

# The Recorder

DECEMBER 7, 2023

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## A Different Type of Gift: The Gift of Life

BY HOLLIE DAVID  
Staff Writer

The Student Nurses Association of Central Connecticut State University partnered with the Maternal Health Advocacy Club to host a Gift for Life donor recruitment drive on Nov. 28 in CCSU's Student Center.

Gift of Life is an organization that helps patients cure blood cancer. For some, chemotherapy and radiation are not enough and a bone marrow transplant may be needed to save the patient's life.

The volunteers helped swab the inside of students' cheeks to have them join the National Bone Marrow registry. The process takes around



Photo: Jordan Pruitt

five minutes.

"It may take a few minutes of your day, but you could save a life," Molly Marteka, student nurse and SNA president

said.

The swabs are then sent to a laboratory and tested to determine the donor's human leukocyte antigen profile

and the immune system factors to help match the donors with the recipients.

Then, the potential matches information is entered into a worldwide

registry. When they find a person in need who matches the donor, then they are contacted.

Miriam Lopez-Cruz, SNA Vice President and Student Government Association Senator said she hopes this event raises awareness about how people can help save someone with bone cancer's life.

"Many people are unaware that they can donate their bone marrow," Lopez-Cruz said. "Many people have bone cancer in the U.S. and need marrow. There are many people who can help".

Go to <https://www.giftoflife.org/to> learn more about Gift of Life and the National Bone Marrow registry.

## CCSU Student Arrested After Fight in Hilltop Cafe

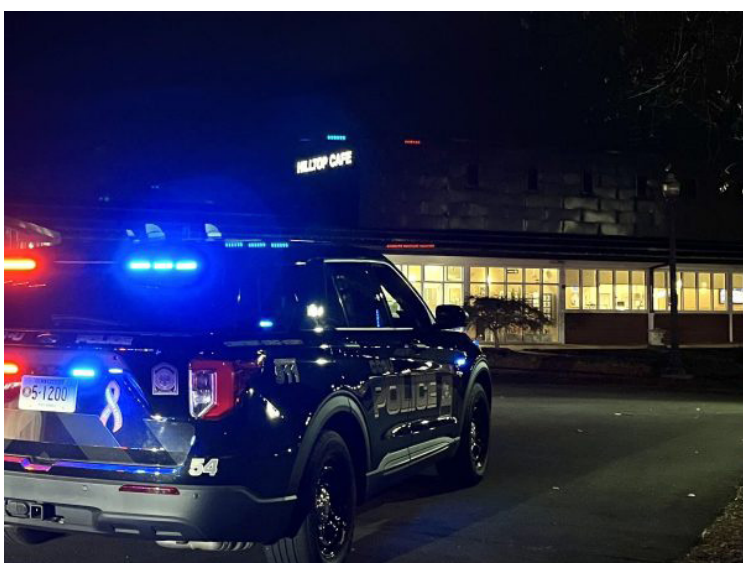


Photo: Savanna Yelling

BY SAVANNA YELLING  
Editor-in-Chief

A Central Connecticut State University student was arrested on two charges following a fight

at Hilltop Cafe. Ziane Ormsby was charged with third-degree assault and breach of peace. Orms-

by has been released on a \$5,000 non-surety bond and is scheduled to appear at New Britain Superior Court on Dec. 15.

Officers were dispatched and responded to Hilltop Café on Nov. 29 after a report of an active fight where one party was pepper-sprayed.

All parties were interviewed, and officers learned the fight was part of an ongoing feud between parties, according to the police report.

Of the other students involved in the altercation, one was a victim and one was a witness, neither of whom will face charges.

Ormsby declined to comment.

## Racist and Anti-Semitic graffiti found in CCSU Residence Hall

BY HOLLIE DAVID  
Staff Writer

The N-word and a swastika were found on a bathroom stall door in Seth North Residence Hall on Nov. 13th.

According to a letter sent by President Toro the vandalism was since removed by the university.

This act of vandalism is currently being investigated by the Central Connecticut State University police department.

"In addition to the criminal investigation, any member of the campus community found to be responsible will

be subject to disciplinary procedures for violation of Central policies and regulations," Jodi Latina associate Vice President of Communications and Media stated. "Central has zero tolerance for all forms of hate crimes," Toro wrote in an email sent to the CCSU community. "These messages are offensive and impact all members of our community."

Susan Koski, LP.D. a professor for the Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice said while violent crimes are down, hate crimes and property crimes are on the rise.

Continued on page 3

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# Barbenheimer Symposium: Gender, Tragedy, and Identity

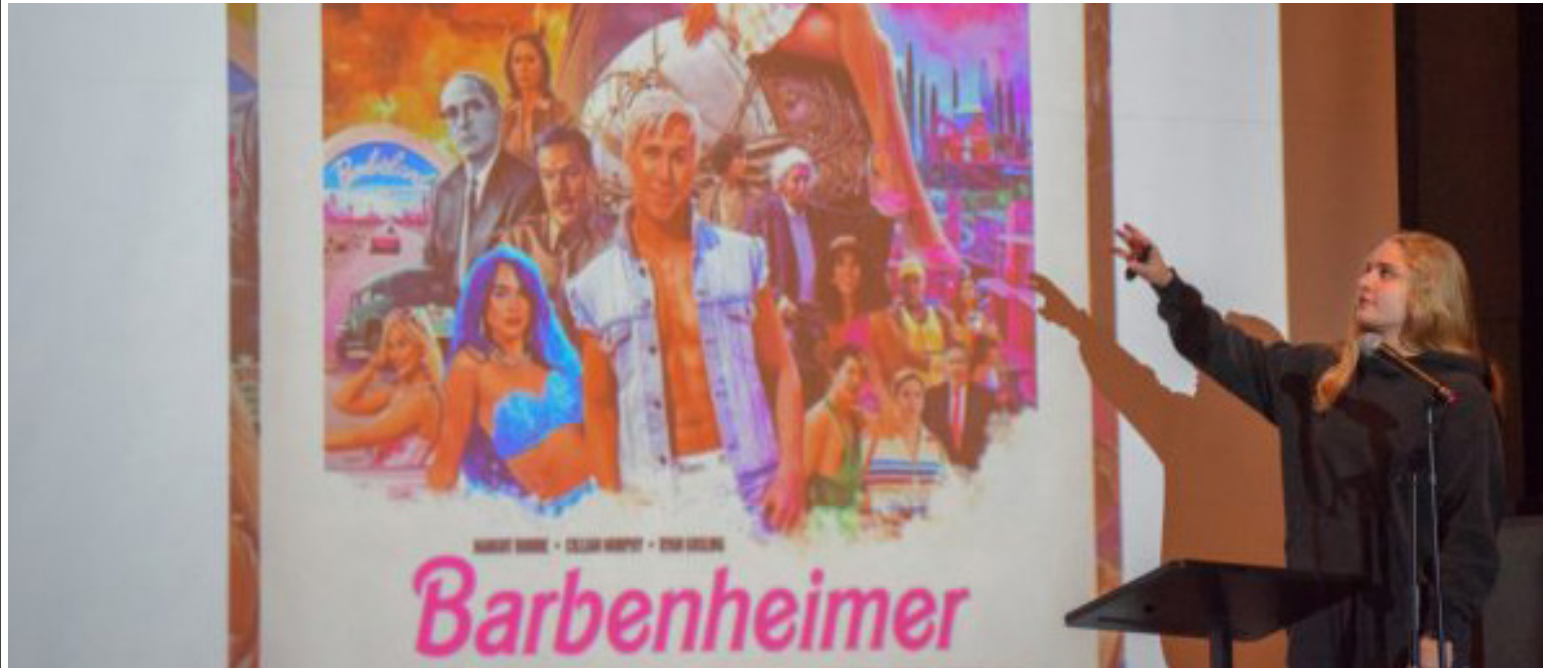


Photo: Madison Musco

**BY MADISON MUSCO**  
Staff Writer

The Barbenheimer Symposium at Central Connecticut State University dissected the pop culture phenomenon that swept social media this summer.

