

★ [SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE] ★



SPRING
TRAINING
PREVIEW
>>> PAGES 34-35

PRESS BOX

No.
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01/02.18
★

SPORTSPERSON
OF THE YEAR
★ **JOHN TILLMAN**
MARYLAND MEN'S LACROSSE COACH

THE BEST OF BALTIMORE SPORTS

PRESSBOX RECOGNIZES THE TOP
PEOPLE, PERFORMANCES AND MOMENTS OF 2017

★ PAGE 6 ★

NATIONAL CHAMPION



NCAA
LACROSSE
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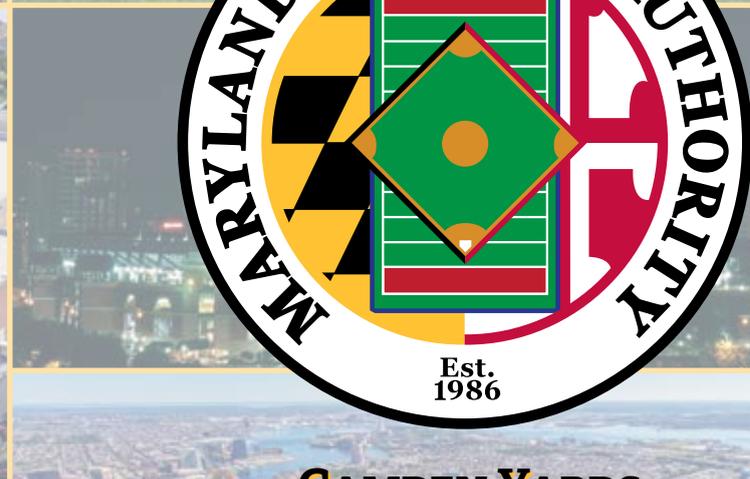


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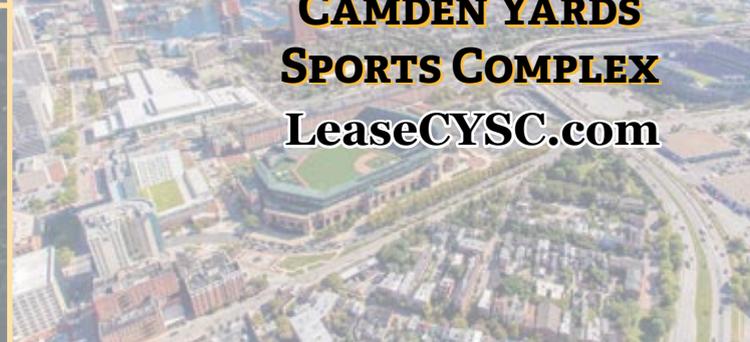


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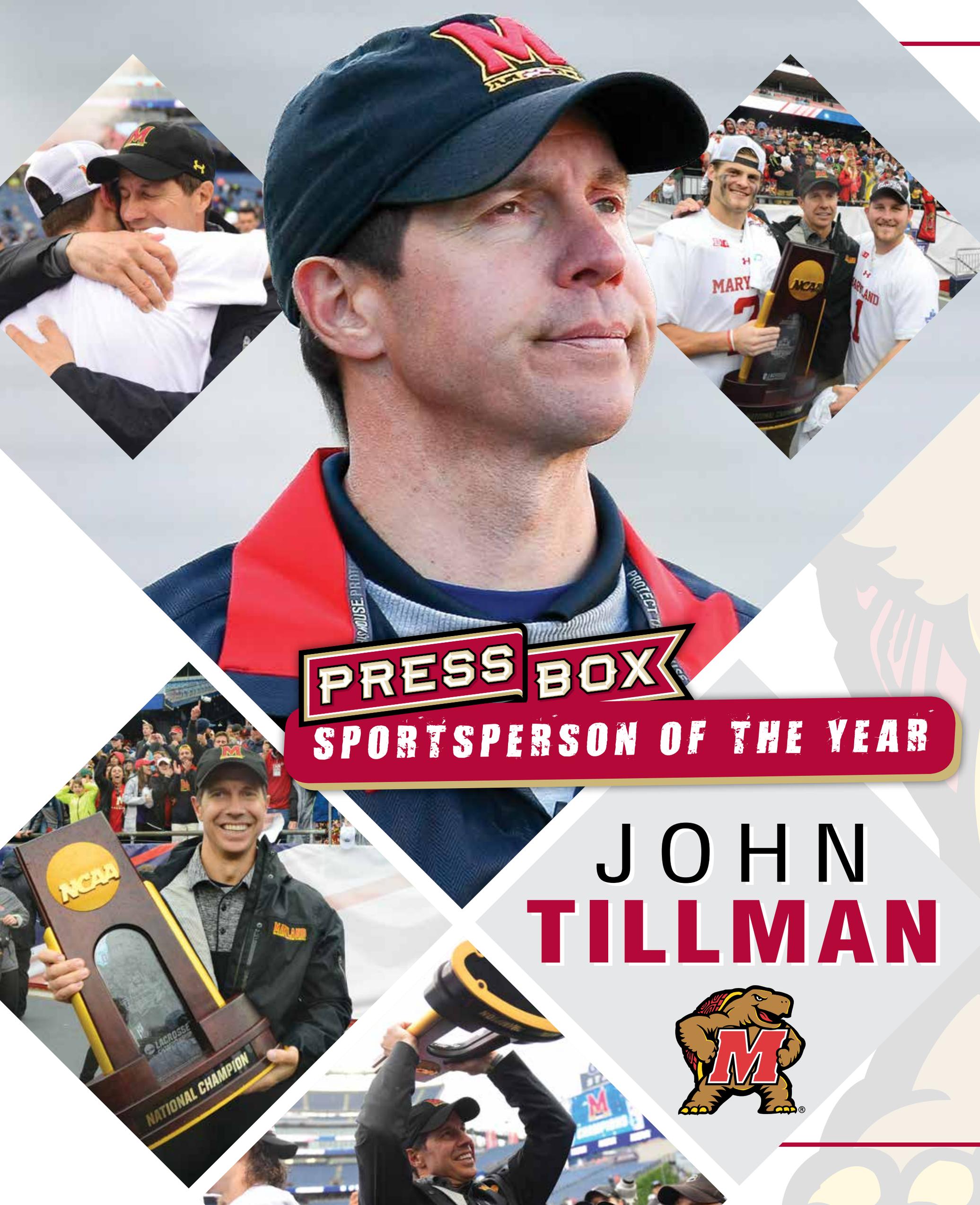
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PRESS BOX

SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR

**JOHN
TILLMAN**



When the **PressBox** editorial department met to determine its Sportsman of the Year, it didn't take long to reach a conclusion. The Maryland men's lacrosse team had endured a 42-year title drought and nine championship game defeats before head coach John Tillman guided the Terps back to the top, capturing the national title with a 9-6 victory against Ohio State May 29.

PressBox publisher Stan "The Fan" Charles sat down with Tillman to talk about the drought, what the title meant to the lacrosse community, the top-notch talent that surrounds him at Maryland and more.

The following interview has been edited for clarity and content.

PressBox: First of all, congratulations, long overdue. After what the program went through from 1975 to 2016, a 42-year championship drought, when your championship was just about to be finalized, what were you thinking of when you knew you'd won?

John Tillman: It's funny. You're so much in the moment, and you are very much coaching to the last second. You're so involved in the game, it doesn't hit. A number of people asked me, 'When does it really hit?' I don't know if it's still really hit. As crazy as it is, as soon as that game is over, everyone is excited. It's great to see the smiling faces of our kids just celebrating, to look into the stands to see parents crying, alums crying and things like that. To me, that was maybe the most special part of it -- the reaction of everybody and just knowing what it meant to so many people. You look at it kind of going full circle, knowing what it meant to so many people, and that's what drove our guys. Not for themselves, but for everybody else.

... Everything kind of came together and meshed. It wasn't one team, it was everybody helping us along but us in turn trying to do it, not for ourselves. It kind of became this really healthy approach to things, and to me that was a big part of our success.

PB: That Maryland lacrosse family -- I know you have developed a pretty special relationship with former head coaches Dick Edell and Dave Cottle and the alumni players. How did that get transmitted to you, and how important was this to all of them?

JT: You get around this program and you see how much it means to so many people. Sometimes it's not even, like, what they say, it's just seeing the relationships.

... It's very evident how much it means to everybody, what the experience here has meant to the alums, how it shaped them, their friendships, their successes, maybe disappointment, how they learn from it. Certainly, from all of the coaches, it goes deeper than that.

... Then there's [former head coach] Dino Mattesich and Dick Edell and Coach Cottle. I've been very lucky because I've been able to meet those guys, learn from them and kind of take the lessons that they learned and were nice enough to offer things that mentor and help me. I really felt like it was the culmination of what they learned, I was able to take. Then we took, instead of the negative aspects of 42 years, we were going to kind of rally around, 'Hey, it's been 42 years, we're going to do it for everybody else,' so it became this really healthy thing, not this monkey on our back.

... Dick always used to say, 'I could tell you a lot about how to win Saturday, but, Monday, I can't talk to you much about that.' He kind of said that jokingly, but I think everybody wanted the same result, and I think what was awesome, looking in the stands, there were a number of guys that played here and were on the field on Memorial Day when things didn't go well. Instead of being envious or jealous that they didn't win, everybody wanted to win it, whether they were playing in the game or not, they wanted it for Maryland. They wanted it for this team. This team wanted it for them. Again, it just became, to me, this awesome, awesome vibe, this feeling, this approach to things that was really healthy and it just kind of kept driving us along.

PB: You were hired by former Maryland athletic director Debbie Yow, but she never saw you coach a single game (she left Maryland to become athletic director at North Carolina State). When you were hired, what was the conversation about?

JT: When I did meet with Debbie, there were some different things that came about. I was obviously flattered, because this is one of the most historic lacrosse programs and

a great university in a state where lacrosse is so important. Are you interested? Yes, but it's almost like if you're dating somebody you really like, some pretty girl could walk up, but you're just so focused on one thing that it's hard to look at another -- even though you would definitely merit the fact that, yeah, she's pretty. My conversations with her were like, 'Listen, Dave Cottle is one of the best coaches ever and he just got let go. He's done a lot more than I have.' It's hard at a place like Maryland to hire a coach that was [5-6-1] at Harvard. You're not going to make a lot of people happy. One of the things I mentioned to her was, if this happens, there are certain things that are really important to me. Developing young men to their full potential as people, students and players, that's something that's really important to me.

PB: You had to feel a certain comfort level that you could build what you wanted to build.

JT: I heard people saying, 'Hey, I don't think Maryland can do it.' It had been 35 years, maybe the best years are behind them and you can't do it. That's probably, for me, the way I've always been, if somebody says you can't do something, that all of a sudden hits your competitive spirit. You're like, 'Who says we can't?'

PB: I wouldn't wish the frustrations of your first six seasons on anyone, but how did they build the long-term resolve and character that you and your team embody?

