Former Red Hawk Michael Knapp Drafted to Major League Soccer

Matt Orth
Assistant Sports Editor

It’s Jan. 9, 2022. Michael Knapp, former midfielder for the Montclair State University men’s soccer team and current midfielder for the United Soccer League (USL) team the New York Red Bulls II, was already living his dreams of being a professional soccer player. But, moving into a bigger professional league was not in his realm of personal possibility.

“My agent called me two days before the draft and he told me, ‘Mike, I think you’re on the [Major League Soccer] draft board, but don’t expect to be drafted by anyone since you are already pro,’” Knapp said. “So in my mind, I was thinking I was not [going to] get drafted because of what my agent told me. But [then again], he also told me to keep my head up.”

Two days passed. Knapp’s head was kept up, but all of a sudden on the day of the 2022 Major League Soccer (MLS) SuperDraft, he started to feel different emotions than usual. It was almost as if what his agent had told him was not going to come to fruition.

“The day of the draft I was just in the gym in the sauna thinking, ‘Man, I have a weird feeling. I have a feeling I’m going to get drafted,’ but because of what my agent told me, I didn’t think much of it,” Knapp said. And then, the strange feeling Knapp had became a reality. A lot of people in Knapp’s circle kept reposting something on Instagram in the middle of the night, waking him up. This was presumably the announcement of Knapp being drafted to the MLS. Confused, he blew it off and went back to sleep. And then, he got one of the biggest texts he would ever get from his agent confirming his suspicions.

“My agent texts me [saying], ‘You have been drafted to Austin FC.’ I woke up in the morning to that text and I was like, ‘What is going on?’” Knapp said. “Since I was technically already a pro, I was really confused, so I called my agent and asked him questions [about] what the whole process was and how it was going to happen. It was pretty shocking.”

And with one of the most out-of-the-ordinary ways to find out that a player has made it into the big leagues, Knapp was officially drafted with the 61st pick in the third round of the 2022 MLS SuperDraft to Austin FC. And with one of the most out-of-the-ordinary ways to find out that a player has made it into the big leagues, Knapp was officially drafted with the 61st pick in the third round of the 2022 MLS SuperDraft to Austin FC.
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Information reported in the Red Hawk Rap Sheet comes directly from the MSU Police Department. We do not print retractions to the rap sheet unless information directly from the police report is incorrect. We can print an update to the events only if the newspaper is given access to relevant documents to corroborate the information.

All submissions to the newspaper become property of The Montclarion. We do not print articles from anonymous contributors.

The first issue of The Montclarion, then named The Pelican, was published on Nov. 28, 1928.

Check out our Newsletter!

Red Hawk Rap Sheet

Sunday, January 23
Paul Hall: Officers responded to Paul Hall in regards to a report of a burglary and theft in the past. This case has since been resolved.

Monday, January 24
Dickson Hall: A student reported an incident of theft from a room in Dickson Hall. This incident is under investigation.

Anyone who has information regarding these incidents is urged to call the police station at T-I-P-S (8477).
Members of David Christian Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania returned to the Montclair State University campus Tuesday afternoon to provoke students outside the Student Center and amphitheater, promoting hatred towards women, the LGBTQIA+ community and those practicing other religions. However, students came back strong.

The protesters were protected by university police, but that didn’t stop students from mocking and teasing the group as a way of fighting back.

Students quickly and efficiently made signs counteracting the hate group reading, “Gay People Are Hot,” “Be Bisexual, Eat Hot Chip, Lie” and “Krusty Krab is Unfair,” all aimed at mocking the protesters.

Sgt. Jay Nielsen of the university police said this isn’t the first time the David Christian Center has been here.

“I’ve been working here for about 10 years,” Nielsen said. “And I’d say they’ve been here at least eight times.”

Pastor Aden Rusfeldt, a member of the group, explained the group’s motivation for visiting Montclair State’s campus was based on a rumor they heard about the women on campus in which a derogatory term was used.

“We’re here to tell them to close their legs and obey Jesus,” Rusfeldt said.

Rusfeldt also wore a hat with a message reading “Shoot Your Local Pedophiles.” He was accompanied by other members of the David Christian Center, including children.

Students also printed multiple pictures of Scrat, the squirrel from the movie “Ice Age,” crucified to a cross, and held it high for the protesters to see, mocking the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the radical view the protesters had of Christianity.

Trans and bisexual pride flags were also brought over and waved through the crowd, with Rocky the Red Hawk even wearing one as a cape, supporting the surrounding students. Free Sour Patch Kids and Swedish Fish were also given out to everyone.

Maria Rodriguez-Gregg, the director of government relations at Montclair State, thought the students were just adding fuel to the fire.

“Freedom of speech I guess,” Rodriguez-Gregg said. “Sometimes you just can’t engage. If you disagree, that’s fine, but this is exactly what they want.”

Noor Alalwan, a freshman psychology major, was watching the protest when Rusfeldt pointed to her and said, “Muslims are going to hell.”

“No, I am not,” she said.

“It’s a shame to see these people dedicate their time to spreading hate and anger,” Ludertz said. “But watching the students come together to express themselves and push back against hate, that is a really beautiful thing.”

See all the photos on themontclarion.org
On the night of Jan. 25, Campus Recreation held a Pottery Painting event as a part of their weekly Rec Nights program. The first level of Montclair State University Recreation Center was filled with something more than the normal fitness and gym-goers. Instead, it was filled with the sounds of laughter, chatter and the smell of paint fumes.

Participants were provided with pre-made ceramics, paint brushes, paint and paper plates to act as palettes. The ceramics included some adorable cows, sunflowers and gnomes as well as some simpler options like change holders and plates. But these predetermined shapes didn’t get in the way of students’ creativity.

Jacob Corter, a junior film and television major, decided to give his cute little ceramic gnome a sinister twist.

“I took a little gnome and I made him into Ghostface from the ‘Scream’ movies,” Corter said.

Others took inspiration from more recent pop culture icons. Kasey Coury, a senior communication and media arts major, worked on a creation she named “Doja Cow.”

Rec Nights are meant to give students a break during the week to do something relaxing and crafty while giving them a chance to socialize with their peers.

For transfer students like Corter, events like this allow him to branch out and meet new people.

“[I just transferred here from a community college] and I don’t have any friends, I know nobody on campus,” Corter said. “Events are a good [place to meet new people].”

Teni Bello, a junior sports communication major and director of special events and Rec Nights at the Rec Center, is always pleasantly surprised at the turnout for the Pottery Painting event.

“It’s a huge turnout, there’s [around 80] of us here and we actually had to start turning people away because of [coronavirus (COVID-19)] restrictions,” Bello said.

Students like Grace Delia, a junior English and communication and media studies major, came to Pottery Painting to take a break as classes begin to ramp up this semester.

“I saw the event on Engage and I was really excited about it because I feel like painting is a really great way to destress and with the start of the semester and everything going on right now” Delia said. “What’s a better way to destress than painting some pottery?”

Rec Nights are held every Tuesday night from 7-9 p.m. in the Rec Center lounge. Some upcoming events include Mosaic Making and DIY Hand Sanitizer.
Overcrowded Classrooms Concern Students

Montclair State students have complained about overcrowding in classrooms. The rise of the omicron variant means that students are being exposed to COVID-19 in classes that were not socially distanced. Professors have expressed concern over the lack of social distancing in classrooms.

Jenna Sundel
News Editor

Montclair State University students have raised concerns over a lack of social distancing in classrooms as the omicron variant of coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to spread. While other universities in New Jersey started their semesters with remote learning, Montclair State decided to continue with in-person classes. According to the university's COVID-19 dashboard, 109 cases were reported during the first week of classes.

Kelly Meagher, a sophomore film and television major, said she received a notification that she was exposed to COVID-19 in a class that was not socially distant.

“I personally felt with the rise of the omicron variant we should have had a hybrid option because some of our classes have a large number of people,” Meagher said. “I even felt a little concerned on that day in class, feeling there was too many of us packed too close together. Little did I know, a few days later I was going to be getting an email saying that I was exposed.”

Anna Mccabe, a junior visual communication design major, was exposed to COVID-19 in her Global Art History class. Mccabe said the class is over-packed and students must sit in close proximity to one another.

“The room is relatively small and we are all sitting at a desk made for two, so it’s very close proximity to each other,” McCabe said. “Having wipes out might have been nice and would have made me feel a little safer because other than the plastic shield over the professor’s podium, there wasn’t anything. I also think the class is overpacked. A few people were missing on the first day but I recall seeing every seat filled.”

Juliana Vasile, a junior English major, said social distancing is not being enforced in one of her linguistics classes.

“While taking attendance, the professor remarked that there’s about 35 people in the class,” Vasile said. “I was shocked because we’re all crammed like sardines. Everyone’s sitting on top of each other.”

Kristopher Skotek, a junior accounting major, said he noticed issues with social distancing in his classes at the Felician School of Business.

“From what I’ve noticed, the campus as a whole, and particularly the business school, is very bad at social distancing,” Skotek said. “None of my lectures are socially distant even though they are run at capacity. The fact that nobody in my classes has caught [COVID-19] is a miracle.”

Harleigh MacBeth, a junior Spanish and public relations major, said one of her classes in the School of Communication and Media (SCM) is not socially distant.

“The class is extremely full and looks like [the university] decided to make classes at full capacity even with omicron [going around],” MacBeth said.

“I can’t understand why they would do this. Students are anxious enough with omicron being extremely transmissible, and instead of taking precautionary measures, it feels as though they don’t care. Full classes, no distance and just a Hawk Check that you can easily lie on because no one checks.”

Rich Wolfson, president of Montclair State’s chapter of the American Federation of Teachers, said the university should be practicing social distancing.

