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- JMU women’s basketball vs. Elon at Convocation Center, 7 p.m.
- The 13-Story Treehouse at Forbes Center for the Performing Arts - Mainstage Theatre, 7 p.m.

Saturday

- JMU men’s basketball vs. Delaware at Convocation Center, 4 p.m.
- Cookie Dough Tasting Party at The Cupcake Company, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Sunday

- Wine and Chocolate Pairing Party at Bluestone Vineyard - Meeting House, 2 - 4 p.m.

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2017 in review

**January**

On Jan. 21, the day after Donald Trump was sworn in as president, there were many protest marches held globally. United Nations condemned actions taken by Myanmar security forces, and refugees fled the area.

**February**

The United Kingdom and its prime minister triggered Article 50, beginning Brexit. Turkey voted to substantially increase presidential powers. Many Turkish citizens celebrated in response to the announcement.

**March**

The United Kingdom and its prime minister triggered Article 50, beginning Brexit.

**April**

Turkey voted to substantially increase presidential powers. Many Turkish citizens celebrated in response to the announcement.

**May**

President Trump fired James Comey after an investigation linked the Trump campaign and Russian officials.

**June**

Over 70 people were killed after a fire spread through the Grenfell Tower apartment building in London.
North Korea successfully test launched its first intercontinental ballistic missile.

A rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, left one dead after a white nationalist drove a vehicle into a crowd of counter-protesters.

Puerto Rico was hit by a Category 4 hurricane. Puerto Rico’s governor called for Congress to approve a substantial aid package.

Film producer Harvey Weinstein was fired for sexual assault allegations against him.

Millions of businesses and political figures’ financial records were leaked, including Wilbur Ross (pictured).

President Trump announced the United States will acknowledge Jerusalem as Israel’s official capital.

For the full story, visit breezejmu.org/news. Contact the news desk at breezenews@gmail.com. For more coverage of JMU and Harrisonburg news, follow the news desk on Twitter @BreezeNewsJMU.
The search for help

By EMMA KORYNTA
The Breeze

Each person in the room was handed a rock and given paintbrushes and paint. To start off the first day of art therapy at the JMU Counseling Center, the counselor asked participants to paint a self-motto or word they live by. Kim Scott took her brush and carefully applied her mantra as she dealt with her depression — “enough.”

“I was able to talk about how I was feeling and why I spiraled into this cycle of depression,” Scott, a senior psychology major, said. “In terms of changing, obviously maintaining friendships and things like that, it didn’t help — you have to be proactive about that yourself.”

Mental Health America estimated in 2017 that one in five adults in the U.S. has a condition related to mental health. Though mental illness impacts a large number of people nationwide, some still feel it has a prominent negative stigma.

Abigail Culverhouse, a freshman biology major, had seen a form of this stigma toward mental illness before being diagnosed in her junior year of high school. She always thought people with mental illnesses were perpetually sad and kept to themselves, even though this didn’t fit how she described herself.

“I’m a very outgoing person, but I was just not a happy person,” Culverhouse said. “I was in counseling for a total of two years dealing with depression, anxiety and an eating disorder. It was a journey that was very different than what I was initially expecting. I knew friends who were depressed but [when] they talked about it, they were unhappy — but I was always the happy person. It was kind of like a culture shock.”

Culverhouse decided to reach out to the on-campus counseling center at JMU and meet one-on-one with a counselor. She felt the center handled her needs well, especially as she adapted to a more independent life in college.

In addition to the art therapy that Scott benefited from, the Counseling Center offers a variety of services to cater to students’ different needs. These include individual or group counseling and relaxation opportunities such as the massage chairs and yoga mats in The Oasis. These different options allow students to try different methods of healing or coping in whichever ways best fit the state of their mental health.

“They were very warm and welcoming,” Culverhouse said. “Especially knowing that I was only going to go there for a short period of time, my counselor really helped me right there and there … They knew exactly what I was going through, what I was feeling and how to help.”

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Greg Dreyer, a sophomore sociology major, had gone to counseling in high school during his parents’ divorce at their suggestion. Once in college, he decided to seek out the resources of the Counseling Center when he was at a low point.

Dreyer feels that as students transition into the more autonomous and independent college lifestyle, they should treat mental health as if it were a physical ailment.

“When we get sick at college, it’s our responsibility to go to the health center and get meds or whatever we need,” Dreyer said. “It’s just a big adaptation.”

Some people who believe they may be struggling might think they don’t need help. Scott believes people should push past this idea and take the leap.

“It’s not something that you necessarily want to do, especially in the beginning of your process, but in the long run, your life changes so much,” Scott said. “From the two years that I’ve tried to find help, I went from self-injury to suicidal and now I only have to see my counselor once a month and I’m on great medication — and that was a trial and error in itself. I’m looking forward to graduating and I have hope that my future will be so much brighter than I thought it would be two years ago.”

Since JMU’s counseling center is only able to offer care to enrolled students, some are hesitant to start using a service they won’t be able to use or replace affordably after they graduate. Natalie Harris, a junior music major, felt this way when considering using the counseling center, which is available for students at no cost.

“It’s hard to keep up with outside help when you’re on a budget because it’s not cheap, whether it’s medication or counseling,” Harris said. “I’ve kind of just been holding myself to a higher standard than I was before when I know that I’m having these weeks just because I know that it’s not necessarily an option for me.”

Many people hold on to the help they received through counseling. While Scott still has the rock she painted at the counseling center, she doesn’t seek counseling on campus anymore. However, she was able to seek out long-term help in the area as a result of her positive experience with her initial counseling.

Regardless of whether students in need choose to use JMU’s resources or seek outside options, many encourage others to find resources or people that help mitigate the impact of what individuals are going through.

“Don’t be afraid to reach out for help,” Culverhouse said. “I didn’t ask for help for a long time and I’m still working on realizing that there are people who care and love me and there’s always someone who is there to listen — you are not alone. It feels like you are, but everyone for the most part on campus is there for you. Even if it’s a teacher or a professor you’re close with, or your RA or roommate or your friends. Whatever it is, just reach out and talk to someone, because doing it alone is the worst.”

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Recreational resolutions

UREC embraces increase in participation

By Jackie Garcia
The Breeze

From lifting dumbbells to running on ellipticals, students are determined to get back on track after the long winter break. The University Recreation Center is seeing an influx in its usage rates with students who’ve set fitness-related New Year’s resolutions for themselves.

According to Daily Mail, 75 percent of women don’t want to exercise because they’re afraid of the judgments others might make. The staff at UREC is working to make it an inclusive space.

UREC offers group exercise classes, educational programs like cooking classes that focus on healthy eating and intramural teams that use its facilities for practice.

With the increase of entrance swipes, UREC has more staff on the floor, especially in the Fitness Center. Generally, UREC staff follows the American College of Sports Medicine’s guidelines for staffing, which recommend one staff person for every 50 participants. The UREC Fitness Center staff suggests coming to UREC in the mornings or midday since the busiest time is from 3-10 p.m.

“Sometimes we set ourselves up to fail when we make these resolutions and are more likely to do it when we mark it on the calendar,” Holly Bailey, assistant director of fitness and wellness, said. “To get back into [an] active lifestyle after the holidays, I encourage students to take wellness classes and focus on long-term goals, rather than a short-term New Year’s resolution.”

After UREC’s expansion in January 2016, there are more cardio machines and open gym space, which removed some of the barriers for participation in the weight room. Kristin Gibson, associate director for UREC Services, believes participants should take care of themselves and look at those goals from a smarter perspective.

“By creating attainable and realistic goals, you can take care of your body and yourself,” Gibson said.

Kristina Gallagher, a second-year grad student, believes making smaller goals is a more efficient way to progress.

“My goal is to continue to maintain my lifestyle with fitness, but focusing on different workouts like a lot of different kinds of cardio,” Gallagher said. “Even if it is only for 20 minutes, it is better than doing nothing.”

With classes and extracurricular activities, some students may struggle finding time to work out. Gallagher says she takes group fitness classes like Express Cycle and Express Sculpt because they’re perfect for her tight schedule or times when the Fitness Center is too crowded. She believes it gives her a good workout in an hour or less.

According to the group fitness staff, it loves the beginning of the semester when it gets to meet new faces and help participants with any unhealthy habits they have. Mary Healy, coordinator of group exercise, ensures the group exercise instructors go through training to be knowledgeable about the classes.

Group exercise programs educate participants on the importance of a proper warm-up, benefits behind certain workouts and importance of cardio for fat loss and heart health.

“This is important for mental and physical well-being,” Healy said. “We emphasize those things throughout the school year, but we overemphasize in the beginning of the semester.”

According to the “Today” show, 67 percent of women and 53 percent of men worry about their appearance a while. Now, I am trying to work out with a more holistic approach to better myself with being more focused on what can I do to make me happier and healthier, physically and mentally. Find a way to focus on your whole self, instead of trying to drop 10 pounds in a month — making it into a lifestyle rather than a couple of weeks or months.”

By attending a group fitness class, students are instantly engaging in “safe, fun and effective” classes, such as Body Sculpt, Barre, Boxing Fitness or Cardio Dance Party.

“Everyone is there to better themselves and no one cares about what you are wearing or how you look,” Healy said.

According to Healy, the instructors try to create a motivational and positive environment for all participants. Every year, UREC hosts Yoga Day with a variety of yoga classes that promote body positivity for anyone who wants to participate.

“For people that work out consistently, it might be hard to deal with people that use the gym in the beginning of the new year,” Gallagher said. “But it is an amazing thing that people are being so conscious about health and to realize that fitness can help mentally and emotionally as well.”

Contact Jackie Garcia at garci2ja@dukes.jmu.edu for more coverage of JMU and Harrisonburg news, follow the news desk on Twitter @BreezeNewsJMU.

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Female voices: Unsilenced on social media

How Instagram is creating a space for female artists working toward women’s empowerment

HANNAH ROBINSON | medicine for the soul

Women have been force-fed harmful messages by media outlets telling us who and what we should be for much longer than society would like to admit. This ancient form of propaganda promotes a sense of paranoia and mistrust toward fellow females. Any woman within a five-mile radius is a threat that must be eliminated.

Some of the common weapons of choice: passive aggression and gossip that cuts deep.

