind admissions policy is hurting efforts to diversify the student body socioeconomically, as the Admissions Office cannot use applicants’ financial data to increase chances of admitting students from different backgrounds. SGA suggested an instant survey to gauge student opinion

on current financial aid policies.

Council members also discussed how to best help students grapple with their debt after graduation.

Women’s basketball coach Paul Nixon announced that the Barnard Night “Pink Zone,” scheduled this year for Feb. 20, will be held in honor of North Carolina State University women’s basketball coach Kay Yow, who died earlier this year from breast cancer. Half of the ticket proceeds from Barnard Night go to the Breast Center at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital.

Council members discussed the upcoming fire-side chat with Barnard Dean Dorothy Denburg, which will be held on March 30. Council members suggested that attendees ask the dean about the current state of dining services and housing as well as the College Activities Office, which members were concerned placed too heavy a burden on the SGA budget.

SGA also announced plans for a new CULPA-like program that would allow students to review the Barnard housing process.

—Carly Silver

Letter Asks for Denunciation of Israel

LETTER from front page

of Gaza,” Francisco Salas, CC ’11, who writes for the Commentariat, said in an e-mail.

“I don’t see it as pressure on him [Bollinger],” Peter Marcuse, a professor at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation said. “It’s a suggestion of something he might wish to consider and that others think is squarely in

his field of expertise.”

But several signatories noted that their support was not contingent on their belief that the letter would or would not compel Bollinger to act.

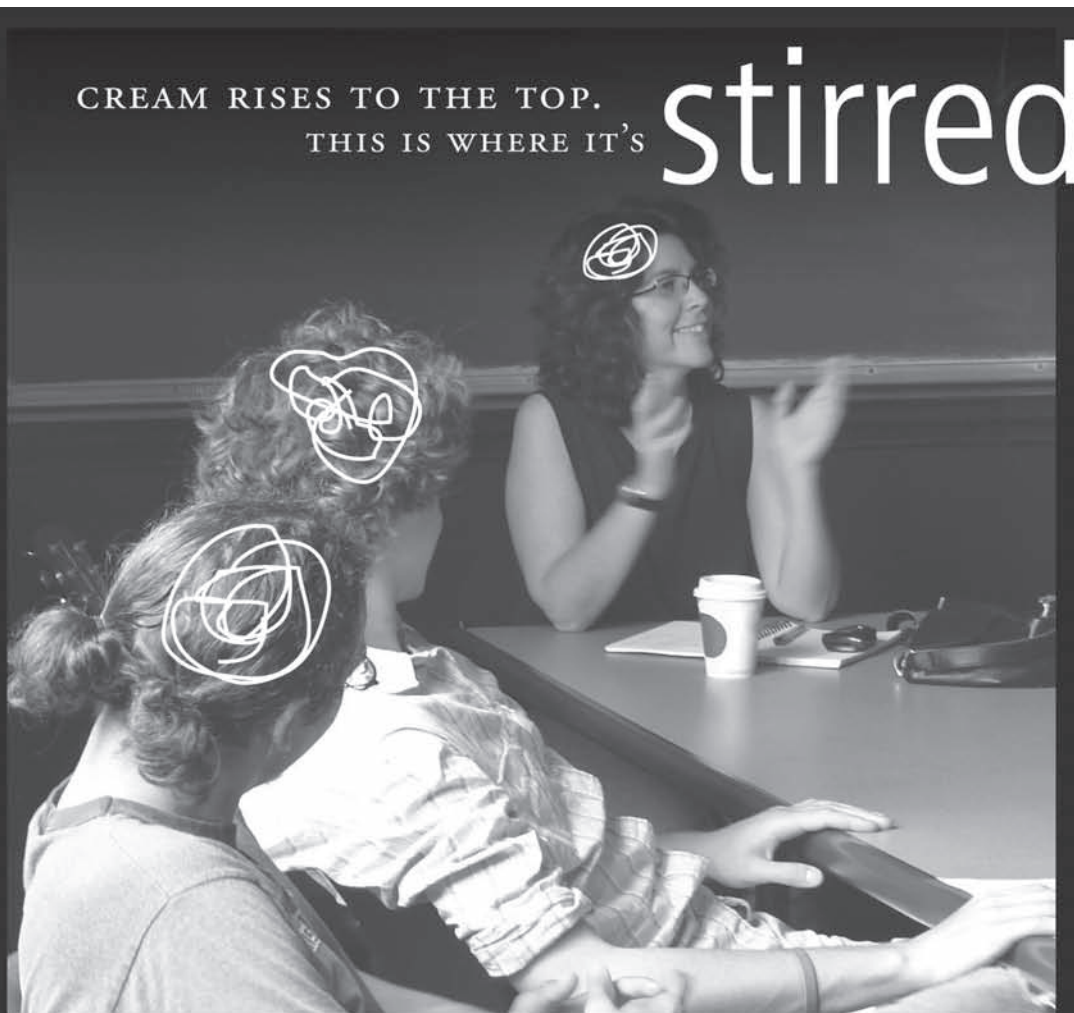
“Standing up for what you believe in doesn’t have to depend on whether you think you will win,” Higonnet said.

“It’s an issue that’s difficult to talk to people in Israel about from the outside because one doesn’t have

the experience of living there and of feeling threatened and insecure,” Marcuse said. “This [the letter] might be one way of raising some issues that one could talk about rationally.”

As of 6:30 p.m. on Monday, 120 faculty members and 106 students, alumni, and community members had added their names to the letter at academicfreedom-columbia.org.