JT: It's always tough when you go on a journey and you get really, really far. You go the distance or you go a pretty long way and you get to a place where a lot of people aren't able to go, you feel very blessed to get there. You realize the kids are doing a lot of things right and your staff has done a really good job, so you're kind of close to where you want to be, but all of us are competitors; you're never going to be satisfied coming in second or third or fourth or anywhere like that. The closer you get sometimes, the harder it is to swallow when you get there. I think all of us can relate to that.

... We try to help them along the way, but there was a lot to be excited about and, like anything, as the leader, if I'm disappointed, I'm feeling sorry for myself, the kids will basically play off of that, so you have to really grit your teeth and basically go, 'Listen. It's over, it's done. We can't change it. What can we learn? What can we do better? How can we change things?'

PB: You were an assistant at the Naval Academy, and after your first year here at Maryland, Navy kind of came after you openly and tried to hire you away, but you stayed committed to Maryland. Do you now feel after being here seven years this is your dream job and you'll be here pretty much for the remainder of your college career?

JT: Yeah, everywhere I've gone, I've always felt like that was the last place I'd be. To me, it just immerses yourself in the place and all your focus goes there.

... What I loved about Maryland seven years ago, I still feel the same way if not stronger that it is a special place. Now, with what they're doing, like the school just academically is even stronger than it was seven years ago. What they're doing in the town, the academic buildings that they're building, the athletic facilities that they're building, the future is even stronger. Now, knowing that we are working on a culture that we are excited about, I think people are excited about what we are doing. It does feel like home and it is truly a special place and unique to itself.

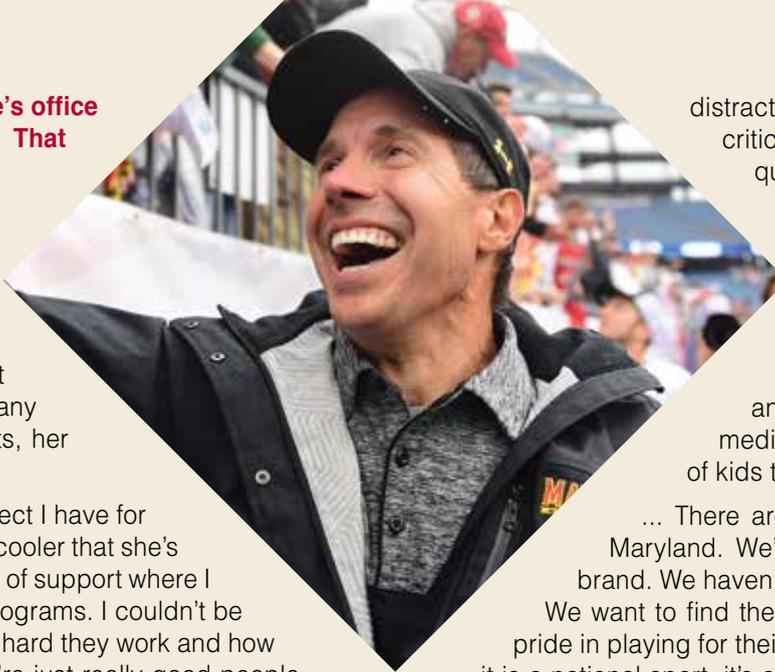
PB: Women's lacrosse head coach Cathy Reese's office is next door. She's had tremendous success. That must keep the bar tremendously high.

JT: I don't know if they get enough credit for what they've done. You look at some of just the records that they put together and obviously all the championships speak for themselves. Their consistent excellence is, you look at what they've done in not only lacrosse, you look at what they've done relative to other athletic programs in any sport, it's phenomenal. I look at some of the stats, her record at home, at Maryland, is absurd.

... I learn a lot from Cathy and there's a lot of respect I have for her, her staff, how they do things. It makes it even cooler that she's married to Brian Reese, who is a Terp. There's a lot of support where I think sometimes there's a jealousy between the programs. I couldn't be happier for their success. Not only do I know how hard they work and how much they invest, I just love them to death. They're just really good people, so you're going to pull for them. Then you've got [field hockey head coach] Missy [Meharg] next door who is phenomenal. [Men's soccer head coach] Sasho [Cirovski] is fantastic. Men's basketball head coach [Mark Turgeon] is awesome, and you look at the amazing job [women's volleyball coach] Steve Aird has done. I could go on and on and on. We have so many great coaches here that every day you can walk in and talk to somebody, pick up something new and get better. That's part of the humility of all this. Missy and Cathy have won a lot of titles. We've done OK, they've done even better. I think we joked it took us 42 years to do it, Cathy's won [11, as a player, assistant and head coach], but it's like if I lived another 400 some-odd years, and they didn't win one, which probably wouldn't happen anyway, I'd have a chance to catch her. She's done a lot more than I have. She's running out of fingers. She's going to have to start putting rings on her toes.

PB: Now that you've won a title, how different is it for you heading into 2018? With the burden of winning one out of the way, does it free you up some?

JT: ... I think not having to hear that it's been 42 years, because that's just a



distraction -- and I get why people would ask it, I'm not critical of that --- it's just nice not to have to answer that question anymore.

PB: Recruiting is the lifeline of your success. You've never had a tough time getting good players here. But how has it changed since winning the championship?

JT: When you're at the Final Four year after year, and with TV, we're on the TV so much and our social media people do a great job, I think there's a generation of kids that are seeing Maryland a lot more.

... There are a lot of kids that have always wanted to go to Maryland. We've been very blessed that we've had a national brand. We haven't limited ourselves to only recruiting Maryland kids. We want to find the right kids in Maryland to be Terps, kids that take pride in playing for their state, guys that want to run behind that flag. Also, it is a national sport, it's an international sport, it's really just finding the right guys that really know what it means to be a Terp, that are going to be willing to do the things that we ask.

PB: You inherited a real solid fan base. How have you seen that grow throughout the seven-year period?

JT: I think that's part of what you love about a place like this. It is important to our state, it's important to Terp Nation. ... What I think is really cool is, you'll drive through a neighborhood and not only will you see an American flag, you'll see the Maryland flag and you'll see a goal in the backyard. To me, it's just cool. What's been important for us is to play a style but also have guys that people would want to support. We talk about that a lot. We want to be a group that people want to support because of the way we're doing our business. ♦

- PHOTOGRAPHY -

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THE BEST OF Baltimore Sports 2017

2017 was a year of highs and, well, probably a few more lows than we would have preferred in Baltimore sports. The *PressBox* staff went to work in the fall to debate the top people, performances and moments of the year. There was consensus for some topics while others led to sparring that would have made Ravens center Ryan Jensen blush. But after much deliberation, *PressBox* is proud to present the inaugural Best of Baltimore Sports.

BEST ORIOLE

Second baseman Jonathan Schoop had been overshadowed by teammate and friend Manny Machado in the past, but no Oriole had a better 2017 than Schoop.

Schoop was named Most Valuable Oriole, and after watching Machado play in three All-Star Games, Schoop made his first All-Star team while Machado watched from the stands.

Schoop's mentor, third base coach Bobby Dickerson, brought Schoop into manager Buck Showalter's office for the news about the All-Star team, implying he was there because Schoop had been traded. Dickerson began to cry when Showalter told Schoop he was an All-Star.

Dickerson has been close with Schoop for years, going back to when Schoop wasn't considered a top prospect. In 2017, the 26-year-old set team records for home runs (32) and RBIs (105) by a second baseman.

His biggest thrill came when he played in the All-Star Game in Miami, Machado's hometown.

"I'm going to stay in his house," Schoop said jokingly when he was named to the All-Star team. "I want to bring my family to stay in his house."

BEST ORIOLES PROSPECT

This past season, **outfielder Austin Hays** became the first player from the 2016 draft to play in the majors. He was named the Orioles' top minor league player after batting .329 with 32 home runs and 95 RBIs at Single-A Frederick and Double-A Bowie. That performance earned Hays a promotion to the big leagues, where he hit .217 in 20 late-season games. Hays enjoyed the perks of being in the majors, such as weight rooms and barbers at the ballparks. "No roommates anymore, either," he said.



Kenya Allen/PressBox



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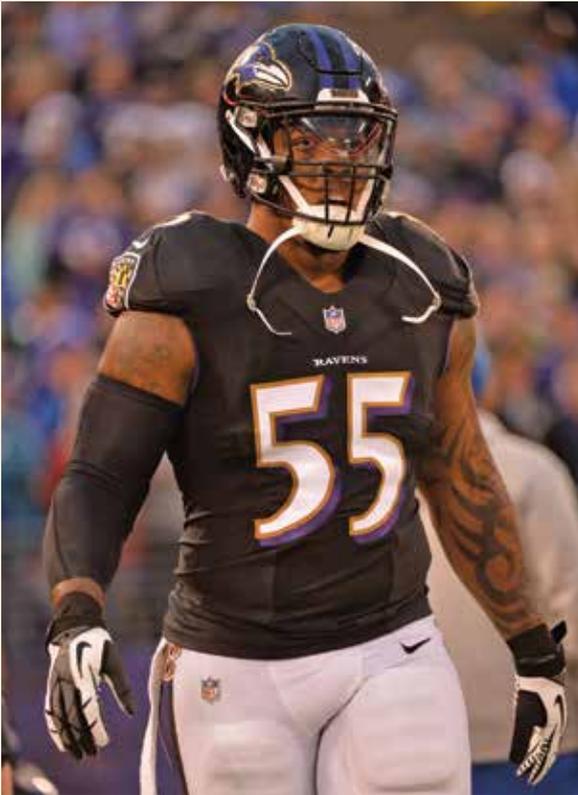
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BEST RAVEN

At age 35, **linebacker Terrell Suggs** beat back not only opposing offensive linemen, but also Father Time. He was the physical and emotional leader of a defense who carried the team for large stretches of the season.

In a departure from previous years, Suggs stayed in Maryland during the offseason and bought in completely to the Ravens' strength and conditioning program headed by director of performance Steve Saunders. The result, as outgoing defensive coordinator Dean Pees said last summer, was that Suggs looked "25 years old again."

Opposing tackles would probably agree, as Suggs recorded a team-high 11 sacks, forced a team-high four fumbles, and was named to the Pro Bowl for the seventh time in his career. And he was not just a situational pass rusher; Suggs continued to play 80 to 90 percent of the defensive snaps for a defense that ranked 12th overall and recorded three shutouts, one shy of the franchise record.

Suggs has openly talked about being on the "back nine" of his career, but he proved this season that he still has a few good swings left.

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APRIL 7	12:00	YOUTH DAY	OHIO STATE	1.00	HOFSTRA
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BEST MALE TERP

Maryland men's lacrosse attackman **Matt Rambo** was the Terps' first male recipient of the Tewaaraton Award. During his senior season, Rambo became Maryland's all-time leader in points, breaking a record set in 1980, and goals. His 62 career NCAA Tournament points mark the most nationally among all players since 2000. And perhaps most importantly, Rambo helped the men's team end a 42-year title drought. He ended his collegiate career as the centerpiece of one of Maryland's all-time great teams.