When it comes to uniting women, competition and comparison have proven to be more lethal than kryptonite is to Superman, repeatedly pitting us against one another in a tiresome battle in which no one really wins. Society has worked to dominate the female collective in a cyclical sort of pattern, affecting the deepest levels of the female psyche. Whether we’re aware or not, women have been taught to be suspicious of one another instead of supportive, viewing each other as enemies rather than equals. This is a trap many are susceptible to, yet as a community, we must learn to build each other up instead of tearing each other down.

In her book “Feminism Is For Everybody,” Bell Hooks states, “Sisterhood could not be powerful as long as women were competitively at war with one another.”

This short, yet powerful, statement introduces both the obstacle and secret to gaining a sense of unity for women. If women wish to rise in their careers politically, socially or artistically, support must come first from the women around them.

The majority of the world is run exclusively by men. It’s extremely important to note that although making up a fifth of the workforce, women only make up three percent of executive positions. Opportunities for women to speak up have their voices heard in the professional sector are often fewer and more far between than their male counterparts. However, with the rise of technology, Instagram has transformed itself into a platform where female artists are building their platforms.

Instagram’s photo-heavy aim has allowed female artists to explore difficult topics such as sexuality and mental health in a simple and aesthetically pleasing space.

While women have longer to live, they must do so with the knowledge that so many more female artists are being recognized.

Artist and activist group Guerrilla Girls — a famous anonymous feminist activist group — was founded to promote the voices of women. In their own words, they aim to “remind the world that they’re not alone. This sense of human fragility seen from such large artistic personalities has made room for a cyber network of female empowerment to take place.

Art curator Katy Hessel commented on Instagram as an artistic platform, saying, “It isn’t that there are all of a sudden so many more female artists, it is the fact that so many more female artists are being recognized.”

Women are a minority in the world, these women are cracking themselves open for their readers — reminding the world that they’re not alone. Instagram poets like Nikita Gill, Rupi Kaur and Nayyirah Waheed came onto the scene with a sense of raw honesty and simplicity. Their work showcases the darker parts of being a modern woman, adopting a delicate vulnerability in their prose. By talking about heartbreak, sexual abuse and describing what it’s like to be a minority in the world, these women are cracking themselves open for their readers — reminding the world that they’re not alone. This sense of human fragility seen from such large artistic personalities has made room for a cyber network of female empowerment to take place.

Not only is Instagram transforming the way women’s art reaches the public, but it also works to protect the authors from sexist backlash from larger institutions by allowing them to choose to conceal their identity while still welcoming new followers. Female artists like Lynsey Addario and Kitra Cahana are in dangerous parts of the world. Instagram has become a free cyber gallery where anyone can become an artist, allowing other female artists to connect with them and support them through their journeys, creating a massive networking web of empowered female artists all over the world.

Some of the common weapons of choice: passive aggression and gossip that cuts deep. Not only is Instagram transforming the way women’s art reaches the public, but it also works to protect the authors from sexist backlash from larger institutions by allowing them to choose to conceal their identity while still welcoming new followers. Female artists like Lynsey Addario and Kitra Cahana are in dangerous parts of the world, publishing photojournalism or documenting controversial topics where the element of privacy is crucial. Instagram works to protect female artists from racial, age and gender prejudice.

As women, we’re so powerful. We have the ability to give life and change the world. I can only imagine how unstoppable we’d be if more women seized the opportunity to use Instagram as a platform to make their voices even louder.

Hannah Robinson is a senior communication studies major. Contact Hannah at robinshl@dukes.jmu.edu.

Katy Hessel
Art Curator

“‘It isn’t that there are all of a sudden so many more female artists, it is the fact that so many more female artists are being recognized.’”

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News outlets don’t focus enough on North Korea

Possibility of impeachment overshadows nuclear conflict in the news

DAN FORD | forward thinking

The past year has been filled with in-depth media coverage surrounding the investigation of President Donald Trump's campaign relations with the Russian government during the election cycle, and subsequently, the possibility of Trump being impeached for wrongdoing. Robert Mueller, who leads the investigation, would likely be the one to conclude whether or not Trump's campaign acted illegally. Proper action should follow this, whether that's impeachment or not. Though, this greatly distracts from other serious problems; perhaps the most serious of these is the nuclear standoff with North Korea.

Although there's no question that presidential impeachment is a serious matter, it's one that should revolve solely around legal questions. These are issues that are handled by legal officials. Then, based upon their findings, U.S. senators should base their impeachment vote on the legal conclusion drawn, not political motives. But as private citizens, there's little we can — or should — do during this investigation. Yet, when it comes to matters such as the North Korean nuclear standoff, we can engage with the administration just as we would for a typical policy matter.

First, we need to rely on the media to do its job and provide the public with the proper facts on the situation and the administration's actual intentions regarding the conflict.

Of course, we can't simply allow the media to act as they wish. Instead, we need to force them to hold the administration responsible for their actions and stories as they relate to the facts. The truth is that the media has spent an exorbitant amount of time discussing the possibility of presidential impeachment while quickly spreading the many rumors involved in the Mueller investigation, often at the expense of focusing on other critical matters, including the rising tensions between our country and North Korea. This criticism of the media isn't only true of this particular matter, as the media often focuses on dramatic stories at the expense of ones the American public cares more about, because they believe these bring in critical views — and that's what much of the media is primarily focused on.

This isn't to say the media has completely refused to discuss the North Korean nuclear threat. There's actually been a fair amount of media coverage on North Korea's expanding nuclear arsenal. Despite this, the media often overshadowed its importance by speaking with greater ferocity about the possibility of Trump's impeachment, which should largely remain within the legal confines of Mueller's investigation. This parallels the way in which the Democratic establishment has also focused too heavily on Mueller's investigation and potential impeachment at the expense of gearing the national conversation toward the most important and impactful matters of today. Democratic donor Tom Steyer perfectly embodies this, believing that his primary focus over the next few years should be to impeach Trump.

We also need to hold those in power accountable, in part by letting the president know that the public disapproves of his Twitter antics with the dictator of North Korea, Kim Jong Un. Indeed, the way in which our president interacts with this foreign adversary could be the difference between a successful conclusion to this complicated matter or an unimaginably bad end, such as a nuclear conflict.

During the famous Cuban Missile Crisis of the early 1960s, President John F. Kennedy and former Soviet Union leader Nikita Khrushchev were one misstep or misunderstanding away from engaging in a dramatic nuclear war.

It took level minds — as well as some good luck — to secure the world's safety back then and it'll take the same this time around. The mental instability of Trump combined with that of Kim Jong Un add yet another layer of concern in this conflict. It's for these reasons that this particular nuclear crisis deserves special attention. We don't have the luxury of having the oval office be occupied by a smart and focused mind.

Dan Ford is a senior international affairs and international business double major. Contact Dan at fordmd@dukes.jmu.edu.

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Benefits of binge-watching

JAZMINE OTEY | call for change

According to Nielsen, 361,000 people binge-watched the entire second season of “Stranger Things” the first day it was released. It goes without question that binge-watching has grown into a new trend, as more and more people take part in the guilty pleasure of watching an entire show in one sitting. The addiction of seeing what happens next can make any viewer a frenzied mess. An innocent, “I’m only going to watch one more episode” can easily turn into an entire season watched in what seems like the blink of an eye.

In The Atlantic, senior editor Jennie Rothenberg Gritz gave an accurate portrayal of what binge-watching can be like at times. “Three [episodes] felt okay, and then it turned into that thing where you eat just one more cookie, and then one more, and then you look down and realize you’ve finished the entire box,” Gritz said.

The thrill of binge-watching is enough to entice anyone to keep watching past that first episode, until, before they know it, hours have passed. These hours spent in a world with new plots and characters could potentially have many different effects on one’s mental health. But it’s questionable what sorts of effects overindulging in a series has, whether they be negative or positive.

Dr. Renee Carr, a clinical psychologist, did some research and came to an interesting conclusion. “When binge watching your favorite show, your brain is continually producing dopamine, and your body experiences a drug-like high. You experience a pseudo-addiction to the show because you develop cravings for dopamine,” Carr said to NBC News.

Dr. Carr developed her argument even further and compared the experience to when an addiction, such as one to drugs, begins. “The neuronal pathways that cause heroin and sex addictions are the same as an addiction to binge watching,” Carr said. “Your body does not discriminate against pleasure. It can become addicted to any activity or substance that consistently produces dopamine.”

Needless to say, binge-watching is a seemingly harmless addiction in comparison to extreme drug use or a sex addiction. It’s comparable to when someone gets lost in a book and starts to see through the eyes of the main character. When reading a book, it’s easy to take lessons learned by the protagonist and apply them to one’s life. Some people even try to mimic main characters’ personality traits.

According to American philosopher Richard Rorty, “empathizing with characters in a novel” helps an individual develop better as a person. He claims that readers put themselves in their shoes and picture themselves in different scenarios. This ultimately causes them to consider what others around them may be going through and overall, become a much more genuine person.

A 2016 study further explored the effects television can have on one’s “moral reception,” a molding process in which one develops their morals. The researchers split the study into two categories: ethics of justice and ethics of care. Ethics of justice

Harmless or not, that doesn’t take away from the influence it has on its viewers.
focuses on set rules while ethics of care considers the individual’s emotions. Those who use ethics of care may be much more empathetic to individuals and have a “treat others the way you want to be treated” mentality. Those who apply ethics of justice may look at the situation first before they make a moral decision.

The study found that documentaries, news and current affairs influence an ethics of justice, but soap operas, drama series and other fictional genres influence ethics of care.

Researchers argued television may not enrich our empathy as much as literary novels due to the fact that when reading a novel, readers are able to imagine a story in ways that best relate to them. Television, on the other hand, doesn’t allow watchers to visually picture themselves but live vicariously through the main character.

Nevertheless, being able to visually see characters interact has proven to “boost emotional intelligence” and give individuals the skill to read and better understand others.

Similar to books, while watching television, viewers are able to be a bystander to a world with new characters and situations. This allows them to subconsciously practice social situations by asking the question, “What would I do in this circumstance?”

Olga Khazan, Atlantic associate editor, agreed: “I usually intentionally binge-watch as a way to relax or to catch up on something I’ve been meaning to see,” Khazan said. “I don’t really feel guilty or unproductive at any point. I just feel like it’s a trip to a museum or something—I’m enjoying it, it’s enriching me, and it’s also taking a lot of time.”

