

The Oracle

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April 2016

Stadium renovations affect home football games

by Bridget Nickel

The football schedule for the 2016-17 school year is different than usual. The football team originally had five home games on its schedule, but due to the renovations of the track and turf, they only have three home games, losing the Central Catholic and North Allegheny home games which have been changed to away games.

Mr. Clint Rauscher, the athletic director, said the WPIAL was very understanding of the issue.

"The WPIAL accommodated us and tried to move the schedule a little bit so it wasn't too taxing. They're not expecting the turf to be done until the end of September, making them only able to put three home games in our schedule," Rauscher said.

Although there will only be three home games, Rauscher does not think this will greatly affect the overall attendance of the games. He thinks the new stadium will help increase attendance due to the community wanting to see the renovations.

"I think by the time the turf is finished, we should have a pretty good understanding of how our team is going to be. Record will depend on some of it and I'm sure we'll get a lot of attendance just to see the new facility. I would expect a little bit of an increase in attendance and if I think we're doing well competitive wise, I think that will add to it even more," Rauscher said.

Head coach Mr. Jon LeDonne is very understanding of the issue. He feels the upgrades are well overdue and that the new stadium will set a new standard for future upgrades.

"Losing a few home games this year is a result of the capital improvement project of updating the Titan Stadium. This is an important step in investing in our facilities and infrastructure, as well as providing expanded opportunities for the use of the stadium by athletics, physical education and the community" LeDonne said. "It is about time we improve our sta-



A computer generated rendering for what the new stadium will look like

tus in terms of facilities. The district plans follow-on phases with the field house and grandstand renovation in the future, which I believe will set the new standard in terms of facilities."

However, the new schedule could cause some financial issues. The money coming from 50/50 raffles, apparel, concessions and admissions all goes to the football boosters as well as the athletic programs.

LeDonne feels that the loss of two home games will affect the team financially, but feels there are ways to help the situation.

"This will impact the fundraising activities for the coming year," LeDonne said. "I am looking for input from students for game day t-shirts to increase participation in the student section. It is always nice playing in front of a packed house, and the players

deserve it."

Despite losing those two home games this upcoming season, LeDonne and his coaches talk to the players about focusing primarily on their opponent rather than where they are playing. LeDonne and the rest of the team are not too concerned with the loss of two home games, because in the next season, two more home games will be added.

"Some things are out of our control, such as the construction schedule, and we don't spend much time focusing on things out of our control. We have had a demanding off-season so far, and look to even push the players further along in development. Also considering we won two road games last year, I am not too concerned about where we play," LeDonne said.

MAT raises money to help math students

by Kimberly Yurasits

Some people think starting a new fundraiser is easy as Pi, but the Mu Alpha Theta Pi Day fundraiser that took place during the week of March 7 took a lot of time and effort to plan.

The idea of the fundraiser was suggested by senior Noah Seelhorst in a Mu Alpha Theta meeting. He planned the event around Pi day (March 14) to help students in need.

Graphing calculators can range from \$100 to \$200 but they are a requirement for many upper math courses. Students who cannot afford them are then put in a difficult position.

"I decided to do it because Pi dealt with math and [doing the fundraiser] would help better Math Honor Society," he said.

Seelhorst suggested that, members of the club would go out with collection jars during homeroom. Anyone who donated would get a ticket to put in the jar with the name of the teacher they would want to see get a pie to the face.

Mr. Yarnot, Mr. Orsini and Mr. Mitchell volunteered to take a pie to the face for the fundraiser. Ms. Piekarski was added to that group later on in the week.

The goal was set at \$2000 which would get about 25 calculators for Shaler students. If \$2000 was raised, all of the teachers would get pied.

"The goal was to fund raise enough money to give graphing calculators to students who could not afford to purchase their own," Paul Stadelman, the sponsor for Mu Alpha Theta, said.



Mr. Paul Stadelman hits Mr. Dante Orsini in the face with a pie after students selected Orsini to receive the pie in the face as part of the Mu Alpha Theta fundraiser.



However, the fundraiser only raised \$350. "We did not reach our total goal of \$2000, but we should have enough money to buy 5 or 6 calculators for students in need," Stadelman said.

The teacher who received the most donations was Mr. Orsini and was the one who got a pie to the face during homeroom on March 14.

All in all, as this was the first year for the fundraiser, it went well.

"The goal is for it to happen next year. I hope the underclassmen carry it on," Seelhorst said.

OPINIONS

Place where dreams come true creating money nightmare

by Shannon O'Leary

Should the happiest place on earth also be the most expensive? Recently, all Disney Parks have created a new pricing system, which has caused controversy among Disney-goers.