“Relative to class size, the number of students in a section is not what matters,” Wolfson said. “It’s how many students are in a particular space. We should have no packed classrooms during the pandemic or for that matter, even when the virus becomes endemic like the flu.”

Wolfson also emphasized the importance of other precautions being taken to keep the community safe.

“The union is confident that our physical spaces have appropriate ventilation, high-quality HEPA filters and air exchange mechanisms that when combined with vaccines, boosters and with appropriately worn high-quality masks at all times when we are indoors or outdoors when in groups will keep us as safe as possible,” Wolfson said.

David Winters, an adjunct professor in the SCM said that the school and the union are not doing enough to keep students and faculty safe.

“Administrators and union leadership at [Montclair State] want us to act as though everything is normal while the world is burning around us, but there’s nothing normal about students and teachers being forced into classrooms they don’t feel safe being in,” Winters said. “There’s nothing normal about watching hospitals fill up with their friends and family; nothing normal about being ordered to follow contradictory and unevenly applied policies.”

Winters stated that he is having difficulty enforcing social distancing in his classes.

“Regarding social distancing and airflow, both my courses are in newer buildings with good ventilation, but we’re not able to maintain social distance in either room,” Winters said.

Andrew Mees, the university spokesperson, spoke about how Montclair State is focusing on vaccinations and masks this semester.

“Based on a growing body of scientific evidence, the university is emphasizing vaccinations, including booster shots, and wearing masks instead of social distancing,” Mees said.

Mees added that few cases have been traced to classroom spread.

“There have also been very few cases attributed to transmission within a classroom environment since in-person classes resumed last fall,” Mees said. “The vast majority of transmissions continue to occur in social settings or in off-campus encounters.”

Winters encourages students and faculty to speak up against the administration’s policies.

“We need leadership with the courage to face up to the changes we’re living through and the personnel [Montclair State] has in place are acting as though they’re unwilling to do that,” Winters said. “The leadership we need can only emerge from grassroots student and faculty organizing and I’m hoping the spring at [Montclair State] sees an uptick in creative and inspiring activism.”
To Rocinha, From Montclair: My Time Inside of Rio de Janeiro’s Most Prominent Favela

I contacted a mutual friend named Maycon, who I was introduced to by Brazilian photographer and friend André Cypriano. Cypriano had extensively photographed Rocinha for years; my two days paled in comparison to the work of Cypriano.

Maycon is a 32-year-old motorcycle taxi driver in Rocinha, a rewarding profession considering it is the most widely used mode of transportation in the favela. He was born and raised in the favela; he is a man that knew his neighborhood and the people as if they were his own family.

I met with him on a Wednesday morning in early January. Rio de Janeiro had been coming down from the prior New Year’s celebrations and was beginning to find its footing once again. Armed with my old Nikon and several rolls of black and white film, I was equipped for my trip inside.

I shook Maycon’s hand and hauled myself onto the back of his motorcycle. We danced through the morning rush traffic, dodging past idle cars, delivery trucks and the occasional family on-foot running their morning errands.

Maycon brought me to one of the iconic viewpoints of Rocinha, a look down the valley where the neighborhood had been built over several decades. “Three years ago, it was really bad,” Maycon had been telling me. “It was war.”

Maycon was referring to the turf war between the Amigos dos Amigos (ADA) and the Comando Vermelho (CV), two of Brazil’s largest drug trafficking organizations.

Over the course of two days, Maycon led me through the streets and alleyways of Rocinha. It was a constant game of whether or not I could photograph; the favela is currently under the control of the Comando Vermelho who had taken back the neighborhood during the turf war three years ago.

Our trek took an ultimate turn when Maycon told me to simply put my camera away in my bag — a stark contrast to the simple “just put it down for now.” This was after a young man came out of nowhere, telling us that I “shouldn’t even have a camera.”

We turned a corner finding ourselves along a road with several shops conducting businesses to our right. To our left, lining the white walls of the street were dozens of shirtless men sitting on plastic lawn chairs, large assault rifles resting on their laps.

One of the armed men — most likely a commander — donned a massive gold chain, with a diaper-clad monkey on a leash seated on his shoulder. Without a doubt, these were the men of Comando Vermelho.

Coming off the open road we had just walked down, we began our way past a bar, where two young men were watching a soccer game, AK-47s resting on their laps.

“Hey! Maycon! What’s up?” one of them had yelled out to Maycon. It was a friend he had grown up with in school. I shook their hands, exchanging names and prazer, a way of telling someone it is a pleasure to meet them in Portuguese.

I’m not going to be able to explain the issues that Brazil has in this short article or in my
photos; it is a beautifully complicated country with titanic issues. Two days in Rocinha is not nearly enough to even convey what is important to convey. What I can say is, however, I received a slice of life inside of Rocinha. A slice of life that I hope shows that Brazil is far more than just soccer and samba. It is a country filled with hopes and dreams: one that craves a future free of corruption, violence, scandals and pain. I have faith.

My photos from Rocinha will be on display at Ridgewood Coffee Company in Ridgewood, New Jersey throughout the entire month of March.

Photos by Julian Rigg
See all the photos on themontclarion.org

A city-employed street sweeper pushes a trash bin down Estrada da Gávea.

CV is the oldest and one of the largest criminal organizations in Brazil.

São Paulo's military police conduct what is known as a "biotc."

A man walks through a beco. His hair is bleached, a tradition amongst Brazilian men to participate in around New Year's.
**Coming back from winter break always gives me a case of the “semester scaries.” It’s like that feeling on Sunday you get when you think about everything you have to do the upcoming week, but times 100.**

One thing that always helps me take my mind off of those feelings of anxiety is baking. These fluffernutter cookies I found on TikTok were the perfect comfort snack that brought me back to the days when Sunday was just another day of the week.

**To start,** preheat your oven to 350°F and grab all your ingredients. You’ll need:

- 3/4 cup of browned butter, cooled
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1 egg and 1 egg yolk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup peanut butter
- 1/3 cup marshmallow fluff

**Making your brown butter should be your first step of the baking process.** Brown butter is made by using a technique to toast the milk solids in your butter. It enhances the flavor of the butter and is liquid gold to many professionals. To make it, add your butter to a pot and melt it down at medium-high heat. Once completely melted, lower your heat to just below medium so the butter will still boil, but not burn.

Take a whisk and continue stirring the butter for three to five minutes until it turns a golden brown color. It’s important to remove your butter from heat as soon as it’s golden brown so it doesn’t burn. Let your butter cool for 30 minutes.

**After your butter cools,** add your brown and white sugars and beat together until light and fluffy. Then, add your egg, egg yolk and vanilla extract. Let the mixture beat until the eggs are completely mixed together and you are left with a velvety texture.

Grab a bowl, and pour your flour, baking soda and salt inside. Take your dry ingredients and gradually incorporate the flour into the butter mixture. Once you’ve added all the flour, take your dough and move it to a separate, shallow bowl.

It’s time for the fun part: adding the fluff and peanut butter.

Take your fluff and add spoonfuls to the top of the dough. Add just about 1/3 cup of fluff. Next, add your peanut butter in spoonfuls to the top of the dough. I slightly melted my peanut butter so it was easier to add. Then, mix to slightly incorporate. You should still have pockets of peanut butter and fluff so that when you scoop the cookies they have a marbled look.

As for any cookie recipe, it’s important to let your dough sit for at least a few hours. This is hard if you have no self-control, but my advice is to make the dough in the morning so when you want to have dessert, the dough is ready to bake.

**Use a medium-sized cookie scoop to scoop out your cookies.** Do not roll them in your hands, as you’ll want to preserve the marbled look of the fluff and peanut butter. Space each scoop inches apart on your cookie sheet. You should bake them for 10 to 12 minutes. These cookies are best enjoyed warm and in my opinion, with peanut butter vanilla ice cream.

These cookies will definitely take you back to your elementary lunches and your peanut butter and fluff sandwich. There is just something so comforting about the taste of peanut butter and marshmallows. I’m so glad my “for you” page brought me to this recipe, and I hope these cookies make your inner child smile too. Until the next bite.
STEM (continued from page 1)

“Many studies out there for cancers are [more focused on] pharmaceutical supplements, things that are synthetically made in the lab,” Ezenwanne said. “So, there’s not really much research out there regarding nutraceuticals, which are natural supplements, things that are found in foods that have benefits.”

Through Ezenwanne’s research, he and his team are studying the molecular pathways, or chain reactions, that lung cancer cells go through when they interact with MSM. They can then share that knowledge with others so that further developments can be made in the world of cancer treatment.

Ezenwanne’s research proposal won him an award from the Wehner Student Research Program (WESTREP) here at Montclair State University, as well as a $5,000 award from the Promega Corporation. He also won an award from the Society of Toxicology (SOT), for which he’ll be flown out to California.

Ezenwanne came to the United States from Nigeria when he was five years old and is currently a New Jersey resident. The main reason why he and his family left was the contrast between the healthcare systems here in the United States and Nigeria.

“Coming from Nigeria, I did get really sick a lot,” Ezenwanne said. “And the healthcare system there really wasn’t as developed as it is in the United States.”

Ezenwanne also raised awareness of the relations between finances and healthcare, something he is passionate about changing for everyone.

“We don’t have health insurance in Nigeria; so things are paid out of pocket,” Ezenwanne said. “So, the more money you have, the better your healthcare is. So, that’s kind of the reason why I want to be a doctor and why I immigrated to America.”

Ezenwanne is also a member of both the Health Careers Program (HCP) and the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) at Montclair State, which helps disadvantaged and underrepresented students succeed in STEM industries.

Both of these programs are to promote awareness for minority students in the sciences,” Ezenwanne said. “So, I believe that my story [of] coming from a disadvantaged background and my initiatives to pursue a project at such an early career was the reason that I was able to win these awards.”