BEST FEMALE TERP

Maryland women's lacrosse midfielder **Zoe Stukenberg** left her mark during her four years with the program. During her senior year, the Tewaaraton winner ranked in the top three on the team in every statistical category and led the Terps to their third national title during her tenure. During the championship game, Stukenberg recorded three assists, three ground balls, four draw controls and three caused turnovers. She was a force on a team loaded with talent and will be difficult to replace.

BEST MALE COLLEGE ATHLETE

In his senior year, **Johns Hopkins swimmer Evan Holder** broke a 29-year-old national record to become the first Hopkins swimmer to win the 200 freestyle at the NCAA Division III Championships since 1978. He earned All-America honors in the maximum seven events, placing second in the 200 IM and third in the 100 breast. He was a member of two runner-up freestyle relays as well as third- and fifth-place medley relays.

BEST FEMALE COLLEGE ATHLETE

A four-time NCAA Championships qualifier, **UMBC swimmer Emily Escobedo** finished third in the 200 breast to earn 2017 All-America honors and was an honorable mention All-American in the 200 IM and 100 breast. As a junior, she became the first UMBC swimmer to earn points at the NCAA Championships. Escobedo was named to the USA Swimming National Team after qualifying in the 200 breast in August.

BEST GOODBYES

The Johns Hopkins' basketball program said goodbye to two titans this year when men's coach **Bill Nelson** and women's coach **Nancy Funk** announced their retirements. During his 37 years as a collegiate head coach, Nelson compiled a 606-365 record and became the 18th coach in NCAA Division III history to reach the career 600-win mark. In her 31-year career, Funk coached the Blue Jays to a 537-264 record, 26 winning seasons, four Centennial Conference titles and 10 NCAA Division III Tournament appearances.



BEST HIGH SCHOOL GAME

Perry Hall's 59-56 win in overtime against Quince Orchard in the MPSSAA 4A boys' basketball state championship capped a 26-2 season for the Gators. Senior guard James Rider led Perry Hall with 18 points on 8-for-8 shooting from the field. Junior forward Laquill Hardnett hit a running jumper for the Gators with four seconds remaining to send the game to overtime, and he made four free throws late to seal the championship.



Courtesy of George Panagiotou

BEST HIGH SCHOOL MALE ATHLETE

Poly indoor/outdoor track star Will Henderson finished his high school career by winning five MPSSAA 3A state championships, two in the winter and three in the spring. Henderson's winter championships were in the 55 hurdles and high jump. In the spring, Henderson claimed first-place medals in the long jump, 100-meter dash and 100 hurdles -- all while competing with a sprained ankle. Henderson is competing collegiately for Penn State University.



Courtesy of Will Henderson

BEST HIGH SCHOOL FEMALE ATHLETE

Wilde Lake softball senior catcher Faith Leslie made waves nationally after an amazing feat no one in Major League Baseball has ever accomplished: she hit for the "home run cycle." Against Hammond March 27, Leslie hit bases-empty, two-run and three-run homers as well as a grand slam. For the season, she batted .512 and had a .479 on-base percentage. A team captain, Leslie helped lead Wilde Lake to two wins in 2017, the program's first victories since 2014.



Tee Dronenburg/Courtesy: Photo

BEST HIGH SCHOOL BOYS' COACH

Loyola baseball head coach Michael Kelly led the Dons to the Interscholastic Athletic Association of Maryland "A" conference title, ending the program's 71-year championship drought. After a regular season in which the team finished 9-9 in the conference, Loyola got on a roll in the postseason, culminating with an 8-3 victory against Calvert Hall in the championship game. Kelly's unique approach to coaching included having varsity and JV players practicing together to build familiarity.



Wick Eisenberg/PressBox

BEST HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS' COACH

When Chesapeake (Anne Arundel) field hockey head coach Joan Johnson took over the program in 2013, the team had not won a regional title since 2001 and had never won a state championship. Under Johnson, the Cougars captured their second consecutive MPSSAA 3A state title in 2017, defeating C. Milton Wright, 2-0, in the final. They've also won on multiple county championships.



CR Wick Eisenberg/PressBox

BEST HIGH SCHOOL DYNASTY

The McDonogh girls' lacrosse team continued its unprecedented run of dominance in 2017. The Eagles won their ninth consecutive Interscholastic Athletic Association of Maryland "A" conference championship, defeating Notre Dame Prep, 12-9, in the final, and extended the program's winning streak to 177 games. McDonogh finished the season undefeated for the eighth year in a row.



Paul Anderson/Courtesy: Photo

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will be held in Washington County, and in October the **Star Worlds Championships** are taking place in Talbot County. We are extremely excited for what **will come** to fruition in the coming year!



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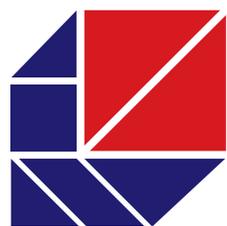


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BEST TEAM

The **Maryland women's lacrosse team** went undefeated and won the national championship, while senior midfielder Zoe Stukenberg won the Tewaaraton award as the nation's best player. In College Park, Md., they call it "just another year." Head coach Cathy Reese's program is so consistently good it's easy to forget you should be amazed by its accomplishments.

BEST SPIRIT SIGN

The Navy football program rallied around offensive coordinator Ivin Jasper's 14-year-old son Jarren, as the younger Jasper dealt with a heart condition that left him in need of a transplant. Ahead of Navy's annual rivalry game against Army, ESPN's "College Gameday" visited Jarren at home and he delighted fans with his own "Gameday" sign, reading "**I would of gone to the game today but blowouts R boring.**"

BEST COMEBACK

Not every comeback is from Tommy John surgery. In fact, the iconic facility in College Park underwent a far more significant reconstructive surgery. The revitalization of **Cole Field House**, the former home of the Maryland basketball team, into a state-of-the-art athletic and research facility, is one of the great comeback stories of all time. No one wanted the building to disappear, but it had no meaningful use. Now the arena can still be celebrated and the Maryland football team can also join the 21st century. Win meets win.

BEST NEWCOMER

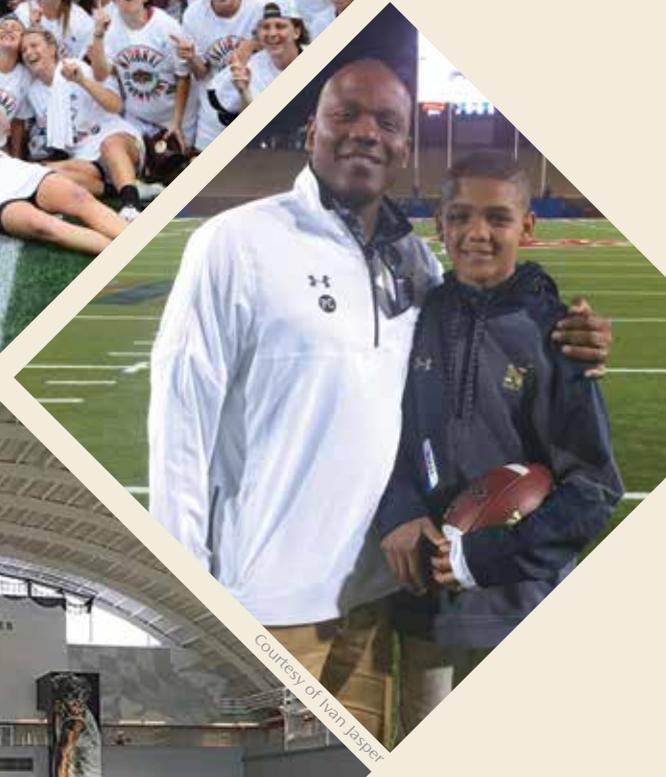
Remember when **Orioles outfielder Trey Mancini** hit three home runs in his first five career games to close the 2016 season? Remember when you thought to yourself, "This is fun, but is this for real?" About that. Mancini finished third in American League Rookie of the Year voting after crushing 24 home runs this season, and he's way more real than the chances of you sticking to your resolutions.

BEST UNSUNG HERO

How disrespected is **Ravens long snapper Morgan Cox**? When ESPN.com wrote a story about Ravens players gathering together to watch "The Bachelorette," it listed every player by position except for one. Cox was merely listed as the players' "friend." Of course when you're a long snapper, people only ever know your name if you screw up, and Cox never does that.