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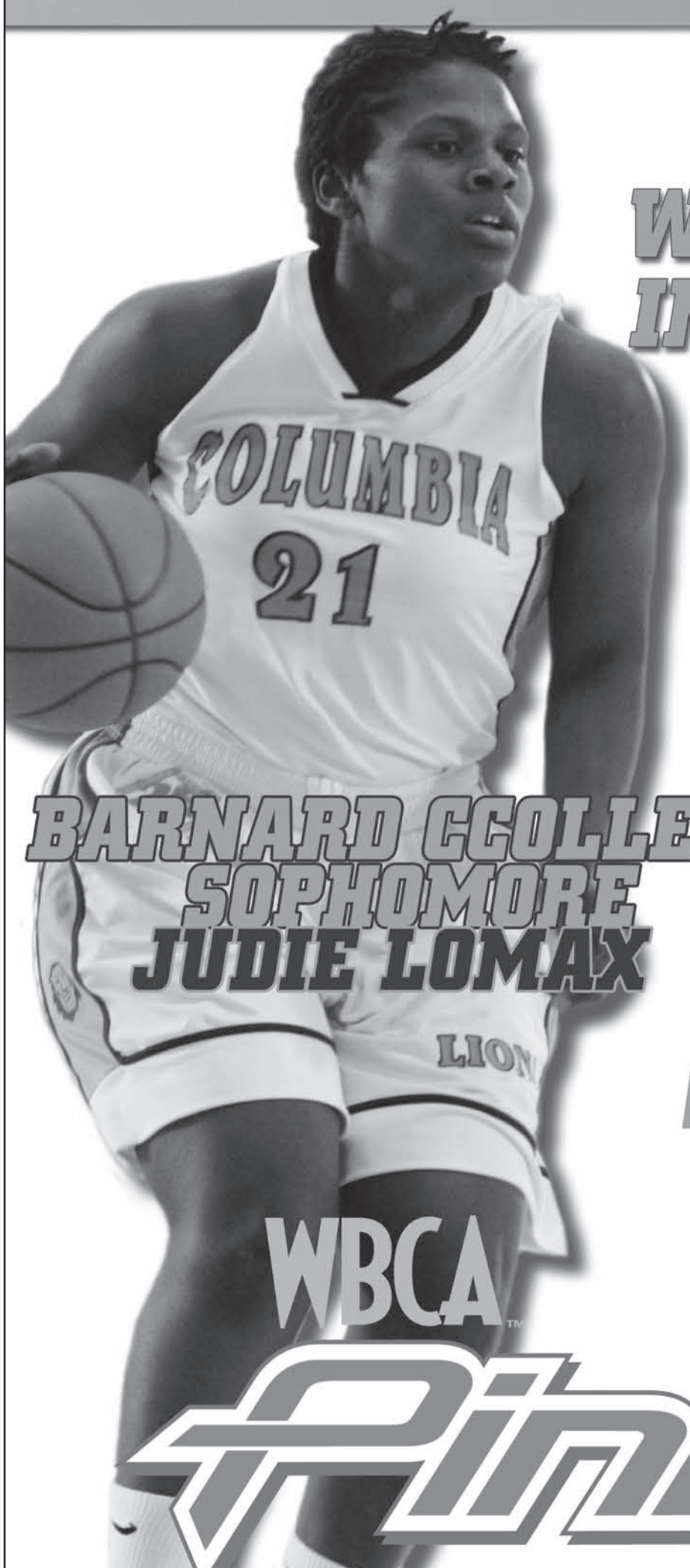
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3	6	2	5	9	8	4	7	1
7	9	8	4	1	2	3	5	6
2	3	9	8	6	5	7	1	4
4	1	5	9	7	3	6	2	8
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8	4	1	6	2	7	9	3	5
5	2	6	3	8	9	1	4	7

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Amanda Sebba, Treasurer

Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle
Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Nichols Lewis

ACROSS
1 Float, as an aroma
5 A, to Aristotle
10 Not quite closed
14 Tolkien badkies
15 Gives a darn
16 Hardy's "obscure" stonemason
17 Some ring combatants
19 Santa ____ California winds
20 Part of TNT
21 Garden invader
23 Sask. motorist's concern
24 2003 Billy Bob Thornton holiday film
28 Take care of
30 Similar
31 Cigar residue
33 From Trondheim, e.g.
34 Mus. majors' degrees
35 Piece of trial evidence
37 Digital encyclopedia
40 "In the good old days ..."
43 Random guy
45 Akihito, e.g.: Abbr.
46 Rodeo buckler
48 Pekoe or green
49 Fate
51 Tie one's cleats
53 "Both Your Houses" Pulitzer playwright Maxwell
55 Polly's cry
56 Paul of "Anchorman"
58 Go down the wrong path
59 "Not likely"
61 TV reporters' short stories
66 Those opposed
67 "Attention, ..." shoppers ...
68 When the war ends
69 Celtic language
70 Goes up and down
71 ABA honorifics

DOWN
1 Chinese cookware
2 Onassis, to friends
3 TV watchdog
4 "For shame"
5 Words after flip
6 Not at all strict
7 Soften at the factory, as jeans
8 Where you are, on mall maps
9 Good thing
10 1977 Grammy-winning Steely Dan album
11 Odds-and-ends storage areas
12 Gets to fit
13 Work on hooves
18 Scottish hillside
22 Material to 7-Down
24 Pig of film
25 Actor Alda
26 Band alternatives, at weddings
27 Budget-balancing statute, perhaps
29 Marginal jotting
32 Mob hiree
35 Roosevelt visitors, for short?

36 Class with a lab
38 First-class
39 Happen again
41 Slugs, to a 32-Down
42 Wing tip-to-wing tip distance
44 Forward movement
46 Illusionist David
47 Eatery serving uncooked shellfish
49 "The Galloping Gourmet"
50 Swing into town
52 Like hoods
54 Money owed
57 Online software come-on
60 "Cats" monogram
62 Success sign
63 Both Begleys
64 www help feature
65 Part of TBS: Abbr.