While some may try to argue that binge-watching is bad for you, if done right it can also be beneficial. Not only can it help expand one’s moral reception and use of empathy, but it can also be a great stress reliever for when students feel overworked and need a breather. There’s nothing wrong with clicking that little red arrow on Netflix to watch the next episode of your favorite show, so stay tuned and keep watching.

Jazmine Otey is a sophomore writing, rhetoric and technical communication major. Contact Jazmine at oteyjl@dukes.jmu.edu.
Once soldier, now student

Veteran redefines himself after experiences in Afghanistan

By CHRISTY FREITAG
The Breeze

It was late March 2010. A squad of five Marines was foot patrolling an Afghan neighborhood in a town called Marjah, scouting for Taliban fighters and hidden explosives. Will Chapman was to the front and far right of the staggered column of soldiers — the most exposed spot of his team. Suddenly, Chapman felt a bullet from an AK-47 pierce through his leg, halting the unit where it stood.

Chapman and his teammates took cover off the road as the fighting began. As the unit dispersed to cover more of the courtyard, Chapman found one of the hidden explosives they'd been looking for; this time, it was beneath his foot. When it exploded, Chapman was thrown to the ground, immobile and critically injured. His world went dark.

Years later, Chapman is now a junior accounting major at JMU. While he's at the top of his class in the College of Business, redefining himself after his experiences in Afghanistan wasn't an easy path.

Chapman separated his shoulder in a skateboarding accident, forcing him to stop lifting altogether. "The feeling of being in accounting was the first time that I felt like I belong somewhere," Chapman said. "I never considered anything other than military service. It's really been an experience trying to set non-military goals as far as my career."

Initially, Chapman chose kinesiology as a major and dedicated his time to lifting and training for bodybuilding competitions. It wasn't until one JMU student, who happened to be Chapman's instructor, convinced Chapman to explore other avenues, leading Chapman to switch from kinesiology to accounting in the fall of 2015. "He sat me down and set goals," Chapman said. "He's just been the angel over my shoulders."

Nichols convinced Chapman to explore other avenues, leading Chapman to choose accounting as his new major in accounting. Chapman was determined to return to JMU for the fall 2016 semester to focus on his mental health. But with the support of Nichols and the possibilities of his new major in accounting, Chapman was now student after experiences in Afghanistan.
His accounting professors, like James Irving, keep Chapman engaged with the subjects and have recognized his potential in this field. "He’s at the top of his class and I’d say that’s a testament to a lot of hard work or something that comes naturally to him," Irving, an associate accounting professor, said. "It’s hard to know, but he has a gift for accounting."

Chapman eventually began his own peer-tutoring sessions to help struggling accounting students with the material that comes naturally to him. "He just wanted to do a community service because he wanted other people to have the support that he finally felt like he was having," Nichols said. "There was a long time when he felt like he wasn’t fulfilling his role after his discharge from the military... so he was looking for something to help other people."

After Chapman’s success with tutoring, Nichols convinced him to join Beta Alpha Psi, the international honors organization for accounting, and to eventually run for BAP’s executive board.

Through BAP, Chapman earned the Medal of Inspiration last summer for his outstanding potential in the accounting field. Chapman has received countless decorations from his tour in the military, but for Chapman, he’s proudest of this award. "A lot of medals I’ve gotten because I showed up. This was the first award based on my academics and merits. It’s all stuff that I’ve done that I wasn’t expected to do."

Now, Chapman is focused on beginning JMU’s master’s program for accounting after graduation in December, and eventually becoming a public accountant. "I fully believe that the sky’s the limit for him," Irving said. "The characteristics that he embodies [are] exactly what [accounting firms] are looking for."

More importantly, Chapman has embraced his new passion for accounting and has learned to move on from his past as a Marine. "It’s always going to be a part of who I am and it’s always going to serve as a solid foundation for who I become, but I definitely don’t want it to be the main part of my identity," Chapman said.

For Chapman, he’s found ways to serve others without wearing a camouflage uniform. "I want to make the world around me a better place," Chapman said. "I want to give back to society and I think that accounting, especially like a public accountant, is going to give me a lot more options to make a difference."

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Despite the fact that Chapman’s past will always be a part of him, he doesn’t want it to define him. He’s now moving on and focusing on applying for a master’s program at JMU to become a public accountant.
‘Seasons of Love’

By ABBY CHURCH
The Breeze

For many people, the beginning of a new year kicks off with a fresh start. Some invest in gym memberships while others aim to learn a new skill. However, some make their goal to reignite the flame of their old passions. For junior English major Haley Brandt and graduate student Jack Nichting, the new year brought an opportunity to get back into theater with an impromptu trip to New York City to audition for “RENT” on Broadway.

Brandt and Nichting’s love story began at Menchville High School in Newport News, Virginia, where then-freshman Brandt met then-junior Nichting through show choir. They’ve been a couple for almost six years.

Jennifer Jarrett, the choir director at Menchville, got to see the relationship unfold and has fond memories of teaching Brandt and Nichting. Arriving at Menchville when Nichting was a junior and Brandt was a freshman, Jarrett had the opportunity to work alongside them, watching them both as soloists in show choir and Brandt as the lead in the school’s production of “Beauty and the Beast.”

“They were two great students,” Jarrett said. “Jack has a huge personality and Haley grew into a huge personality.”

Both Brandt and Nichting developed a passion for performing at a young age. Brandt did theater throughout high school. For Nichting, theater was a way he bonded with his mother as a child, from playing soundtracks to shows around the house to attending performances in London while they lived in Europe.

While theater has always been something Brandt and Nichting loved, the idea to head to New York to audition for a Broadway show didn’t enter their heads until recently.

“I was looking online on Backstage, which is this website that has auditions and stuff, and I saw this,” Brandt said. “I think I told [Jack] as kind of a joke, ‘Hey, there are ‘RENT’ auditions on Jan. 3. We should go up because anyone can go’, and he was like, ‘OK, let’s actually do it.’

“The couple found out about the auditions Dec. 28, and after discussing the possibility of making the trip, they made plans on New Year’s Day to head to the auditions.

“I really wanted to go, but Haley wasn’t sure if she was able to go,” Nichting said. “And then on Monday, Haley was like, ‘You know what, let’s do it,’ so we just planned it, booked it and went.”

“The couple’s audition for ‘RENT’ marks their first big audition for any show. They decided to make the trip to begin 2018 with adventure.

“We wanted to start the year off doing something, like, kind of fun and just crazy for ourselves,” Brandt said.

That night, Brandt and Nichting booked a pair of bus tickets and made the overnight trip on Jan. 2. Brandt had her audition the following morning and slept on the bus in a valiant effort to rest up for the important day ahead. Arriving without any expectations, the pair decided to shoot for any role they could get.

While Brandt says stepping into the audition as a first-timer in a room full of seasoned actors was certainly nerve-wracking, she maintains that everyone was supportive and the experience wasn’t at all as daunting to make in such a short period of time, Brandt was surprised by the simplicity of the process. Rehearsals for the show don’t begin until May, and Nichting believes they should hear about callbacks by April. After going through this crazy experience, the couple committed to doing things like this more often.

“I always thought about things like this as being very difficult to go do, but I mean, we got a bus overnight for like $50, and we just showed up,” Brandt said. “It’s definitely way easier than people think it is and it’s really fulfilling knowing that you’ve done something for yourself and something you really enjoy.”

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Even though this was a spontaneous endeavor, the two agree it was beneficial for their relationship.

HARRISONBURG CHESS CLUB

The spontaneity of the trip made for a whirlwind week for Brandt and Nichting. While stressful, being together made the audition process extremely special for them.

“I think it’s a lot easier knowing that I have somebody here with me,” Brandt said. “I think it’d be a lot scarier by myself, just because Jack is really good at calming me down when I get worked up about things. And it’s just funny because we’ve been together for almost six years ... we did show choir together — it’s like coming full circle almost.”

For Nichting, being with his significant other gave him plenty of opportunities to practice, and he appreciates Brandt’s patience throughout the process.

“It is definitely really nerve-wracking, and with Haley, I always forget my words a lot,” Nichting said. “I just always forget words, and so throughout the day, I would just stop Haley and just sing the words to her. She would [hear it] probably 30 times. She’s really the only person that would embrace the same thing getting sung in her face 30 times.”

While the trip seemed daunting to make in such a short period of time, Brandt was surprised by the simplicity of the process. Rehearsals for the show don’t begin until May, and Nichting believes they should hear about callbacks by April. After going through this crazy experience, the couple committed to doing things like this more often.

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In the fiercely divided post-punk era, it’s hard to find a solid ideology to stand on. Amongst the myriad of genres, from pop-punk and hardcore, to psychobilly and Christian punk, there lacks a general consensus regarding sound and belief. This problem has been long-standing in the rock subgenre. Following the 1970s, punk was simultaneously evolving and devolving faster than a highly competitive game of Jenga. Raw energy yielded politics, which yielded high art, which yielded raw emotion, which yielded pop viability, which yielded whatever Broadway hits Panic! At the Disco is churning out these days. What’s a punk rocker to do?

Punk songwriter Jeff Rosenstock has taken on a refreshing, if not needed, position in the genre since his break with the band Bomb the Music Industry! By using his songs and career as a guide, I’ve extrapolated a general Rosenstock philosophy for navigating the post-punk wasteland.

Almost everything about life is painful and embarrassing (a bummer, but necessary). But hey, help each other out and be nice (important). Try to have some fun (get drunk).

Rosenstock follows this ethos with graceful tenacity, from finding Quote Unquote Records, a donation-based independent label, to being a producer for The Smith Street Band, who is known for rambunctious, emotional live performances and Mikey Erg, who pushes the boundaries of pop-punk. Not to mention, he’s paired with Fake Problems front man, Chris Farren to create antarctigo Vespucci and composed the music for “Craig of the Creek,” a Cartoon Network series about a children’s utopia — this is what punk is now.

With the surprise release — a subsequent drunk performance — of his third studio album “POST-,” Rosenstock remains as honed into his craft as ever. The album continues Rosenstock’s tradition of energetic, punk instrumentations with thoughtful, catchy lyrics. Though the album feels heavier at times than his breakthrough 2016 album “Worry,” there are moments of experimentation. Rosenstock’s brand of punk remains distinctly more palatable than many of his predecessors.