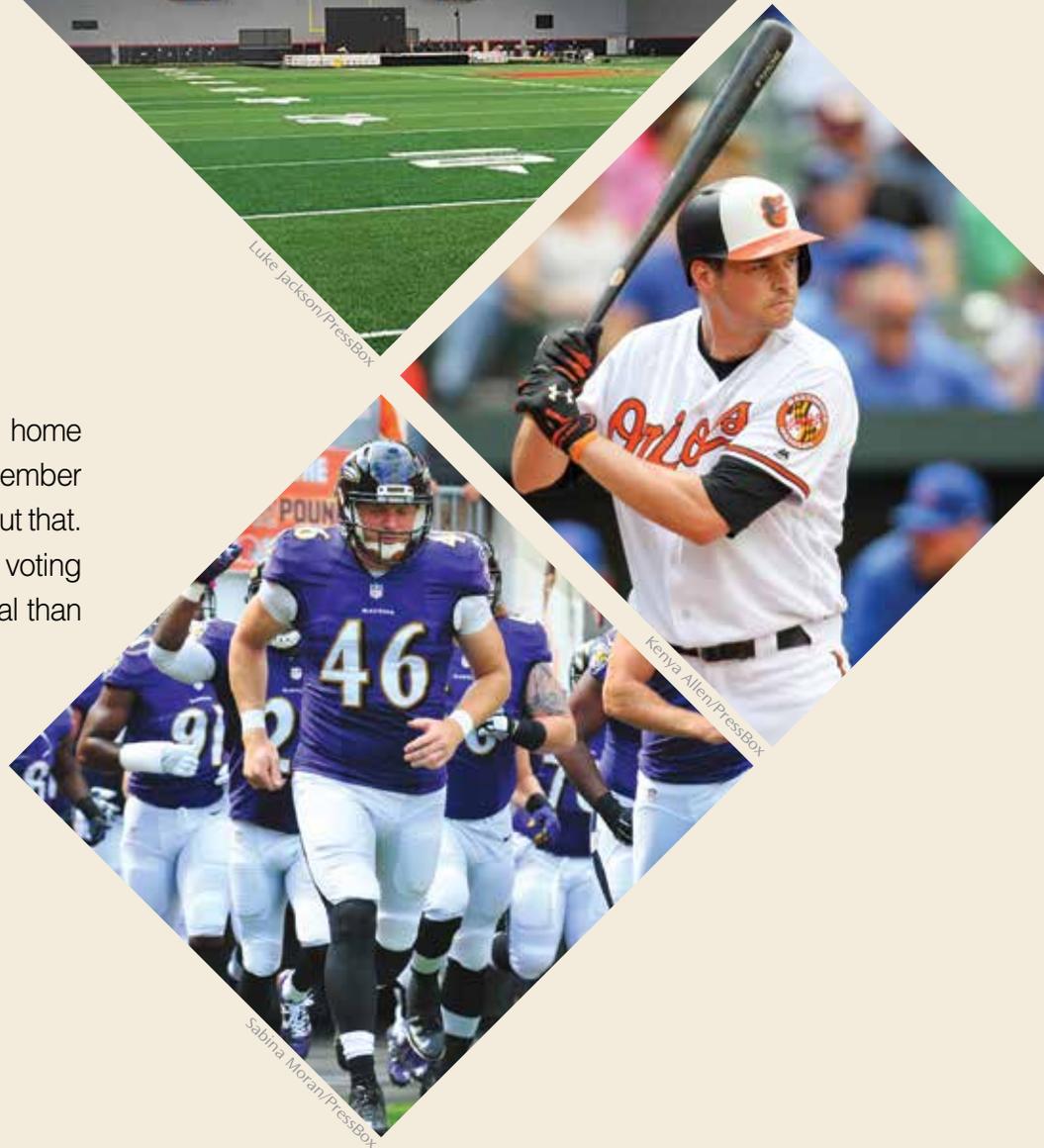
Courtesy of Maryland Athletics



Courtesy of Ivin Jasper



Luke Jackson/PressBox



Kenya Allen/PressBox

Sabina Moran/PressBox

BEST BLAST PLAYER

It would be enough that **goalkeeper William Vanzela** was an All-MASL performer who led the team to its second consecutive league title and eighth championship overall. But Vanzela had to handle the most difficult of circumstances -- an overtime Game 2 and a golden goal mini-game with the season on the line in front of a rabid crowd in Mexico. Even Orioles closer Zach Britton would be impressed with how he handles pressure.

BEST SINGLE-GAME PERFORMANCE

How good was **Orioles pitcher Dylan Bundy** during his one-hitter against the Seattle Mariners Aug. 29? If the Birds hadn't been in a shift against third baseman Kyle Seager in the fourth inning, Bundy probably would have thrown the team's first no-hitter in 26 years. Seager's bunt single was the only blemish for Bundy, who struck out 12 Mariners while throwing just 116 pitches.

BEST DEFENSIVE PERFORMANCE

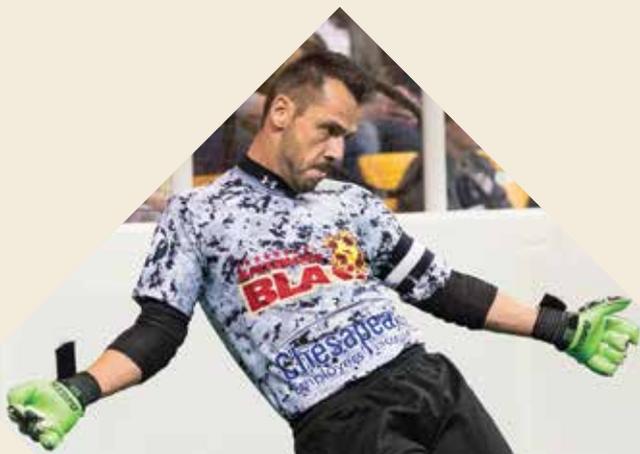
In the national quarterfinals, the **Towson men's lacrosse team** was facing a Syracuse squad whose midfield trio of Nick Mariano, Sergio Salcido and Jamie Trimboli had combined to score 64 goals and tally 51 assists. On that Sunday afternoon in Newark, Del., however, the Towson midfield held the trio to just one goal and one assist as the Tigers upset the Orange, 10-7. Even Orioles third baseman Manny Machado would have to tip his cap.

BEST OFFENSIVE PERFORMANCE

Orioles third basemen Manny Machado had already homered in two of four at-bats against the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim Aug. 18. So when he stepped to the plate with the bases loaded in the bottom of the ninth inning, perhaps we shouldn't have been surprised when his third home run departed Oriole Park at Camden Yards faster than you could say "fait accompli." Three home runs and a walkoff grand slam? Not a bad Friday night.

BEST SURPRISE

Sure, Maryland football ended its season with multiple quarterback injuries and blowout losses ... again. But let's not forget how glorious it was when the then-still healthy **Terps waltzed into Austin, Texas, Sept. 2 as roughly three-touchdown underdogs and got a 51-41 win**, their first victory against a top 25 team in seven years. Quarterbacks Tyrrell Pigrome and Kasim Hill were both fantastic during the win and can hopefully recreate that if/when healthy next fall.



David Rippeto/Baltimore Blast



Kenya Allen/PressBox



Rob Maloof/Towson Athletics



Kenya Allen/PressBox



Kenya Allen/PressBox

BEST PLAY

With Maryland and Michigan State tied at 60 in the final five seconds March 4, there was never any doubt that **Terps guard Melo Trimble** was going to take the final shot. His (nearly) walk-off 3-pointer to beat the Spartans was the final act of his career at home and a fitting end for a standout player with a knack for coming through in the clutch.



Alex Edelman/PressBox

BEST CLOSE CALL

College Park, Md., native **Frances Tiafoe** won't legally be able to drink until next January. Fans of Roger Federer probably needed a stiff one as the teenager took him deep into a fifth set in their opening-round match at the U.S. Open Aug. 29. The event was pure theater -- playing out on the grand Arthur Ashe Stadium court as fans lived and died on every shot before the sport's all-time greatest champion ultimately prevailed.



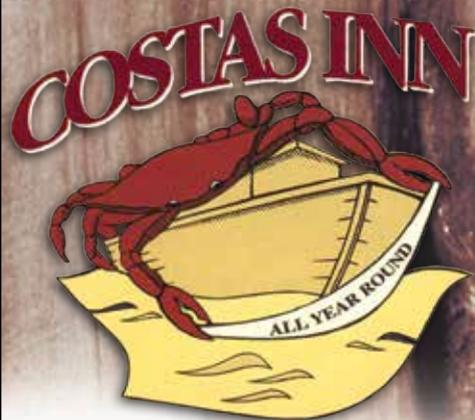
Mike Lawrence/Miami Open

BEST CINDERELLA STORY

The **Mount St. Mary's men's basketball team** overcame a 1-11 start to win the Northeast Conference regular-season and tournament titles and earn an NCAA Tournament berth. The Mountaineers edged New Orleans, 67-66, in the NCAA First Four round to advance to a first-round meeting with overall No. 1 seed and defending champion Villanova. Remarkably, the Mount (20-16) jumped out to a 10-2 lead against the Wildcats and led for nearly the entire first half before falling, 76-56.



Courtesy of Mount St. Mary's Athletics



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BEST NEW ADDITION

When the Orioles acquired **shortstop Tim Beckham** at the trade deadline, the move was met with a collective shoulder-shrug from O's fans, but they were going bonkers for Beckham in no time. In his first week with the club, Beckham homered in three straight games, set a franchise record with 11 hits in his first four games and even took a curtain call. He batted .306 with 10 homers in 50 games for the Orioles.

ORIOLE WE'LL MISS

Not only will we miss the play of **shortstop J.J. Hardy**, whose option for 2018 was not picked up, but we'll also miss the crowd chanting, "J ... J ... Hardy!" when he was introduced. In seven seasons in Baltimore, Hardy won three Gold Gloves and a Silver Slugger award and made an All-Star Game start. In what was presumably his final home game this past September, the affable Hardy received a standing ovation before his first at-bat and later hit a homer.

RAVEN WE'LL MISS

Tight end Dennis Pitta made a remarkable comeback in 2016, but after suffering his third major hip injury this past June, his career almost definitely is over. Sidelined for all of 2015 and most of 2014, Pitta returned to post career highs in catches (86, which led all tight ends) and yards (729). Pitta, who had great chemistry on and off the field with quarterback Joe Flacco, shined in the 2012 postseason, including catching a touchdown pass in Super Bowl XLVII.

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BEST STORY WE COULDN'T GET ENOUGH OF

This summer in Kakata, Liberia, Maryland defensive end Melvin Keihn (Gilman) and his mother, Satta, saw each other for the first time since he left his war-torn country 14 years ago. Satta did not know her son was coming. "She started sprinting towards me and I ran to her and gave her a big hug," said Keihn, who left Liberia when he was 8 to live in the U.S. with his father and stepmother. "Crazy emotions just came over both of us."

BEST STORY YOU HAVEN'T HEARD ENOUGH OF

You probably aren't aware, but there's a college sports dynasty residing right in North Baltimore. **The Johns Hopkins women's cross country team** won its second consecutive NCAA Division III championship in November and its fifth in the past six seasons. The dominant Blue Jays finished 95 points ahead of second-place Wisconsin-Eau Claire, and three of its runners -- Ellie Clawson (pictured), Natalia LaSpada and Therese Olshanski -- earned All-American honors.

BEST ATHLETE YOU SHOULD KNOW MORE ABOUT

When you've dealt with the type of adversity Timonium, Md., swimmer **Becca Meyers** has in her life, a three-month delay to the start of the World Para Swimming Championships doesn't faze you. Meyers competes against fellow visually impaired swimmers, but she's also deaf due to Usher's Syndrome and can't hear the starting horn. Meyers still claimed four medals (one gold, two silver, one bronze) in Mexico City.

BEST GUILTY PLEASURE

During the week, they might be school teachers or work in the corporate world or medical field, but on the weekends they put on roller skates and pads and deliver hard-hitting "booty blocks." They're the **Charm City Roller Girls**. The organization has a three-team, local roller derby league as well as interleague squads that compete nationwide and internationally. The skaters have names such as Liquor Muffin, Snarl Marx and Boom Shocka Latke. What's not to love?

BEST BEER LEAGUERS

Before facing MLS-level D.C. United in the fourth round of this summer's U.S. Open Cup, Baltimore-based **Christos FC** kept up its usual practice schedule. Which is to say it didn't practice at all. The squad, which includes a number of UMBC soccer alums, managed to knock off the USL-level Richmond Kickers and had a 1-0 lead against United before ultimately bowing out. The big win for the team named after a liquor store was getting an apparel deal from Adidas.