Its goal was to dissipate park crowds during busy seasons, which has become a problem recently, given that Magic Kingdom has actually had to close due to too many people.

The demand-based pricing created three different types of one-day seasonal tickets: value, regular, and peak. Value tickets include the days in which crowds are the smallest, including September (when kids go back to school) and May (when school is coming to end). The price of value tickets ranges between \$95-\$97 and is intended to promote crowds on vacant days.

The regular tickets are for when crowds are expected to be steady, such as weekends, range between \$102-\$105.

The problem, or Disney's supposed solution, comes with the peak prices. Peak ticket days are the most popular and crowded days, including holidays, summertime, and specific weekends. Disney increased prices to \$114-\$119 per person.

This increase in prices has good intentions, but intentions that fall short. In efforts to prevent thrifty people from coming on the crazy busy days and going instead on the slower days, Disney is ultimately making much more money and limiting availability for visitors.

What are parents who work year round supposed to do? They certainly cannot get up and leave work so they can take their kids to Disney during an inconvenient value day. What are the less wealthy families supposed to do now? If the only opportunity they had to experience Disney was in the summer, how are they supposed to afford the new prices?



In efforts to increase its profit, Disney is ultimately forgetting about just how much money it makes as is. Not only do families need to pay nearly \$100 per person for park tickets, but they also typically have to pay for airline tickets, hotels, and the commodities that come with Disney. Children love going to the cool restaurants, especially ones that provide meeting the characters, and surely souvenirs are a must. Why is the increase in prices even necessary?

The time of year a family chooses to go to the theme park is their decision and opportunity; it should not have to be regulated by Disney's over-the-top-pricing. Perhaps Disney is forgetting one important aspect though: competition.

By raising its prices and attempting to dissolve Disney parks' large crowds, Disney is allowing for Universal Studios to bring in some more customers due to their new projects and attractions.

Despite common belief, Disney and Universal are not allies, but are enemies given that they have different owners. Universal has had its seasonal pricing system set long before Disney, but the outrage that comes with Disney's alterations could ultimately guide customers to the path that leads straight to Universal Studios and its many unique attractions

instead.

People who are willing to pay the large amount of money in ticket increases could possibly want to visit new parks like Harry Potter World or Jurassic World instead, located in Universal Studios. The loss will not be too great for Disney, but it is still not fair that some families will no longer be able to experience the magic of Disney.

Disney obviously had no intentions of creating rage among its customers, given that it primarily wants to promote activity throughout the entire year rather than one season, but since it is already so expensive, it should have seen this reaction coming. Airlines do it, hotels do it, sports venues and concert halls do it, and even Uber does it. Does

that mean that the already extremely prosperous and need-to-go experience should, too?

Price increases are the norm, especially in such a popular place like Disney. If people will still buy tickets, then why not sell them, right? But the idea to reduce crowdedness is near laughable; theme parks of that size and popularity will never truly see lines with shorter than a 20-minute wait.

Disney's efforts to reduce crowds could be commended but surely the parents who have to budget and actually pay for the trips are shaking their heads at this decision.

Prices are already pretty ridiculous and Disney is definitely popular enough to bring in loads of cash without an increase in price. I wouldn't be surprised if Disney continued to raise its prices annually, not because a raise is necessary or beneficial, but because Disney recognizes the opportunity to take advantage of customers and exploit them for more money. It's a good thing Disney gives families a great and memorable experience because they sure do take a lot in the process of getting families to the "happiest place on earth".



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The Oracle

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The Oracle is the official student newspaper of Shaler Area High School. Although it is published by the journalism classes, one does not have to be enrolled in a class to contribute.

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POLITICAL OPINIONS

Take time to be informed, form opinion on candidates



by Antoni Miladinov

I believe we must all become more involved in the political process and it begins with looking into every presidential candidates' values, history and behaviors. If we all start caring about the direction our country is headed, the United States will be a much better place for our future generations.

I'm a strong Bernie Sanders supporter for the fact that he is focused on abolishing the establishment. For those of you who don't know, the establishment is basically the system where corporations make campaign contributions to officials running for political office, in order to ensure that those officials protect the corporations' private interests. In other words, a company funds a politician's campaign so that the politician works toward legislation that will benefit the company. Sanders is entirely funded by the people, breaking the record for the most amount of money raised by private donations in a presidential campaign.

Sanders is also a huge civil rights activist. During his first term as Mayor of Burlington, Vermont in 1983, he supported the city's first ever gay pride parade. He was even arrested in 1963, as leader of the University of Chicago's Congress of Racial Equality, during a civil rights sit-in.