The song “USA” is one such example. The middle of the seven-minute opener unravels into an ethereal dreamscape of synths. The song “TV Stars” opens with church-like organs and a simple piano. Many verses on the album have the feel of big-band standards. How? Johnny Ramone would be spinning in his grave. But even though these soft interruptions curb the overall intensity of the album, Rosenstock realizes this. In “USA,” he chants, “we’re tired and bored” over and over.

Everything that can be tried in punk has probably been tried — a problem with three-chord progressions. Rosenstock’s solution? Hop on a piano.

On the song “TV Stars,” he discloses his lack of skill in a humorously explicit manner. “I can’t play piano all that well / Like, I’m fine / I can get away with it / If I’m acting like I’m drunk on stage / And you’re shocked that I’m playing anything / I’ll get away with it.” For Rosenstock, punk has evolved into a mindset of activism rather than a specific musical style.

Many songs, even the album title itself, deal with the realities of living in a post-Trump society. On “Let Them Win,” Rosenstock sings, “They can hang us out to dry / They can profit from their lies again / They can shake our souls / They can send us home, oh yeah / We’re not gonna let them win, oh no.” Though defeatism is an easy mindset to adopt, the punk singer preaches involvement.

“POST-” continues Rosenstock’s sound and beliefs with wry enthusiasm. Yes, his philosophy is fun, but it can’t undo the atrocities that our country’s current political regimes are wreaking on everyday social life. Still, the philosophy is a good place to start. At a time when our country makes political entertainment out of bullies and abusers, being kind is important. While the distorted guitars and do-it-yourself ideology is great, it’s Rosenstock’s ideas that a punk rocker should stand for. Being nice is now punk.

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Women's basketball flips the page for resurgent start to CAA play

By ELI JENNINGS
The Breeze

As JMU students return from break this week, many feel like they're coming back to their home away from home. Everyone is catching up with roommates, grabbing their favorite food on campus and settling back in as classes pick up. While it may be business as usual around JMU, things are a little different when it comes to the women's basketball team.

Two days after campus emptied for break, the Dukes lost to Dayton and found themselves at 3-7 for the year. As of today, they're owners of a winning record at 8-7 and are in the midst of a five-game winning streak that has seen them win big at some points and grit out closely fought games at others.

"Having a losing record like we did really motivated us and snapped us back into a laser focus on winning, especially conference games that are really important," sophomore forward Devon Merritt said.

The Dukes have gotten red hot at the perfect time, as all five of their wins have come against conference opponents to start CAA play.

"I think we're getting back into our rhythm with things," sophomore guard Kamiah Smalls said. "Our defensive intensity is back and our defense is just leading to our offense. Right now, we're just playing JMU basketball and hopefully we'll continue our win streak."

Smalls has been a cornerstone of JMU basketball all year and her play has remained consistent throughout this winning streak. She's scored double digits in all 15 games while leading the Dukes in points, minutes and steals.

"I can say that I'm not surprised," sophomore guard Lexie Barrier said. "I just know she has a really hard work ethic, she does everything she's supposed to do and she's good, like she's just good. She does her thing out there and I'm not surprised."

Another Duke who's been a model of consistency is senior guard Hailee Barron. She went 4-7 from beyond the arc, which brought her career total to 119. With just three more 3-pointers, she moves into the top 10 of all time in program history. Barron has also appeared in 116 straight games for JMU, which also gives her the 10th-longest streak of all time at JMU. She needs only nine more appearances to move into the top three of all time. On a team filled with young up-and-comers, Barron's presence is invaluable.

"It's great learning from Hailee, of course," Smalls said. "I look up to Hailee a lot and everything that she does and her leadership is great for us, so her being here is really something that helps build our culture and helps bring us together."

Over the course of this streak, there've been some memorable moments, but one that really sticks out to team members is the come-from-behind win at Northeastern. JMU left the first half down by seven, though the tide would soon turn.

"We came back in the third quarter and we were all just on our A-game lighting it up," Smalls said. "We ended up getting closer in the third and ended up winning the game."

Now that momentum is back on the Dukes' side, their ability to maintain their confidence and poise is key for success moving forward.

"We had to really dig down and pull ourselves together and come back as a team," Barrier said. "It really just showed that we can do that and the fight we have within ourselves."

So yes, things may be getting back to normal around campus—but not in the Convocation Center. The Dukes have entered this new year in a big way and have the rest of the CAA on watch. Friday night will be the next test as Elon comes to town for a rematch of last year's CAA Championship. Somehow, it seems like this will just be another piece in the puzzle of this season as a whole.

"We just have this mindset to take everything a game at a time," Barrier said. "Every game we always say is the biggest game of the season. We look at every game the same way, go in with the same attitude and mindset and hopefully come out with the win."

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By PAIGE ELLENBERGER
contributing writer

While JMU nation was traveling home for the holidays and relaxing over winter break, the JMU men’s basketball team was put to the task against some of its most daunting foes of the 2017-18 season.

The Dukes played Hofstra, Northeastern and in-state rival William & Mary, who are fourth, second and first in the CAA, respectively.

With more than half the roster being underclassmen, the Dukes knew it would take time to endure their fair share of growing pains. Head coach Louis Rowe spoke to the trust the older guys have in him and the obstacles younger teams face.

“It’s hard sometimes for younger teams to be consistent,” Rowe said. “Especially to consistently win.”

Going over break, the Dukes understand this process needs time. Putting in the necessary work in the gym and facing each obstacle one by one will be key to a successful season. Freshman guard and CAA Rookie of the Week Matt Lewis understands this concept and how he can best contribute moving forward.

“He tells me to keep doing what I’m doing,” Lewis said of Rowe. “The wins will come. We’re a young team. We will figure things out. [He tells me] keep playing with the same energy.”

Stuckey Mosley, a redshirt junior guard, was a dominant player over break, scoring in double digits every game, including points against Hofstra. Mosley, along with the rest of the team, knows that consistency is the aspect of the team’s game they primarily need to improve upon.

“He understands what is in front of him,” Rowe said of Mosley. “He understands we all have to keep working.”

One thing is for certain — the Dukes played a difficult schedule over break. Each team the Dukes faced has put up large numbers on the scoreboard, but the Dukes answered back. Despite their efforts, the Dukes’ defense will need to be on top of its game, every game.

“We play really, really good offensive teams,” Rowe said. “Their style plays directly to our defense. We have to be sharp all the time. It’s just a league with a lot of really good offensives.”

Now that the past couple of games have been played, the Dukes will begin working on how to perfect their style for the upcoming home games. With students returning from winter break, the team is excited to have JMU nation back in the stands cheering it on.

“I definitely think having a good home crowd is going to help us out,” Lewis said. “I play better in front of bigger crowds.”

Over break, the Convocation Center wasn’t as full as it usually is. Home games aren’t the same without JMU students, and neither was the Dukes’ level of play.

“It should help having the students back,” Mosley said. “When no one was here, the Convocation Center was kind of empty. It will help.”

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While men’s basketball has struggled to the tune of a 4-13 (0-4 CAA) record to start its season, Matt Lewis has been a dynamic weapon as the Dukes’ sixth man. Lewis currently has the second-most 3-point field goals on the team (20).
Yes, I know. East Carolina turned out to be a poor FBS opponent this year. That doesn’t take away from the annihilation in Greenville, North Carolina, in the season opener, when the Dukes left town with a 26-point victory over the Pirates. It was the first time JMU fans laid eyes on junior running back Marcus Marshall, who made the most of his first impression by charging down the field for 70 yards to give the Dukes a 27-point cushion at the time. But redshirt senior running back Cardon Johnson stole the spotlight, rushing for 265 yards on just 17 carries.

“I think I shocked some people tonight,” Johnson said. “I shocked myself. It was an amazing feeling.”

Redshirt senior running back Cardon Johnson excelled against ECU, rushing for two touchdowns.

Lee Corso picked JMU to beat Villanova at the end of “College Gameday’s” visit to Harrisonburg.

Cue Big & Rich because ESPN’s “College GameDay” was coming to our city for a second time in three years. Kirk Herbstreit, Lee Corso and the rest of the gang couldn’t pass on a chance to visit Harrisonburg and the estimated 14,000 JMU fans who showed up on the Quad on Oct. 14 responded with appreciation. Redshirt junior cornerback Jimmy Moreland and JMU’s lockdown secondary harassed both Villanova quarterbacks all day, allowing just five completions for 39 yards in the 30-8 beatdown.
Last-minute win vs. Richmond

Junior running back Trai Sharp ran for 61 yards and a touchdown in JMU’s 20-13 win over the Spiders.

In recent years, the JMU-Richmond matchup has always lived up to the hype. This year, during a frigid Harrisonburg evening, senior quarterback Bryan Schor was staring down what would have been a detrimental loss that might have cost the Dukes the CAA Championship and the No. 1 seed in the FCS playoffs. With under four minutes left in a 13-13 game, Schor and junior running back Trai Sharp combined for the game-winning touchdown with 44 seconds left to play.

“You’ve got to have the mindset that you’re not going to be denied,” Sharp said afterward.

FCS playoff madness

Despite being the top-seeded team in the draw, JMU didn’t have a cakewalk. After the Dukes handled Stony Brook, they needed a rally against No. 11 Weber State. Trailing by eight with just under three minutes to play, JMU scored the final 11 points to win a game for the ages. Redshirt freshman kicker Ethan Ratke was the hero, notching a career-long 46-yard field goal as time expired.

Still, 11 points in under three minutes isn’t the craziest stat of JMU’s playoff run. That came the following week when the Dukes forced 16 turnovers against No. 5 South Dakota State. All those miscues made way for the 46-14 obliteration of the Jackrabbits that sent JMU to Frisco, Texas, for the second straight year.

“This is kind of a dream come true for being a transfer and kind of how the season has went,” Marshall said. “I couldn’t have asked for anything better.”

The victory extended JMU’s Division I-best winning streak to 26 games.

Senior accomplishments

Senior quarterback Bryan Schor and redshirt senior offensive lineman Aaron Stinnie after a 2016 win.