The event was organized by the Department of Communication and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

About 50 people attended the event that stretched over five hours on Nov. 17. Most of the presentations were focused on "Barbie," because students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Communications classes studied the film throughout the semester.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Shizuko Tomoda, a second-generation survivor of the bombing of Hiroshima spoke on the symbolism of the iconic mushroom cloud during her lecture.

"I don't see much progress on how two nations, or the world, interpret what happened in 1945," she said.

Tomoda said the United States dropped two more bombs after the initial test in August 1945, then proceeded to call them "tests." The two subsequent bombs were those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"I don't call this a test," Tomoda said. "It's a human experiment."

During a student presentation on "social media riffs," which highlighted different graphics combining "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer," Tomoda asked a student why she would say that a particular image was cool.

The image showed multiple characters from each movie, with the easily recognizable mash-up of "Barbie's" bright pink and teal, combined with the dark and devastating imagery of "Oppenheimer." Barbie, played by Margot Robbie, was happily sitting atop a mushroom cloud with chaos all around her.

"I see a mushroom cloud," Tomoda said. "I see destruction."

The stark contrast between "Barbie" versus "Oppenheimer" grabbed global attention this summer with both films premiering six days before the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

The juxtaposition of Barbenheimer made for striking visuals and viral memes, but the ideas that each film explores follow similar lines when explored through a sociological lens.

Dr. Carolyn Jacobs, a communication professor, expressed that both films show opposing sides of the male identity. While "Oppenheimer" presents a traditional take on masculinity, "Barbie" emphasizes the more emotional and compassionate side of men.

Dr. Karen Ritzenhoff, a professor of communication, organized the event as a way for students within the department to get on stage and share their opinions and projects they've been working on throughout the semester.

Through studying "Barbie," she said that students found even a lighthearted film can hold a deeper meaning.

"Students are reluctant to talk about real-life politics," Ritzenhoff said. "But through pop culture, it is easier."

While Tomoda's was the only presentation solely focused on the theme of "Oppenheimer," students and faculty offered unique perspectives on different points of "Barbie."

Samuel Baker, a student, presented the evolution of Ken, played by Ryan Gosling, throughout the movie.

After the movie's debut, celebrities like Ben Shapiro, the host of The Ben Shapiro Show and Andrew Tate, an influencer and former kickboxer, said the film was "anti-man."

Baker argued that Gosling's character develops into his own person through his adventure with Barbie and realizes that he's more than just Barbie's boyfriend.

Dr. Anna Young, a communication professor, discussed the significance of Weird Barbie, played

by Kate McKinnon, and the important role she plays in the film.

"Society tells you that you have to blend in and be with the crowd," Young said. "If you are a little bit different then you don't fit, which is not true."

Weird Barbie, characterized by her scribbled-on face, chopped hair, and perpetual splits, acts as a guide to Barbie in the film. She knows how to fix Barbie's flat feet, get to the real world, and deprogram the brainwashed Barbies after the Kens take over Barbieland.

"Yes, she is weird, and she recognizes that. But on top of that, she embraces it," Young said. "Recognize that those things that make you different actually make you special; they make you stronger."

Ritzenhoff said that faculty from both departments are currently working on co-authoring a book on the Barbenheimer phenomenon.

"There is no academic literature written about Barbenheimer yet," Ritzenhoff said. "So, students really had to analyze it themselves."

Tomoda is currently working on a documentary entitled "Memory of Hiroshima Through Imagination." She has focused much of her time on peace activism since retiring from CCSU after teaching for 32 years.

## Racist and Anti-Semitic graffiti found in CCSU Residence Hall

Continued from front page

“Many times hate crimes and property crimes overlap,” Koski said. “The most common type of hate crime is vandalism.”

Across the country there has been a rise in anti-Semitic incidents on college campuses, Kathleen Bantley, a professor of criminology and criminal justice who studies hate crimes, said this is since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.

“Anytime you have a terrorist event you will always see a rise in hate crimes,” Bantley said. “When there is unrest in the world more people lash out and commit hate crimes because they feel emboldened.”

College campuses are at a high risk for hate crimes, Koski said.

“College campus-

es are densely packed and diverse,” she said. “College is the first time some students may see people from different races, genders, sexualities and religion especially if you grew up in somewhere rural and primarily white.”

Bantley said the first step in helping reduce the incidences of hate crimes is reporting them.

“Most hate crimes are not reported so it was important that the student who saw the hate crime reported it right away,” Bantley said. “With any type of crime, it’s important to act swiftly.”

When a hate crime occurs it is not only sending a message to the victim but also members of the community. It is important during this time to show support to members of the affected group,

Bantley said.

“Reaching out to members of the affected group and showing your support to them. Be it your friends, family, classmates, dormmates. Is a good first step,” Bantley said. “Vandalism is extremely visible so the more visible support you can give is huge. This level of support is huge and shows that we don’t accept this behavior. Unfortunately, these things will continue to occur but the more we can all be there for each other and unite the better.”

It is also important to have an open dialogue when a hate crime occurs. It helps allow people to examine their past behaviors and biases. Open dialogue fights ignorance and promotes tolerance, Koski said.

## Career Development Office Launches Central Career Closet



Photo: Madison Maske

BY SAVANNA YELLING  
Editor-in-Chief

Central’s Career Development Office has launched the “Central Career Closet” in Carrol Hall, offering free second-hand businesswear to students.

The career closet collected donations for about a year before its opening. CDO accepts

gently used professional clothing and accessories that become available to students to keep for work, internships, or interviews.

The Central Career Closet was previewed at career fairs and the First Gen Fair on campus where students could try on blazers for professional headshots and even

keep them if it was the right fit.

Madison Maske, CDO social media and communications specialist and Career Closet Coordinator said it is imperative to dress for success in the workplace.

“Proper business attire is essential for conveying professionalism, fostering positive first impressions, and boosting self-confidence,” Maske said. “It contributes to a cohesive workplace atmosphere. Especially in client-facing roles, where a polished appearance builds trust and credibility.”

The Career Closet is available to all students via appointment. Hour-long appointments can be made on the CDO web page. Students can try on clothing and are given a reusable shopping bag to take home as many clothes as they can fit in it.

Donations are accepted on Fridays at the Career Development Office in DiLoreto 101 between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. The closet accepts clean and gently used blazers, shirts, blouses, sweaters, pants, skirts, dress shoes, and jewelry appropriate for an interview.