Beside Bernie Sanders there are other candidates who would love to snag the presidency, like Donald Trump. Oh Donald, there is so much to say about you, but I'm going to keep it short and sweet.

It amazes me how so many people are voting for a racist man who is unclear in his policy information and has never held a political office in his entire life. But worst of all, he isn't looking out for every American.

Trump's supporters are voting for a man who believes Mexicans need to build a wall for the United States that keeps illegal immigrants out of the country. He also condones the violent behavior that his rally attendees use against African Americans, Middle Easterners and protesters.

He's a man who believes the family members of terrorists must be killed. A man who never gives any specific information as to how he will accomplish everything he is promising to the American people, other than his great wall.

Like Bernie Sanders, Donald Trump is not a part of the establishment. He uses a lot of his own money to fund his campaign, while still receiving campaign contributions. However, Trump has so much money and worth that if elected into office, the establishment will be so angered by him not protecting their interests. He will instead be protecting his own interests which is just as danger-

ous as protecting those of other millionaires and corporations.

What scares me the most is that he has no political experience whatsoever. How can the American people trust that he will serve them when he has never been a public servant? Not to mention, trusting a man who is constantly changing his mind.

For example, on the Stephen Colbert show there was a "debate" set-up where Donald debated against Trump. Colbert played a video clip of Mr. Trump saying one thing, then played a second clip where he states the exact opposite of what he said in the first video.

Mr. Trump is not the only candidate who is having trouble deciding what they believe in.

It's very hard for me to trust Mrs. Hillary Clinton as well considering what she said during her campaign for the Senate in 2000. According to polificat.com, she was cited having said "I think marriage is as a marriage has always been, between a man and a woman."

Also according to politifact.com, when Hillary left her position as secretary of state in 2013, she was cited saying "I support marriage for lesbian and gay couples. I support it personally and as a matter of policy and law."

Hillary also responded to a question at the November 6 Democratic Forum where she was asked about being too close to Wall Street. Her response was, "Anybody who thinks that they can influence what I will do doesn't know me very well."

Well, tell me Hillary, why are they giving you thousands of dollars for private speeches? If you were confident that Wall Street won't influence you, then why don't you just release the transcripts of your speech to the American people? It seems a little shady to me.

All of these candidates have their flaws, but you must ask yourself this question: do you want a racist as your president? Do you want a liar as your president? Or do you want an honest man who looks out for the middle and working class families to be your president?

With the way things are now, I would much rather have anyone become president over Trump. It is just an embarrassment to live in a country where large amounts of the citizens are voting in a racist businessman to be their president. Clinton being an indecisive politician that is bought out by the establishment also is not a very trustworthy candidate either.

I hope that after reading this you become inspired to check out this year's presidential candidates. This only sums up a small part of what each candidate is about so it is up to you to look into each and find which one fits what you believe in.

America simply can't afford free college education

by Kayla Snyder

Once upon a time on a social media website I know way too much about, I scrolled across a tweet stating presidential candidate Mr. Bernie Sanders' proposals for America. There are so many things wrong with his plans, but I only want to address one. According to a tweet posted by Wall Street Journal on Twitter, Sanders' proposal is expected to exceed \$18 trillion dollars over the next decade.

According to the Wall Street Journal, his agenda includes an estimated \$15 trillion for Medicare for everyone, \$1.2 trillion for Social Security, \$1.0 trillion for infrastructure programs, \$750 million for tuition-free public college, \$319 million for a paid-leave fund for working families, \$29 million to bolster private pension funds, \$5.5 million for jobs for disadvantaged youths and an unknown estimate that will come soon regarding the Pre-K/Child Care Program.

The biggest issue I have with this proposal is that Mr. Sanders wants to allocate \$750 million to make college tuition free. Anyone who is currently looking at colleges or enrolled knows that college is expensive. Tuition can range anywhere from \$5,000 to above \$100,000 a year for students depending on the degree and the university or college a student wants to attend.

Given this price tag, where does Mr. Sanders expect to pull this money from when our government is already over \$19 trillion worth of national debt? Some common answers I've heard are the money is going to be pulled from Wall Street, military spending and by taxing the 1% of wealthy Americans. In my opinion, I don't think pulling money from those three sources will come close to what the cost of free education will exceed.

In addition to the price tag, the irony in this is that by spending more, the degree is worth less.

Hypothetically, if everyone goes to school and completes his or her studies and obtains a bachelor's degree, workplaces will now look for a master's degree as a requirement. That's already what is happening in America. Today, a bachelor degree is no longer an adequate measure of achievement.

By giving away free education, it will turn from needing a master's degree to a doctorate degree and then eventually, the value of education will diminish altogether. Somewhere along the line, Americans will be in hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt all due to the stupidity of the government.