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE:

P	A	R	A	W	C	S	M	E	C	C	A	S
A	T	A	D	R	A	H	O	N	R	A	M	P
J	A	V	A	J	I	V	E	N	A	I	L	E
A	R	E	N	O	T	A	F	T	B	A	R	I
M	I	N	O	R	E	D	Y	A	M	I	N	I
A	S	S	J	U	M	P	I	N	G	J	A	C
K	P	A	P	A	L	A	M	O	R	A	L	
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J	U	N	K	J	E	W	E	L	R	I	D	S
O	N	E	S	M	A	L	A	C	O	N	I	C
L	A	R	S	I	D	A	H	A	S	A	G	O
S	L	A	P	O	N	J	U	M	B	O	J	E
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N	A	S	S	E	R	R	E	N	E	M	T	S

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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37		38	39			40				41	42	
46	47				48			49	50			
51				52	53		54					
55			56		57		58					
59		60		61		62			63	64	65	
66				67				68				
69				70				71				

By Peter Justin Wentz
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SPORTS

Living the Life Of a Columbia Superfan



LISA LEWIS
THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID

Have you heard of the “Superfan”? It’s a nickname that refers to one particular Columbia athletics supporter who makes it out to a ridiculous number of games. I take pride in going to a variety of Columbia sporting events myself, so I knew I needed to meet him when I traveled to Harvard to photograph the women’s soccer team’s Ivy Championship game, which he was attending. “There were lots of heckling Harvard fans, and maybe two or three of us. I was probably the most vocal,” Superfan Austin Brauser, SEAS ’10 said. Brauser had to face off in a cheering war against approximately 30 rowdy (and, for some reason, shirtless) Harvard fans. “They were all drunk, but what were they going to do? Beat me up?” Brauser asked. “I had to step it up and support our girls.” Austin explained his strategy to me—every sport requires a slightly different style of cheering. “Women’s soccer is a different kind of heckling. It’s more suggestive, like saying something about how you like their hair. I usually get someone to laugh.” The relatively tame antics of a women’s soccer game contrast with the cheering at men’s basketball games. I’ve witnessed it firsthand—since Ivy crowds are smaller than other D1 programs’ crowds, it’s easier it is to get the crowd to start saying things that aren’t so nice. “At men’s basketball, the cheers get more polarized. I do like basketball. It’s exciting to get in the face of the other team.” Brauser didn’t come to New York for Columbia’s sports programs, saying “As much as I like sports, having a good football team isn’t a good reason to go to a school unless you play. I was trying to decide between here, Cornell, and Penn State. Which [school] is 20 minutes from Yankee Stadium?” Brauser loves being a fan—you can tell just by talking to him. But beyond the fun of being in the stands, I wanted to know why he does it. Why come out and cheer at every game? His first response was that of a true Columbian: “I have a really busy schedule, and it’s a way to get away from things for a little bit!” But then he answered, “Athletes put in so much time and effort, people should go. I like being the sixth man.” When I say this guy is dedicated, I’m not kidding. He’s been to football, women’s soccer, field hockey, wrestling, fencing (home and away ... at NYU), women’s basketball (he came back from winter break early this year to be one of two students in the student section), men’s basketball, men’s swimming, women’s swimming, men’s soccer, baseball, and men’s lacrosse. He’s even made it out to a men’s club hockey game in Hackensack, N.J., which is about an hour-long bus ride away. And when he says he’s escaping a busy schedule, he means it. The Superfan is majoring in mechanical engineering and minoring in psychology. He is also the chief engineer for the Formula SAE engineering club on campus that designs a race car every year. Brauser will be missing this year’s “Think Pink” women’s basketball game because he will be defending his title as “Mr. SEAS.” “At last year’s Pink game, I got all pinked out—I borrowed pink boxers and a pink T-shirt,” Brauser said. I asked Austin what he wished he could change about the athletics programs on campus. I sympathized with his first two wishes: placement of a hockey arena on campus and implementation of a permanent double-quarterback strategy (Dual Pistol! Dual Pistol!) for the football team. But his last wish amplified the reason he’s become the Superfan. He said, “I wish the student body would appreciate what hard work other students put in and get more into sports. I really think that the athletes enjoy having a large, rowdy crowd.” I asked Kelly Hostetler, CC ’11 and current starter on the women’s soccer team for her input, and she completely agreed with him. “When you have a fan base with a ton of people at the game, it pumps you up. The game that turned our season around this year was versus American—there was a huge home crowd! Everyone was talking about how great the turnout was. Other athletic teams came out together to support us, and that game started this whole win streak.” I could say that Austin is an inspiration and that everyone on campus should aspire to be as supportive and unwavering as he is (they should.) Or I could, like yesterday’s editorial, encourage you to be a fair weather fan—if men’s basketball is winning, then you should support them. But maybe the best thing to do buy Austin a beer (or a Red Bull) the next time you see him at a game and thank him for what he’s contributed to so many of Columbia’s teams every single season.

Lisa Lewis is a Barnard College junior majoring in economics. sports@columbiaspectator.com

Unexpected Talents Lead Columbia in League

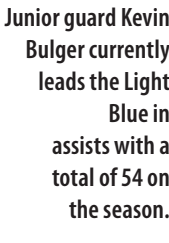
BY MAX PURO
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

After losing four senior starters to graduation and projected starter Brian Grimes in the off-season due to an injury, the expectations for the Columbia men’s basketball team were relatively low. A .500 finish might have been considered lofty while the possibility that the Light Blue could fall to the bottom half of the Ivy League was more likely. But, after eight conference games, the Lions stand at 5-3—matching the best start in Joe Jones’s six-year tenure as head coach. The non-conference portion of the

SEE MEN’S BASKETBALL, page 7



Junior guard Patrick Foley leads the Lions in average points per game with 10.7 on the season.