Schor became JMU’s all-time leader in passing touchdowns and finished his career with 62. He also holds JMU’s program records for passing yards, completions and total offense. Redshirt senior defensive lineman Andrew Ankrah is the FCS ADA Defensive Player of the Year, amassing 15.5 tackles for a loss and 8.5 sacks. Redshirt senior safety Raven Greene broke JMU’s all-time interception record with 14. Redshirt senior linebacker Kyre Hawkins led JMU in tackles with 101, good for third in the CAA. Redshirt senior safety Jordan Brown finished No. 1 in all of FCS with nine interceptions. This Dukes senior class will graduate as the winningest class in JMU history.

Indeed, JMU doesn’t have the words “national champions” next to its name. However, for a second straight year, it’s been a remarkable season to remember.

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It takes a lot for a player to step up when the coach calls on him, and it also takes a lot to be able to simply do your job. For the JMU men’s basketball team, redshirt junior guard Stuckey Mosley has shown what it means to put in hard work and be a leader.

Mosley started his collegiate career at the University of Toledo, where he spent two years before transferring to JMU. Through 17 games in his first season eligible to play for the Dukes, Mosley is averaging 19.8 points per game, good for second in the CAA.

The transition from Northwest Ohio to Harrisonburg may seem daunting, but Mosley didn’t find any trouble transferring to JMU. "It wasn’t difficult," Mosley said. "I had a good relationship with the coaches, which helped, so it wasn’t difficult transferring schools."

Due to NCAA transfer rules, Mosley had to sit out one year before he could officially suit up for the Dukes. Luckily for him, head coach Louis Rowe was in the same position when he played college basketball, and wanted Mosley to make the most out of his time at JMU.

"I told him when I was recruiting that I was a transfer," Rowe said. "I transferred from Florida to [JMU]. I know what that sit-out year is like. It took me a while to get back to playing well so we pushed him a lot and didn’t let him have a lot of off days last year. I knew he was going to come in this year ready from the start."

In terms of specific areas where Rowe wanted Mosley to work on, it was being a weapon that can give the Dukes a competitive edge.

"The main thing we worked with him last year was being the guy," Rowe said. "What we wanted him to do was be aggressive. I’ll send him a text saying, ‘Stuckey, shoot the ball.’ Stuckey’s a guy that within the structure of our team he has to go be aggressive, and that’s not who he is. We worked on that mentality of, ‘Don’t think about it.’"

On five of the Dukes’ losses this season, JMU has led in the final minute. As Mosley has stepped up to be the team leader, he knows what the team has to do to get back on track after an 0-4 start to CAA play.

"We just have to close out games," Mosley said. "In the Hofstra game, we were up three with three seconds left, so we have to learn how to finish games."

Playing two years at Toledo meant he had to compete in the Mid-American Conference. After the transition to the CAA, Mosley says the biggest difference between the two conferences is travel.

"The travel is a lot different," Mosley said. "[The CAA] is all up and down the East Coast, while the MAC is mostly Ohio and Michigan."

In a very young team with a lot of new faces, Mosley has had to step up and be the leader. Whether it be on or off the court, Mosley has quickly adopted a role that allows younger players to learn from him. Freshman guard Darius Banks values Mosley as a key part of helping the team get better.

"I think he’s just mentored us on staying humbled and poised," Banks said. "He helps me try to stay consistent on the shots I take and the shots I score."

Mosley will still have one more year of eligibility left after this season. For the team, that’s vital in helping keep them together.

"I think [Mosley coming back next year] is going to be very important," Banks said. "We’re going to be right back doing what we do."

For Mosley and the Dukes, climbing up the CAA standings is an obvious necessity. Though it’ll take hard work and improvement, that’s something Mosley believes they’re ready to do.

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By NOAH ZIEGLER
The Breeze

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4 Expert
7 Pops
12 Brewery output
13 Sleep phenomenon
14 Unmoving
15 Rotating part
16 Reason to call 911
18 Pump up the volume
19 Heathen
20 Lumber
22 Run-down horse
23 Blue hue
27 Toss in
29 Political refugee
31 Groan-inducing, maybe
34 Take as one’s own
35 Overacted
37 Lingerie item
38 Church section
39 – Khan
41 Traditional tales
45 Piffered
47 Churn
48 Too thin
52 Storm center
53 Automaton
54 A Kennedy
55 Sinbad’s bird
56 Lessen
57 One or more
58 Pismire
59 “Inferno” writer
61 Type of wave
62 Swelled head
63 Telephone info

DOWN
1 Colorful parrot
2 Texas mission
3 Beat
4 Get ready, briefly
5 Order back
6 Last letter
7 Autograph
8 “A Chorus Line” song
9 Lair
10 Joan of —
11 Pigs’ digs
12 Anger
13 “Inferno” writer
14 Vote for
15 Easter bunny
16 Scratch
17 Shell game
18 Mound stat
19 Unruly bunch
20 Dada artist
21 “Inferno” writer
22 Type of wave
23 Swelled head
24 Telephone info
30 Scratch
31 Shell game
32 Diamond artist
33 Phone bk.
34 Facts
35 Love
36 Must, jocularly
37 Whalebone
38 Must, jocularly
39 Love
40 Must, jocularly
41 Love
42 Met performance
43 Silk alternative
44 Vote for
45 Locales
46 Vortex
47 Shell game
48 Mound statistic
49 Unruly bunch
50 Lawyers’ org.
51 Barracks bed
52 Storm center
53 Automaton
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55 Sinbad’s bird
56 Lessen
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58 Pismire
59 “Inferno” writer
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JMU football’s historic 2017-18 season included 14 consecutive wins, a visit by ‘College GameDay’ and the chance to defend its FCS title in the national championship game.
Dukes fall in Frisco
End of an era: Bryan Schor
Richmond rivalry carries respect
Houston motivates with intense speeches
Father of player embraces JMU
Defense paces FCS
Bridgeforth: Where QBs go to die
Photos of the year
8 days of playoff bliss
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Comeback falls short

NDSU defeats JMU 17-13 in FCS championship game

Defensive lineman Darrious Carter dives at NDSU quarterback Easton Stick as he throws a pass. The Dukes were able to keep the Bison from scoring at all in the second half, but it wasn’t enough to make a comeback.

By SAMMY CRISCITELLO
The Breeze

As the famous Bull Durham mantra goes, “Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose and sometimes it rains.”

For the Dukes, Saturday didn’t represent the former. After piecing together an unforgettable 26-game winning streak and perfect 2017 campaign heading into the season, JMU fell to North Dakota State 17-13 in the FCS Championship at Toyota Stadium in Frisco, Texas. NDSU takes home its sixth FCS title — tying Georgia Southern, who’s since moved to FBS, for the most in FCS/ID-AA history.

“What I love about my teammates this year is something that I’ve loved since I got to JMU,” senior quarterback Bryan Schor said. “It’s a special community there. Inside that locker room we have something that no one else in the country has. The camaraderie, the brotherhood, the family that we have in there. Ending my career, the hardest thing is not have that piece [in my life] anymore. I know I’ll have these guys the rest of my life.”

The sea of purple and gold erupted when the Dukes quickly stopped the Bison on NDSU’s first drive of the game. The sounds of claps and hollers from JMU’s following were silenced as the team roughed senior head coach Chris Klieman announced the surprising move just hours before game time.

After a three-and-out for the Dukes, JMU turned to its most stable unit to turn the momentum back its way. JMU’s defense matched NDSU with a three-and-out of their own, including a six-yard sack by redshirt junior defensive lineman Darrious Carter. D’Angelo Amos returned Koonce’s punt for 37 yards — the second-longest return of his career — to put the Dukes at the NDSU 14-yard line. Despite the encouraging field position, Schor whiffed on three pass attempts and JMU was forced to settle for a field goal booted in by redshirt freshman Ethan Ratke.

The young kicker had a chance to put the Dukes within one in the second quarter, but sailed a 42-yard attempt high and wide to the left to keep the score at 7-3 in favor of the Bison. Later in the quarter, redshirt senior defensive lineman Simeyon Robinson blazed through NDSU’s offensive line to sack Stick and force a fumble.

“Those are big sacks, but it doesn’t really matter at this point,” Robinson said. “They created opportunities for all of us, but we just came up short.” Despite taking over in prime position at the NDSU 28-yard line, after two drives by junior running back Marcus Marshall, Schor was hit by a defender as his arm moved through the zone, which deflected the ball off one of his linemen and into the hands of NDSU’s senior tackle Nate Tanguay, who returned the interception for 11 yards to the NDSU 29-yard line. To add insult to injury, a fight broke out after the play and JMU was taxed with a 15-yard penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct. For the second time in the half, a JMU miscue directly propagated a touchdown for the Bison. After taking over at their own 44-yard line, Stick handed the ball off to Anderson for 13 yards on two plays and Dunn for two yards on two plays before whistling a dart to junior wide receiver Darrius Shepherd, who converted a wide-open pass downfield into a 50-yard touchdown to extend NDSU’s lead to 14-3.

The Dukes’ sloppiest half of the season only got worse as the clock neared halftime. After taking over the ball, Schor hit senior tight end Jonathan Klooosterman for 10 yards before being sacked for 11 yards to move back to the JMU 24-yard line. Looking to get down the field in a hurry, Schor hit redshirt sophomore wide receiver Riley Stapleton on a 27-yard pass, but Stapleton fumbled the ball as he was tackled. NDSU took over at the JMU 41-yard line, and after advancing to the JMU 19-yard line on six plays, junior kicker Cam Pedersen knocked a 32-yard field goal in between the posts to extend NDSU’s lead to 17-3. Ratke then matched Pedersen, and with six seconds remaining in the half, the freshman kicker knocked in a 21-yard field goal to trim NDSU’s lead to 17-6 heading into the half.

No one knows exactly what JMU head coach Mike Houston said to his players in the locker room, but the Dukes seemed to trot out a brand new team in the second half. After a dominant defensive showing to halt NDSU’s offense in its tracks, Amos drove for another impressive kick return — this time for 33 yards — before the Dukes’ offense reminded the sold-out crowd of 19,890 why they’re ranked No. 1. After Schor hit redshirt senior wide receiver Terrence Alls for 12 yards, Schor and Marshall combined for 20 rushing yards over four consecutive plays to bring the Dukes to the 1-yard line. Marshall then paraded through a stack of defenders to slip into the end zone and narrow the deficit to 17-13.