Ezenwanne’s team consists of his research partner Zachary Bonelli, a senior biochemistry major, and Dr. Ann Marie DiLorenzo, a Montclair State biology professor as well as Ezenwanne’s mentor since freshman year. Together, they form what they call a second family. Regarding DiLorenzo’s relationship with Ezenwanne, she called him one of her “academic children.”

Ezenwanne agreed.

“She’s like my second mom,” Ezenwanne said.

The two had met in Ezenwanne’s freshman year when he came to sit in on her tissue culture class, and over time, as DiLorenzo jokingly put it, she “couldn’t get rid of him.”

DiLorenzo is confident that after watching Ezenwanne grow, he will achieve his professional goals, citing his passion and determination.

“I think he probably will have enough interest to do some research while in [the] medical [field], absolutely, which is a nice thing,” DiLorenzo said.

Ezenwanne and his colleague Bonelli also have a close bond.

“We were always in the front row [in freshman year], always answering questions that were asked and paying attention in the front,” Bonelli said. “[It got] to the point where you [would]

Bonelli further discussed the ways in which he assists Ezenwanne.

“I’m here to put my peace of mind into it and bounce ideas off of each other,” Bonelli said.

“If there’s something that [Ezenwanne] doesn’t get about the numbers or something like that, I could just run through it and try my best, so we’ve been thinking as a team.”

Ezenwanne praised Bonelli for his help on the project.

“He’s basically been a gem, my right-hand man in the project,” Ezenwanne said. “Definitely wouldn’t have gotten this far without [Bonelli].”

The team is still in the process of their research, but they plan on presenting their findings to the SOT and the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASMBB).

Ezenwanne hopes his research will show other scientists a new way of developing cancer treatments and is hopeful for his future research.

“I would definitely like to have this project published for other scientists,” Ezenwanne said. “Once we find good results, other scientists can piggyback off of it and move into the direction that benefits cancer patients.”

Dr. Ann Marie DiLorenzo, a professor in the biology department, has watched Ezenwanne’s progress over the years.
Who’s Your Celebrity Crush?

By John LaRosa, Photo Editor

**Jennifer Lopez**
“...she doesn’t seem to be getting older, she seems to be getting younger.”

**Jose Lopez**
Junior
Business & Analytics Major

**Will Smith**
“I just think he’s a great guy, I’m reading his book & I’ve always been a fan of him.”

**Jennifer Nguyen**
Freshman
Business Administration Major

**Zendaya**
Sean Gadiare
Freshman
Fashion Studies
Ryan Reynolds
“He seems like the perfect human.”
Bettina Rosario
Sophomore
English Major

Ryan Reynolds
“He’s pretty.”
Jack Nagle
Senior
Communications Major

Zac Efron
“I’ve liked him since ‘High School Musical.’”
Katie Griggs
Junior
Food Science & Nutrition Major
Help Wanted

PART-TIME BABYSITTER

Seeking a babysitter/mother’s helper on Mondays in Teaneck from 4pm-8pm to help me with an infant, 5yr old and 8yr old. Responsibilities may include feeding/holding the baby, playing with my older kids, and helping with homework. We are looking for someone fully vaccinated and with excellent references. Experience with an infant is a plus.

Please reply to 516-241-7616 if interested.
Across
1. Carved by the Colorado River through erosion, this gorge is thousands of feet deep and spans more than 200 miles, much of it serving as a National Park in Arizona.
5. Located in Egypt near the Nile River, this man-made structure has lasted for thousands of years and is the only of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World to still exist.
6. Caused by the Earth’s magnetic field, these waves of light can be seen from varying points across the northern hemisphere, including Canada and Alaska.
7. Found in the Himalayas, a mountain range in Asia, this mountain has Earth’s highest altitude above sea level.
8. The world’s largest coral reef system, located in Australia, has over 100 islands and an abundance of marine life.

Down
2. This attraction, straddling the border of Canada and New York, is the collective of three waterfalls that flow between two of the Great Lakes.
3. Located in Brazil and extending into other South American countries, this tropical location is not only the largest of its biome, but also the most biodiverse terrestrial place on Earth.
4. This National Park, situated atop a volcanic hotspot and reaching into Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho, is home to a variety of animal life, canyons, forests, springs, rivers and geysers - the most notable being Old Faithful.

 PUZZLES

National Landmark Edition

By Kayla Carlamere

Sudoku

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Word Search

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*For answers to the puzzles, please check The Montclarion Facebook page every Thursday.*

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Geographic
Monuments
Preservation
Wonders
Mountain Range
Habitat
National Park
Landscape
Coastal
Attractions
Environment
Wilderness
Landmarks
Waterfall
Tropical
Crowded classrooms are common at many large colleges, and Montclair State University is no exception. Anyone who has tried to take a popular course knows the adrenaline rush that comes with getting in, as well as the quiet desperation of hoping the course won’t fill up before you can register. One can easily go their entire college career never having taken a much-desired course because of these capacity limits.

With the largest-ever freshman class having been accepted in the fall semester, classrooms seem more packed than ever before. In the era of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, this is not only a frustrating reality but a concern when it comes to in-person learning.

Being squeezed into a small classroom with dozens of other students used to be a source of anxiety or annoyance at worst and an exciting opportunity to socialize at its best. But now, even fewer people are eager at the prospect. COVID-19 is, after all, an airborne illness that necessitates keeping your distance from others, especially in large groups.

One popular class, Introduction to the Film, has a capacity limit of 120 students. This isn’t unusual for a lecture-based course, especially one centered around an audio-visual medium. But the room it is held in, located in Calcia Hall, is a tiny auditorium, about the size of an average black box theater. Students are seated shoulder to shoulder, so close that one could easily accidentally elbow someone in the face while taking off their coat. The only social distancing relief comes from the occasional broken chair.

Masks are obviously important in such a scenario. But with over 100 people packed together like sardines, it feels like masks can only do so much. It’s difficult to feel at ease being so close to so many people when the importance of social distancing has been etched onto our collective psyche.

In an Instagram poll taken by The Montclarion, 63% of 286 students said at least one of their classes felt too crowded or unsafe due to being overly full. Safety concerns regarding packed classrooms seem to disproportionately affect those in older buildings such as Calcia Hall or Dickson Hall, where rooms and desks are small and neglected infrastructure can make a lack of even basic ventilation, like windows. Such disparities are apparent when traveling between buildings, having a class in the Feliciano School of Business or University Hall can feel like a mocking kind of special privilege if you’re used to the windowless boxes of Dickson.

Students can choose to avoid other potentially crowded spaces, such as dining areas. But without a missive from Hawk Check to stay home due to possible COVID-19 exposure, coming to class is not optional. Not only is being physically absent from class largely impossible due to the university’s insistence on continuing in-person education, but the other precautions put in place to keep students safe seem moot if they are just going to be crammed into tight quarters with each other. After all, it has been proven time and again that one of the most effective ways to avoid contracting COVID-19 is to stay six feet away from other people.

Classroom crowding is no longer simply an inconvenience but a matter of safety. Preaching the need for social distancing becomes an act of thoughtless hypocrisy when students are placed into learning environments that make such precautions impossible to take.

Holding courses like Introduction to the Film in a larger room, for everyone’s comfort and well-being, is just one of the basic adaptations that Montclair State can and should make. Such classes are typically longer in duration, which underscores the need for as much space between people as possible. The more time spent near large groups, the higher the risk is of getting sick.

Montclair State can also accommodate its campus population by providing better masks, such as medical-grade N95s, KN95s or KF94s for free, on account of the highly contagious nature of the omicron variant. This would go a long way toward reassuring students and employees that they are at least protected in high-density areas of campus, as well as lifting some of the financial burdens of having to constantly procure new masks.

With 109 COVID-19 cases in total on campus, Montclair State’s numbers are not out of control, but they are still higher than they were before winter break. Students have exercised a commendable amount of caution so far, but the fact remains that we could all use a little more space.

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**Campus Voices:**

**Have you had any experiences with crowded classrooms this semester?**

**By Hailey Mayewski**

- **I came from a really big high school, a vocational high school, so I’m used to crowded classrooms. I’m just used to crowded spaces, so I don’t really mind it. It’s like the usual for me.”**
  - Hadia Gonzalez
  - Elementary Education
  - Freshman

- **I have been in a lot of crowded classrooms...because of quarantine, I’m not used to being around a bunch of people so close, so it’s, like, nerve-racking a little bit.”**
  - Alyson Sanchez
  - Elementary Education
  - Freshman

- **My history class is in a classroom in University Hall and there’s almost 40 people in the class and honestly I’m very unhappy about it. Because of COVID-19 standards, I have been vaccinated three times, I have to wear a mask everywhere, yet I still don’t feel like Montclair’s doing their part in spacing people out.”**
  - Ira Kuperman
  - Undeclared
  - Freshman

- **I haven’t been in an extremely crowded classroom yet, but if I was I’d be very upset considering the fact that I had to get vaccinated, COVID-19 tested before I came and wear a mask, and then Montclair [State] continues to put the students at risk.”**
  - Brielle Kimler
  - Product Design
  - Junior
During the first week of 2022, I received a call from my grandmother, who lives in Ecuador. During the conversation, she mentioned she was going to receive her coronavirus (COVID-19) booster dose the following day. I was relieved and happy that she would finally receive the third vaccine.

Days later when I got home after work, my mom, somewhat worried, told me both my grandparents were vaccinated with other vaccine brands. My grandmother, whose first two doses were Sinovac, had received her third dose of AstraZeneca. I was certainly worried, too, as I didn’t know that was possible.