## SGA Briefs

The Student Government Association meets every Wednesday at 3:05 p.m. in Bellin A and B of the Student Center.

The meetings are open to all of the Central Connecticut State University community. These briefs are from the SGA’s Senate meeting on Nov. 30.

### Lily Mercado spoke on behalf of the Intersectional Justice Coalition.

- Stated they are disappointed in President Toro and the Central administration as they have created a space where students feel silenced and underrepresented.
- Asked Toro to address some of the questions and concerns that students have.

### President Zulma Toro said she enjoys coming to speak to SGA at least once a semester.

- Reminded students that her office has an open-door policy.
- Stated that her goal is to create a welcoming and safe environment for students no matter race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or political views.

### Zoe Pless spoke on behalf of the Black Student Union.

- She stated that the administration often does not acknowledge when something happens or requests behind-closed-door meetings.
- She stated that recently the black community was attacked on campus with the hate crime that took place in the dorm. She stated that BSU had to put out their own statement and offer support to their community because there was nothing from the school.
- She stated that this is a call for action, and she is looking to transform the culture of the school.

### The following items passed in a consent agenda:

- Motion to allocate \$3,800 to the Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Club.
- Motion to allocate \$1,775.32 to the Math Club.
- Motion to allocate \$140 to the Spill the Tea event.

## “The 39 Steps” Auditions Build Hype For the Show

BY JAYDEN KLAUS  
Lifestyle Editor

The auditions for Central Connecticut State University’s production of the comedy play, “The 39 Steps,” were held on November 20th in Maloney Hall.

The play is a parody of the 1915 adventure novel by John Buchan and 1935 Alfred Hitchcock spy thriller movie adaptation by the same name. The gimmick of the play is that it only has four actors total, with most of the actors playing multiple different characters at a given time. The result is that the serious nature of the plot is made humorous.

Even though there were no sit-ins on the auditions allowed, the people auditioning for the show had plenty to say about how they thought their auditions went.

Cedric Westcott said that he has auditioned for the part of one of the clowns, one of the two roles that fulfills the many characters. Westcott said that he thinks he did well in his audition and is excited to perform in the show if he gets cast.

“I think that the play looks fun,” Westcott said. “Playing a lot of characters is fun, so it seems like a great show to do.”

Mike Zimmerman said that he has auditioned

for all the parts in order to increase his chances of being cast in some role. He said that he did decent at his audition but has doubts.

“I think I did okay, though I could have done better,” Zimmerman said. “The nerves really set in and affect how well you do.”

Krizzia Cruz said that she thinks that her audition went pretty well for her. Cruz said that she is alright with any part that she receives, as long as she is in the production in some way.

“I’m fine with any part that they think I would be good in,” Cruz said. “I’m very open to anything, even if it’s

small.”

Matt Durland said that he also had auditioned for any part in the show and will let the production place him in any spot that works. Durland said that his audition went well for him overall.

“I did the best I could in the moment and let things be,” Durland said. “I tried not to think about it too much.”

Stage manager Allie Nadeau said that this is her first time as stage manager for a production at CCSU after being assistant stage manager for two previous productions. Nadeau said that she is excited to be getting the experience as the person managing this production

and has high hopes for the people auditioning.

“I know almost everyone who’s auditioning and I think they’re great,” Nadeau said. “They all have very good chances.”

The people who have auditioned for “The 39 Steps” have shown their passion and talent for acting and are now currently waiting for the cast list to be announced. Regardless of who gets a role, this upcoming show is sure to be a great performance that should not be missed.

“The 39 Steps” will be showing in Maloney Hall Blackbox Theatre from March 6-9, 2024.

## What’s Your Astrology Big Three?



Photo: Youtube

BY DEANNA PRESCOTT  
Staff Writer

Do you know your big three? If not, you are out of the loop. Astrology is climbing back to popularity, especially among Gen Z, demanding a new culture across social media. It is nearly impossible to scroll through Instagram or TikTok without seeing some type of astrological forecast or meme; what noodle shape are you based on your star sign? Or which signs are you

romantically compatible with?

In November 2020, Snapchat played on celestial trends by including a profile feature that tells the user their big three, which are also known as the sun, moon and rising signs. This trinity is the core of someone’s zodiac make up with the time, place and date of birth needed to retrieve that information.

According to Mindbody, the sun rep-

resents identity, the moon represents the soul and the rising represents the individual’s social personality—but where is this information found and how can individuals use it to their advantage?

A few astrology apps are circulating the consumer market, such as Co-star, which seemed to have a boost in popularity alongside the new Snapchat feature in 2020. Co-star casts daily horoscopes and provides an overview of the individ-

ual’s birth chart among other features and is currently ranked #41 under “Lifestyle” in the Apple store. Other popular apps such as The Pattern and Nebula are available for curious astrology beginners.

In tumultuous times, humans tend to seek guidance in higher divinities, which could explain why Gen Zs are so drawn in.

“For a generation struggling to make sense of a politically and socially polarized world, astrology offers Zers a natural route for navigating uncertain times,” Stephanie H. said in an article from Gen Z Insights. “It also affords a system to help better understand themselves, others and in turn, the world.”

It is easy for a young and impressionable generation to cling to the stars in uncertain times because they are at the tip of their fingers with today’s technology. Generalized star-sign

horoscopes offer direction or a piece of advice for someone to take through their day. Something as simple as “you will have an insightful interaction with someone today,” is vague enough to reach all twelve-star signs.

The nitty-gritty, more accurate horoscope drawings lay in the birth chart. There are tons of in-depth online chart generators, such as astro.com or cafeastrology.com. Natal charts are uniquely catered to the individual because they involve not only the big three but every other planetary placement as well. These websites are great places for someone who is just acquainting themselves with the stars. Detailed analyses for each planetary placement are available on these sites.

If you have made it this far, hopefully you are on the way to searching up your big three. Why not add a little magic to the mundane?

DECEMBER 7, 2023

## LIFESTYLE

THE RECORDER

# The Maybe Man is the Latest Pinnacle of AJR

BY JAYDEN KLAUS  
Lifestyle Editor

The reveal of indie pop band AJR's newest album, *The Maybe Man*, definitely caught me by surprise when a short announcement video dropped on the Met brothers' YouTube channel on August 28. I had not been expecting anything from them after the passing of their father a month before. I had heard that they had cancelled their tour to mourn, so I figured that it might be a while before any new material was released.

But I was wrong and glad to be. AJR is one of my favorite bands right now and I was happy to see that they would be releasing new music. It obviously can't be easy for them now, but the new album seems to be a way for Adam, Jack, and Ryan to find purpose through their grief and work through it, especially with the tearjerking single, "God Is Really Real," which released shortly before the announcement of their father's passing.

A few weeks before the album was scheduled to drop on November 3, AJR announced on their Instagram that the release of *The Maybe Man* would be pushed back by a week to drop on Nov. 10 instead. This was a bit disappointing to find out the day of Nov. 3 but what was interesting was that this was possibly a reference to a previous song, "Next Up Forever," which has a



Photo: Youtube

lyric describing anxiety over releasing an album and wanting to drop it a week later than it is supposed to. Despite the delay, I was still excited to see what the new album would entail.