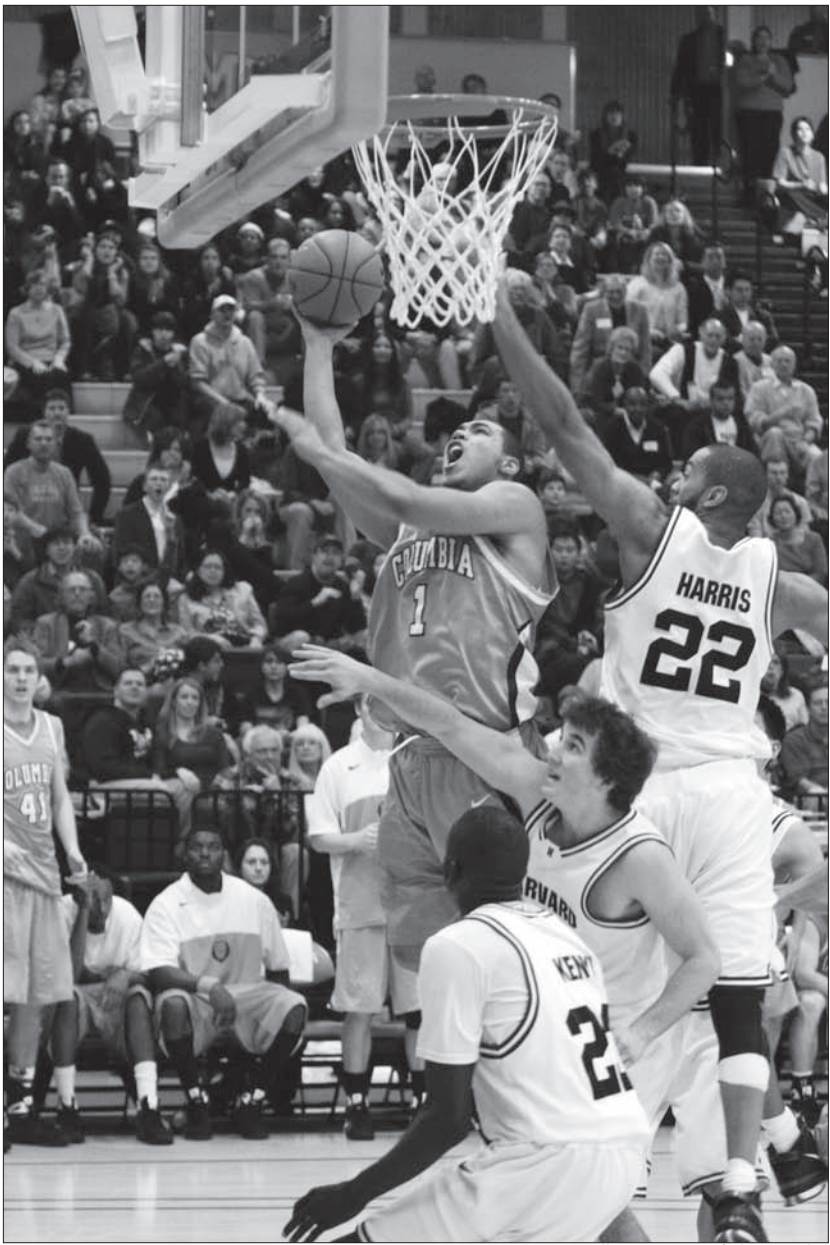


Junior guard Kevin Bulger currently leads the Light Blue in assists with a total of 54 on the season.



Senior center Jason Miller is the team and league leader in rebounds with 154. He also leads the Lions in total points with 226.

Courtesy of Columbia Athletics



Ajit Pillai / Senior Staff Photographer

FILLING THE VOID | Rookie Noruwa Agho and senior Jason Miller have surpassed all expectations and have become major contributors to the Lions success this season.

Two Players Earn Ivy League Honors

After a sweep of Harvard and Dartmouth, Jason Miller and Noruwa Agho were rewarded for their stellar play by being named Ivy League Player of the Week and Ivy League Rookie of the Week, respectively. Miller posted consecutive 19-point, eight-rebound games, while shooting an impressive 13-for-21 (61.9 percent) to help lead Columbia to back-to-back victories. The senior center also recorded a career-high four assists against Dartmouth. Agho had his third 20+ point game of the season against Dartmouth to go along with a career-high nine rebounds. Against Harvard, he played a monumental role down the stretch by scoring eight of his 11 points in the second half. For the weekend, he averaged 15.5 points, 5.5 rebounds, 3.5 assists, and two steals. This week marks the third time that Agho has received Ivy League Rookie of the Week honors, while Miller became the first Lion to receive the Ivy League Player of the Week award since John Baumann last February. —Max Puro

Light Blue Appear Back on Track After Win Over Harvard

BY SARAH SOMMER
Spectator Senior Staff Writer



Dan Fainstein / Staff Photographer

HIGH PRESSURE | Lack of consistency has plagued Columbia this season.

With a .500 conference record, winning the Ivy League championship is a tall order for the Columbia women’s basketball team (11-11, 4-4 Ivy). Dartmouth has won all seven of its league games—including a 55-43 victory over Columbia—and is unlikely to falter in its remaining matchups. Nevertheless, the Lions may finally be back on the right track after a critical three-point win over Harvard this past Saturday. “We’ve got a little bit of momentum,” head coach Paul Nixon said. “We have, obviously, a lot of positive feelings coming out of that Harvard win that we’re going to build on.” Columbia began Ivy play on a dramatic note with a come-from-behind 47-44 win against Cornell. The Lions trailed the Big Red for most of the game, but senior guard Katrina Cragg and sophomore guard Kathleen Barry sank clutch free throws for Columbia in the final three minutes of play. Not only did the Lions begin league competition with a victory, but they found a way to win a game that they had not dominated.