My grandmother told my mom that her doctor said there was no problem, even going on to say the combination of vaccines may be better for her. The only thing my mom and I could do was wait and hope nothing would happen.

The days went by and indeed, my grandparents were doing well and had no severe symptoms, at most a bit of pain in the arm in which they received the injection. I was relieved to hear that, but it didn’t take away my curiosity to understand how the combination of vaccines could be possible.

The strategy of mixing two doses of different vaccines is called heterologous vaccination, and this procedure is becoming common worldwide. Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States and some Latin American countries have already allowed the mixing of primary vaccines and booster doses.

For some people, receiving a booster dose of a different brand could increase protection against COVID-19, according to some studies conducted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Several volunteers were vaccinated and received booster doses of different vaccines, and the results show that receiving a booster vaccine different from the initial vaccine increases antibody levels.

The combination of vaccines and boosters may even be more effective than just sticking to one brand, as it can help prevent the virus from spreading more quickly between individuals.

Dr. Leana Wen, an emergency physician and professor at George Washington University, clarified more information about mixing the vaccine and boosters in an interview.

“Under almost all circumstances, we should say that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are generally interchangeable,” Wen said.

Wen explained the switch of vaccines should be done in case of an emergency, such as with individuals who had a severe allergy to the first injection or a previous case of myocarditis, which is inflammation of the heart muscle.

“The same brand sounds just fine,” Wen said. “If the only thing available in your area is Moderna but you got Pfizer the first time, switching to the other mRNA vaccine is also OK.”

Mixing vaccines can be beneficial in more ways than one. The availability of various vaccines may be limited in some areas. Several times I have seen pharmacies near where I live with large signs advertising "COVID VACCINES NOW AVAILABLE! (MODERNA ONLY)". But this flexibility allows people to have more booster dose options and helps more people receive their vaccines on time.

My grandmother’s situation was outside of the United States, and there are thousands of people around the world like her who choose or must be vaccinated with a different brand of vaccine from their first dose. The comments and different opinions that exist around this topic can cause hesitation, confusion and fear for one’s health. Although vaccination plans in the United States are moving forward with this new finding, many people are unsure about the safety of the discovery.

Medicine has been advancing rapidly during the last few years. There is still a long way to go to achieve absolute immunization in the world. This new strategy could be beneficial for the general population as there seems to be many advantages to this method. Several countries are already allowing heterologous COVID-19 boosters, and it’s working.

This is undoubtedly a sensitive issue, so before making any decision, it never hurts to ask a health expert to give you another point of view on the combination of vaccines.

Darian Mozo, a junior journalism major with a minor in linguistics, is in her first year as a staff writer for The Montclarion.

Is It Safe to ‘Mix and Match’ COVID-19 Vaccines?

Nearly $13 million raised for animals shelters in honor of Betty White

523 acres of California forest returned to Indigenous Sinkyone people

New Orleans college students start glass bottle recycling service, use ground-up glass to make disaster relief sand

Hate group cosplaying as Christians shows up on campus—again

Russia poised to invade Ukraine

Black man arrested and held for a week after police “mistook” for white suspect of the same name
Kids Need to See More LGBTQIA+ Representation

The transformation society has gone through in the last few decades is remarkable. Those who were once discriminated against are now celebrated through many forms of media and in real life. While there has been an overall greater acceptance for the LGBTQIA+ community, Hollywood and the world still have a long way to go before homophobia disappears. How do we improve the lives of those discriminated against when they face lingering effects of decades upon decades of homophobia?

One of the biggest problems for the LGBTQIA+ community is that they are still treated as taboo or inappropriate. This prejudice comes from the same parents that let their children watch Andie and his girlfriend make out for an entire episode of “Victorious” on Nickelodeon.

I remember seeing that scene as a child and thinking how weird it was at the time. No one can tell me “Victorius” was for teens when I was one of the hundreds of 8-year-olds attending the Victoria Justice concert. Clearly, the show was targeted toward young kids.

Looking back, there were plenty of scenes in shows targeted toward kids that had many scenes of a sexual nature. Whether it was romance or a joke that flew over our heads, most kids are already exposed to adult themes from a young age.

So, what makes a happy and loving queer couple on TV too inappropriate for children? I don’t know if people are aware of this, but straight couples engage in adult activities just as much as same-sex couples. The only difference between the two is the fact that one couple just happens to be attracted to the same gender as each other.

For far too long, the world has been poisoned with the prejudice that a queer couple is somehow scandalous rather than just two people in love. The LGBTQIA+ community is no less appropriate than heterosexual lifestyles for kids to be exposed to, and all kinds of love are completely normal and natural. Representing different walks of life other than straight and cisgender ones in kids’ media is important in order to teach future generations that everyone should be accepted and equal.

Not only will it help the next generation of youth to be more accepting and loving, but it will also do wonders for kids and young teens in realizing who they are.

It can be hard to see how important representation is to somebody when you already have thousands of characters that relate to and look like you. Nobody wants to feel like their existence is a forbidden secret. Before anyone asks “Won’t that just confuse them?” No, it won’t do any harm to your children.

If anything, hypothetically, an 11-year-old girl may be confused and ashamed that she has a crush on Jade rather than Beck. Then she thinks, “But Jade likes boys, so why do I like her and not Beck?”

I’m no parent, but I’d rather have a child’s network explain to my kid about having crushes on the same gender than anything they may find on the internet, which sadly is what a lot of kids have to explore to solve their inner conflict, and the internet isn’t as PG as a Disney show.

We should be giving kids a safe and appropriate introduction to the magic of love and self-expression while showing them what the world is really like outside their homes. I’ve been especially ecstatic to see Disney showcasing and appreciating a variety of cultures in their animated movies.

Every child deserves to be seen and appreciated by the media and those they enjoy. I hope that with more support and representation, kids of all kinds feel empowered to find love for themselves.

Avery Nixon, a freshman television and film major with a minor in creative writing, is in her first year as the assistant opinion editor for The Montclarion.

The Texas Synagogue Hostage Crisis was a Hate Crime

Common stereotypes I often hear are that Jewish people hold power in the banks, Hollywood and the government. These are antisemitic beliefs that are dangerous and can lead to violence.

On Jan. 15, four people were taken hostage by an armed man in a Colleyville, Texas synagogue where they were held for 11 hours. The hostages narrowly escaped with their lives.

The gunman was a British citizen named Malik Faisal Akram. His motive: demand the release of Aafia Siddiqui, a woman serving an 86-year sentence for terrorism after being convicted of attempted murder of U.S. soldiers.

After initially believing Akram did not specifically target the Jewish community, the FBI declared the incident a hate crime and act of terrorism.

Akram took these innocent people hostage because according to Jeffrey Cohen, one of the congregants whom Akram took hostage, he was genuinelyPrediction the F.B.I. underlined the severity of the situation and antisemitism in America.

According to the United States Department of Justice, the definition of a hate crime is “crimes committed based on the victim’s perceived or actual race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability.”

According to their definition, holding people at gunpoint at their place of peace for 11 hours in hopes their religion could release a prisoner would, in fact, be considered a hate crime.

The circulation of antisemitic rumors is all too familiar and present in the world. It’s easy for people to sweep things under the rug when they don’t look at these problems through a deeper lens. Just because Akram didn’t express an overt dislike for Jews doesn’t mean what he did wasn’t a hate crime.

It is crucial to acknowledge just how hateful it is to claim that “Jewish people are in power and control.” These dangerous false accusations made by prominent people fuel people like Akram to commit violent antisemitic hate crimes.

The Jewish community has been and still is a target for damaging conspiracy theories. People fail to recognize the overt hate and prejudice tied to these theories. Ignoring the influence of these baseless claims has led four innocent people to be traumatized for the rest of their lives.

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Gregory on the Sidewalk – Alexander McParland

Gregory was on the sidewalk moments before the accident. He paced between two telephone poles, waiting for the light to change so he could cross the highway. Bags of groceries sat in the crooks of his elbows, leaving his shoulders sore and forearms numb. He had to hunch his neck to press the phone to his ear.

“What do you mean, you’re ‘done?’”

Cars raced past. They rumbled pebbles and bits of broken glass along the walkway.

“You can’t just be ‘done.’ You need those meds, you know that.” He stared at the glass; it glittered, even in the overcast.

He wanted badly to run a hand through his hair. He looked around, desperate, in search of a place to sit, to put down his bags, but found none. Still hunched, he listened through the roar of the highway.

“I know it’s been hard, and I know it’s expensive, but please, this is a bad idea. You know it’s a bad idea.”

His eyes roved from the sidewalk to the median, between the lanes of the highway. A plastic bag was hooked on the stoplight pole near the ground. It batted in the wind, whipping itself against the concrete again and again.

“This is suicide. You know that, right? If you do this it’s going to kill you.”

His hand shook. His whole body shook. The plastic bag shook.

Somewhere down the highway, a screeching of tires, followed by the violent twisting of metal, followed by broken screams. Then, another loud crash, then another. Cars shoved up the lane. Gregory could only watch. Arms heavy, neck crooked, words pointless. A fire broke out.

He could only watch.

“Moth to a Flame” - Polly Londis

It was February of ’96 when we pulled into the full-service gas station just outside of Stratton, Vermont. The snow fell heavy and our minds grew weary on the road from New York City. It was late in the evening when our Jeep shifted into park.

Snow quickly began to swallow us whole. We waited some time for the gas station attendants. When no one had emerged from the building and my bladder couldn’t hold it any longer, I left the vehicle and went inside. I had hotel room slippers on and a beanie covering my unbrushed hair. Three characters stood staring at me as if I was a ghostly phantom from the snow-covered night.

“Bathroom?” I asked quietly. Their bugged eyes followed me as I reached for the key that the one behind the desk pointed towards with a shaky hand. “And, uh, our car is on pump two.”