An education economist at the Hoover Institute, Eric A. Hanusek said in an article published by The New York Times called "The Masters as the New Bachelor" that a masters degree has an extra signaling power

"There is definitely some devaluing of the college degree going on," Hanushek said. "We are going deeper into the pool of high school graduates for college attendance."

College is a luxury, not a necessity. No one is entitled to free education in America. If you want to pursue a college degree, then you have to pay for it. Just because you want a degree does not mean it should come out of the government's pocket.

The problem with America is that everyone thinks he or she is entitled to everything. I wish that people would stop thinking that way. Some say that the American Dream is dead. No, The American Dream is not dead. However, it requires a little more work and dedication. Education is not something that should just be handed to us especially if it could cripple the United States economy in the making.

Students ready to put on a killer show

by Kayla Snyder

Shaler Area is set to put on the first student run production since 2013 on April 22 and 23 at 7 p.m. in the auditorium. The play is a comedy titled "We'll Be Right Back After This Murder"

The play is a two-act, murder mystery that showcases an abnormal family in which the grandfather, Hampton Bellamy is shot, stabbed, electrocuted, clubbed and ran over by a large truck. The entire play is focused around Bellamy's murder and the overarching question of whodun-it? is prevalent throughout.

However, according to the directors, the true murderer could create an interesting element of surprise.

"The entire play is the investigation of his murder... More people die throughout and the end is shocking," senior director Natalee Junker said.

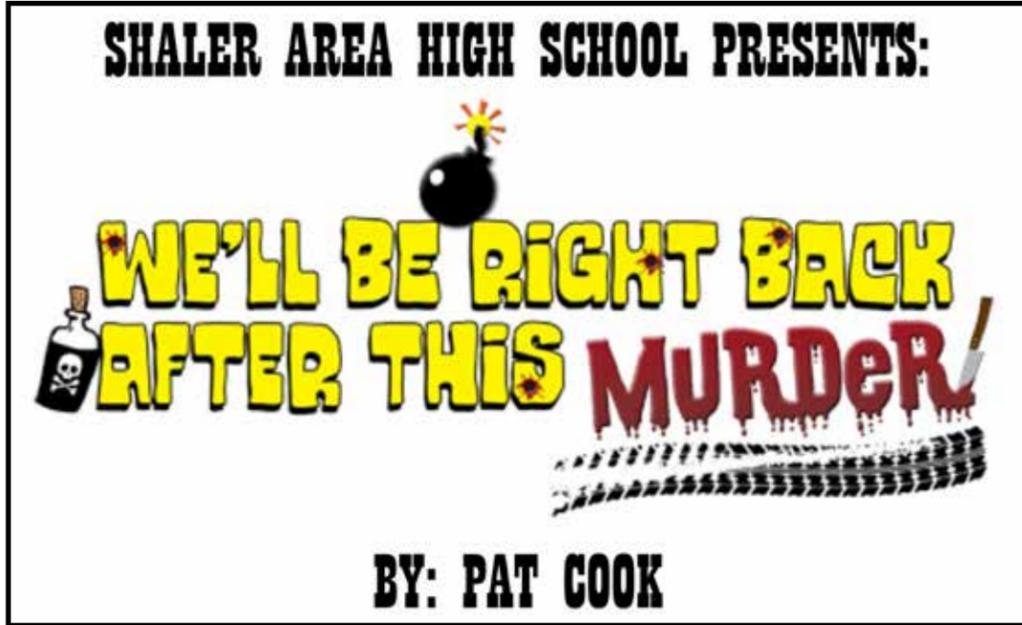
Seniors Natalee Junker and Tori Lorenz seized the opportunity to direct the production.

With the help of the Theatre Arts Parents of Shaler (TAPS), Junker and Lorenz were able to make a simple idea into reality. After "A Christmas Carol" wrapped back in November, Junker and Lorenz started the process for this student-run performance.

"Reading the description, I laughed," Junker said. "It just sounded ridiculous. It's funny because they're a dysfunctional family and that's exactly what the theatre kids are. We don't act anything like these characters off stage, but their craziness is something we can all relate to. Also, the talent we have fits these characters perfectly."

For both Junker and Lorenz, being the directors is very different from being a cast member.

"From being in so many shows, I only see the student's perspective," Lorenz said. "To be sitting in the director's chair is pretty neat. Having control



over a show and having the opportunity to make it any way that you want is fun. Casting, figuring out rehearsals, planning, everything is a lot of work, but it's going to be something you won't want to miss."