Columbia seemed poised to overtake Cornell in the teams’ second meeting, but the Lions’ eight-point halftime advantage faded down the stretch. After establishing control of the game, the Light Blue allowed the Big Red to make it a back-and-forth affair, resulting in a 58-53 loss. In terms of results, not much has changed since Columbia’s first pair of Ivy games. The Lions have split back-to-back league matchups for the past three weekends. What has changed is Columbia’s ability to will itself to a narrow victory, which was evidenced in its 63-61 loss at Yale. The Lions have dominated lesser teams, as evidenced by blowout wins over Brown and Penn. Nevertheless, they were unable to mount a complete comeback against Princeton. The Lions allowed the Tigers to score the first eight points of the game, but they rallied in the first half to tie the score at 20-20. Columbia only faced a four-point deficit at halftime before letting Princeton extend its lead in the second half. The Tigers emerged from the game with a 69-59 victory. Although the Lions’ most recent pair of games also involved one loss and one

win, they have taken a step in the right direction. This past weekend was arguably their toughest of the season as the Lions faced the top two teams in the league on the road. Columbia could not overtake Dartmouth, but it scraped a 74-71 win over second-place Harvard. The Crimson had entered the weekend with only one Ivy loss, which had come at the hands of the Big Green. Columbia held a 40-34 halftime lead against Harvard, but the Crimson ended the half with consecutive buckets. The game remained close in the second half, but the Lions prevailed. “I knew that they were going to throw everything but the kitchen sink at us in the second half, and we really prepared ourselves at halftime for them to come out and try and make a strong run,” Nixon said. “We talked about the fact that they might actually come back and even take the lead, but we were never going to let the game get away from us.” Columbia is now in fourth place in the conference standings. The Lions continue league play against Brown and Yale this weekend. Tip-off for both games is set for 7 p.m. in Levien Gymnasium.

Men’s Tennis Narrowly Falls At ECAC Championships

BY KUNAL GUPTA
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Columbia lost a heartbreaker to Harvard in the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) Tennis Championships on Monday, dropping a 4-3 decision to the Crimson. Harvard (ranked 49th in the nation) will now head into Ivy League play as the favorites to defend their crown from last season. The Lions got off to a quick start, winning the doubles point against the Crimson. At number two doubles, freshmen Haig Schneiderman and junior Jon Wong defeated their opponents 8-4. The first doubles match featuring Bogdan Borta and Mihai Nichifor was closer. The Lions grabbed an early 7-4 lead only to drop the next two games before closing out the match 8-6, giving Columbia a 1-0 lead overall. The number three pair of Dan Urban and Ekin Sezgen was down 7-5 when the match was called because the doubles point was already decided. “We won the doubles point and we thought we were in pretty good shape,” head coach Bid Goswami said, “but it turned out we were not.” Harvard rebounded quickly in the singles matches, jumping out to a 3-1 lead. At number two singles, Borta was defeated by senior Sasha Ermakov 6-1, 6-3 to knot the match at one. Kevin Kung at number six singles was the next Lion to fall, as he dropped his match to Aba Omodele-Lucien from Harvard in straight sets 7-6, 6-2. The following match also featured a Crimson victory, as Schneiderman lost in three tight sets 6-2, 6-3, 6-3.

SEE MEN’S TENNIS, page 7

Cornell Basketball in First After Weekend Sweep

BY MAX PURO
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

With many teams jumbled near the top of the Ivy League standings, a wild weekend created a clear picture with Cornell (17-7, 7-1 Ivy) manning the top spot. After a disappointing 18-point loss last weekend at Princeton, the Big Red responded with a weekend sweep of Harvard and Dartmouth. Against the Crimson, Cornell shot 61.1 percent from the field in the first half on its way to an insurmountable 16-point lead. Ryan Wittman was one of five Big Red players who totaled double figures. Wittman, who set the Big Red record for career three-pointers during the game, finished with 20 points, four rebounds, and six assists in the 96-75 win. Cornell also set a school record with 31 assists in the game.

Harvard (10-12, 2-6) was led by Drew Housman, who had 16 points, three rebounds, and six assists. On Saturday, Dartmouth (6-16, 4-4) cut into Cornell’s 19-point second-half lead to force two overtimes. However, down the stretch, the Big Red were able to make the plays needed en route to a 79-76 victory. After falling behind by 19, Dartmouth went on a 15-0 run to bring the score within four with under 10 minutes remaining. Down 61-59, senior Alex Barnett’s leaning runner with 35 seconds left forced overtime. In the first overtime, Dartmouth’s Kurt Graeber found David Rufull, who hit a runner with just two seconds left to force the next extra frame. The second overtime belonged to Cornell freshman Chris

SEE IVY LEAGUE, page 7



Courtesy of Cornell Big Red

OUT IN FRONT | The Big Red improved to a 7-1 record after its dominant weekend.

Light Blue Downed in Final

MEN'S TENNIS from page 6

kid [Felton] played well, and it was unfortunate that he lost, but that's how tennis is sometimes."

Despite the loss, Goswami was

able to take some positives out of the match.

"I thought we played better doubles," Goswami remarked. "I think that the doubles are getting better every day. Third doubles is a work in progress."

Agho, Miller Pace Men's Basketball

MEN'S BASKETBALL from page 6

schedule proved difficult for the youthful squad as their performance wavered throughout. Yet amid the losses, a glimmer of hope persisted. Superior teams like American and Virginia Tech were not blowing out the Lions, and Columbia was getting better with every game.

The improvement heading into the grueling early portion of the Ivy schedule did not pay immediate dividends against a superior Cornell squad. The losses (by 12 and 11 points, respectively) were impressive considering how Cornell had dominated its Ivy League opposition so far. And since the opening two losses, Columbia has responded with an impressive string of wins.

Columbia shed its inexperience during the six-game stretch, winning two games by fewer than six points and three due to second-half comebacks.

The lone exception was the poor showing at Princeton, where the complexities of both the Tigers' offense and defense took the Lions out of rhythm, and the game, quickly. But the consistency that was missing early on has appeared in the early portion of the Ivy campaign. So, with that in mind, here are some midseason awards.

Midseason Player of the Year: Jason Miller

Coming into this season, the senior center had posted career averages of 1.6 points and 1.3 rebounds. Further, with transfer Brian Grimes eligible, the likelihood of Miller even starting seemed grim. But, due to Grimes's injuries, Miller has emerged as a consistent force.

This season, Miller has averaged 10.3 points and 7.0 rebounds while shooting an impressive 53.8 percent from the field. His game has only improved during conference play. In the eight Ivy contests, Miller has averaged 13.1 points and 7.4 rebounds while shooting 56.7 percent.