I left a twenty-dollar bill on the counter and made my way towards the exit. They watched with slow yet sharp eyes as I walked back out into the tundra. I nearly slipped on ice as I made my way across the outside of the building. My blood was nearly as cold as the whipping wind that surrounded me.

My five friends James, Davey, Raul, Dallas, and Dallas’s girlfriend Janie watched impatiently from the fogging windows. I rounded the corner of the building.

Next to the graffiti, snow, and ice-covered dumpster was the bathroom door that had a broken lock. It didn’t even need a key. I walked back out into the tundra. I nearly slipped on ice as I made my way across the outside of the building. My blood was nearly as cold as the whipping wind that surrounded me.

My five friends James, Davey, Raul, Dallas, and Dallas’s girlfriend Janie watched impatiently from the fogging windows. I rounded the corner of the building.

It was warm in the small room, but my feet grew cold quickly from the draft under the door. I turned and ran the water which never got hot, so I didn’t bother giving my hands more than a fast pass under the faucet before shaking the minimal water drops from my fingertips.

I pushed through the door and went back to the car. As I opened the door I gazed into the service station lobby. All of the characters had receded away from sight.

I fell into the driver’s seat and took off down the road, out towards the cabin that awaited us. Rumor had it that it would be the worst snowstorm in decades.

The gas station was home to a drug ring that was busted only hours later.
Meet the Illustrators

Ruby and Rocco.

Some fun facts about St. Amant are that she collects small plushies, sews and takes care of two Shih Tzus, later this year. She aspires to do freelance work for clients in book publishing one day, more specifically with children’s books and comics. In the meantime, she’s currently writing an independent webcomic she hopes to launch. She is inspired by observing how the world works and by artists like Maruti Bitamin and Posuka Demizu, color is a challenging but very important decision for St. Amant, which is why she isn’t afraid to experiment.

For St. Amant, an illustration can take anywhere between three to four hours, as her creative process consists mainly of the people he’s around, like his friends. He immediately jumps into the creation process after feeling inspired by something he encounters in his day-to-day life. This is what he refers to as his unique creative process, inspired by artists like Maruti Bitamin and Posuka Demizu, who create unique pieces motivated by ordinary ideas. She aspires to do freelance work for clients in book publishing one day, more specifically with children’s books and comics. In the meantime, she’s currently writing an independent webcomic she hopes to launch later this year. Some fun facts about St. Amant are that she collects small plushies, sews and takes care of two Shih Tzus, Ruby and Rocco.

Magazine

Polly Londis (Senior, Joined Fall 2019, @cartoonishly on Instagram) Having created a handful of illustrations for The Montclarion, Londis continues her artistic efforts outside of the school newspaper through her YouTube channel, @Cartoonishly, where she has several animated videos that range from song lyrics to animated versions of “The X-Files” or video games like “Hitman.” She also focuses on her animation thesis, which is centered around two cats having a dance battle. Her free time is usually spent working out. For Londis, exercise sparks her creativity. She also looks at vintage decor, textiles and fashion for inspiration.

Their senior thesis project, which is a collection of 12 illustrations based on a theme, is focused on lifestyle editorial work. In the future, Londis hopes to get into creative hobbies like jewelry and rug making and become an editorial illustrator, in addition to volunteering with a local animal shelter. In their free time, Long is either reading, walking, playing “Animal Crossing” or thrifting. Londis is inspired by various types of fashion, fantasy media and animated films by Studio Ghibli, Weckstein both lives and breathes art each and every day.

Kelly Weckstein (Senior, Joined Fall 2021, @bunnibrainart on Instagram) Heavily inspired by various types of fashion, fantasy media and animated films by Studio Ghibli, Weckstein both lives and breathes art each and every day. After graduating in the fall of the next school year, she plans to make a lifelong career out of it, in particular, working with 2D and 3D animation, character designs/concepts or visual story development. She hopes to create her own 2D animated series or graphic novel, possibly even starting a business where she would design clothing and accessories.

When she isn’t practicing drawing or focused on other forms of art like writing stories and poetry, Weckstein can be found running as a part of Montclair State’s cross country and indoor/outdoor track team. She is inspired by observing how the world works and by artists like Maruti Bitamin and Posuka Demizu, who create unique pieces motivated by ordinary ideas. She aspires to do freelance work for clients in book publishing one day, more specifically with children’s books and comics. In the meantime, she’s currently writing an independent webcomic she hopes to launch later this year. Some fun facts about St. Amant are that she collects small plushies, sews and takes care of two Shih Tzus, Ruby and Rocco.

Antonio Rizzo (Senior, Joined Fall 2021, @ant.makes.art on Instagram) Though he only just joined The Montclarion, Rizzo has already created two illustrations for the paper. Whether he’s painting or creating digital work for the paper or just for personal enjoyment, Rizzo feels his art is a way for him to capture moments in life. He immediately jumps into the creation process after feeling inspired by something he encounters in his day-to-day life. This consists mainly of the people he’s around, like his friends.

“I like to capture the things I do with them or just the memories we share so that they can last a little longer for me,” Rizzo said. Currently, he is working on illustrations for one of his best friend’s books, as well as his senior thesis project. Otherwise, he’s usually catching up on the latest entertainment, whether it’s a deep, emotionally mature film or a children’s movie.

Anaïs St. Amant (Sophomore, Joined Fall 2021, https://www.anaistamant.com/) For St. Amant, an illustration can take anywhere between three to four hours, as her creative process consists of first doing research, followed by doodling with a pencil to determine the subject and composition, before bringing the idea to the computer on programs like FireAlpaca and Photoshop. Choosing the right color is a challenging but very important decision for St. Amant, which is why she isn’t afraid to experiment when needed. She is inspired by observing how the world works and by artists like Maruti Bitamin and Posuka Demizu, who create unique pieces motivated by ordinary ideas. She aspires to do freelance work for clients in book publishing one day, more specifically with children’s books and comics. In the meantime, she’s currently writing an independent webcomic she hopes to launch later this year. Some fun facts about St. Amant are that she collects small plushies, sews and takes care of two Shih Tzus, Ruby and Rocco.
Maria Rashidah Manongdo (Junior, Joined Fall 2021, @rashidadravings on Instagram)

Drawing has been Manongdo’s whole life, which is why she is always working to build up her portfolio and eventually hopes to be a concept artist for films or games. She often finds herself daydreaming or playing games such as “League of Legends,” “Valorant” and “Dungeons and Dragons,” which have been the inspiration behind some of her favorite pieces of art.

When it comes to illustrating for The Montclarion, she feels the talented writers are the ones that help her stretch her skills as she works to accommodate their ideas.

Otherwise, she simply follows whatever her hands want her to draw. She has also been working on starting up her own sticker and print store on Etsy.

Not only does she love drawing and art itself, but she also adores hermit crabs, including her own pets Cove and Vito.

Sophia Caparros (Junior, Joined Fall 2021, @sopca.art on Instagram)

While Caparros is an illustrator who primarily enjoys working digitally, she has also picked up on other arts and crafts, including embroidery, felting and punch needling, as well as hobbies like yoga and cooking.

Her art style draws inspiration from zoology, mythology, history and philosophy. It is also greatly impacted by cartoons she watched when she was younger, such as “Chowder” and its interesting character designs and moving textures. This also correlates to her motivation to try out funkier color palettes and bright colors in her work.

Caparros aims to be a children’s book author or graphic novelist. After that, she would hope to work as a high school art teacher, as this is where she initially fell in love with art.

Caparros feels as long as you enjoy drawing, you’re already an artist under any conditions.

"If you love making things and put all of your effort into it, you’re an artist,” Caparros said. “And all the other artists in the world are probably happy to see what you make.”

Ruthy Villa (Sophomore, Joined Fall 2021, @revagaize on Instagram)

Villa, who draws and paints both digitally and traditionally, is currently expanding her portfolio and is focusing on experimenting with background illustration and character design. What inspires her art the most is her Afro-Latina cultural background and deep interest in fantasy and mythology.

In the future, she would like to design book covers, illustrate children’s books and create her own graphic novels. She would also want to venture into the animation industry, as well as create concept art and storyboards.

Villa is working on launching her own small business, which consists of a handmade tote bag shop that features most of her artwork. The shop is centered around her Christian faith and spreads the message of modesty, as Villa is always exploring different fashion styles.

Maxwell Best (Sophomore, Joined Spring 2022, @maxwell.best on Instagram)

A recent member to join the illustration team after moving from Florida, Best is excited to meet new people and spend time doing what he loves. His art is typically inspired by what he visualizes as he reads or watches something, leading him to want to be an illustrator for Marvel or a video game company in the future.

As an illustrator, he finds art blocks can be annoying but is also constantly learning new things he can improve.

Aside from drawing, he is usually cooking, hiking or hanging out with his girlfriend and friends.

Zack Spangler (Junior, Joined Fall 2021, @calamity_zack on Twitter)

Spangler mostly paints digitally, but he also enjoys 3D modeling and animating. When working on his projects, the process begins by first jotting his idea down in a notebook. Later, he puts on music (relevant to his idea if possible) and sketches until he creates something he likes. Then, he can build off of it.

His art is mainly inspired by his favorite comic book artists, Mike Mignola and Frank Miller, and Cartoon Network’s “Adventure Time,” as it’s a show with a simple premise that unfolds into a grand narrative as you watch. He is working hard to grow his Twitter art account and create enough pieces to be able to participate in artist alleys this year.

“Spangler advises those interested in art to focus on improving their skills as opposed to weighing their progress against others.

“If your drawings are better now than they were a week ago, you’re on the right track,” Spangler said. “Don’t compare your own creative journey to your neighbor’s.”