The cast consists of twenty characters, with no one part being more important than another. All that is different is the amount of talking the character does.

"There are definitely bigger characters than others, but the bigger characters aren't the most important; they just talk a lot," Junker said. "Captain Bogie Graham is a slightly larger character because he has more lines but mostly everyone is on stage the whole time, unless they die."

As with most productions, additional challenges are created for the directors to face. Both Junker and Lorenz they are dealing with issues

that revolve around scheduling rehearsal times.

The cast will only have 15-16 definite rehearsals before opening night to fully prepare for the show. Every cast member is going on the music department trip to Nashville in April, creating an additional challenge for the first-time directors.

"Whatever the audience sees on the stage was done in a small number of practices," Junker said. "It's going to call for some long nights, but we're prepared for it."

Both Junker and Lorenz have had to fill in the role of directors in every extent, which means they have to control their

fellow peers during rehearsals.

Junker said the level of professionalism each cast member exhibits makes being in charge seamless.

"It can be hard to get [the cast] to listen only because we don't want to be the bad guys telling everyone what to do," Junker said. "For the most part, everyone is very professional."

Lorenz also said there will be opportunities for other students to get involved such as singing in the lobby, running different booths, introducing the show and more to help promote the Theatre department.

Tickets will be on sale soon in the Activities Office for \$5.00 but can also be purchased at the door before each performance.



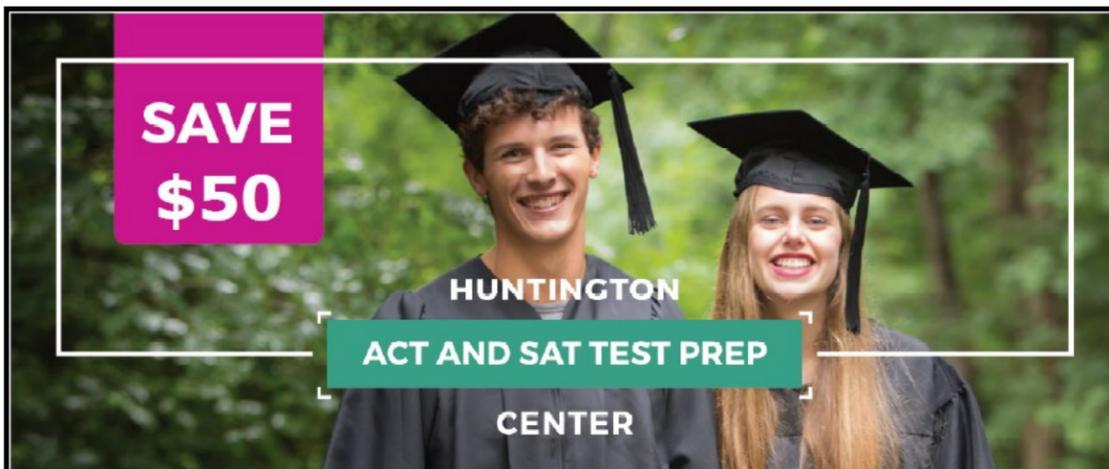
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In-school suspension to get a new look next year

by Kaitlin Parente

After a review of the In-School Suspension (ISS) program, it has been determined that there needs to be a change in the implementation of ISS. This program, meant to deter students from continually breaking school rules, has not changed since it was first initiated and has become ineffective in deterring students from committing the same offense over and over again.

A day in the life of a current ISS student entails sitting in a room for the entire school day doing class work. Once the work is finished, there is nothing for students to do in the bland ISS room.

The current ISS program that Shaler has used to be considered effective, but many issues have occurred causing the effectiveness to decrease drastically. ISS students are allowed to do school work on their iPads. While yes, there are benefits that iPads bring to students in ISS, there are drawbacks that can defeat the overall purpose of being in ISS.

However, a new ISS option has been proposed by social studies teacher Mr. Cory Williams. His plan would give students who receive ISS the option to perform community service work at the school instead of sitting in a room all day doing work, with parents' permission.

"In the spring and the fall we would start with rebuilding the outdoor classroom and then begin working our way around various [bike] trails around campus. Included in that would be upkeep and maintenance. In the winter we would

walk the kids through and guide them in painting murals in halls. We have to run it by the maintenance program first to make sure we aren't infringing on any of their territory," Williams said.

However, there is a "three strike" rule that applies to the service work. If students continuously receive ISS for the same reason and choose to participate in the service more than three times, they will be required to stay in the current system of ISS, except no iPads would be allowed with the new ISS program. Students would be required to use the laptops provided by the school to do any Google Classroom work teachers may have assigned for them.