It has not only been the numbers, but Columbia's need to run the offense through him that has allowed Miller to improve so dramatically. Without Miller positioned on the block and the threat of him swooping across the lane for a left-handed hook, the Light Blue's offense would be fairly stagnant with perimeter players attempting to make plays on their own.

Midseason Rookie of the Year: Noruwa Agho

Before the season began, Jones noted that Agho and Steven Egee both "shoot the ball pretty well and are pretty good players off the dribble." This might have been quite the understatement, especially in Agho's case.

Since a 24-point outburst at Cornell, the six-foot, three-inch guard has started the past six

The loss seemed to bring Ivy league play into focus for Goswami with a focus on the April 3 showdown against the Crimson in Boston.

"Hopefully, in the spring, if we can beat them, it will be sweet revenge," Goswami said.

games—and has proven to be quite the offensive force. Agho can shoot from the perimeter (he is a 39 percent shooter from behind the line), but his ability to drive and get to the free throw line makes him a very versatile offensive player.

In the eight Ivy games this year, Agho leads all Ivy freshmen in scoring (11.4 per game) and steals (1.8) and is second in three-point shooting (47.6 percent) and minutes played (33.0).

Biggest Surprise: Columbia's ability to be 5-3 despite injuries

Even with the laundry list of injured starters (Patrick Foley has missed seven games, Niko Scott three, Joe Bova four, and Asenso Ampim eight), Columbia remains in third place. The ability of players such as Miller and Agho to raise their game has allowed Columbia to lose players but still be able to win games.

With the players missing games and a number of players rarely practicing, Jones has accomplished his most successful season since he started at Columbia by finding an offense that fits this year's squad quite well.

With two road trips coming up, it is going to be interesting to see how the Lions respond. A sweep on either weekend could propel them to their best Ivy record since Jones's arrival at Columbia. However, being swept could sink their hopes of a .500 record.

Big Red Climb Ivy Standings

IVY LEAGUE from page 6

Chris Wroblewski, who recorded a rebound and a basket to seal the win.

Cornell was paced by reigning Ivy League Player of the Year Louis Dale. The junior guard scored 18 points and had seven rebounds, two assists, and three steals in 42 minutes.

While Cornell was able to pick up a sweep, the Ivy's other top team, Princeton, did not receive the same treatment, as it fell by double digits to both Brown and Yale.

After their suffocating defense and efficient offense stifled both Columbia and Cornell just a week ago, the Tigers looked lost on both ends of the floor in Friday's 60-48 loss to the Bulldogs.

Yale (9-13, 4-4) played superb defense in the first half, allowing just 20 points and forcing the Tigers to shoot 31.8 percent from the field. The

Elis had three players in double figures including Ross Morin, who recorded a double-double, scoring 10 points while grabbing 10 rebounds.

Needing a victory at Brown to keep pace with Cornell, Princeton fell to the previously winless Bears (7-15, 1-7), 61-43.

Both teams struggled offensively in the first half, as they were tied at 21 entering halftime. However, Brown took control early in the second half, shooting an amazing 61.1 percent to blow the game open.

Matt Mullery scored 19 points on 8-for-10 shooting and recorded six assists, four rebounds, and four blocks to send the Tigers to their second consecutive defeat. Peter Sullivan scored 13 points and had six rebounds and two assists in the win.

Kareem Maddox paced the Tigers with 10 points in defeat.

While its traveling partner struggled with Yale and Brown, Penn was able to keep itself in the top

half of the League by recording a rare road sweep.

The Quakers (7-13, 4-3) used a late first-half run to send Brown to its seventh straight conference loss. In the first half, Penn shot a respectable 56 percent from the field while building a 10-point lead.

Tyler Bernardini led the way for the Quakers with 16 points while Jack Eggleston had a solid all-around game with 13 points, six rebounds, and four assists. Adrian Williams paved the way for Brown by scoring 15 points in the defeat.

Looking to record a sweep, Penn never trailed against Yale, as they were able to beat the Elis 68-63 in New Haven. Making a rare start, Harrison Gaines scored a season-high 19 points while grabbing six rebounds as the Quakers ground out the win.

Yale, which shot only 39 percent for the game, was led by Travis Pinick, who scored 15 points on 7-for-10 shooting as well as eight rebounds in 33 minutes of action.

Riding the Wave of Nouvelle Vague

GODARD from back page

sons. "First, more than any other filmmaker, Godard ties together intensely emotional stories with a theory of cinema. The second important aspect of Godard's work is how deeply he has engaged with the history, the ethics, and the politics of his times."

These two unique aspects can be found in *Made in USA* and *2 or 3 Things*, which are both cinematically inventive and intensely political. *Made in USA* alienates audiences even more than Godard's usual fare.

It is essentially a deconstruction of American film noir genre like *The Maltese Falcon*, though ironically in vibrant colors that mimic a Lichtenstein Silkscreen. Anna Karina, the then-wife of Godard, plays a journalist who looks for her missing ex-boyfriend, only to find out that he has been murdered. The film deals with communism, capitalism, and Franco-American relations while bombarding the audience with abstract visual and audio effects.

The same goes for *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her*, addressing war, consumer culture, and the rise of

the Parisian banlieues (suburbs). A woman is encouraged by her husband to prostitute herself in order to earn money, but her manner of doing so is cold and apathetic. Although it is more melancholic and sensual than *Made in USA*, it touches upon the same themes of cinematic abstraction and politics that make Godard so relevant to the world today.

2 or 3 Things I Know About Her and Made in the USA are showing through next Tuesday at Film Forum (209 W. Houston St. at Varick St.). Tickets are \$11.

The Secret of Barnard Dance Success

JACK SOTO from back page

flourishing under the crackling wit and sharp but compassionate eye of Jock Soto. Soto's often hilarious comments, which included encouraging the male students to stay out of sight during a traveling lift by walking with bent knees like

Fred Flintstone, underscored his deep understanding of the very nature of the pas de deux. He cleverly revealed the ideological complications behind a duet that is supposedly about displaying both the ballerina and intimate love. Soto perfectly summed up this Valentine's-Day-appropriate conflict with the last combination of

steps in which he requested that the ballerinas demand a ring directly after embracing their partners.