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Montclair State Players Spring Back Into Action This Semester

Adam Kaunfer
Staff Writer

Every semester, the Montclair State University Players put on a slate of plays. These include musicals, comedies, dramas and improv shows. This spring will be no different, as the talented group has big plans for performances throughout the semester.

The semester will start off with the first of two rounds of Montclair Improv League and Friends (M.I.L.F.). A workshop will be held on Jan. 26, followed by auditions on Jan. 27 and Jan. 28. Callbacks will be on Jan. 29. The show, “M.I.L.F. Night Live,” will be held on Feb. 18 and Feb. 19 at 8 p.m. in University Hall 1020. Admission will be free.

The next M.I.L.F. workshop will take place on Feb. 21, and auditions will take place between Feb. 22 and Feb. 23. Callbacks will be on Feb. 24. The second show will be held on April 1 and April 2. Its theme will be chosen by the Players’ general body. It will also be held in University Hall 1020 at 8 p.m., for free.

The Players will put on “ABBA in Concert,” a cabaret show set mainly to the songs of the Swedish pop group. It will be directed by Maggie Aube, a junior theatre studies major. A longtime fan of ABBA, she thought it would be fun to unofficially tie in with their new album.

Aube also felt the need for some positivity in these times.

“I think the world right now needs some uplifting and just generally fun pieces to take everyone’s mind off of the stress and sorrow of the outside world,” Aube said. “I think this just gives a nice moment for people to come and dance and just be happy.”

“ABBA in Concert” takes place on Feb. 25 and Feb. 26 at 8 p.m. It will be held in the Student Center Ballroom A with free admission.

Next, a dance show will be put on by the Players. This semester, Tina Petrillo, a senior communication studies major, will be directing a show inspired by “The Matrix.”

Petrillo came up with “The Matrix” theme after listening to the song “Spy?” by WHOKILLEDXIX.

“I decided to make a show around [the song], and with [“The Matrix Resurrections”] coming out, I figured it’d be a really cool event to have,” Petrillo said.

Auditions for the dance show will be held on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, with callbacks on Feb. 2. The show will be held on March 18 and March 19 at 8 p.m., and on March 20 at 3 p.m. in the Red Hawk Nest. Tickets will be available for purchase on Eventbrite for $5.

Players will also put on “The Crucible” as their play. Written by Arthur Miller, it is a fictionalization of the Salem Witch Trials. Director and audition information will be announced soon. The show will be on March 25 and March 26 at 8 p.m., and March 27 at 3 p.m. in the Red Hawk Nest with tickets to be available for purchase on Eventbrite for $5.

The group’s president, JC DeMaria, a third-year political science major, is most looking forward to implementing new technology this semester.

“We have a whole bunch of new lighting and sound equipment that I’m excited to put to use in this season’s shows,” DeMaria said.

As president, DeMaria likes interacting with as many members of the group as possible and is excited to do so with this semester’s productions.

“I love being able to produce as many shows as we do, and getting to really interact with everyone and get on the same level as everyone within our organization,” DeMaria said.

The first Montclair State Players meeting of the semester will be held on Zoom on Jan. 31.

“Grease,” the classic musical with a story of a good girl and a greaser whose summer love is challenged when they end up attending the same high school. Director and audition information will be announced soon. The musical will be performed in the Red Hawk Nest on April 22 at 8 p.m., April 23 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. and April 24 at 3 p.m.

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‘And Just Like That...’ Carrie, Miranda and Charlotte Are Out Of Touch

Sam Nungesser
Editor-in-Chief

After six seasons and two movies, the women of “Sex and the City” are back together and navigating life in their fifties in the new HBO Max reboot “And Just Like That.”

However, “And Just Like That” is a reboot where its best aspect, among the few positive elements there are, is merely seeing these ladies play their unforgettable roles from the late 90s and early 2000s once again. Each one has her own storyline, mostly having to do with them figuring out how to adapt to a woke 21st century.

Carrie Bradshaw (Sarah Jessica Parker) goes from writing her sex-relat-ed columns to speaking on a raunchy podcast. Charlotte York (Kristin Davis) learns to break away from her outdated version of “perfection” as her one daughter comes out as nonbinary and the other secretly becomes frer with her body. And finally, Miranda Hobbes (Cynthia Nixon) learns more about herself and her sexuality as a result of her unhappiness within her marriage to Steve (David Eigenberg).

Most noticeably, Samantha Jones (Kim Cattrall), arguably the best character from “Sex and the City” is absent, and that is truly felt. The show is missing the crude, witty humor Samantha never failed to deliver in the original series.

Though we don’t get to see Cattrall reprise her iconic role as Samantha, the show doesn’t fail to mention her. And every time they do, it is sure to bring a tear to any “Sex and the City” fan’s eye.

But what’s hot on everyone’s mind is the Miranda of it all. Miranda, who condemned Steve for his cheating in the first movie, goes on to take up the role herself in the new series as she begins an affair with Carrie’s podcast boss, Che Diaz, played by “Grey’s Anatomy” star Sara Ramirez.

There’s a good and a bad to this — the good being that we applaud Miranda for fully exploring her sexuality and representing the women who may be in a similar position. The bad being that she is married, and that Steve, especially the poor, geriatric version of him we see in this reboot, is utterly screwed over in a heartbreaking fashion. I mean, did the Brooklyn Bridge scene in the first movie mean nothing to her?

As for Charlotte, she contributes to the letdown of what was to come for the characters. Completely oblivious to what teenagers are like and the world in which we all currently live, it’s almost as if she was taken from 1998 and plopped right in 2022 with no sense of how people and the world have evolved. You just want to tell her to listen to Rock (formerly Rose) when they say they don’t want to wear a dress. And dub, Lily has a secret finsta, she’s 15.

The most disappointing, however, is that once upon a time these two characters were so on their game and strong-willed. They contributed to a cast that represented women in a time when only men could acceptably be loose with their goose. Now, though they are trying to mold to the times — and I will give them that — they seem to be going about it in a clueless and borderlining cringey way. Fifty-five isn’t old, so don’t make it seem so out of touch.

As for our leading lady Carrie Bradshaw, her world is turned upside down when Mr. Big (Chris Noth) tragically dies at the hands of none other than the Peloton, something to which the brand in real life has attributed to his highaltitude lifestyle of big steaks and expensive cigars.

Though it was a game-changing shocker for fans of the couple who waited so long for them to officially get together, the recent sexual assault allegations against Noth allowed his character a decent enough exit from the series before they would inevitably have to write him off.

Speaking of, Stanford’s departure was nothing short of swept under the rug and disappointing. Willie Garson, who plays Carrie’s best friend in the original series, passed away unexpectedly three episodes into filming. Rather than a proper tribute, the writers merely sent him to Tokyo with nothing but a letter left for everyone to find out where he had gone. If you ask me, both Garson and his character deserved more of a send-off.

As many flaws as “And Just Like That” has, it also has some redeeming qualities, one being Anthony (Mario Cantone), Charlotte’s quick-witted friend from the original series and Stanford’s now-husband. Anthony’s line delivery is perfection in every scene he is in and is sure to fill in the humor void.

The show also does work toward portraying more representation. From the inclusion of LGBTQ+ storylines to more diverse casting, they do make an effort to break away from the same old, same old from the past.

Further, there is nothing like references to the original show. Carrie sitting in the window of her old apartment in the Versace dress she wore in Paris is the moment we didn’t know we needed but got anyway. With only two episodes left to air, all we can ask for is Aidan to return.

Now for the big questions. Did this reboot taint our beloved characters? Yes. Am I going to stop watching? Absolutely not.

“And Just Like That” presents flaws and disappointments that are manifold. However, the joy of seeing these actresses back on the small screen together in the roles we know and love is just enough to make it worth watching.
‘Station Eleven’ Tells a Beautiful Story of Trauma and Hope in the Post-Apocalypse

The storytelling in “Station Eleven” is far from linear. The show starts through the eyes of a certain character only to not focus on him again until episodes later. The viewer is left with heaps of questions episode to episode, forced to ride the wave of unexpected protagonists and surprising plot reveals.

The story itself is strange and mysterious, and it takes a bit for the viewer to notice all the puzzle pieces that have been set up, but they’re clear once they collide and redefine all that came before.

This divide between past and present is one of the show’s most defining qualities. Without it, some of the most profound character moments wouldn’t exist. The show itself is beautiful to look at. The cinematography by Steve Soderbergh is great with the work of Hiro Murai (from “Atlanta” and “Barry”) being a particular highlight.

The biggest thing this show exemplifies is completely unintentional, given it was based on a 2014 novel and began filming in January 2020. “Station Eleven” is a perfect allegory for the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The pandemic in this show is sudden and throws the world into chaos. These characters are dealing with horrific loss and trauma, but they find a way to care for each other. Finding a new normal is hard, and letting go of the past is nearly impossible, but they find a way.

In the show, art thrives and brings light into people’s lives. The relationship between art and humanity is one of the strongest elements of “Station Eleven.” The show’s namesake is a graphic novel about a desolate astronaut stranded in space, a story young Kirsten is infatuated with.

This is one of the numerous examples of how art helps these characters work through the trauma, something this series itself can do for people in reality.

“Station Eleven” is strange, unpredictable and veers in directions that may throw off the viewer, but by the end of the final episode, it establishes its place as one of the most exciting and engaging shows in recent memory.

- Aidan Callari
  Staff Writer

‘Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping’ on Amazon Prime Video

‘Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping’ is a musical satire that is ridiculously funny for anyone who loves the Lonely Island comedy group’s over early-mid 2000s “SNL.”