Another issue arises when the students simply don't care that they've received ISS. According to school policy, detentions and ISS do not go onto transcripts and won't affect college-bound students during their recruitment and application process. The hope for students who choose to do service work, is that they will take ISS more seriously and gain more respect for their school by doing labor to better the school grounds.

"It's a very interesting proposal and I think it will be very effective," Royall said. "Some students will still go to ISS and do their work; there are some students that won't. So for the students that don't do work, don't get work, or get their work done; [it will] create a service component to ISS, voluntary, allowing students to volunteer...at the school."

This new option for In-School Suspension is set to go into effect at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year.

School calendar dates set mostly around standardized tests

by Alyssa Wohlfarth

Recently, Shaler Area released its new schedule for the next school year. While some are not happy about the starting date, many are ecstatic about the ending date.

Next year, Shaler will start on Thursday, August 25, 2016. This is almost two full weeks before Labor Day. Years before school would not start before Labor Day and now they are starting weeks before it. During the 2012-13 school year, Shaler Area started after Labor day and has started earlier and earlier ever since.

"Many school districts are looking to start earlier and end earlier in order to maximize instructional time before state assessments. Schools that are looking to begin later are typically for the purpose of completing school construction projects. Shaler Area has also considered this in the past but not currently," Shaler Area's Superintendent, Mr. Sean Aiken, said.

Although, with the new, earlier start date for the next school year, students will be getting out a lot earlier. The last day of school along with graduation is June 2, 2017.

There is a lot of planning and work that goes into making a school calendar. It takes multiple months to complete and finalize. Many people are involved in the process of making the calendar and ensuring it fits.

"We review previous calendars, confer with the state, and gain as much input from as many stakeholders [principals, teachers, DPC – parent group] as possible through meetings and discussions," Aiken said.

As well as the stakeholders, Aiken talks with the state to make sure Shaler Area is meeting its requirements. It has a certain amount of hours and days they have to complete to fulfill what Pennsylvania requires.

One thing that is normal for Shaler Area is the fact it does not have built in snow days. Some

schools build in days off that would be taken away in the case of a snow day instead of taking away from Spring Break.

Another complaint some may have is the fact that they think the breaks are not long enough, but in fact, the breaks are pretty long. They are also considered in making the calendar and are thought about thoroughly.

Many students may get upset at the fact that they might lose a day of spring break, but Shaler Area does have students' best interests in mind.

When talking about the length of breaks, Aiken said, "This is a combination of giving students an adequate break from the rigors of schoolwork, allowing for family time, and considering the flow of the school year."

School may start earlier than others and breaks may be shorter, but that just means the summer break will be longer. As much as some may complain about Shaler Area, Mr. Aiken and everyone else does have the students' best interests in mind.

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Hartman overcomes injuries, places 2nd in WPIAL

by Jared Panza

With the wrestling season coming to a close, one thing we can be certain of along with the astounding talent level of the team, is the relentlessness of senior Jake Hartman.

Ever since he was a freshman, when he was starting on varsity, Hartman always was one of the top wrestlers in the WPIAL. At 132 lbs., he posted a record of 10-4 before his freshman season was cut short by a concussion.

The following year brought even more success for Hartman as he racked up 33 more wins. He also won a section title, and placed seventh in the WPIAL.

Going into his junior year, Hartman joined the football team and moved up to wrestle at 152 lbs. where continued his impressive high school record with 17 more wins. That season was shortened by a serious elbow injury.

After spraining his UCL and suffering from ulnar nerve damage, Hartman was in a brace for nine weeks. Determined to return to wrestling, Hartman came back for his senior year, only to injure his elbow once again after starting his season 15-4.

"It was my senior year and I had goals that I couldn't just let hang over my head for the rest of my life. Also watching my teammates on the mat every day at practice and in competition was just slowly eating away at me," Hartman said.

After a visit to his doctor, he was given some good news.

"The doctor told me he didn't believe any structural damage will occur if I give it a try so I was on the mat that day because of how excited I was to be back," Hartman said.

Wrestling in extreme pain, Hartman noted how he felt unable to compete at the same level he did before.

"It was tough but more frustrating than anything. I had to tweak my style a lot because I wasn't as strong or I'd get shots of pain or numbness in certain



Jake Hartman reacts after a loss in PIAA tournament in Hershey (Barry Reeger, Tribune-Review)

positions that I was used to being in," Hartman said.

Despite that, Hartman made it to the WPIAL tournament where he placed second, earning himself a spot in the state finals in Hershey, PA; an incredible accomplishment for someone who, just weeks before, was told he would never wrestle again in high school.

At states, Hartman lost his first two matches by a slim margin, officially ending his high school career.