The strength of Soto's wisdom and the virtuosic and artistic performance of his students were truly enough to give any balletomane confidence that New York City Ballet has a bright, strong future.

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DANCE

A Shot at The Major League

BY AMANDA KOSTREVA
Columbia Daily Spectator

At first glance, the hefty, muscular, hat-wearing men of Minor League Baseball would appear to have very little in common with the students of the School of American Ballet (SAB). But beyond the superficial commonality of spandex-blend pants, both Minor Leaguers and SAB students face a devoted group of fans eagerly looking for “the next big thing.”

On Feb. 14, Jock Soto, former New York City Ballet principal dancer, gave a master class on ballet partnering, using students from the advanced class of the School of American Ballet at Symphony Space entitled “The Art of the Pas de Deux”. The class enticed New York City scouts with the opportunity to get the first look at a future star, and it offered fans the chance to get a first glance at the potential Lincoln Center “rookie of the year.”

Just like the Minor Leagues, the School of American Ballet is the training ground from which professionals are selected, and it is only from the graduating class of the School of American Ballet that new members of the New York City Ballet are chosen.

This zealous quest for the next ballet idol has historically been a charismatic force in ballet culture. In her memoir *Theatre Street*, the famed prima ballerina Tamara Karsavina speaks of her graduation performance from the Russian Ballet School, a performance set against the backdrop of a pre-World War I Russia. “The lucky ones amongst the balletomanes considered it a privilege to be present—each wanted to be the first to proclaim new talent, to witness the first steps of future dancers.”

The audience at Symphony Space proved that this balletomane—or devoted ballet fan—spirit still lives on passionately in the ballet audiences of modern New York City.

The technical and fervent knowledge of the balletomane was especially revealed during an incident in which Soto told his students that the next demonstration of steps would include a “shoulder sit,” a statement which immediately caused the Symphony Space audience to let out a small, excited collective gasp. The highly expert audience knew that the shoulder sit was a difficult lift that required the male dancer to raise the ballerina up onto his shoulder.

In response to the excitement of their dedicated audience, the students of the School of American Ballet performed admirably,

SEE JACK SOTO, page 7



Kenneth Jackson / Staff Photographer

MUSIC TO YOUR FEET | Classically trained pianist Michael McFrederick is adept at selecting the perfect music to accompany dancers' movement in ballet classes.

MUSIC

Barnard Dances to A Familiar Tune

BY STORM GARNER
Columbia Daily Spectator

You're a classically trained pianist. You went to Juilliard. But when you've finished performing a challenging Chopin étude, not one of your 30 listeners applauds. And, come to think of it, none of them sat still for even a second while you were playing.

Most musicians would feel a bit annoyed, but to Michael McFrederick, this is all in a good day's work. Accompanist to the Barnard Dance Department's ballet and tap classes for 10 years, and possibly one of the most experienced dance class piano accompanists in the country, McFrederick has made a career out of his peculiar love for making useful music.

Classical musicians generally crave a rapt but passive audience that applauds at appointed times and otherwise remains silent and intellectually receptive. Pop and folk musicians, on the contrary, tend to gauge their success by the extent of audience participation—head-bopping, singing along—at their gigs.

McFrederick is more like John Lennon than Mozart when it comes to his performance preferences. He is happiest when the dancers leave the studio having not only learned a new dance step, but also with a renewed passion for dance, music, and all that involves the “spiritual realm.” As an accompanist, “It's your job to make that class a unique experience. At the end of the class, the students should feel inspired, like they're walking a few feet above the ground as they go back out into the world,” McFrederick said.

It takes more than just inspiration to accompany a dance class. For each separate exercise in each of the 18 dance classes McFrederick accompanies all over N.Y., he has to make a split-second

decision as to which piece to pick from his vast memorized repertoire of mostly nineteenth-century classical piano music, but also some twentieth-century classical and even some pop music. These decisions hinge upon the tempo, mood, and form of the movement that is being studied. “If you hear the teacher say ‘pliés,’ for example,” McFrederick explained, “you know it's supposed to be a slow three or a slow four, and the phrasing is almost always symmetrical.”

“I don't know any school that teaches this,” McFrederick said. Although conservatories such as Juilliard or Manhattan School of Music offer degrees in accompaniment, the focus remains on musical accompaniment, and the accompanists still expect to be listened to in rapt, seated silence, not danced to.

When McFrederick was a 16-year-old sunny California lad, his tap teacher offered him his first gig accompanying a ballet class because he was known locally as a promising young pianist. From his subsequent 43 years of dance accompanying experience, McFrederick has come to understand the special relationship between sound and expressive gesture in a way that probably cannot be taught. Some may argue that McFrederick, playing for dancers who bring music and plays to life before his very eyes, is in touch with the prime motive of music—to inspire movement.

No matter which dancers he accompanies, be they Alvin Ailey, Mark Morris, or Barnard and Columbia students, the goal is the same: “Whatever that motion is that's being worked with, they're working with me, and I'm working with them. If that's not happening, nothing's happening.”

For more on Barnard dance musicians, be on the lookout for another upcoming profile.

FILM

Godard's Lesser-Known French New Wave Films Make a Splash

BY JULIA ALEKSEYEVA
Columbia Daily Spectator

Jean-Luc Godard became a cinematic legend 50 years ago. Director of the 1960 film *Breathless*, Godard virtually launched the French New Wave movement and revolutionized cinema as we know it. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in Godard, and Film Forum is currently showing two lesser-known Godard films until Feb. 24—*Made in USA* and *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her*.

To show these two films instead of more popular films like *Breathless* or *Contempt* indicates something entirely different and new—both of these movies could probably be considered Godard's “B-sides,” and investing such interest in two films that weren't very successful at their release is a sign of a revitalized fascination with Godard and with New Wave cinema in general.