“I just felt like this team had what it took to beat that North Dakota State team,” Houston said. “If somebody would’ve put a mic in front of me at the half I would’ve told them we were winning the ballgame. They made the plays when they had to and we didn’t. That’s what it came down to ... the plays were there.”

After JMU’s defense kept NDSU from getting past their own 31-yard line, Schor completed two passes to Stapleton for 28 total yards before throwing a pick just in front of the end zone. Sophomore cornerback Marquise Bridges intercepted Schor’s pass at the NDSU 3-yard line.

After showing flashes of excellence in the third quarter, the Dukes reverted to their sloppy style of play from the first half in the fourth quarter. In JMU’s first drive of the fourth quarter, Alls dropped a wide-open pass downfield that preceded a drive-ending sack of Schor. The Bison were poised to put a potential dagger in JMU’s hopes of a comeback, as they lined up for a field goal with 4:37 left in the contest. As Pedersen jolted toward the ball for a 38-yard attempt, Robinson leaped and knocked the ball into the ground to keep the score at 17-13. JMU started the possession at their own 27-yard line, and Schor picked up a first down on a 17-yard run to start the team’s season-defining drive. You could feel the air leaving the stadium as the Dukes brought the punting unit out with just over three minutes to play. To the shock of the crowd — and the NDSU defense — freshman punter Harry O’Kelly faked the punt and bursted to the left for a 24-yard run to an open field. After getting as close as the NDSU 18-yard line, it just wasn’t meant to be for the Dukes. On fourth down, Schor scrambled as he was chased to his right and flung a pass into the end zone. Several players from each team leaped for the ball, but the Dukes’ receivers came up empty.

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By SAMMY CRISCITELLO
The Breeze

As the dust settles on a sensational season that saw the Dukes win 14 straight games heading into the FCS National Championship game, fans will come to terms with the sobering realization that the days of the Houston-Schor era have come to a close.

JMU head coach Mike Houston and senior quarterback Bryan Schor rose to prominence together in the fall of 2016, as the two helped lead the Dukes to their first FCS title since 2004. In Houston’s first season at the helm of JMU football and Schor’s first year as a starter after taking the reins from Vad Lee, the team went 14-1 — falling only to FBS powerhouse UNC.

In their second and final season together, Houston watched Schor surpass JMU program records for career passing touchdowns (559) and total offense (8,241).

“I’ve had the opportunity for the last two years to coach the best quarterback to ever play at James Madison University,” Houston said. “I think we all have been blessed to have a player of this caliber on our team and for the fans to be able to watch him lead our team for the last two years.”

While Schor’s days of donning No. 37 for the team in purple and gold may be over, the impact Houston has had on his life will long exceed his days with the Dukes.

“It probably changed my life when he came in front of us and said he was going to trust us and he wanted us to trust him,” Schor said. “It’s a special thing in college football to get with your coach and know you can look him in the eye and when he says something to you it’s the real thing. He speaks with integrity. When I raise my kids and how I live my life, what I say is going to be what I mean. That’s something he’s taught me that I’ll take on the rest of my life.”
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GO DUKES!
Rivalry rooted in respect

Despite intense on-field competition, JMU and Richmond share mutual admiration once the on-field action concludes

By BENNETT CONLIN
The Breeze

After 60 minutes of trying to physically and mentally dominate their opponent in the 35th edition of a heated rivalry, players from JMU and Richmond’s football teams made their way to the sixth floor of Bridgeforth Stadium. Just minutes after a thrilling game that saw the Spiders drop their fifth game of the season — their fourth by seven points or less — players from Richmond didn’t spend the game venting about officiating or sulking about how close they came to beating the team billed as the nation’s best. Instead, head coach Russ Huesman and his players faced the cameras and talked about their respect and admiration for a team that likely ended their playoff chances.

“They find ways to win,” Huesman said. “They’re an excellent football team. I’ve said it all along, they’re well-coached. Mike [Houston] has an excellent staff and their kids play hard.”

Redshirt senior quarterback Kyle Lauletta spoke about the words he shared with JMU’s senior quarterback Bryan Schor following the defeat.

“I said, ‘Hey if there’s another guy that I would want to win the league and go out and win the national championship, it’s him,’” Lauletta said. “I’ve talked to him a number of times and he’s an outstanding person and he’s an outstanding football player. I have a ton of respect for him and I wish him the best ... he’s as good of a guy as they come.”

Yes, there’s no one that Lauletta, the face of JMU’s largest rival, would rather see win the national title than Schor. The respect goes both ways, as Schor had kind words for Lauletta following the win.

“I told him he’s a great player, I enjoy watching him,” Schor said. “It’s just mutual respect. You know, I’ve watched him develop through the years here, me being at JMU, him being at Richmond. I have a lot of respect for him. He’s a really talented player and a really respectful guy who loves the game.”

OK, as a JMU fan this is a little alarming, but at least head coach Mike Houston didn’t compliment the Spiders, right?

see RIVALRY, page 34

Redshirt seniors Brendan Coniker (left) and Jordan Brown pose for a photo after this year’s intense showdown.
congrats DUKES
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By CATIE HARPER
The Breeze

Head coach Mike Houston motivates with pregame speeches

The locker room is quiet, filled with players who have fire in their eyes, waiting for their coach to speak. It’s a team fueled by a passion for the game, but a potent speech from its head coach only adds to its desire to perform.

JMU football head coach Mike Houston has made a name for himself on the field, leading the Dukes to a commanding 28-2 record and a national championship title in his two years at the helm. However, when the playoffs rolled around last season, it was his pregame speeches that helped bring more national attention to the program.

“We don’t usually make a habit of having the cameras in [the locker room] too much,” Houston said. “It was good the first game, so we let them be in there throughout the playoffs.”

Houston isn’t a coach who sits down and plans out his speech before each game. Instead, he uses what he’s talked to the team about throughout the week to prepare the team to take the field.

“There’s a common message that we started on Sunday that we built on today and there’s some key fundamental things that we’re talking about with the kids every single day,” Houston said. “I don’t spend a whole lot of time jotting stuff down because most of those things come from anticipation for the game at hand and a coach who garners the attention of his team as he begins to speak.

“We’re anxious for the game, we’re angry to play and we’re collected,” redshirt senior linebacker Kyre Hawkins said. “We’re getting our thoughts together, we’re focused and once he calls us up everybody’s ready to go and everyone...
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Redshirt senior safety Raven Greene's father Rasean has supported his football career every step of the way. Rasean, who couldn't play football due to a car accident, attends every football game despite the location.

By SAMMY CRISCITELLO
The Breeze

While JMU's Division I-leading 6–3 games may be the most celebrated streak by the Dukes' fans, it pales in comparison to an unrivaled stretch held by the father of JMU's all-time interceptions leader.

Rasean Greene hasn't missed a single down his son Raven Greene has played since the day the redshirt senior safety first tossed a purple and gold jersey on over his pads.

"I have an agreement: they suit up, I suit up," Rasean said. "I can't play a down for him, I can't help him do another pushup, or pullup, but I can show him, 'Hey you know what? You're loved.' It's that sort of thing that made my life and this experience really, really special.

Raven first discovered his fervent passion for football as a kid when Rasean explained to him that a childhood car accident kept him from ever playing a single snap. Living in New York City at the time, Rasean was attempting to cross the street as he was struck by a car. He was told he would never walk again, and that his leg would need to be amputated.

Despite the grim prospect, Rasean's grandmother visited him in the hospital every day and reminded him, "You’re going to leave here with every limb you came in with." While Rasean successfully turned his grandmother's vision into reality and slowly progressed to be able to walk again, playing a sport as physical as football was simply out of the question.

Instead, Raven plays it for him. "I go out and play every single down for him just because I know he never had the chance to," Raven said.

Despite the seemingly impractical notion of traveling around the country each weekend, Raven never had to take the field without the person he was playing for — even if that meant Rasean had to travel from Hampton, Virginia, to New Hampshire on his birthday to watch a game in 16-degree weather. "This goal has been made attainable by the recognition of this inseparable bond by the Greene's friends and relatives, such as when the owner of the company Rasean works for offered to pay for the Greene family's airplane tickets and lodging to travel to Fargo, North Dakota, for the FCS Semifinal game last season."

"It's hard to describe in any other terms other than it's almost a mold of me, and he, together," Rasean said. "That's how connected we feel. When he's not himself, I sense it. It's not one of those things where I wonder what's wrong with my kid. I feel it like he feels it — and that's from early on because we're so alike in so many ways.

Perched in the Dukes' secondary as Raven awaits the snap, he never has to wonder where his father is — nor does seemingly anyone in the JMU fan section. Rasean takes pride in leading the charge — hooting and hollering before and after each play to engage the fans to help encourage and propel the team.

"I've had games — no matter where we go — I've been voted the most valuable fan by the opposing team at the end of the games," Rasean said. "Some of the JMU parents come up to me and say, 'We missed hearing your voice today' because almost every game, I go hoarse. Just like [the players] lay it out, I lay it out. They need us to give them that energy, they need us to be there when they get down on themselves.

With every howl of fortification, Raven is reminded of the values his father has instilled in him since his days of mixing it up in sandlot football as a child.

"In general you think of a father as being a life coach too," Raven said. "It's been a crazy alignment — all the values that he's taught me ringing true later on in my life. I'm using those same ones to guide me and they definitely helped me get to this point and I just cannot thank him enough."

While Raven's fans optimistically anticipate that he'll continue to channel these values into his career as a professional football player, the Dukes' most formidable safety is considering plans to follow in his father's footsteps after he's unleased the spikes for the final time.

"Raven is a very, very complex kid," Rasean said. "He's a critical thinker, he plays with his heart on his sleeve. His passions seem to be in sync with mine — a natural curiosity for the body. He's a very giving person in nature, and very caring. In that, those opportunities as far as careers [in physical therapy] line up with being able to exercise those characteristics more freely.

Despite the looming inquiries from agents concerning Raven's plans, his future has taken the backburner for the time being. "He's a diehard fan and an even better dad," Raven said. "It's going to be a sea of purple in full effect with my dad leading the charge.

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WAY TO GO, DUKES!