"I cried for a half hour after my last match. It was rough," Hartman said in a Tribune-Review story after the state tournament.

Not only was it hard to accept the reality of the end of his Shaler Area wrestling days, but he also

knows he was not at his best.

"I believe [my injury] highly affected my skill level because of all the time being off the mat and not being able to practice. My timing, technique, and conditioning was not at its full potential," Hartman said.

Even with an impressive high school record of 78-11, Hartman, who has been on highest honor roll during his entire high school career, has decided not to pursue a college wrestling scholarship as he is entering the Carpenters Union.

"Next year I will be joining the Carpenters Union and getting into a 4-year program where I will be paid to learn carpentry," Hartman said.

Swimmers perform well in WPIAL, PIAA meets

by Shayla Nguyen

The Shaler Area swimming/diving team had a nice finish to its 2015-2016 season. The Titans competed in the WPIALs championships at Trees Pool at the University of Pittsburgh with some personal bests and broken records.

"All three of the coaches felt the team had a positive finish to the season at the WPIAL championships," coach Keith Simmons said.

First, junior Evan Kelly and senior Mike Schmelzer were able to advance to the next round of the diving competition, with Kelly placing at 18th and Schmelzer advancing to the final round, placing at 13th as his personal best.

After the diving competition came the swimming portion. Three girls relay and three boy relay teams competed at the championships. Of the six that competed, five achieved their best times of the season.

In individual races, six swimmers competed in a total of nine individual races. Six of those nine races produced both seasonal bests, as well as personal bests.

Two swimmers on the team were also able to break school records. Abby Banze set a new school record in girls breaststroke at 1: 09. 49.

"It was really surreal. I didn't realize I'd broken it at first," Banze said. "It didn't hit me until I saw my name on the board a couple days later."

Senior Dillon Brown also was able to break some records of his own. He competed in the backstroke category and not only achieved personal bests, but also broke a school record previously set in 1978 with a time of 53.49.

"I didn't know immediately that I broke the record, but once I found out it was the most surreal feeling in the world. I never expected to do this and it was such a great feeling to finally see all my hard work pay off," Brown said.

Brown was also able to qualify for the state championship located in Bucknell, Pennsylvania. At states, Brown ended up placing in the top 30 swimmers in Pennsylvania and achieved his second best time of the season.

Now that his final swim season is over, Brown says that, while he is unsure as to whether he wants to swim on a team in college, he has no intentions to stop swimming.

"I'm not entirely sure about being on a team in college because I want to devote my time to my studies a lot more, but I can guarantee you this: I'll just keep swimming, just keep swimming," Brown said.

Play Ball!

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Holtz preparing for potential NFL career

by Jared Panza

As the 2016 NFL Draft draws closer, JP Holtz, senior tight end at Pitt and 2012 Shaler Area graduate, is waiting to see if his will be one of the names called during the NFL draft weekend.

Ever since he was young, Holtz was a star athlete in both basketball and football. Both of which he was considered around the WPIAL as a top competitor, winning numerous awards.

A talented center for the basketball team, Holtz helped lead Shaler Area to a regular season record of 20-2 his senior year, also helped his team earn a WPIAL AAAA Section 3 title and a PIAA Class AAAA playoff berth.

“When I was younger I always thought I was a basketball player, I just never grew taller,” laughed the 6-foot-3-inch tight end. “I definitely think that playing basketball in high school helped. It just showed my athletic ability and how I move around on the court translates to on the field.”

But his thoughts of basketball quickly changed to football when he immediately achieved success as soon as he stepped foot on a high school football field.

In his freshman year, injuries to the starting and backup quarterback forced Holtz to be the team’s quarterback for a playoff game at Canon McMillan. The Titans prevailed 16-0.

As four-year varsity letterman, Holtz was already receiving Division 1 offers in his junior year, and verbally committed to Penn State the summer going into his senior year.

In his senior year, Holtz was one of the nation’s top tight end recruits, ranked at No. 10 by Scout Recruiting. His awards and accolades include Pennsylvania Football News All-Class AAAA, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review’s “Terrific 25”, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette’s “Fabulous 22”, All Northern Seven, and was one of the players selected to play in the Big 33 Football Classic.

Being one of the most highly decorated stars in WPIAL football, Holtz gained a lot of attention.

“I was fortunate to have a lot of offers coming out of high school. It made me never want to stop working to get to the point where I’m at today so I used that attention as motivation,” Holtz said.

After the Jerry Sandusky scandal, Holtz decided not to attend Penn State and looked for other options.

Holtz had numerous Division 1 offers from schools including Michigan State, Purdue, West Virginia, Syracuse, Virginia, and Pitt, where he decided to go and major in criminal justice.