Kenya Allen/PressBox



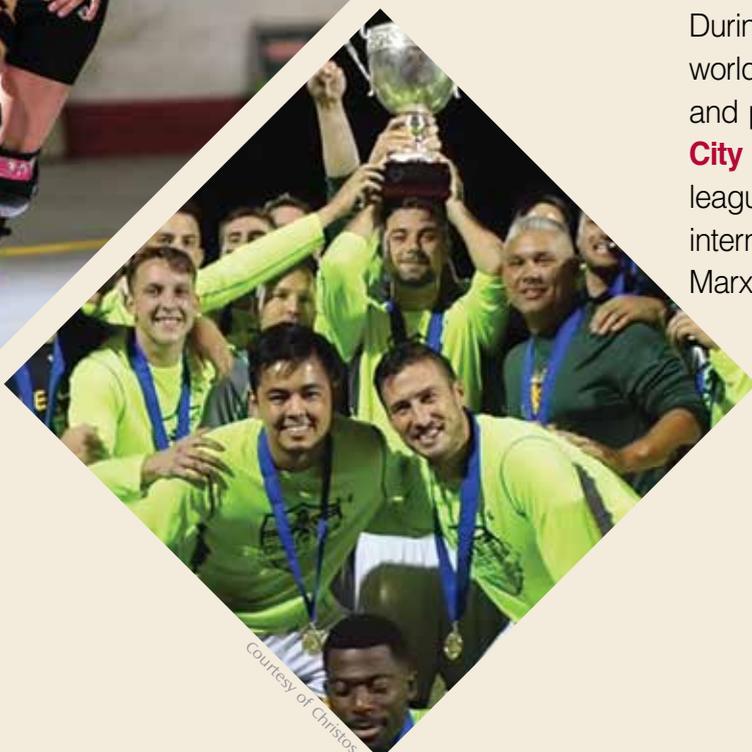
JHU Athletic Communications



Courtesy of Becca Meyers



Jimmi Curry of Down 'n' Out Photography



Courtesy of Christos FC

BEST PRO PERFORMANCE

West Baltimore **boxer Gervonta Davis** predicted he'd defeat IBF junior lightweight champion Jose Pedraza in the eighth round of their Jan. 14 title fight. Davis was wrong; he knocked out Pedraza in the seventh round. The 23-year-old Davis (19-0, 18 KO's), a protege of boxing legend Floyd Mayweather Jr., became the first Baltimore fighter to win a world championship since Hasim Rahman beat Lennox Lewis for the undisputed heavyweight title in 2001.



Courtesy of Mayweather Promotions

BEST COLLEGE PERFORMANCE

It surprised absolutely no one when Carroll County **wrestler Kyle Snyder** won his second straight NCAA heavyweight championship for Ohio State in March. But that's only because Snyder was both the defending world champion and Olympic gold medalist in the event. (He'd add a second world title in August.) It's a near certainty he'll wrap his collegiate career with a third NCAA title this year. Death and taxes think he's automatic.



PressBox Staff



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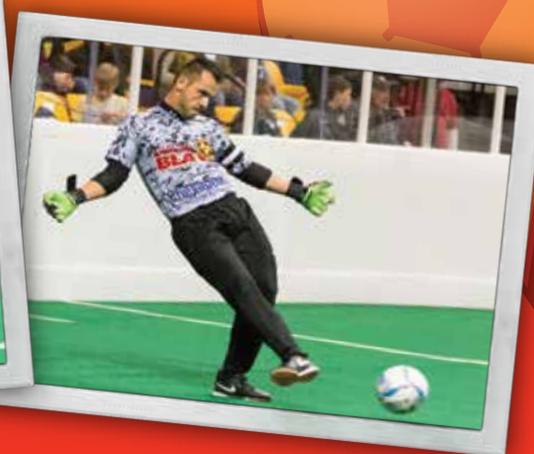
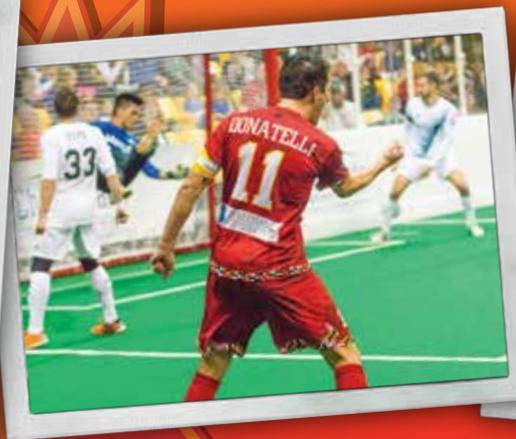
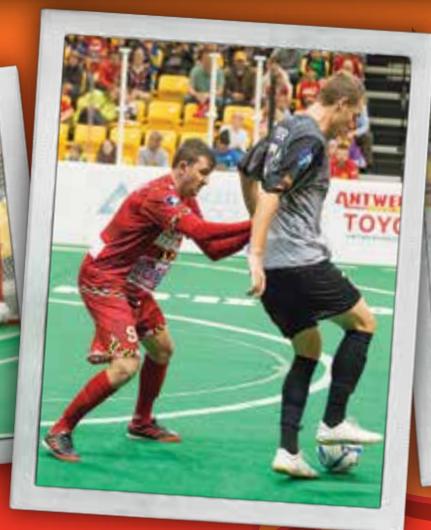
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BEST SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

When he's not dancing or making snow angels, **Ravens defensive tackle Brandon Williams** is cracking jokes or playing with voice filters on Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. In fact, the Ravens actually gave him the keys to their own Snapchat account while he was in London last summer promoting their game against the Jacksonville Jaguars. If you haven't seen his absurdly oversized Halloween costume as Alvin from Alvin and The Chipmunks fame, you're doing social media wrong.

BEST SOCIAL MEDIA POST

On Twitter, **Jimmy's Famous Seafood offered free crab cakes for life to Jeremy Maclin if he'd sign with the Ravens.** Initially, the offer to the free-agent receiver was for free crab cakes for the length of his deal, but when Maclin left Baltimore in June without signing, the restaurant upped the ante -- extending the offer to the rest of his life. Just days after signing, Maclin took advantage of the deal for the first time. Jimmy's received free publicity from ESPN, NFL Network and just about every sports website.

BEST CELEBRITY FAN ON TWITTER

It's no secret that **actor and Baltimore native Josh Charles** is a passionate fan of the Ravens and Orioles, but the Twitter world found out just how passionate of a fan he is during the Ravens-Dolphins game Oct. 26. After quarterback Joe Flacco was injured by a nasty hit from Miami linebacker Kiko Alonso, Charles tweeted a profanity-laced rant (four f-bombs!) calling out Alonso, anyone who thought the hit was clean and anyone joking about it. And we f---ing love him for it.

BEST LOCAL PITCHMAN

Maybe he didn't sing opera or rap this year, but **Ravens kicker Justin Tucker** continues to sell Royal Farms chicken and coffee as effectively as Jim Palmer once sold underpants. Tucker's ads are so effective that you have at least one friend who has said to you, "I'm mad I've never seen him when I was at Royal Farms." OK, you have five friends who have said that.

BEST MINOR LEAGUE PROMOTION

On Aug. 11, the short-season Class-A Aberdeen IronBirds did not exist, and everyone in attendance at Ripken Stadium for that night's game was a little "crabby." **For one night only, the IronBirds became the Aberdeen Steamed Crabs** to pay homage to Maryland's affinity for eating the crustaceans. The team's uniform featured mascot Calvin the Krab and there was a crab-themed menu at the ballpark. The hitters even rubbed Old Bay on their bats instead of pine tar. OK, we made up that last part.



BEST NEW STADIUM CONCESSIONS

No offense to Jeremy Maclin or Danny Woodhead, but a lot of Ravens fans would agree the best addition the franchise made for this season was a **Shake Shack at M&T Bank Stadium**. Located by section 109 on the main concourse, the modern-day “roadside” burger stand -- which has gained a cult following around the world -- features an assortment of Shake Shack classics, including all-natural Angus beef burgers, grilled flat-top dogs, frozen custard and beer.

BEST STADIUM INDULGENCE

What tasty creation combines a Maryland delicacy, a childhood favorite and a ballpark staple? It's the **crab mac and cheese dog at Oriole Park**. Served at Esskay Gourmet Hot Dogs on Eutaw Street near Gate H, this delicious comestible is a hot dog topped with mac and cheese and fresh lump crab meat and seasoned with Old Bay. Now please excuse us as we wipe the drool off our mouths.

BEST ATMOSPHERE

The **UMBC men's soccer team welcomed then-No. 1 Maryland to Retriever Soccer Park Sept. 26**. The match was tremendous, but the real story was the record 3,766 fans who mobbed the pitch to take in the contest. Since the game was sold out, a number of fans waited outside just in case tickets left for people at will call were not claimed. The teams finished in a tie. The fans all won.

BEST VISITING EVENT

There wasn't a better walk in a Baltimore park last summer than when the **Constellation SENIOR PLAYERS Championship** strolled through Caves Valley. The event allowed fans the opportunity to get even closer to some of golf's legends (Maryland native Fred Funk seemed to personally say hello to everyone in attendance all weekend). The tournament closed dramatically as Bernhard Langer (pictured) coughed up a late lead, allowing Scott McCarron to charge to the title.

BEST PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

A **5-minute film on the Catch A Lift Fund** by Alex Walker shares the stories of post-9/11 veterans who were wounded in combat and how the Catch A Lift program helped them regain their mental and physical health. Catch A Lift, which emphasizes a return to physical exercise and has helped thousands of wounded veterans, was founded by Lynn Coffland to memorialize her brother, Army Cpl. Chris Coffland, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2009 by a roadside bomb.



Courtesy of the Baltimore Ravens



Courtesy of the Baltimore Orioles



Maryland Demond/UMBC



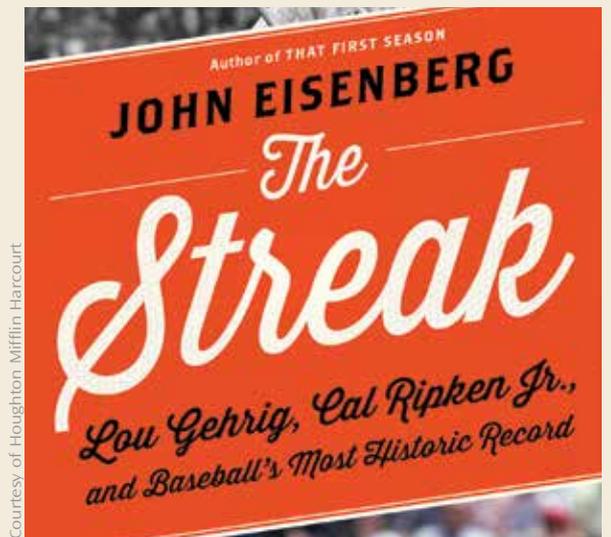
Courtesy of PGA TOUR Champions



Courtesy of Catch A Lift Fund

BEST SPORTS BOOK

Pro tip: Don't read the first chapter of **"The Streak: Lou Gehrig, Cal Ripken Jr., and Baseball's Most Historic Record"** in public. John Eisenberg's re-telling of Game 2, 131 is so vivid that the room you're in might suddenly feel really dusty. The book isn't just about Ripken and Gehrig, though, it's about every player who has ever pursued a long consecutive games streak. Sadly, that means there's nothing in there about Felix Pie. Otherwise it's perfect.