Directed by two-thirds of The Lonely Island, Jorma Taccone and Akiva Schaffer, comes a modern classic. Directed by two-thirds of the “Saturday Night Live” alumni, such as Maya Rudolph and Bill Hader, as a majority of this is relatively laugh out loud humorous and the audience will be rolling in the aisles. This is a perfect addition to any comedy fans movie shelf.

- Avery Nixon
  Assistant Opinion Editor

‘About Time’ on Netflix

Despite the acclaimed Rachel McAdams starring in it, the 2013 romantic comedy-drama “About Time” falls short of the recognition it deserves.

Domhnall Gleeson plays Tim Lake, a young man who discovers his ability to time travel, a gift passed down in the family’s men from generation to generation. He uses this newfound talent to alter both big and small moments in life, including the times in which he interacted with his love interest, McAdams’ character, Mary.

What seems to be a movie purely about romance at the start, “About Time” evolves into a film that teaches viewers to enjoy and appreciate all the ordinary moments in life, whether it be interacting with a cashier or simply saying “good morning” to your family.

- Megan Lim
  Entertainment Editor

Underrated Movie

‘Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping’

‘Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping’ released in 2015 and was directed by Jorma Taccone and Akiva Schaffer. The Lonely Island comedy group’s over early-mid 2000s “SNL.”

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‘About Time’

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What seems to be a movie purely about romance at the start, “About Time” evolves into a film that teaches viewers to enjoy and appreciate all the ordinary moments in life, whether it be interacting with a cashier or simply saying “good morning” to your family.

- Megan Lim
  Entertainment Editor
Season Two of ‘Cheer’ Brings Triumph and Tragedy

After a successful premiere in early 2020, Netflix’s hit docuseries “Cheer” is officially back for its second season, which was released on Jan. 12. Based in Corsicana, Texas, “Cheer” follows Navarro College cheerleading head coach Monica Aldama and her competitive team’s journey toward winning the Daytona Beach Championship. In the first four episodes, audience members are brought into the cheerleaders’ worlds following their championship win in season one. From Ellen DeGeneres appearance and $20,000 checks to interviewing high-profile celebrities on the red carpet, mat-talk king Jerry Harris, sassy Butler, and, of course, different personalities, including training styles, choreography elements each team brings to the mat, the show together is the personal stories of the cheerleaders. From constantly moving to different houses to dealing with childhood abandonment, sexual abuse, homelessness and incarcerated parents, viewers can see that cheerleading is what keeps these athletes. From constantly moving to different houses to dealing with childhood abandonment, sexual abuse, homelessness and incarcerated parents, viewers can see that cheerleading is what keeps these athletes.

As training continues, midway through the season the teams are hit with the news that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic will cancel their entire season. This leaves both teams in utter shock and disappointment and feeling like their rigorous training and sleepless nights were in vain. With the months passing by, Navarro and Trinity Valley prepare to return to training for the 2020-2021 season, but if Navarro thought COVID-19 was their worst nightmare, they thought wrong. Just as they stepped back into the groove, breakout star Harris was arrested for child pornography in September 2020. The series dedicated the fifth episode to Harris and the accusations filed against him. It is quite commendable that the producers of the series chose to include these aspects when they could have very easily stayed silent on the issue. The episode invokes a gut-wrenching feeling from viewers as they hear Harris’ victims speak out. They can also sense the awkwardness and devastation Navarro members feel as they are stuck in the position of being a friend to Harris and not condoning his behavior. It almost feels like a funeral. With this devastating yet unforgettable news, Navarro had to push forward and stick to their goal of becoming a National Cheerleaders Association (NCA) national champion for the 15th time.

As the pandemic persisted, the cheerleaders battled through the strict guidelines of multiple COVID-19 tests and wore masks due to the high probability of team members testing positive. These aforementioned issues can resonate with viewers, especially athletes. While the question remains as to whether or not Navarro will be able to continue their winning streak, there’s one thing that can be said about this series: “Cheer” is captivating and dives deep into competitive cheerleading, a sport that is widely overlooked and deserves more recognition.
Michael Knapp

(continued from page 1)

successful Division III soccer programs here at Montclair State?

Knapp played for the Red Hawks during the 2018 and 2019 seasons, totaling three goals, with one of them being a game-winning penalty kick against New York University (NYU) to advance to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Division III Tournament.

He also notched seven assists, one of those being a game-winning pass to senior forward at the time, Nixon Soglo, to defeat the Profs of Rowan University early on in the 2018 season.

In just those two seasons, Knapp established himself as one of the top players at Montclair State and within the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) as a whole. He won NJAC Rookie of the Year in his first season, then proceeded to win the Pat Baldisserra Midfielder of the Year Award in the conference the very next season.

Knapp described his favorite moment from playing soccer for the Red Hawks.

“I think my best moment was winning the NJAC [Regular Season] title in my second year when we beat Rowan,” Knapp said. “Just the feeling of seeing [Oscar Sanchez] scoring in the last minute of the game — I will never forget that. Everyone was just so tired and limping around with the season about to end, and then I see [Sanchez] put the ball in the net, and I was going crazy.”

The assist from Colin Mulligan to Sanchez not only helped the team move onto the NCAA Division III tournament and bring about Knapp’s aforementioned penalty kick winner, but it also awarded current head coach Todd Tumelty the fourth NJAC Championship of his coaching tenure.

The win gave Tumelty his eighth appearance in the NCAA tournament, solidifying him as the all-time winningest coach in program history. Tumelty talked about some of the things that impressed him the most from coaching Knapp a few years ago.

“His explosiveness, his speed and his athleticism; those are things that he is gifted with, so when you have a player that encompasses those abilities, they are hard to teach,” Tumelty said. “Working on his soccer technique and also getting bigger and stronger in the weight room are a couple of things that I think helped [Knapp] get to where he is today.”

Another player currently on the Red Hawks and an old teammate of Knapp is junior midfielder Justin Goldberg. As a freshman, he had Knapp, Sanchez and other Red Hawk stars to take him under their wing — no pun intended. Goldberg spoke on what is like to see Knapp make it into such a big league like the MLS.

“The kid worked hard,” Goldberg said. “He had a goal, worked on it every single day and look where he is now. He is definitely an inspiring [individual] and role model. It goes to show how hard work can take you in whatever you do.”

While talking with the newest member of Austin FC in his hotel room down in Texas, this is something he made abundantly clear in discussing his journey: hard work pays off. And if you keep on working hard, your dreams will come true. Knapp talked about the impact of his family on his journey and how that helped him reach new heights in his career.

“I want to thank all my family members and my brothers because if it wasn’t for them, I would not be where I am at today,” Knapp said. “Sometimes when I was down and didn’t think I could do [anything], they pushed me in the right direction. When I had nobody, I came to them. I really love them.”

Not many people would’ve thought that Knapp would make the leap from Division III soccer to the MLS. Proving them wrong, he soared as a Red Hawk, running through the competition as a Red Bull and now preparing to make a new mark in the big state of Texas with Austin FC.

“In terms of where I came from, I didn’t play at an academy; I went to Division III, got injured and kept on working,” Knapp said. “You just have to put your head down and go to work. Don’t listen to anybody and believe in yourself. That’s why everyone was so happy when I got drafted — I believed in myself when nobody else did. I’m proud of myself and everyone else that helped me go through the process.”

Michael Knapp recorded 59 tackles as a member of the New York Red Bulls II in 2019.
Meet The Nationally Ranked Men’s Club Basketball Team

The club basketball team is making noise around the country with some shocking victories

Ryan White
Staff Writer

There’s an underlying power when it comes to athletics at Montclair State University and it doesn’t involve any of the traditional varsity athletic teams.

Sitting with an overall record of 8-3-1 (4-1 in conference), the Montclair State men’s club basketball team is reaching new heights.

The team was founded during the 2011-2012 academic year, a season where they went 9-0. Other than the 2020 season, which was canceled due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, they have been going strong ever since.

In 2016, the Red Hawks joined the National Club Basketball Association (NCBBA) which is known to be one of the fastest-growing intercollegiate club basketball leagues in the United States. In their 11-year history, only one player has been named an All-American (Sidney Dawkins during the 2019-2020 season) and they have had five players move up to play in the NCAA.

So far this season, it has been nothing short of historic for this squad as they are currently looking to defend their Atlantic East Conference title from the 2019-2020 season. On top of that, they have reached new heights by being tied for eighth in the most recent NCBBA Phenom Elite Rankings.

Senior guard and captain Taishawn Chavis has been with the team since his freshman year and he reflected on what it means to be nationally ranked.

“It makes us feel nice,” Chavis said. “It makes you feel like the work you’re putting in matters.”

Chavis plays a key role for the Red Hawks as a veteran presence and he also leads the team in assists with 4.2 per game. Much of their success has stemmed from the leadership of Chavis on and off the court.

Chavis believes that because they are like a family, they are confident in one another and just as determined as anyone else.

“I think [our success comes from] our confidence and that we really are a group of brothers,” Chavis said. “When we go out and play a team, you have to play all 13 of us. We all trust each other, so when you go out there, it’s [like] playing basketball with your family, and a lot of teams can’t do that.”

Being able to keep up this pace after a mid-season break is going to be very difficult. However, head coach Adrian Perry believes this team is special.

“I think there’s just a commitment to excellence we haven’t had on the team in a long time, if ever,” Perry said. “I think these guys are just gritty. This is definitely the toughest team I’ve had.”

For the Red Hawks, talent has never been the issue; it is a matter of bettering oneself that matters, not just individually but as a whole unit, and that’s what the team has been doing this season. The Red Hawks are dangerous across the board. They are loaded at every position and they believe that if they don’t beat themselves, they can beat anyone in the country.

“We’re a dangerous unit; we are deep,” Perry said.