The Official Beverage of JMU Athletics
A historic effort

JMU's defense finishes among the best in program history

By KEVIN HASWELL
The Breeze

A historic effort

JMU was able to hold a 26-game winning streak in part due to the strength of its defense. The team allowed just 11.1 points per game this season, the lowest total in the FCS, thanks to their dominant defense.

JMU's defense finishes among the best in program history

Despite the 17-13 loss in the FCS National Championship, the JMU defense, led by head coach Mike Houston, will go down as the best defense in school history. The Dukes showed Saturday that their defense was able to dominate anyone in the country.

In the loss to North Dakota State, the JMU defense shut down one of the best offenses in the FCS. Coming into the game, the Bison were second in the country in scoring offense, averaging 40.3 points per game. After giving up first-half points, the Dukes didn’t allow the Bison to score in the second half.

The Dukes finished the season first in the country in scoring defense, allowing a miniscule 11.1 points per game this season. They also finished in the top five of the FCS in total defense, team passing efficiency defense and turnover margin.

"Definitely the best defense I’ve ever played with," redshirt senior defensive lineman Simeyon Robinson said. "We’re a family out there."

Individually, the JMU defense was as star-studded as they come. Redshirt senior defensive lineman Andrew Ankrah was named the FCS ADA Defensive Player of the Year, CAA Defensive Player of the Year and was a consensus First Team All-American. The Dukes’ defense as a whole had nine players named to one of the three CAA All-Conference teams, including six on the First Team.

It’s not just the stats or the individuals that make this defense though. It was one of the most cohesive units the FCS has ever had the pleasure of watching. No matter the level of the defense, the group was always on the same page. They all bought in to Houston and defensive coordinator Bob Trott’s scheme.

"I would definitely say that this is the best defense I have ever been a part of," redshirt senior linebacker Kyre Hawkins said. "Not just statistically but what we bring to the field and how we come out and play together. We never have to guess what the guy next to us is doing and that he has our back."

Not only was this group cohesive, but when things weren’t going right for the crew, they always adjusted. What set this defense apart from others was the halftime adjustments throughout the season. As a second-half unit, they made their name known.

While there were other factors in the success of this JMU football team throughout its 26-game win streak, the defense’s play was the X-factor. No matter who they were playing or whatever tough situation came upon them, they always stepped up. When Houston needed adjustments in the FCS National Championship, the Dukes shut down the Bison in the second half. When you look back at this JMU football team, the defense should be what’s remembered the most.

"We’ve been fortunate enough to have some pretty good defenses over the years," Houston said. "The best defensive unit in James Madison University history."

By KEVIN HASWELL
The Breeze

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WAY TO GO, DUKES!
THANKS FOR A GREAT SEASON.
Get off the bench and follow The Breeze’s sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports for the latest updates on JMU.
JMU football took down Stony Brook in the second round of the FCS playoffs on Dec. 2, 26-7, behind the strong play of its secondary. The Dukes had one task on the defensive side of the ball coming into the game: slow down Stony Brook junior quarterback Joe Carbone. Stopping Carbone would be a tall task for most teams, but for JMU it was just another day on the job.

"Well I can say that there was a lot of film study that went into it," redshirt senior safety Raven Greene said. "Preparing a good game plan and going out there just knowing that we got to go out there and be us and execute."

Carbone came into the game with 11 touchdowns to only three interceptions this season. He led the Seawolves to a 10-2 regular-season record, while passing for 2,470 yards and completing just over 56 percent of his passes. All those statistics went to die at Bridgeforth Stadium on Dec. 2, as Carbone only completed 41.7 percent of his passes for 207 yards, while throwing five interceptions.

"As we went through the film on Sunday, the one thing that was very apparent was that they contest every ball, that’s the style they play," Stony Brook head coach Chuck Priore said. "They didn’t let up a lot of plays that were clean."

The team’s defensive performance wasn’t an anomaly, the Dukes did this to another star-studded quarterback in the playoffs last year. Sam Houston State’s Jeremiah Briscoe, a junior at the time, came into last year’s FCS playoff quarterfinal as one of the best quarterbacks in the country. The Dukes held Briscoe to a 19.5 completion percentage, forcing him into two interceptions in a 63-7 rout of the Bearkats.

The grass hasn’t always been this green for the JMU secondary. Halfway through last year, the Dukes were struggling to slow down opposing passing attacks. The performance against Briscoe and Sam Houston State was the jumpstart for this group. Since they made the leap, the Dukes have been one of the best secondaries in the FCS.

"Certainly Sam Houston State was the first one that was kind of on the big stage," Houston said. "When it just stood out with Briscoe and us being able to match up with them and play man pretty much all day long. The second half of last season is when we turned the corner."

Houston and company have made Bridgeforth Stadium a place where quarterbacks come to die.

By KEVIN HASWELL
The Breeze

CONTACT Kevin Haswell at breezesports@gmail.com. For more sports coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter at @TheBreezeSports.
knows what time it is and we’re starting to get fired up.”

Redshirt senior safety Raven Greene has a hard time explaining the feeling in the locker room when Houston stands before the Dukes to give his speech.

“It’s electric, just being able to look around at everybody and see that they’re just as excited as you are,” Greene said. “It’s really hard to describe, but it’s a great feeling.”

Houston doesn’t just give speeches to fire up his team before games. Prior to going out for the second half of each game, Houston addresses the players to put one final spark in them.

“Every game we come in we have our meetings, which are position group during the halftime and then he brings us up and allows us to know the game’s not over yet and we have to continue to go out there like it’s 0-0,” redshirt senior offensive lineman Aaron Stinnie said.

Houston’s most quotable speech came before the Dukes’ matchup with New Hampshire in the second round of the playoffs last season. Prior to the game, members of New Hampshire’s football team called out JMU, saying they wanted another shot at the Dukes. “That game had a certain message,” Houston said. “We were playing somebody that kind of said some stuff about us, and we needed to take care of that, and the way you take care of it is the way you play on the field, and that was kind of the point of the whole deal.”

For Hawkins, that week’s speech was his favorite Houston has given.

“Lock the gates, and not letting them out until we were finished with them,” Hawkins said. “That was probably the most memorable one.”

From “locking the damn gates” against New Hampshire to “finish the drill” against Youngstown State, Houston’s speeches have quickly become a trademark of JMU football. Houston’s passion for the game and devotion to JMU football is heard every time he addresses his team before a game.

“You can hear the fire in his voice,” Greene said. “He’s just really been motivating us this entire time and you can see how much he cares. It’s just so much emotion. You know he wants us to succeed bad, and that makes us want to go out there and play well for him.”

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Massanutten Resort wishes you the best in the future. #JMULOVE
By HARRY HOLTZCLAW
The Breeze

It all came down to this: nearly 14,000 fans packed into Bridgeforth Stadium on a frigid Friday night, watching the Dukes line up for a 3rd and 9 that could end their undefeated season. JMU was down by eight to Weber State, a deficit it hadn’t faced all season.

The JMU faithful didn’t know it at that moment, but they were about to endure eight days that won’t be forgotten.

Bryan Schor’s 40-yard touchdown pass to redshirt sophomore wide receiver Riley Stapleton on that third down made it 28-20. Junior running back Trai Sharp then punched in a how-did-he-do-that two-point conversion that tied the score, making the stadium’s tension tantalizing.

The game seemed destined for overtime, and that’s all the Dukes could ask for after mounting such a comeback. But when a Weber State three-and-out ensued, JMU charged down the field and set up Ethan Ratke for a 48-yard field goal. The redshirt freshman nailed the longest field goal attempt of his life as time expired.

“Did you go to the game Friday?”

You couldn’t walk around campus and not hear that question. For days, JMU students rode their emotional high, replaying Ratke’s kick, adding the famous heroic song “My Heart Will Go On” in the background and letting goosebumps fill every inch of their seemingly purple and gold skin.

Four days later, as final exams week pushed students’ anxiety to new heights, JMU nation was delighted when head coach Mike Houston signed a four-year extension through 2029. Rumors about getting multiple FBS head coaching offers had surrounded Houston. A 28-2 record in two seasons drew national interest. But Houston putting his roots down in Harrisonburg allowed the Dukes’ community to not just cherish the coach today but to dream of tomorrow, too.

Saturday rolled around and in came the fifth-seeded South Dakota State Jackrabbits, hot off a seven-game win streak — six of which were against ranked/seeded opponents. The Jackrabbits had one of the most prolific offenses in the FCS, and handled powerhouse North Dakota State by two scores earlier in the season.

But with Frisco, Texas, as the next destination, redshirt junior cornerback Jimmy Moreland and company terrorized the highly touted SDSU offense for 13 turnovers. You read that right — double-digit takeaways.

Moreland had three interceptions, redshirt senior safety Jordan Brown snagged two and redshirt senior safety Raven Greene returned another for a touchdown. The defense also forced three strip sacks en route to recovering four fumbles.

It was a beatdown that shocked anyone watching. The offense clicked, but one image — two different plays — stuck in the heads of the JMU playoff fans. Marcus Marshall exploded out of the second-half gates with a 35-yard dash and then, no, it wasn’t instant replay, he did it again. This time, it was an 87-yard bolt to the end zone for the junior running back.

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Get used to it
Mike Houston signs 10-year extension to remain head coach

JMU announced head football coach Mike Houston’s 10-year contract extension on Dec. 12. Although the release didn’t contain salary information, through a special request, The Breeze obtained specific contract information from JMU’s director of communications and university spokesperson Bill Wyatt.

Most notably, Houston will earn $390,113 annually, excluding incentives and his supplemental income. The head coach receives an additional $125,000 in supplemental compensation per year from anonymous donors. According to the addendum to the contract, these are awarded “in consideration for services provided by the Coach to enhance the University’s media and fundraising operations.”

In addition to his base salary and supplemental compensation, Houston will receive performance-based incentives.

The contract also guarantees the addition of an indoor practice facility. Wyatt provided a document summarizing the contract, which said the facility “will be available to all of JMU’s 18 varsity sports programs when inclement weather disrupts normal practice and conditioning opportunities.” The designated space, “located at the uppermost natural turf field at Sentara Park,” will be roughly 50 by 60 yards in size.

The deal includes a number of resignation clauses as well, which account for the head coach potentially leaving the program for a different job. Those clauses differ based on the date Houston would resign as well as the conference affiliation of the new institution.