The album begins with the song, "Maybe Man," which had been teased in the announcement video from a few months ago, so it was really cool to hear the full version of it. The song is soft and melancholic, exploring the feeling of wanting to be something else other than yourself but there being drawbacks that may leave you worse off than before. It is such a powerful song to open with and the theme of self and identity is explored throughout the album.

One of the things that this album does so well, just like other AJR music, is their use of open and honest lyrics on emotions. Their lyrics are to the point on how it feels to live in

today's world and deal with the various kinds of struggles that come from it. It makes their music very engaging to listen to and relatable as AJR writes about what we all go through, but may not necessarily express readily.

Several of the songs have a rather eccentric feel to them like "The Dumb Song," "Hole in the Bottom of My Brain," and "I Won't" but their soft, yet upbeat nature keeps them feeling cohesive with the rest of the album's overall tone of struggling with who you are and want to be.

The song "Inertia" was an interesting electronic number with hip-hop-like elements in the melody. It describes the feeling of going along with the flow of things but more out a sense of apathy and lack of motivation. It really speaks to the idea of having aspirations but not the energy to break the flow of your life

to make that change, which fits with the concept of inertia and ennui.

One of the tracks, "Turning Out Pt. iii" connects back to two previous songs by AJR, "Turning Out" on *The Click* and "Turning Out Pt. ii" on *Neothater* respectively. Just like its predecessors, the song deals with love, but a different aspect of it. It goes into the feeling of wanting a relationship with someone but being nervous about it the entire time and everything that does come or may come with the relationship. It is an intriguing thing to see tackled in a song, as most songs about romance describe the great parts or outright toxic parts of a relationship but not the quieter anxieties.

"The DJ Is Crying For Help" might have been one of the most impactful for me in how concerns about job prospects are

brought up in the lyrics. The violins and piano are very engaging in this song and definitely make the song stand out, even as it describes a pervasive worry of mine.

The final song, "2085," talks about getting older and encourages you to get out and do things instead of fretting over who you are because you only have so much time. It brings back part of "Maybe Man" to conclude that you only have yourself and your one life so instead of stressing over who you might be, you have to be yourself and make the most of things. There is a country-like sound that is almost reminiscent of Tiny Tim's "Tip Toe Thru' The Tulips With Me" that adds a beautiful levity to the song and underscores the emotion in it.

Listening to this album was very cathartic for me. AJR's music has gotten more relatable to me over these past years as I go through the years and several hardships. Listening to *The Maybe Man* is like having a warm blanket wrapped around you in how it acknowledges feelings of depression and anxiety. It helps me to feel that I am not alone in feeling these ways and brings me immense comfort to see it expressed by one of my favorite bands.

AJR announced on Nov. 8 that they will be going on their first arena tour for *The Maybe Man* in April 2024.

## Soaring Higher With Chris Stapleton

BY DASCHALL HAYES  
Staff Writer

Country megastar Chris Stapleton has been on a roll for decades as he has penned songs for massive country musicians like Lee Ann Womack and Darius Rucker while evolving as a solo artist and constructing his fanbase. It is now the third anniversary of his fourth studio album, *Starting Over*. Stapleton is celebrating with his fans by dropping his fifth studio album, *Higher*. The Nashville native and his wife, Morgane, on backing vocals, share natural and vigorous talent with the world. Stapleton has engraved a slot in the music industry as a bearer of authentic, heartfelt storytelling. You are taking a voyage of emotional turmoil through themes of love, heartbreak, and alcoholism.

“White Horse” is the lead single off the album, which is more of a fierce rock-oriented track reminiscent of early ZZ Top. Stapleton references his dream of being a cowboy who rides alongside his special somebody on a majestic white horse, but he is too afraid of commitment to go through with the ideals of being together. He does hope that she waits for him to boss up.

Saying that romantic connections represent a lot about Stapleton would be an understatement. The theme of romance is dominant in this album,



Photo: Andy Baron

which brings out his best arrangements. From song three, “Trust,” to titular song nine, “Higher,” there are all love songs delivered back-to-back. My favorite of this bunch is “The Fire.” Stapleton describes a love interest not fully noticing the effort or the “fire inside of him” that could make the relationship go beyond its current status. A contagious guitar pattern plays throughout the song that’s stuck in my head hours after listening.

I also thoroughly appreciate “Think I’m In Love With You” for its straightforward, yet memorable melody and subject matter that brings me back to Teddy Pendergrass or The O’Jays. The soulful guitars and low drums expand the lyrical value of “It Takes A Woman,” a song about Stapleton’s lover bringing out the best in him and providing well-deserved comfort. I could listen

to this man sing about the woman in his life for hours.

We get to hear Stapleton assemble songs about heartbreak and his coping methods. Stapleton tackles the touchy subject of alcoholism just as frequently as he does his positive romantic relationships, his drink of choice being whiskey. Songs like “What Am I Gonna Do?”, written alongside Miranda Lambert, and “The Bottom” give you a solid idea of how the effects of drinking liquor while heartbroken can tarnish a man’s mind and body.

“The Day I Die” is easily the most heart-breaking song on the project, documenting how Stapleton ending his relationship would be the end of his life. The pain in his voice through the barreling screams is something special you do not get from many artists nowadays. “Trust” is another

heart-wrenching song about how true love overshadows its darkest moments. Stapleton provides a clear view of some of the struggles similar to a bad relationship with lyrics like “Though we jump through hoops and dance on wires/Walk on broken glass and play with fire.”

I think it is interesting how this album clocks in at 55 minutes, but it feels like it is half of that time. The large portion of the album being back-to-back love songs makes everything feel compact, limiting that creative balance. I wish Stapleton separated them so the album could have that difference throughout, or at least put all the love songs at the front and the sad ones near the bottom. I have no complaints about the tracks, but I hoped he would switch up the topic or take more stylistic risks. It is obvious he is sticking to

what he is used to since this album sounds like everything else since going solo. The song “Crosswind” is astonishing but has no business on an album about drinking through pain and being madly in love.

In wrapping up the exploration of *Higher*, it becomes evident that Stapleton remains a maestro of emotional storytelling, skillfully weaving narratives traversing love, heartbreak, and coping with life’s challenges. With a career steeped in songwriting for country luminaries and a steadfast commitment to authenticity, Stapleton’s artistry on *Higher* continues to resonate with listeners. The album’s thematic concentration on love, accentuated by standout tracks like “The Fire,” showcases Stapleton at his lyrical best, the poignant exploration of heartbreak and the perils of alcoholism in songs like “What Am I Gonna Do?” adds depth to the emotional spectrum.

However, as the album leans heavily on back-to-back love songs, a desire for a more varied thematic balance arises. The consistent stylistic tone, while a trademark of Stapleton’s solo career, may leave some listeners yearning for more experimentation. Despite this, *Higher* is a testament to Stapleton’s enduring prowess as a storyteller and musician, offering a compelling chapter in his ongoing musical legacy.

DECEMBER 7, 2023

## LIFESTYLE

THE RECORDER

## Scary Hours 3 Proves How Scary Drake Can Be With A Mic

BY JACK PIXTON  
Staff Writer

Coming off the heels of his 11th studio album, *For All the Dogs*, rapper Drake returns with his third installment of his Scary Hours series.