“My family is here and I wanted them to be able to come to every game, so that was a big factor in it. But I always felt in my heart that Pitt was where I truly wanted to go,” Holtz said.

As soon as his Pitt career started, Holtz quickly was acclimated to playing Division 1 football. He started ten out of 13 games racking up 13 catches for 173 yards and three touchdowns. He also was named a Big East All-Academic Football team honoree.

His freshman season also contained one of his favorite career moments, a memorable game at Notre Dame. Pitt eventually lost 29-26 after three overtimes, but Holtz had three receptions including a touchdown.

His sophomore year he started all 13 games and had 23 receptions for 209 yards.

In his junior year, Holtz again started every game and caught the ball 21 times for 199 yards and four touchdowns, one of which was caught in the Armed Forces Bowl against Houston.

This past season, his senior year, Holtz was named as a team captain and had his best season yet, with 24 receptions for 350 yards, and adding four more receiving touchdowns to his career total. Holtz was also selected to play in the NFLPA Collegiate Bowl All-Star game.

“It was fun [playing in the Collegiate Bowl All-Star game], it was definitely a good experience. The



JP Holtz catches a pass against Akron this past season (Matt Freed, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette)

coaches were all NFL Hall of Fame coaches and there were a lot of ex-NFL players there so it was really cool getting to be around them,” Holtz said.

With a successful career at Pitt, Holtz can reflect on the memories he made while playing there.

“It was fun. It was always my dream playing at Heinz Field and I will always cherish that moment, running out of that tunnel onto the field. Now that I look back I think ‘wow I really miss it,’” Holtz said.

But as his career at Pitt comes to an end, Holtz prepares himself for a very possible and imminent new career in the NFL. Holtz is currently meeting with NFL teams to discuss being a possible draft pick or being picked up as a free agent.

“It’s kind of like getting recruited again out of high school. I’ve talked to a lot of teams. [After the all-star game] I met with a lot of teams out there and I met with a few here before pro day,” Holtz said.

At Pitt’s Pro Day, Holtz put up excellent numbers, running a 4.7 second 40 yd dash, and pushing out 20 reps on the bench press.

“I’m very satisfied with [my performance at pro day], I think it went very well, I hit the numbers I wanted to hit, and I think I impressed a lot of people,” Holtz said.

Many of these impressed scouts are hoping to see Holtz at a different position other than tight end on their team, as Holtz has been asked to make a possible switch to fullback by several teams.

“Some teams have mentioned it. Actually more teams have (than haven’t). But there are some that would like me at tight end, too,” Holtz said.

When asked about the difficulty of changing positions, Holtz didn’t seem too worried.

“It’s going to be hard at first, I guess. I’m excited, though. I’m just going to do whatever I have to do to make a team,” Holtz said.

As for playing in different positions, Holtz is used to it. He played numerous positions in his high school career including running back, linebacker, quarterback, and of course, tight end.

With many teams already contacting him, Holtz is

preparing for his journey into a professional career.

“All these agents come at you, recruiting you. I picked an agent and signed with him after the season. After the all-star game I went straight to Florida and started training there. Now I’m back here training and I’m just going to stay here in Pittsburgh just working out. It’s pretty nice, I really don’t have many responsibilities except working out,” Holtz said.

But when asked about the process of meeting with NFL teams, Holtz explains that it’s different than what most people would expect.

“It’s more of trying to figure out what type of person you are, asking questions about your family and all that stuff. I have seen more interest in some of the guys than others; some [NFL teams] make comments like ‘we really like you’, but it’s tough to figure stuff out from guys like that. They like to keep things ‘hush hush’, but definitely it’s a great experience learning about it,” Holtz said. “I have fun with it. I get excited if I get invited out to go on a visit. I have a few things lined up right now.”

Some of the teams contacting Holtz about a potential NFL career include the Bears, Bengals, Browns, Chargers, and the Steelers.

With the draft quickly approaching and with the possibility of his name being called, Holtz explains how he’s not too worried whether or not he’s drafted or picked up as a free agent.

“Being drafted would be cool and a thing I’d always remember, but I’m willing to go wherever a team takes a shot at me, if I have to go free agency I’ll do that. It’s not going to change my mind for what I’m going to work for,” Holtz said.

In fact, on draft day, Holtz is planning to take it easy and relax with his family.

“I’ll be chilling,” laughs Holtz. “I’ll probably watch it every day, nothing crazy, just relax and watch it with my family.”

The 2016 NFL Draft runs April 28-30, where there is a possibility to hear the name of one of Shaler Area’s finest football players called to join an NFL team.