With Houston’s new base salary of $390,113 and his annual supplemental compensation of $125,000, he makes $515,113 annually excluding incentives. Houston’s base salary makes him the second-highest paid employee at JMU, behind only President Jonathan Alger’s $454,578.

**Guarantees**
- $515,113 yearly income (including annual supplemental compensation)
- New indoor practice facility

**Incentives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incentive</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winning national championship</td>
<td>$32,509.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making national championship</td>
<td>$32,509.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postseason bid</td>
<td>$32,509.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-year APR score of at least 960</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning AFCA Coach of the Year</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postseason victory (each win)</td>
<td>$16,254.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning/sharing CAA Championship</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning CAA Coach of the Year</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
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</tbody>
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Building brotherhood

Some JMU football players attend church services to create team unity

By CATIE HARPER
The Breeze

The bond held by the JMU football team isn’t just one seen on the field at Bridgeforth Stadium under the bright lights, surrounded by roaring fans. It’s one that can also be found even after the final seconds tick off the clock and the fans go home.

Every Sunday, members of the team pull themselves out of bed and get ready to head off to church alongside one another. It’s a trip that highlights just how united the team is. The weekly visits to church came to JMU’s football program last year along with head coach Mike Houston.

“Every year since I’ve been a head coach — and I’ve been a head coach for many years — I always during preseason camp, especially for newcomers to campus, like to at least expose them to different worship services around the area that I think that kids that age might be attracted to,” Houston said.

None of the players are required to attend the services and no religious beliefs are pushed on the athletes.

“Certainly, they go or they don’t go, but the vast majority go,” Houston said.

One of Houston’s main hopes from his players attending church is that the trips will make them better men than they were before they went.

“To me, the whole thing revolves around building a team that has strong character, has integrity, that’s doing the right things, and that’s kind of our thing we preach to them,” Houston said. “We are going to do the right things on and off the field and the way we conduct ourselves and the way we carry out our business.”

Houston’s decision to introduce the team to different places of worship has gone over well amongst the team. Redshirt senior offensive lineman A.J. Bolden is one of the players who’s enjoyed his time in church with his teammates.

To him, the trips have helped the team become more like a family.

“It’s been great because we really preach family around here,” Bolden said. “Nothing brings us closer than our relationship with one another and the one with our faith.”

Throughout Houston’s time in Harrisonburg, the team has attended multiple churches under his recommendation to make sure they’re introduced to different types of atmospheres of worship.

“We went to Crosslink and after that we went to Divine Unity,” redshirt senior defensive lineman Andrew Ankrah said. “They’re two different types of churches. Coach did that to see what type of churches people would like and which one they’ll fit in. Still preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Along with the weekly church visits, Houston has welcomed Marcus Anderson, the team’s character coach, to the team. A position funded by Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Anderson is another person that members of the team can go to for advice. Houston understands that a player may not always want to come to a coach with a problem, which is one of the reasons why he has Anderson as part of the team.

“The thing I like about having Marcus around the program is the players get to know him and he builds relationships with them,” Houston said. “Those relationships, when they’re really needed is when a player is going through a struggle, whether it might be an injury, a loss of a family member, something tough in their personal life. They have a relationship with someone that they trust and … I have faith [he] is going to give them a solid, sound advice on making decisions in their personal life.”

With a large emphasis on religion, Ankrah has found that what they’ve learned about religion off the field has transitioned onto the field to help create an unbreakable bond among the team.

“People think [football is] just physical and it’s just mental,” Ankrah said. “Coach Houston has brought a faith and spiritual aspect to this team that I feel like a lot of guys are learning to really grasp onto. If you add [spirituality] in there, you are just going to be that much better just because you have faith in yourself, you have faith in your teammates and you have faith in that you have a protector up there that’s going to protect you when you’re out there on that field.”

Going into this season, opponents knew the JMU team that took the field would be a hard team to face. They knew that the reigning national champions had spent the summer practicing for hours and memorizing the playbook. However, what they didn’t expect — and what makes the team even stronger — is the dedication the team has for becoming a family.

“We are playing for one another, and at the end of the day, when I walk off this field, I know I have brothers for life,” Bolden said.

CONTACT Catie Harper at harpercm@dukes.jmu.edu. For more football coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter at @TheBreezeSports.
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Why ‘College GameDay’ chose JMU

By JACK FITZPATRICK
The Breeze

James Madison University isn’t the first name that comes to mind when you think of dominating college football. Instead, the teams thought of are normally ones that make up the SEC, like Alabama or Georgia.

“It was a combination of JMU being one of the top programs in the FCS,” Associate Athletic Director for Communications Kevin Warner said. “And also having some good stories to tell of some of our student athletes and coach Houston. But on top of that, it was everything else falling into place with other games around the country going our way in terms of wins and losses that made us the top destination for this week.”

Although not as popular as other teams in the world of college football, JMU is a force to be reckoned with. Winning its last 17 games, the team leads the nation in all of Division I football. It’s also outscored opponents this season by an average of 30.2 points per game.

Normally FCS schools aren’t picked for ESPN’s “College GameDay,” — this will only be the eighth time GameDay has come to an FCS school’s campus. However this game pits two CAA powerhouses against each other.

With the game being a CAA matchup, this makes it even more enticing for GameDay. It’s no SEC matchup or ACC rivalry, but the game is still bound to give storyline after storyline with competition between two highly ranked FCS opponents.

It could be argued that the CAA is the SEC of FCS football. It currently has six teams in the top 25 and is stacked from top to bottom with no easy win. This game pits two of the powerhouse teams in the CAA against each other, which makes for a great game.

“Great challenge coming in here Saturday, in a very, very good Villanova team,” head coach Mike Houston said. “Ranked 11th in the most recent polls, and when you look at them on film, they look very much like the Villanova team of the past.”

GameDay has many reasons for choosing JMU for its second trip to the valley in three years.

JMU has the stats to show it’s the best team in the FCS, being ranked No. 1 in both the STATS FCS top 25 and the FCS Coaches Poll. So right off the bat, it’s one of the only real options GameDay has if it was to choose an FCS team.

JMU has won games in convincing fashion week in and week out, even against FBS foe East Carolina University. They’ve also been able to beat down on CAA foes, which shows their talent.

Another reason GameDay made its choice to come to JMU is that the FBS slate the show was looking at wasn’t all that alluring, outside of Oklahoma at Texas. This was also a major reason they came in 2015. This FCS matchup gave more storylines and more of an allure to GameDay than any other FBS game could have.

Hosting back in 2015 really isn’t thought of as another reason they made the decision, however it did play an instrumental part. According to Lee Fitting in an interview he did with the Daily News-Record’s Greg Madia, GameDay was looking at other FCS matchups, like Youngstown State vs. North Dakota State. Since they knew what to expect from JMU, however, it made their decision a little easier.

Last time GameDay came, they had a great experience. All hosts tweeted about the atmosphere and how amazing the fans were, all of which contributed to JMU landing GameDay once again.

“I don’t think there is any doubt it’s customer service,” JMU Director of Athletics Jeff Bourne said. “It’s what we do and I think we do it very well.”

JMU, and more specifically the Quad, serves as one of the most picturesque backgrounds that GameDay could choose.

JMU is able to offer up stories that have gone with them through the year as well, whether it’s Trai Sharp rushing for 130 yards when his father passed away or Bryan Schor made on his way here or Houston’s instant success.

This is also the game where JMU looks to break the CAA record for consecutive wins with 18. They’re currently tied with the 2008-09 Richmond Spiders.

“They experienced [GameDay] two years ago and it left a bitter taste in their mouths,” Houston said. “The other thing we lean on is our experience from the National Championship game last year. Our whole focus is 100 percent on Villanova [because] that is the only thing we have impact on. The players, you know, aren’t fans. They will be one day … but right now, their job is to play the football game.”

When you first step back and look at GameDay choosing JMU, it could be thought of as a knee-jerk reaction and something that doesn’t really have a lot of backing. However, once you sit down and look at the team and school themselves, it all makes sense. JMU blew ESPN out of the water back in 2015 and has continued the success that started that season to this day.

CONTACT Jack Fitzpatrick at fitzpajg@dukes.jmu.edu. For more sports coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter at @TheBreezeSports.
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“Kyle Lauletta is just as good a quarterback as there is around,” Houston said.

“Maybe not quite as good as the one that I have in my helm, but he’s certainly a close second. A lot of respect for them and the way they played.”

As a JMU fan, it’s easy to be concerned. The Spiders and the Dukes aren’t supposed to get along. JMU supporters were supposed to band together this week in mutual dislike of an in-state rival. Well, maybe that’s not exactly the case. Maybe the two teams can have a phenomenally intense rivalry, while still being friends and respected peers off the gridiron.

A week after brawls defined the NFL’s slate of games, it’s nice to see teams competing at a high level, while still treating each other with respect. Sure, there were a few unsportsmanlike conduct penalties, but the two teams clearly showed understanding of their opponents’ talent. Respecting your competitor doesn’t diminish the rivalry, either. In fact, it might even improve it.

There’s going to be a closeness between JMU and Richmond in future matchups. This year, 21 players on JMU’s roster are either from Richmond or a Richmond suburb. Players on both sides competed against each other in high school and in some instances were even on the same team. With this level of familiarity, the intensity is going to be high as the players want to beat the guys they’ve been squaring off against for years.

That intensity has led to great contests the past three years, with the Dukes outscoring the Spiders by just one point (116-115) across the three matchups. In 2015, Richmond spoiled JMU’s homecoming and ESPN’s “College GameDay” visit with a 59-49 win. Last year, JMU used fourth-quarter touchdowns to earn a hard-fought 47-43 victory. This year, the Dukes used a Trai Sharp touchdown in the final minute to win by seven. Houston expects much of the same in future matchups.

“What a game,” Houston said. “I’ve been in two of these now and they both went down to the final drive, so I guess I better get used to this [being] what JMU-Richmond is like every year.”

If the Dukes and Spiders perform on the field the way they have the past three years and treat each other with the respect they had this season, fans are in for not only a tremendous show, but also a perfect example of the highest level of sportsmanship. As a student at JMU and a massive college football fan, I can’t ask for anything more.

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