The six-song extended play contains a feature from rapper J. Cole, with production from industry giants like Boi-1da and the Alchemist.

The EP contains tracks that sound like the Drake fans fell in love with in the early 2010s. Throughout the project, Drake is trying to prove a point. He almost wants to regain the throne; being the best rapper of this generation.

This six-song run is the best sounding run from Drake in recent memory. If this was on *For All the Dogs*, along with the few tracks that stuck out from that record, we would be looking at one of the best Drake records ever.

Within the first line of the project on the track "Red Button,"



Photo: OVO/Republic Records

Drake raps, "The most decorated, competition decimated." Listening to that opening line along with the vocal sample in the production, it was without a doubt, that this was going to be a conscious session from Drake.

Drake throughout the record takes jabs at some of his most famous

opponents, such as media personality Joe Budden, and fellow rapper Ye. Drake and Yeezy seemed to make addends when they did a joint concert, back in 2021. However, it seems like there are still a few rifts in the relationship.

"Every time that Yeezy called a truce, he had my head inflated.

Thinking 'we gon' finally peace it up and get to levitating," Drake said "Red Button."

One of the best moments is the track, "The Shoe Fits." This six-minute rapping performance is one of his best. There are very few songs nowadays at that length that have replay value. This, however,

gets better and better with every listen. You pick up on a different line each time you hit play. It is one of his best tracks in a long time.

The best track through is the one with J. Cole; "Evil Ways." This track is proof that Cole and Drake are two of the best MCs in rap. The performance of both is braggadocious and it feels like they are trying to out-rap the other person. The track is full of punchlines and bars. This is the best lyrical track of the year by a mile.

This year in rap has been a slow one with little quality, even though we have had albums by giants such as Travis Scott, Gunna, and Young Thug. *Scary Hours 3* is one of the best records of the year. It is the best six song run this year and one of the best sounded runs this year.

Drake has once again proved, when in the right mindset he can hold his own with the greatest in the genre. *Scary Hours 3* adds to his already legendary catalog and legendary lyrical cuts.

## OPINION: Rap Music Isn't For Me

BY JAYDEN KLAUS  
Lifestyle Editor

Listening to music is one of my favorite pastimes. Whether it is to occupy my mind while I am driving or to set the mood as I read, listening to some tunes brings me comfort and joy. Even though there are some genres I prefer over others, my taste in music is rather broad and I will listen to anything. Despite this, there is an exception. I do not like rap music overall and will often refuse to listen to it.

The majority of rap songs I hear on the radio or just hear in general feel dull and annoying to listen to. When I listen to music, I prefer to hear someone belting their

lungs out or crooning in a microphone, rather than just a voice blandly speaking in time with the music. The second that certain rap songs come on the radio as I drive, I switch to a new station because I would much rather listen to some commercials promoting things that I do not care about than a terrible rap song.

The style of singing the rap employs is also a major turn off for me. It is difficult for the use of just speaking to the beat to do anything for me that I cannot find in songs with more traditional singing. I know that people enjoy the quick pace and lyrical rhythm of speech in rap music but it just makes me cringe. I find the style

of recitative singing used in musicals to be a more effective way of performing that type of singing and conveying what the song it about, along with being more engaging to listen to.

I get why rap is so popular these days with many people. It employs a certain creativity with how emphasis is placed on words that is achieved in a way that you do not typically see in more traditional music. Freestyle can be especially effective in poetry and enjoyable to listen to. Though when it comes to rap, I feel that the inclusion of the music can bog down the lyrics. It potentially is because the music itself is bad, and thus taints the lyrics by association, or the music is incongruous with the lyrics and the lyrics' rhythm is changed to their detriment in order to fit the instrumentals.

I also have a strong distaste for the

subjects of rap music. Subjects can vary widely, just like in any genre of music, but from my experience, the majority of popular rap music is about women, sex, drugs, violence, or some combination thereof. Sure, these are present in other genres, but the majority of rap that I hear others listen to or see topping the chart are about these subjects. I do not care to hear about songs that describe these topics in such detail that I often see in rap songs. Additionally the gratuitous swearing that is common in rap music comes across as being in poor taste and bad songwriting. As a result, I am turned off from rap music if it is just going to have lyrics that I do not want to hear in my music.

That is not to say that I do not like the genre. The rap music I do like consists mostly of songs from the musi-

cal Hamilton, with few scattered ones from other artists. And there are several songs from other music genres that employ some rap, that I find to be very effective. It is not the most robust list of music when you compare it to how much pop, rock, and alternative take up my playlists, but there are some diamonds in the rough that I can appreciate. It is just difficult to wade through a collection of perceived trash to find one's treasure.

I do respect rap music for what it is and what people get out of it. It is a genre that grew out of the Black community and is seen by many as an expression of it and its history. It is just not for me though, in most circumstances. I will pick a pop song nine times out of ten over a rap one and be content with the fact that I am listening to something that is not terrible rap music.

# The Hunger Games Return With Incredible New Movie



Photo: Youtube

BY JAYDEN KLAUS  
Lifestyle Editor

The *Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* by Suzanna Collins came out on May 19, 2020 and was a huge shock to me when I saw it in my local library. For a couple years, I had heard that Collins had a new book in the works that would be a prequel of sorts set in the world of *The Hunger Games* with the working title simply being *Untitled Panem Novel*. I was curious as to what it would entail, but did not think about the book too much until it came out and got my hands on it.

I devoured the book once it came out. It provided a fascinating glimpse into the past of this popular series and made me rethink so many things about several key characters. Then when I learned about the movie adaptation, I became even more excited. The *Hunger Games* movies have received flack in the past for various reasons but I have always enjoyed them as fitting adaptations and could not wait to see what would in store for *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*.

The movie follows

the story of Coriolanus Snow, the president of Panem and the main antagonist of *The Hunger Games*, in his youth and in the early history of the titular *Hunger Games*. Snow, along with several of his classmates, have been selected to act as mentors for the incoming tributes of the 10th *Hunger Games*.

Snow gets to mentor the District 12 tribute, Lucy Gray Baird, and he is determined to win so that he can get the prize money to save his family's legacy and wellbeing. Lucy Gray does win, but as a result of Snow cheating, and he is sent to be a Peacemaker in District 12. While there, Snow and Lucy Gray grow closer, but Snow's friend Sejanus participates in treasonous acts with rebels and Snow exposes him, leading to Sejanus' death.

Snow and Lucy Gray decided to run away together to escape the consequences of what happened with the rebel plot and their ties to it. As they are leaving, Snow realizes that he cannot trust Lucy Gray with his secrets and she ends up betraying him, fleeing into the woods and never to be seen again. Snow returns to the Capitol where he

accepts a mentorship under Head Gamemaker Dr. Volumnia Gaul.

My favorite performance had to be Viola Davis as Gaul. Davis plays Gaul with this eerie, unhinged, yet calm energy that I found to be incredibly engaging. Gaul is easily one of the most despicable people in the entire *Hunger Games* franchise but I cannot help but enjoy seeing her on screen being performed by Davis.