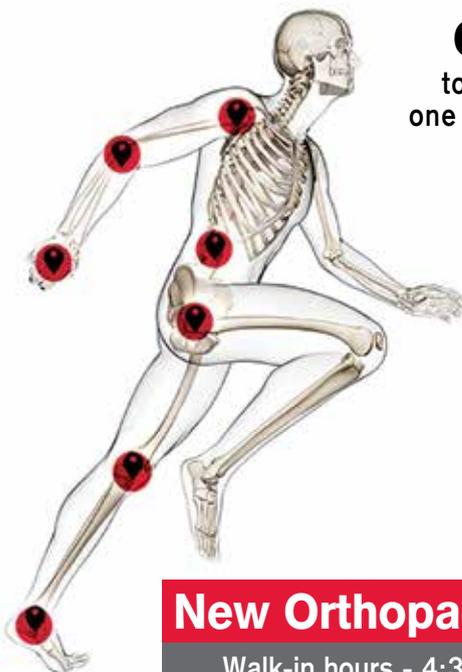


BEST SPORTS DOCUMENTARY

Produced by local high school football legend Bobby Sabelhaus (McDonogh), ESPN Films' **"Baltimore Boys"** was a labor of love about the legendary Dunbar basketball teams of the early 1980s. If you have a soul, you'll get choked up during a scene toward the end in which they honor the late Reggie Lewis. Actually it's so powerful that a soul may not even be a prerequisite for getting emotional.



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BEST PERSON TO SIT NEXT TO AT AN ORIOLES GAME

If you've had the pleasure, you know that sitting next to **Diamond Comics CEO and president Steve Geppi** behind the home dugout at an Orioles game is probably only comparable to sitting next to the pope at Sunday mass. He seemingly knows every single person at Camden Yards, and they're all thrilled to see him. Not only will he be your best friend for three hours, but if you brought your wife and mother-in-law to the game he'll be theirs, too.

BEST CELEBRITY FAN

Only Chris Lucas from the country duo **LOCASH** is actually from Baltimore. But their tally for the year includes playing a private show for Ravens fans in Nashville, headlining the infield concert at Preakness and being a part of Adam Jones' annual charity Ravens tailgate party. Oh, and Orioles manager Buck Showalter is also a huge fan. Rumors are he half-smiles when he hears their music.

BEST INSPIRATIONAL FAN

It's not every day that sports fans have fans of their own, but Glen Burnie, Md., native **Mo Gaba**, 11, is not your everyday sports fan. Diagnosed with cancer at 9 months old, Gaba started calling into the "Scott Garceau Show with Jeremy Conn" on 105.7 The Fan after school in 2015 and became a favorite among the hosts and listeners. Garceau and Conn helped fans rally to Gaba's aid as he battled cancer for a third time in 2017, raising more than \$35,000 through Gaba's Mo Strong GoFundMe page.



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BEST THING ABOUT BEING A BALTIMORE SPORTS FAN

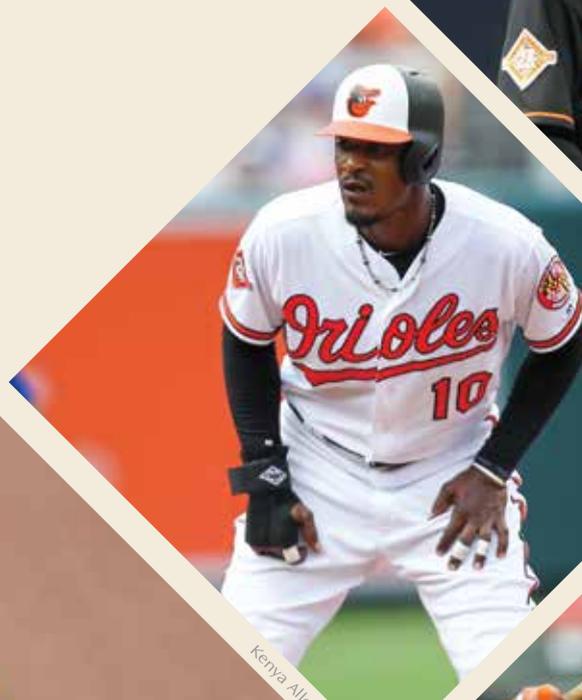
There isn't much more that can be said about **Orioles center fielder Adam Jones** that hasn't been said already. He's the genuine article. In 2017, he again raised thousands of dollars for the Boys and Girls Club of Metropolitan Baltimore and took his time to be involved with the kids. He also took on a leadership role within baseball after he was on the receiving end of racial taunts at Boston's Fenway Park to speak to an issue far bigger than baseball.

But as if all of that wasn't enough, he also said this during spring training: "I'm here for one reason. I'm not here to be friends with anybody. I'm here to win, and at the end of the day, I think that's what we're all here for. From myself to PR people to general manager, everybody that scouts, I think we're all in the same mission ... to win a championship for Baltimore. If they want to have friends, I've got my own friends. I don't need any more friends. I'm here for one reason, and that's to win."

We need 1,000 more like him. Year in and year out he makes us proud that his away jersey says "Baltimore" across the front.



Kenya Allen/PressBox



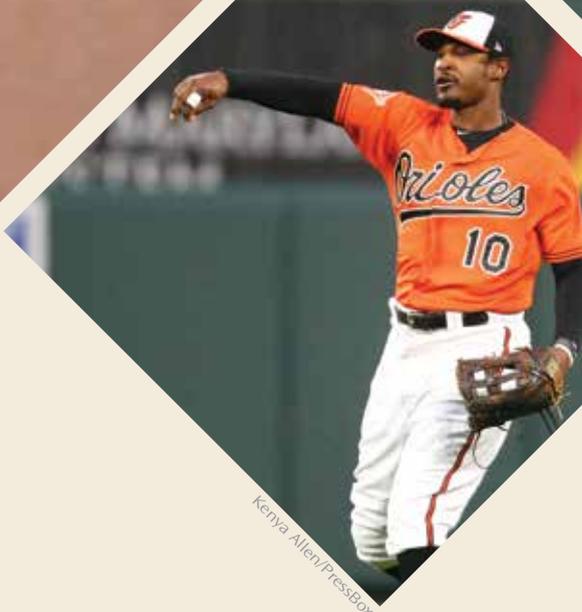
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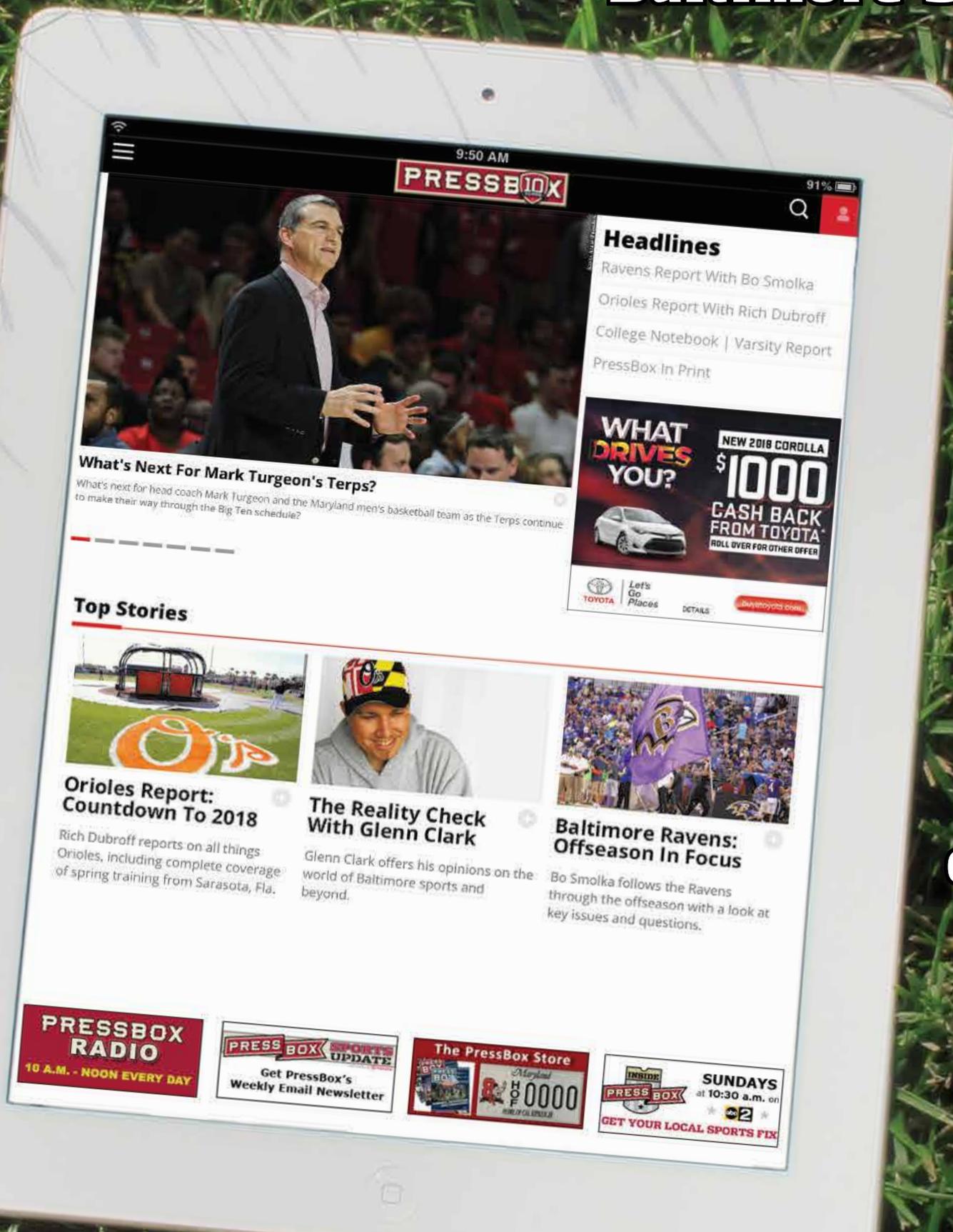
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THEY SAID IT

BEST QUOTES FROM 2017

"Wade Miley recommended that I wear the T-shirt under my jersey, and, like, if I hit a home run or something, rip my jersey open, and I said there's no shot I'm going to be doing that."

- Orioles outfielder **Trey Mancini** after he hit a home run on his T-shirt giveaway night May 8.

"I hated it. I hated what it stood for. It was humiliating, in my mind ... I said, 'No. I don't want to wear a bow tie every game. But then I thought about it, and knowing they were going to make me wear it again, I decided [representing the BowTie Cause charity] might be a way to do it on my terms and do it for a good reason."

- Fox baseball reporter **Ken Rosenthal** in July about his first thoughts on wearing a bowtie, after the head of Fox at the time suggested he do so to make him stand out more.

"We're going to have to figure out how to either prevent concussions or manage concussions if football's going to have a future in this country."

- Andrew Pollak, the chair of the department of orthopedics at University of Maryland, Baltimore, as the University of Maryland unveiled the first phase of the Cole Field House Performance Center at a ribbon-cutting ceremony Aug. 2.

"To be honest with you – and maybe I'll get into trouble for saying this – don't plan on going over there

any time soon to play again. So, somebody else can have that job."

- Ravens head coach **John Harbaugh** Sept. 25, a day after Baltimore's 44-7 loss to the Jacksonville Jaguars in the franchise's first game in London.