In the movie theater I worked at this past summer, the walls were covered with Godard posters—not because it showed Godard's films, but because the manager was positively obsessed. In March, *ZooZoom* Magazine will launch a fashion shoot inspired entirely by the women of Godard. This Godard mania isn't a new phenomenon, and New Wave cinema has influenced movie buffs since the 1960s, inspiring the “New Hollywood” generation of Coppola and Scorsese. Yet it seems that 50 years after it burst onto the cinematic sphere, the New Wave—or Nouvelle Vague—movement is more relevant than ever.

Columbia Professor Philip Watts, who teaches the French New Wave course, agreed. “It's true that there's a real interest in his [Godard's] work today,” he said, adding that his work has relevance for two rea-

SEE GODARD, page 7



Courtesy of Film Forum

FRENCH FILM REVOLUTION | Following a recent resurgence of interest in Jean-Luc Godard's films, Film Forum is screening two of his lesser known movies. They present audiences familiar with his work to a new side of the famous French filmmaker.

STYLE

Shipley & Halmos Get Inspired By the Dark Depths of the Future

BY ELLIOT SMALLING
Columbia Daily Spectator

Only a year after moving from Newport Beach, California and debuting their New-York-based label Shipley & Halmos, Sam Shipley and Jeff Halmos have moved on from their first project, the whimsical, California-prepster-influenced *Trovata*. Their ironically titled Fall 2009 collection, “The Individualist” took a dark and introspective look at conformity and fashion in their new hometown, New York City.

Set in a dusty, unfinished gallery space to the tune of what can only be called “Radiohead's Greatest Apocalyptic-Sounding Hits,” models walked a line that zigzagged throughout the cavernous room. While their gaits were similar to those of robotic office workers, the clothes were anything but. Starting the show was an assortment of slimly tailored black leather—a skirt and sweetheart-cut dress for the girls, a jacket for the boys. The palette throughout was predominantly grey and black, although pale golds and teals made an appearance in the conformist apocalypse imagined by

Shipley & Halmos. A salmon pink, shawl-collar blazer stole the show in terms of menswear while slim silk dresses and innovative knitwear gave the women's clothing a cohesive look.

The biggest statement of all, though, was the black silk turtleneck worn by both men and women under every outfit. It is in this kind of subtle detail that fashion can become something more, a larger intellectual statement. After the entire collection was shown, the models began the show over, this time only a few steps ahead of each other. The frenzy of forty models closely following each other down a clearly marked line, all wearing the same black turtleneck, was a haunting image. After the second cycle, the show started over again and again until it was clear that it could go on forever. As Thom Yorke blared on the speakers in one of the latter cycles singing “Ice age coming, ice age coming,” it was clear that every last detail was attended to in order to make a big statement. Shipley & Halmos envisions a cold, bleak, robotic future, but at least it's a future in which everyone will look impeccable.

ART

Retired Graffiti Artists Get Creative Without Criminality at 5Pointz

BY ALYSSA RAPP
Columbia Daily Spectator

Though the contemporary art museum P.S.1 lures art tourists to Long Island City, Queens, its post-modern façade pales in comparison to the kaleidoscope of graphics that cover the abandoned, block-long warehouse across the street. The block at Jackson Avenue and Davis Street has evolved into 5Pointz, a living graffiti installation overseen by internationally acclaimed aerosol artist Meres One.

In Saturday's warmth—ideal graffiti-writing

weather—my eyes wandered from the E train to these fluorescent brick canvasses where Meres and his closest friends share weekend writing sessions. Masters of the renegade art form, the artists have given up the fast life of “bombing,” writing in public spaces, to work at 5Pointz and gain gallery exposure.

However, these artists still treasure the risk-filled careers of their youth. One writer, Munk, remembers his subway writing, while Charm, a current gallery artist at Alphabet in Brooklyn, reminisces about his underage days when the threat of being arrested

could not curb his creativity.

Unlike so many of his friends, Meres hasn't quite retired from the thrill of “bombing.” A native of Queens, he began tagging at the age of 13 and is still the most satisfied by projects that “last the longest and that no one has thought of,” thus demonstrating the symbolic value of a graffiti piece's placement. For Meres, aerosol work is akin to Egyptian hieroglyphics and prehistoric cave paintings, as it marks the artist's presence. Egos reign supreme, according to Meres. The “ultimate goal is [to see] who can get up the most.” His friend Charm agreed, stating, “our identities here are public.”

Yet at this point in his life, Meres seeks a different kind of publicity as he focuses on gaining gallery exposure and working with a carefully chosen crew to create “pieces,” large works that coexist together on a wall to form murals. Meres's unique style, a hybrid of chunky-lettered New York aesthetic and the more flowing LA technique, has caught the attention of the New York Knicks and Swatch as well as record companies such as Def Jam and musical artists including Matisyahu and Joss Stone, whom he body-painted for her album cover. “At first I did it [graffiti] because I wanted the rush—I never thought that I would get to know the best of the best and meet people,” Meres said.

Meres's cultivation of freedom of expression at 5Pointz does not cater to a commercial purpose.



Alyssa Rapp for Columbia Daily Spectator

AEROSOL ARTISTRY | Graffiti artists, many who have retired from illicit “bombing,” take to the streets legally at Long Island City's 5Pointz.

“I wear different hats: tour guide, teacher, security guard, curator,” he said as he nodded at the building, calling his project a “pivotal point in graffiti making.” Allowing both creators of Rembrandt reproductions and novices to work at his space, he seeks to propel the art form into the next generation, offering weekly summer classes to aspiring local artists.

Rebuffing the media's negative stereotypes of graffiti, Meres aims to transform the place into a museum. According to Meres, “You can't say it [graffiti] is not art because then you have to classify what art is.” Fortuitously positioned across the street from P.S.1, Meres's aerosol cloud nine uses graffiti's competitive spirit to challenge the definition of art on a colossal scale.



Alyssa Rapp for Columbia Daily Spectator