The rest of the cast was also quite good. Tom Blyth as Snow did very well at portraying his character. Through his performance, you can see the man we know from the previous movies begin to take form. A line spoken by adult Snow's actor Don Sutherland in *Mockingjay: Part 2* placed at the end of this movie really sells it. Rachel Zegler did great as Lucy Gray in all of her scenes. Her singing throughout the film was top notch and a treat to listen to. Additionally, Peter Dinklage as Casca Highbottom was quite fun. Highbottom is a fascinating character and I could think of anyone better to play him than Dinklage.

The set and costume design were

remarkable. It feels so distinct but has the same dark feel as the rest of the franchise. The way the technology is designed to make it feel older that what we see in the present day of *The Hunger Games* but still beyond what we have currently in the real world, shows just how much the Games have changed and sophisticated.

One of the main things that stood out to me about the movie was how much the plot was condensed. The original book is over 500 pages and including every last detail would not translate well to film. It was likely for the best, as to not make the movie last longer than it had to or split it into two movies like *Mockingjay* was.

The tightening of the pace helped to get through the necessary plot points in a timely manner. However, it resulted in the loss of some character development. The entire movie feels as if it takes place over only a few weeks while the book, it is much longer. The back-to-back events have little room to breathe in between each other and there is not much time where we get to see how Snow and other characters

change as a result of them other than in the moment.

Lucy Gray's betrayal moment especially feels a bit out of the blue as a result of this. Her sudden ditching of Snow seems out of character as her actions in the Games are reduced. In the book, we get to see Snow's realization of her potential danger and cunning as a victor but that does not come across as strongly in the movie.

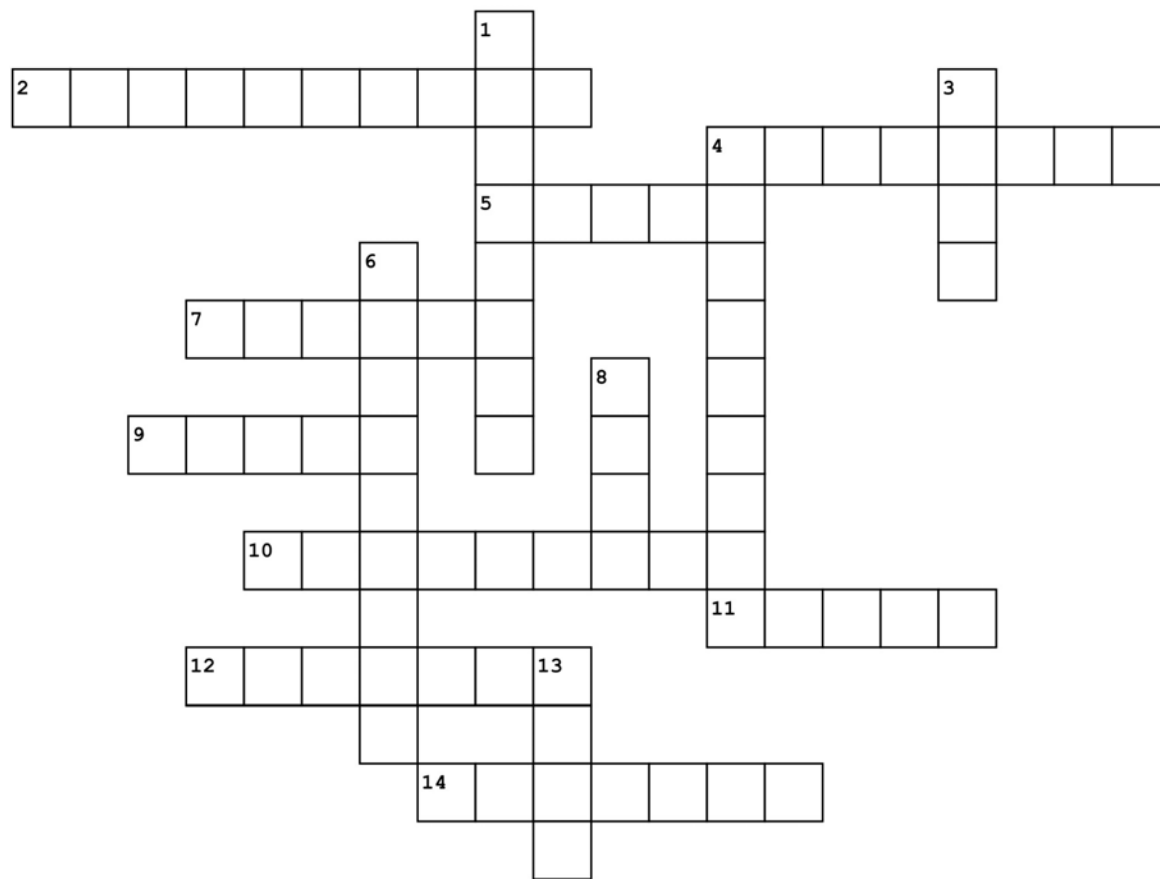
Several other character details are also left out because of moments being cut or shortened. As a result, it does not quite capture the subtler impacts of the book. But that does not diminish the overall good of the movie and how it adapted the book. The average viewer will likely be fine with missing details not in the movie. It is only me as a fan of the book who would get annoyed by this sort of decision.

Overall, *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* was a rather enjoyable movie. This is an incredibly compelling series and I am glad that it was able to get another film adaptation. I would be interested to see if another movie was to get made on a different *Hunger Games* and how it would turn out.



## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Created By David Cocchiola

**Across**

2. CCSU's "google classroom"
4. Hearty thanksgiving side dish
5. 7 across manufacturer
7. Android Alternative
9. What weather dark clouds may predict
10. Super popular sandbox game
11. Helicopter's special ability
12. Name for bubbly water
14. Company who makes TVs, fridges and excavators

**Down**

1. CCSU pool Hall
3. Campus Radio station
4. All freshman dorm building
6. NBC sitcom about a college
8. Swedish furniture store
13. Capital of Italy



: @centralrecorder

# OPINION: What Happened to the Patriots?

BY JASON HARTMAN  
Staff Writer

It's no secret that after nearly two decades of being arguably one of the most dominant dynasties in the history of professional sports, the New England Patriots have spent the past four years thumbing their way back to relevance since the departure of their legendary quarterback, Tom Brady.

In my lifetime, the New England Patriots have given me four Super Bowl championships, seven Super Bowl appearances, and countless memories that come with nearly twenty years of sustained success. At the forefront was Bill Belichick, an eight-time Super Bowl champion, winning six as the head coach of the Patriots and two as an assistant for Bill Parcells with the New York Giants.

Throughout his tenure with the Patriots, Belichick has made franchise-altering moves that defined his legacy as one of the greatest coaches in all sports. The controversial decision to play a second-year backup, Tom Brady, over returning starting quarterback Drew Bledsoe, fresh off of inking a ten-year, \$103 million contract in the offseason, paid dividends for Belichick in the long run as the duo would go on to win six Super Bowls together.

But recently, Belichick has come under fire for the lack of success the Patriots have had since Brady left after the 2019 season. In the 62 games played since the departure of the quarterback, the Patriots sit at a mediocre 27-35 in games dating back to the start of the 2020 season.