"There were so many nights out there when I was just a name in the lineup. I didn't feel like I had contributed. Maybe defensively, but definitely not with my bat. And I look at the numbers now and the year as a whole, and I feel like I'm a better player than that and I feel like these guys deserve a better product than what I've been giving them. If you want to call it a chip on my shoulder or motivated or whatever, I definitely have some things I'm looking forward to working on."

- Orioles slugger **Chris Davis** Oct. 1 after he finished a disappointing season with a .215 average, 26 home runs and 61 RBIs.

"That Texas game feels about eight years ago right now. We definitely had a plan, had a mindset, had a culture and a team built, but we got hit pretty hard with injuries at one spot. Obviously, you lose your two quarterbacks in the first nine quarters of the season. I think you can ride emotion a little bit – we rode that when we got to Minnesota and responded. But it just wore on us and we slowly just deteriorated."

- Maryland football head coach **DJ Durkin** Nov. 25 after his team lost two starting quarterbacks to injury and finished the season 4-8.



In the throes of winter, it's easy to want to hunker down beneath every blanket in your house and choose not to leave again until you don't need to wear three pairs of socks at the same time. But the sporting calendar is already underway for 2018, and it's important to start making plans.

For The 15 this month, we offer dates a Baltimore sports fan should keep in mind for the rest of the year. These events will either be happening locally or will involve local teams or athletes.

[01] **FEB. 5:** St. Frances at McDonogh girls' basketball
These are two of the region's top five girls' basketball teams, and if you haven't seen five-star St. Frances point guard Nia Clouden play, you're going to want to before she heads off to Michigan State next season. Also of note, Mercy and Institute of Notre Dame square off in Baltimore's best girls' basketball rivalry (known as "The Game") Feb. 2 at Towson's SECU Arena. On the boys' side, John Carroll visits Mount St. Joseph Feb. 12, which gives you another chance to see future Kentucky point guard Immanuel Quickley (John Carroll) and future Maryland forward Jalen "Sticks" Smith (MSJ) square off.

[02] **FEB. 10:** Northeastern at Towson men's basketball Autism Awareness Day at SECU Arena
You should check this game out because the Tigers are likely Baltimore's best chance of having an NCAA Tournament team this year. But you should also attend this game because the annual Autism Awareness Day is very important to Tigers head coach Pat Skerry, whose son Owen has autism. Skerry and coaches throughout the country will wear blue puzzle piece pins this day. Speaking of local men's basketball, may I also recommend you make it out to one of the two Morgan State-Coppin State rivalry games this year -- either Jan. 20 at Coppin or Feb. 26 at Morgan.

[03] **FEB. 16:** Adrenaline Championship Wrestling "Ellsworth's Homecoming" at Michael's Eighth Avenue in Glen Burnie, Md., and **FEB. 17:** MCW Pro Wrestling "Horsemen Anniversary" at MCW Arena in Joppa, Md.
Some of you are likely rolling your eyes, but bear with me. The third weekend of February provides two incredible opportunities to support independent pro wrestling in the area that should be exciting for even casual fans. The ACW show marks the return to the local scene for Baltimore native James Ellsworth, who spent the last year-plus as a popular star with WWE. The MCW show will include an appearance from Ric Flair (perhaps you just saw his "30 For 30?") and the legendary Four Horsemen faction. Additionally, WWE hosts a live show at Royal Farms Arena Jan. 27 and will reportedly return to Baltimore for the "Payback" pay-per-view May 27.

[04] **FEB. 22:** Men's 500-meter and 5,000-meter relay Olympic short track speedskating in Gangneung, South Korea
While local athletes have dominated the Summer Olympics in recent years, the best chance for a Marylander to medal at the Winter Olympics will be this day, as these are the two events in which Atholton alum Thomas Hong will compete. The relay could be the single-best chance, as the U.S. team won gold in



2018 SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

the event at the World Cup in Shanghai last November.

[05] **FEB. 28-MARCH 4:** Big Ten Men's Basketball Tournament at Madison Square Garden in New York
The location is what makes these dates on the calendar so compelling. No matter how Maryland is playing at this point, the opportunity to watch the Terps compete in a postseason tournament at "The World's Most Famous Arena" is rather enticing. If for some reason the Terps are eliminated early, perhaps you can manage to get some tickets to "Hamilton" or something instead.

[06] **MARCH 3:** Coors Light NHL Stadium Series: Toronto Maple Leafs vs. Washington Capitals at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium
You don't have to be a Capitals fan to be interested in this one. Heck, I once went to a Rangers-Islanders game at Yankee Stadium in New York just so I could witness the oddity that is outdoor hockey. Add in a fun day of tailgating in Annapolis, Md., and this should be a special event for hardcore hockey fans and interested observers alike.

[07] **MARCH 29:** Orioles Opening Day vs. Minnesota Twins at Oriole Park at Camden Yards
Opening Day is on a Thursday this year, which is ... weird. The Orioles are actually off the next day, so you might already be rooting for weather issues on the 29th to force the game to a Friday. Other highlights on the schedule include the annual home-and-home series against the Washington Nationals (in Baltimore May 28-30, including a Memorial Day matinee, and in D.C. June 19-21) and a Fourth of July trip to Philadelphia that will probably be a popular road trip for Orioles fans.

[08] **MAY 9:** Ripken Cup: Towson vs. Maryland baseball at Ripken Stadium
First, college baseball is awesome. There are like 17 runs scored every game and every inning is super dra-

matic. Second, the Ripken Cup is such a cool concept for an annual game at a cool venue. It's worth checking out as both teams try to get back to the NCAA Tournament this year.

[09] **MAY 19:** 143rd Preakness Stakes at Pimlico Race Course
Could this be the final Preakness at Pimlico? I know we've annoyingly asked this question every May for the past 30 years, but it's starting to feel like perhaps we could really mean it this time.

[10] **MAY 19 OR MAY 20:** NCAA Men's Lacrosse Tournament quarterfinals at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium
Hopefully the games will be on Sunday the 20th so they don't compete with Preakness. But most importantly, these are the last neutral-site NCAA Lacrosse Tournament games scheduled for the area for the foreseeable future. No quarterfinals, no Final Fours, nothing (with sites determined through the 2022 season).

[11] **JULY 17:** MLB All-Star Game at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C.
With the MASN dispute likely to keep the All-Star Game from coming back to Baltimore anytime soon, Orioles fans may want to consider making the short trip to D.C. for this year's game. In addition to the Mid-Summer Classic, the Home Run Derby is the night before and the annual All-Star Futures Game July 15.

[12] **JULY/AUGUST:** Ravens training camp at Under Armour Performance Center
Training camp becomes more relevant this year because unlike in 2017, fans will again be able to attend practices in Owings Mills, Md. In fact, renovations at the facility mean even more fans will be able to attend this year. It might not be as good as Westminster, Md., but it's progress.

[13] **AUG. 4:** Pro Football Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in Canton, Ohio
We have good reason to expect that former linebacker Ray Lewis will become the second career-long Raven (offensive tackle Jonathan Ogden was the first) to be enshrined during the weekend's festivities. It is not yet known if the Ravens could also be invited to play in the Hall of Fame Game Aug. 2, but Ravens fans may want to have contingency plans to get to Ohio early just in case.

[14] **SEPT. 1:** Texas vs. Maryland football at FedEx Field in Landover, Md.; Towson at Morgan State football at Hughes Stadium
Labor Day weekend is setting up to be a special start to the season on the local college football landscape. The Longhorns will be looking for revenge after the Terps came to Austin and stunned them last season behind quarterbacks Tyrrell Pigrome and Kasim Hill, both of whom Maryland hopes to have healthy again this season. Plus, Morgan gets to host this year's "Battle For Greater Baltimore" contest after Towson hosted and won last year.

[15] **TBA:** Baltimore Ravens at Los Angeles Chargers in Carson, Calif.
When the Ravens and Chargers play this season, it will mark the Ravens' first visit to Los Angeles in ... ever. Despite the small size of the Chargers' temporary soccer stadium home, tickets appear to be fairly easy for road fans to come by, making this likely a very popular trip for Ravens fans this season. Of course, all of the non-division road trips are appealing this year, as the Ravens will also travel to Atlanta, Charlotte, Kansas City and Nashville. •

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CONNOLLY'S CORNER

Playing WAR Games In Order To Analyze Orioles Pitching Greats

★ DAN CONNOLLY

One of the things I love about my job is that sometimes I'm doing one task and another story angle emerges.

Earlier this winter, I was compiling biographical information on former

Orioles left-hander Scott McGregor, who had agreed to be the special guest at my annual baseball talk for charity in Southern Pennsylvania.

The basic numbers I found weren't surprising. McGregor, who pitched for the Orioles from 1976 to 1988, was sixth all-time in modern franchise history (since 1954) in wins and fourth in games started and innings logged.

Those in front of him aren't shockers.

Jim Palmer, Dave McNally and Mike Flanagan -- in that order -- have McGregor beat in games started and innings pitched for the modern-day Orioles. Mike Mussina (147 wins) and Mike Cuellar (143) are third and fourth, respectively, on the franchise's all-time wins list, ahead of Flanagan (141) and McGregor (138) and behind Palmer (268) and McNally (181).

Those are basic statistics -- counting stats, as they are referred to these days -- and they have a lot to do with the success of

the teams and the eras in which those pitchers played.

I was curious as to what modern metrics would say about the greatest pitchers in Orioles history. It's definitely difficult to compare eras, but I thought I would at least look into it using the rWAR metric -- that's Wins Above Replacement according to baseball-reference.com (that's where the "r" comes from). There's also fWAR, done by Fangraphs, that is computed slightly differently. For this piece, I'm exclusively using rWAR.

I know many old-schoolers hate WAR, which is supposed to determine how many more wins a specific player generates for his team above what a baseline (or replacement-type) player would achieve. The formula is complex, but basically for pitchers it focuses on the prevention of runs and baserunners while also incorporating other factors such as league, ballpark, defense, et cetera.

It's a tool. It's an interesting way to evaluate players. I don't believe it is more than that.

And, in many cases, WAR reinforces what we saw with our eyes and comprehended with our minds. For this piece, I delved into the advanced metric to get a sense of Orioles pitchers throughout the years. The results weren't startling.

Palmer, the one pitcher who has gone into baseball's Hall of Fame as an Oriole, is the franchise leader with an all-time WAR of

68.1. All 558 big league games in which Palmer pitched from 1965 to 1984 were in an Orioles uniform.

Second on the list isn't particularly surprising, either. It's Mussina, who had a 47.6 WAR in an Orioles career that spanned from 1991 to 2000. Add in his eight seasons with the New York Yankees from 2001 to 2008 in which he accumulated a 35.1 WAR, and Mussina's total number is higher than Palmer's (82.7).

Mussina's career WAR is the 19th-highest all-time for a pitcher -- slightly ahead of Hall of Famer Bob Gibson's -- and 14th for all pitchers who have played since 1950. There's a legitimate reason why Mussina's Hall of Fame supporters grow each year.