Defensively speaking, the Red Hawks have made points hard to come by as they are only giving up 59 points per game. On the other side of the floor, they are arguably even better as they average 72 points per contest and rank first in the North Atlantic Conference (NAC) in point differential.

On Nov. 6, the Red Hawks recorded the biggest win of the season and maybe of all time, when they defeated the University of Vermont, who is now ranked No. 1 in the entire nation.

As the second half of the season approaches, junior and captain MJ Moncrieffe leads a confident Red Hawks team that’s full of energy and massive expectations.

“I try to set an example,” Moncrieffe said. “I try to be the person [the team] could look up to and be like, ‘Oh, that’s how you get better and that’s how you work on your weaknesses.’”

Not only has Moncrieffe stood out for Montclair State, but he has also been one of the best players in the entire NCBBA. Moncrieffe is the team’s leading scorer with 14 points per game and was named NCBBA Player Of The Week after he averaged 16.5 points and 5.5 rebounds in two games against the University of Connecticut (UConn) during week six.

For Moncrieffe, it was a symbol of validation for his terrific play on the court.

“It was a good feeling, it shows that the hard work that I put in is finally paying off,” Moncrieffe said. “But, all the credit shouldn’t go to me. My teammates go out there and play just as hard as I do every day, so I feel like we’re all national players of the week.”

Montclair State still has a lot of work to do to get where they want to be, but with a championship on the horizon, they are as motivated as ever.

Perry spoke to just how important his captains are for this team.

“I’ve had them [on the roster] since they were freshmen,” Perry said. “I can’t speak any more highly of [Chavis and Moncrieffe]. These are two of the best leaders I’ve seen on this campus.”
How The Volleyball Team Rallied Around Katelyn Monaghan In The Midst Of Tragedy

How one special gift sparked a volleyball player to return to the court after a tragic loss.

Katelyn Monaghan (bottom left in red) credits her teammates with supporting her while trying to cope with her father passing. Photo courtesy of Katelyn Monaghan

Corey Annan
Sports Editor

Eight days before the Montclair State University home volleyball opener against Stockton University, Katelyn Monaghan sat in the hospital with her family, saying goodbye to the man she’s considered her best friend for 21 years: her father.

John Monaghan, who had just successfully beaten cancer a few years prior, was diagnosed with the coronavirus (COVID-19) in January 2021 along with her mother and brother. All three were extremely sick, but Katelyn’s mother and brother eventually came out on top of the virus. Her father lost his battle.

Monaghan said, “It was almost as if she was in a state of shock,” Waterman said. “She called her mom over immediately to see it. It was almost as if she was in a state of shock.” Monaghan’s mom over immediately to see it. It was almost as if she was in a state of shock.

Monaghan maintained she didn’t want to take too big of a hiatus from the sport, as she believed her father would’ve wanted her to continue to play. A visit from her teammates and friends, Carly Waterman and Delaney St. Pierre, confirmed her conviction.

While the visit was full of lots of hugs, tears and silence, Waterman and St. Pierre gave their fellow volleyball captain a special gift.

“They gave me a card with pictures of the girls on the team with an orange, green and white ribbon on their sneakers that was in honor of my Dad, who was very Irish,” Monaghan said. “They even gave me my own shoe with the ribbon that included [my father’s] initials on it.”

“Like the rest of the team, Waterman didn’t want to see Monaghan cope with the loss of her father alone. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 cases being so high at the time, the team wasn’t able to make it to the funeral to show their support for the Monaghan family.”

To make up for this, the team decided to keep the spirit of John Monaghan alive on the court. For every game that season, the entire team wore the ribbon on their sneakers. They even brought Monaghan’s game sneakers to the games she missed.

“For anyone, the loss of a parent is undoubtedly devastating. But for Monaghan, her relationship with her father molded her into the woman she is today and was the backbone for her love of volleyball. “His biggest thing he taught me was whatever you do, do it at 100%,” Monaghan said. “With whatever I do, I never give it half my effort. He always told me to do everything the best you can.”

Mourning the loss of her father, Monaghan, a junior at the time, missed three games in the early part of the spring 2021 season. The New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) pushed the volleyball season from fall 2020 to spring 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The outpouring of support Monaghan received was overwhelming, she said. In the initial days and weeks of her father’s death, extended family members popped into their home to check up on Monaghan, her mother and her brother. Friends and family showed their support for the volleyball player on social media with tributes and heartwarming text messages, posts and more.

Monaghan credits her late father for growing her love for the game. Photo courtesy of Katelyn Monaghan

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“She was super happy and in tears when we showed her the picture of the ribbons,” Waterman said. “She called her mom over immediately to see it. It was almost as if she was in shock because she wasn’t expecting it. We just wanted her to know that the whole team had her back, we couldn’t go to the funeral since we were in-season and COVID-19 was on the rise, so it was super hard for her to not have as many people around her. We just tried everything we could to make her feel like she was there with us.”

After only missing a few games, she made her return on March 11 against Rutgers-Camden, racking up 13 digs in a thrilling five-set victory. It was nine days after the funeral.

“When Carly showed me those pictures, that was the moment where I realized I wanted to come back and be with my team and play with them,” Monaghan said.

Monaghan played a big role in the Red Hawks’ stout defense that season, but it wasn’t enough to win an NJAC title as the Red Hawks lost to Stockton in three sets in the conference championship game on March 25.

While losing to Stockton stung, it provided her with more motivation heading into her senior season. This senior class has been through a number of challenges — heartbreaking playoff defeats, a global pandemic and losing loved ones. Monaghan wanted to not only finish out her career for her father but for her teammates and coaches who showed such enormous support for her during such a turbulent time in her life.

Prior to her senior year, Monaghan wasn’t considered to be one of the Red Hawks’ premier players. However, head coach Eddie Stawinski saw potential in her based on her steady improvement during her career.

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Prior to her senior year, Monaghan wasn’t considered to be one of the Red Hawks’ premier players. However, head coach Eddie Stawinski saw potential in her based on her steady improvement during her career.
Monaghan was named a captain during her senior season. Throughout the last few seasons, she was named a team captain this season along with fellow seniors Waterman, St. Pierre and Leah Higgins. This new leadership role also came with a position switch — Stawinski gave her the libero role on the team, which is often given to the team’s best defensive player. It was a role she’d dreamed about since she was an underclassman, and after years of fluctuating playing time, the fall 2021 season was finally her chance to have a breakout season.

Stawinski praised the senior captain’s leadership and attitude during such a difficult time in her life. “I think one thing that [sports] gets wrong is that athletes have to work through something like this, but it’s not like this,” Stawinski said. “I think it says a lot about her that she continued to play volleyball even when facing this. There were ups and downs. But I think she understood that it is okay to have bad days, to feel sad or that today I might be reminded of him a little bit more.”

During her senior season, Stawinski noticed a change in Monaghan on the court. “I noticed that she was more calm on the court and she was happy on the court and you could see it in her play,” Stawinski said. “She wasn’t looking at the errors, the mistakes, any of that. She was just playing to have fun. And it was something that when I look back at everything that she’s gone through this past year, it’s truly remarkable.”

Her renewed focus on the court led to Monaghan’s best season by far this fall. She totaled 463 digs, averaging 4.5 per game as her dominating performance on the defensive end led her to be named the NJAC Co-Defensive Player Of The Year and a First-Team All-NJAC selection. Both awards were firsts for the senior libero/defensive specialist.

“I was so surprised I won the award, considering that this was the first full season without my father and he played such a big role in my volleyball career,” Monaghan said. “Still, I know he was really with me this season [in spirit]. I could’ve only imagined his reaction if he was here and I told him.”

As a tribute to her father, Monaghan wore armbands during her games this season with the words “Dad” on one arm and then his initials on the other.

While her dad wasn’t the loudest fan at Monaghan’s volleyball games growing up, he was always the most supportive. Showing up to every game he could, motivating his daughter through adverse situations, you name it. Not seeing him there and playing without him in the crowd was a significant adjustment. “It was definitely upsetting not having him there at first since the only games my dad really missed was when he had some health issues going on,” Monaghan said. “I remembered the first home game, thinking, ‘It’s just my mom now.’ But the whole season my aunts and cousins came along with my grandmother. On senior night, I had a lot of family from my mom’s side, on my dad’s side. So I had a lot of support.”

Unfortunately, Monaghan’s dream season didn’t have the happy ending that one would hope. In a crushing defeat, the Red Hawks lost in five sets to Rowan University in the NJAC Championship Game on late-game heroics by the Profs. Given the injuries to several newcomers, including a season-ending injury to Waterman late in the regular season, many people didn’t even expect the Red Hawks to make it this far.

However, Monaghan is still proud of the way she played for herself and her father and the way the team battled amidst adversity. “While I did want to finish this season out for my dad, those girls on the team are my best friends and I wanted to win that championship for them,” Monaghan said. “It was sad when we lost to Rowan, but I think we all knew how much we accomplished this year [and] with all the injuries we had, we still never took our eyes off what we wanted to accomplish. I’m proud of how far we came.”
PHOTO ESSAY: Men’s and Women’s Basketball Sweeps TCNJ

Both teams recorded huge conference victories on Jan. 22

Both the men’s and women’s basketball teams here at Montclair State University have been on a roll as of late, with both teams recording huge conference victories on Jan. 22.

The men’s basketball team took advantage of their hot shooting from downtown in the second half (7-19, 36%) to take down The College Of New Jersey (TCNJ), 71-53. Freshman guard Mike Jackson led his squad with 18 points, a season-best for him.

The women’s basketball team followed up with a 53-39 victory over the TCNJ Lions with junior guard Nickie Carter leading the way with 19 points and freshman forward Olivia Vero recording five blocks in a breakout performance.

The Red Hawks will be back at Panzer Athletic Center against Stockton University this Saturday, with tip-off starting at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

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