2020 can be excused. With Brady off

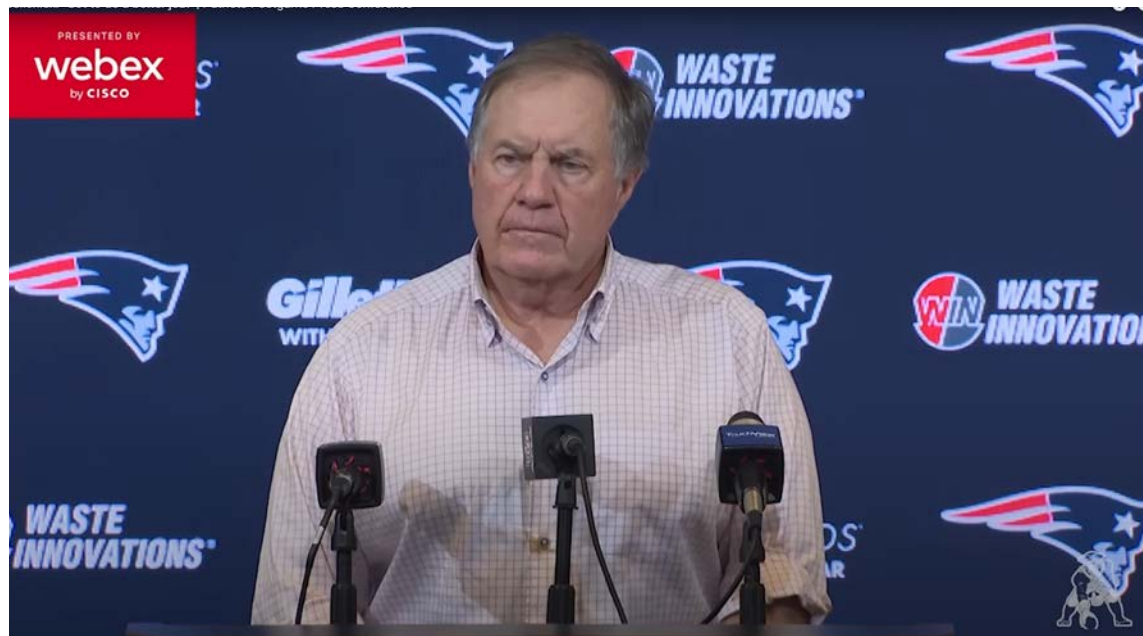


Photo: Youtube

to Tampa Bay, the Patriots had no real plan at the quarterback position. They settled for a temporary fix, signing veteran free-agent quarterback Cam Newton to get them through the year. Despite missing the playoffs for the first time in twelve years and having minimal talent on the offensive side of the ball, the Patriots still won seven games and were in contention for a playoff spot until the last few weeks of the season. If COVID-19 hadn't decimated the team, they could have won a few more games.

The 2021 campaign was supposed to start a whole new era for the team. With highly drafted rookie quarterback Mac Jones beating out the returning Newton for the starting job and a flurry of moves made in the offseason to help add some talent to the roster, the Patriots endured a slow start to win nine of their first thirteen games. They finished the season 10-7 and played the Buffalo Bills in the playoffs, losing 47-17. Jones made the Pro Bowl as a rookie, and the team had much promise going forward.

Then, 2022 happened.

The team as a whole took a massive

step back. The Patriots ran a new offense, which backfired on the young quarterback. Jones was injured during a loss to the Ravens in week three and lacked the same confidence when he returned. He was benched several times for backup quarterback Bailey Zappe, who started two games during Jones's absence.

Despite not being out of playoff contention until the last week of the season, the Patriots limped to the finish line and finished the campaign 8-9.

In this current season, the Patriots sit at 2-10, and they are lucky to be just that. Their only wins were a narrow victory over Zach Wilson and the Jets, a team that looked much better after the Patriots game, and against Josh Allen and the Bills, a game that felt like a total outlier and showcased what the Patriots should have been this season.

So, an important question lingers: what in the world is wrong with this team?

Let's start with the offense. It's clear that Mac Jones has not looked like himself so far this season. The thing is, it's not entirely his fault. His offensive line is a mix of

rookies and veterans who have failed to perform as a cohesive unit. Add in injuries to important linemen, and it's a recipe for disaster.

Belichick has failed to acquire talented receivers to surround Mac during crucial years of his development. Most, if not all, of the elite quarterbacks in the league also have a go-to option for critical situations. Patrick Mahomes has Taylor Swift's boyfriend, Travis Kelce. Joe Burrow has Ja'Marr Chase. Josh Allen has Stefon Diggs. Mac Jones has... Kendrick Bourne? JuJu Smith-Schuster?

Even Brady had guys like Troy Brown, Randy Moss, Rob Gronkowski, and Julian Edelman that he could depend on in a pinch. The only player the Patriots have had during Jones's tenure that could resemble that is Jakobi Meyers, whom the Patriots let walk in free agency before the 2023 season.

Another thing that has cost the Patriots massively is the awful draft decisions coming from Bill Belichick. This is nothing new, as these decisions have plagued the Patriots even while Brady was there. In the past five years, the Patri-

ots have drafted running back Sony Michel, offensive tackle Isaiah Wynn, and wide receiver N'Keal Harry in the first round. None of them are still on the team, and Michel is retired.

To his credit, Belichick has been better at drafting defensive players in the early rounds. Safety Kyle Dugger and linebacker Josh Uche, both second-round picks in 2020, have panned out and can be playing for big pay-days in the future.

However, for every Dugger and Uche, you have tight ends Dalton Keene and Devin Asiasi, both drafted in the third round of the same draft. The pair combined for just five receptions in their Patriots careers.

It's a problem that has plagued the Patriots for many years but is just now starting to catch up to them. In the past, Brady could make lesser talent work just because of how great he was at getting the ball to them. The Patriots no longer have such a luxury.

The 2023 version of the New England Patriots is nearly unwatchable every week. Every time I think it couldn't get any worse, it does. I thought they hit rock bottom when they lost to the New York Giants 10-7, but they found a way to one-up that performance the following week with a 6-0 loss at home to the Los Angeles Chargers.

Only time will tell if Belichick can turn things around and lead the Patriots back to the top of the NFL. But the only sure thing is that the Patriots need to address many issues this offseason if they want to even be in the conversation for the playoffs next year.

## Seven Blue Devils Receive All-NEC Football Awards



Photo: Ian Yale

**BY IAN YALE**  
Staff Writer

The Northeast Conference released its regular season football awards on Wednesday, Nov. 22, and the Central Connecticut State University Blue Devils were well represented.

Seven Blue Devils came away with All-NEC selections, including three on the All-NEC first team.

Junior Dan Toatley, a team captain for Central, was voted a first-team defensive lineman after a dominant season in the trenches.

Toatley, from Trenton, New Jersey, led the NEC with 0.55 sacks per game, totaling six on the year. He also finished the season with 12 tackles for loss and 52 total tackles while playing in all 11 games for CCSU.

Always a team player, Toatley downplayed the award in favor of another honor.

“Although I am very pleased and excited

to receive this award, the best accomplishment I received this season was being nominated a captain by my fellow teammates,” Toatley said. “Being able to lead those guys every Saturday was truly an honor.”

Joining Toatley on the first-team defense was sophomore safety Kimal Clark.

A native of Lackawanna, New York, Clark paced the NEC in total tackles with 89, 53 being solos. The tackling machine showed his versatility in Central’s secondary all season, coming up with three interceptions.

The season’s final game, on Nov. 18 against Saint Francis University, was the cherry on top of Clark’s season. He amassed 15 total tackles en route to earning NEC Prime Performer honors.

Central’s third first-teamer was Southington, CT product kicker Jack Barnum.

Barnum’s season as kicker was statistically

one of the best in all of NCAA football. He tied the program record for field goals made in a season with 13 and paced the NEC in both field goal percentage, at 72.2%, and points per game, at 6.3.

Barnum attributed his year-long success to the special teams unit, as well as the coaching staff.

“It could not have been done without Cole Escoto, Aidan Clark, and the line always allowing the operation to be successful,” Barnum said. “I am thankful for Coach Lechtenberg, always trusting in my abilities and giving me plenty of opportunities throughout the season.”

In addition to Toatley, Clark, and Barnum, four Blue Devils were voted on the second team.

Sophomore running back Elijah Howard made the second-team offense. Howard ran for 990 yards on the year and ranked third in the NEC

in all-purpose yards.

Senior offensive lineman Reis Spicer joined Howard on the second team. Spicer anchored an offensive line that allowed Howard to enjoy his breakout season. Spicer’s line ranked tenth in the nation in pass protection, allowing just 1.27 sacks per game.

Senior linebacker Luquay Washington made the second team. Despite missing four games at the beginning of the season, Washington had a huge impact down the stretch, capped off by a 52-yard interception return for a touchdown in the season’s final game.

Finally, junior punter Aidan Clark found himself as the second-team punter. Clark averaged 39.8 yards per punt, good for second in the NEC, and placed 13 kicks inside the 20-yard line. He also served as Barnum’s holder and was a crucial piece in the Blue Devils’ special teams unit.



### CCSU ATHLETICS SCHEDULE

#### MEN’S B-BALL

Dec. 9 @ Maine  
Dec. 16 @ UMass Lowell  
Dec. 19 vs. Northeastern  
Dec. 21 @ Fordham

#### WOMEN’S B-BALL

Dec. 8 @ Seton Hall  
Dec. 18 vs. Colgate  
Dec. 20 @ Penn State  
Jan. 3 @ Morgan State

#### MEN’S TRACK & FIELD

Jan. 6 @ Wagner Invite  
Jan. 11 @ Bryant  
Jan. 15 @ UMass Invite  
Jan. 20 @ Ramapo Opener

#### WOMEN’S TRACK & FIELD

Jan. 6 @ Wagner Invite  
Jan. 11 @ Bryant  
Jan. 15 @ UMass Invite  
Jan. 20 @ Ramapo Opener

#### SWIM & DIVE

Dec. 17 @ CSCAA  
Jan. 19 vs. Sacred Heart  
Jan. 27 @ URI  
Feb. 2 @ UConn

# Men's Basketball Halt Crusaders At Home

BY IAN YALE  
Staff Writer

The Central Connecticut State University men's basketball team conquered the College of the Holy Cross Crusaders 78-67 in Detrick Gymnasium on Saturday, Dec. 2.

Central's win raised their non-conference record to 3-4 as they continue to tune up for Northeast Conference play.

Offensively, Central focused on long-range shooting and shot selection, two aspects of the game they struggled with out of the gate.

But, the Blue Devils came out firing and continued to bury threes at a high rate, finishing the game 10 of 20 from long range and 28 of 58 overall from the field.

Head coach Patrick Sellers made a point in the preseason to



Photo: Ian Yale

have his team practice good shot selection and limiting turnovers. Sellers said he implanted a new rule in his offense that has drastically cut down on offensive mistakes.

"If you drive in and kick, you can't double drive," Sellers said. "That's really taken away

a lot of our turnovers and has really gotten us rhythm, open shots."

Four Blue Devils scored in double figures in the game, led by senior Jordan Jones's 18 points.

Senior Kellen Amos could not be slowed down at any level of the game, as he tallied

12 points, 10 rebounds, six assists, two blocks, and a steal.

Despite the impressive stat line, Amos said he is not concerned about his stats and focuses on doing the little things to help the team.

"I'm not really worried about stats,"

Amos said. "Coming into this year, I'm just trying to do more because I know I'm going to have games where I'm not making shots."

Defensive play has been integral to the Blue Devils' identity, and nobody embodies it more than Tre Breland.

Breland shot an efficient 5 of 6 from the floor, 2 of 3 from three, for 12 points. He added four rebounds, two steals, and a block.

Breland said he has embraced his role coming off of the bench.

"I'm the energy guy, the glue guy," Breland said. "I'm not going to score a million points every game, but I'm going to play hard and help my team win."

The Blue Devils are on the road for their next three games and will be back in Detrick Gymnasium on Dec. 19.

## Small in Stature, Big in Heart



Photo: Steve McLaughlin Photography

BY ARI KINDER  
Staff Writer

He may be 5 feet 8 inches tall, but there's nothing short about his game. Davonte Sweatman plays with grit, heart, and passion. He learned to play that way from his father

and godfather, to whom he gives all the credit.

"Really, my pops, but my godfather too, Ricky Lambright, he really was the person that brought me up," Sweatman said. "Playing in fifth grade, he showed me the ropes, how the game

is played, how to play the game the right way, ever since fifth grade all the way up to high school."

Sweatman, playing in his junior year, is off to a good start despite the team's early struggles on the road.

Coming out the gate in his first game against Rhode Island University, he had 12 points, three rebounds, and one steal before missing two games with an injury.

Being an undersized guard at the Division I level is a challenging task. The average height for a Division I guard is 6 feet 4 inches, but height has never been a challenge for Sweatman because he's always played against his older cousins.

"I realized it, and it's kind of weird because when I was young, I never really played with my age group when I was young," Sweatman said. "I always played with my cousins, and they were always older and taller

than me, so it was either I go out there and they kill me or I go out there and compete with them."

That mindset makes Sweatman succeed. He's a natural competitor with the heart and gritty playstyle that makes him stand out on the court.

Sweatman had a tremendous senior season at Lawrence Academy in Groton, Massachusetts, where he averaged an impressive 30 points per game, 4.7 assists, and 5.7 rebounds.

With those stats, one would think he'd have several offers. Sweatman said that wasn't the case.

"I was always underrated and overlooked by colleges, so I was like, this is my last year either I come out and hoop or just be average or mediocre," Sweatman said. "In my last year, I had to get it done. I had no offers or anything before my senior year."

Sweatman

could've taken an entirely different route coming out of high school. Rather than taking the junior college route to get more looks, he found his home at Central. Sweatman said the decision was easy because CCSU's head coach, Patrick Sellers, had faith in him.

"Coach Sellers really believed in me. I talked on the phone with other Division I programs, but they just tell you what you want to hear," Sweatman said. "When I talked to Sellers, I really felt like he wanted me here; he respected my game."

Something that Sweatman said he worked on gaining back confidence and having fun this offseason.

"I would say confidence, and I would say that because in high school, you can see I had all the confidence in the world," Sweatman said. "So, over the summer, my main goal was confidence."