Palmer is 28th all-time in WAR, just behind Rick Reuschel, who never won a Cy Young Award, but made three All-Star teams.

So, yes, WAR is far from an exact science. There are results that don't pass the memory muster.

But it's interesting to scroll through anyway.

Here are some of the other things I found when comparing Orioles pitchers during the years. Call this fun with WAR:

- Not only does Palmer own the largest career WAR in franchise history, but he also has the highest (8.5) for one season among all Orioles pitchers. That was in 1975 when he

was 23-11 with a 2.09 ERA in -- get this -- 323 innings. He threw 25 complete games in 38 starts and had 10 complete-game shutouts. It was an extraordinary effort in all facets, yet it is tied for 137th best all-time among pitchers, joining Randy Johnson's 2004, Pat Hentgen's 1996 and Dizzy Dean's 1934, among others.

- As great as Palmer's 1975 was, WAR suggests that Mussina's campaign in 1992 was nearly as strong -- although the basic numbers pale significantly. Mussina was 18-5 with eight complete games and four shutouts while posting a 2.54 ERA in 241 innings. It's amazing that, as tremendous as Mussina's career was, his first full season is the one that statistically is considered the best in his 18 years in the majors.

- Palmer is the king of WAR when it comes to single seasons in an Orioles uniform. Six of the top eight season WAR totals for an O's pitcher were turned in by Palmer. The other two were by Mussina in 1992 and knuckleballer Hoyt Wilhelm in 1959. Mussina was 23 years old in 1992; Wilhelm was 36 and in his first full year as primarily a starter. Wilhelm had a 7.6 WAR while going 15-11 with a 2.19 ERA in 226 innings.

- From an Orioles career standpoint, the top pitchers in club history, from a narrative point of view, are aligned with the top WAR numbers. But there is one significant surprise in the top five. McGregor is sixth, Mike Boddicker is seventh and Mike Cuellar, eighth. Palmer and Mussina are first and second, McNally is third and Flanagan, fifth. So, who is fourth all-time as an Orioles pitcher, according to WAR? Milt Pappas, the man best known as the primary chip in the trade that brought Frank Robinson to the Orioles before the 1966 season. Pappas, who played for the Orioles from 1957 to 1965, had a total Orioles WAR of 22.0, just ahead of Flanagan's 21.8.

- Here's a modern WAR surprise: The 10th-highest WAR among O's pitchers -- just behind Steve Barber's 17.1 -- is Jeremy Guthrie's 16.4. Guthrie pitched during the dark days of the Orioles, from 2007 to 2011, and was 47-65 with a 4.12 ERA. In three of his five seasons, though, he had an ERA under 4.00 and a WAR at 4 or better.

- Another recent shocker: The 11th-highest WAR for an Oriole for one season was in 2007 by left-hander Erik Bedard. He was 13-5 with a 3.16 ERA and, according to his 5.7 WAR, was slightly better than Mussina in 2000, 1997 and 1994, and McGregor in 1983. I'm sure McGregor would be OK with that distinction, since he won a World Series ring that year, while Bedard's Orioles were 69-93 and finished fourth in 2007. The Orioles traded Bedard to the Seattle Mariners after that season, landing Adam Jones and Chris Tillman (and three others) to set up the franchise for future success. Bedard never posted a WAR over 2.0 in any season after 2007.

- We all know the Orioles had a rough year on the mound in 2017, including posting the worst rotation ERA in club history. Well, WAR backs that up. The only Orioles pitchers with a WAR at 2 or better last year were Dylan Bundy (2.7) and Mychal Givens (2.3). Thirteen Orioles pitchers had negative WAR, meaning they were worse than replacement level, including starters Wade Miley, Jeremy Hellickson, Ubaldo Jimenez and Chris Tillman. •

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UPON FURTHER REVIEW

When It Comes To Baseball Hall Of Fame Enshrinement, It Isn't Supposed To Be Easy

★ JIM HENNEMAN



his would seem to be the perfect time to discuss almost everything you need to know about baseball's Hall of Fame -- and maybe try to explain why so often it's

tough to get there.

For openers, it's supposed to be tough. If it wasn't, any discussion would be a waste of time. And before going any further, I'd like to dispute the notion raised by some critics of the system that "it's only a museum." The building that holds the plaques is, indeed, a museum, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum to be precise, but let's dismiss the idea that's all we're talking about.

As of press time, the announcement of the 2018 class headed to Cooperstown, N.Y., hadn't been made, so we can't comment on anything official. But, based on

the tracking of early public ballots, we can be assured it will be a crowded classroom, which will include a pair of first-time eligible players, Chipper Jones and Jim Thome -- which addresses one of the most frequent complaints about the Hall of Fame's voting system.



IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE TOUGH. IF IT WASN'T, ANY DISCUSSION WOULD BE A WASTE OF TIME.

There is a belief among some that if a Hall of Famer isn't good enough to go in on his first ballot, then he isn't good enough, period. The argument goes that the numbers don't change, which is true, but this is definitely an instance when "one and done" isn't such a good idea. Prior to this year's election, there were

220 players in the Hall of Fame, roughly 1 percent of those who have played in the major leagues. Jones and Thome, if they get in as expected, would be only the 53rd and 54th to make it on the first try -- and that includes the five from the first class in 1936.

To fully understand the system and the recent ballot log jam that has developed because of the so-called "steroid issue," you'd have to go back to the very beginning, that inaugural class in 1936. There were no restrictions then -- everybody was eligible, including active players. Requirements remained somewhat sketchy for the first dozen years or so while the system adjusted itself.

One stipulation that has remained constant is the need to get 75 percent of the vote to be elected, and that degree of difficulty was established early. Although Ty Cobb (98.2), Honus Wagner and Babe Ruth (95.1), Christy Mathewson (90.7) and Walter Johnson (83.6) easily qualified, there were 37 others on that ballot who would eventually be elected to the Hall of Fame.

To give you an idea how difficult it was for electors in those days, it wasn't until 1947, when Carl Hubbell went in on his third try, that somebody other than those on the initial ballot was nominated. And it wasn't until 1962, when Bob Feller and Jackie Robinson were inducted, that somebody other than the "first five" was elected in the first year of eligibility.

First timers have become more commonplace lately, with 18 elected in this century, compared to 10 each in the decades of the 1990s and 1980s -- and only

nine in the period between 1937 and 1979.

While requirements were adjusted as the system formulated in the early years, there were no elections in nine years -- 1940, 1941, 1943, 1944, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1963 and 1965. There were also 10 years when nobody got the required 75 percent for election, most recently in 2013, the year that the "steroid era" impacted the ballot and started a log jam that still exists.

As the numbers increased, and election became more difficult, the Hall of Fame Board of Directors made moves to help the process. It wasn't until 1968 that a screening committee was put in place, limiting the ballot to no more than 40 candidates. In 1979, the 5 percent rule was incorporated and any player not getting at least that percentage of the votes was dropped from future ballots.

There is still a five-year waiting period before eligibility for election, but in 2014 the length of time a player can remain on the ballot was reduced from 15 to 10 years, another move designed to speed up the voting process. The continuing debate about suspected use of PEDs by otherwise obvious candidates has clouded the process in recent years, resulting in a field of candidates more crowded than any time since those early years.

With the probability of at least four, and possibly as many as six, reaching the magic 75 percent goal this year, the ballot should open up somewhat in 2019. Vladimir Guerrero and Trevor Hoffman, the returning leaders from last year, and Jones and Thome, appeared to be in position to get the call this year. In addition, Edgar Martinez was making a strong move to make it a quintet, and Mike Mussina was close enough that a push from the undeclared could make this the biggest class ever.

That first class in 1936 is still the largest inducted. Four is the most since then, most recently in 2015, when Randy Johnson, Pedro Martinez, John Smoltz and Craig Biggio were inducted.

There is some ballot relief on the way, but it's still not going to get much easier. Mariano Rivera leads the 2019 freshman class, which will also include Roy Halladay, Andy Pettitte and Todd Helton among others. Derek Jeter is front and center in 2020, so it won't be until 2021 before we see an election without a slam-dunk.

It will still be tough. As it should be. ★

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RAVENS REPORT

Five Offseason Questions Facing The Ravens

★ **BO SMOLKA**

Still smarting from their stunning, last-minute loss to the Cincinnati Bengals that knocked them out of playoff contention, the Baltimore Ravens entered 2018 mode earlier than anyone in the organization envisioned in mid-December.

The Ravens finished 2017 with a 9-7 record, missed the playoffs for the third straight year and now find themselves at an organizational crossroads.

John Harbaugh will return for his 11th season as head coach, and embattled offensive coordinator Marty Mornhinweg will be back as well. Defensive coordinator Dean Pees has announced his retirement, and former linebackers coach Don "Wink" Martindale will take his place.

Fan disenchantment is as high as it has been in the team's 22-year history, and the Ravens are a middling 40-40 in the regular season since winning the Super Bowl five years ago. Playoff pedigree? Roughly half of the Ravens' 53-man roster has never made the playoffs in Baltimore.

As the Ravens begin the hard work of rebuilding their roster with an eye on 2018, here are five critical questions:

1. Will the Ravens prioritize offense in this draft after all but ignoring it last year?

The Ravens went all-in on defense in last year's draft, using their first four picks on cornerback Marlon Humphrey, linebacker Tyus Bowser, defensive lineman Chris Wormley and linebacker Tim Williams. Of the four, only first-round pick Humphrey made a significant contribution.

The offense was virtually ignored in the draft. For the first time in team history, the Ravens drafted no skill position

players on offense. Their only two offensive draft picks in 2017 were offensive linemen Nico Siragusa (fourth round) and Jermaine Eluemunor (fifth round).

Coming off a season in which the offense was ranked among the worst in the league for much of the year -- the Ravens ended the season ranked 27th overall, 11th in rushing, 29th in passing and last in passing yards per play -- the Ravens desperately need to add offensive play-makers.

The Ravens' track record of drafting and developing wide receivers is abysmal, but Alabama's Calvin Ridley has to be a candidate for the Ravens at No. 16.

2. Who will play wide receiver?

The Ravens need an athletic tight end. They need depth at inside linebacker. But two months before free agency begins, wide receiver is the team's most dire need.

Mike Wallace led the Ravens this season with 748 receiving yards on 52 catches, but he is a free agent in March. Jeremy Maclin had 40 catches for 440 yards, both career lows, and had one touchdown after Week 2. He is under contract but could be a salary cap casualty. Former first-round pick Breshad Perriman is coming off a lost season in which he had 10 catches for 77 yards. Michael Campanaro (19 catches, 173 yards) is set to become a free agent.

At this juncture, it appears the Ravens' most certain option among the receiving corps is Chris Moore, who had 18 catches for 248 yards and three touchdowns and also showed big return potential with an 87-yard kickoff return against the Bengals during the season finale.

As usual, the Ravens don't have the cap space to be big free-agency players, and the marketplace at wide receiver is underwhelming, with Jarvis Landry and Sammy Watkins among the top options.

3. Which pending Ravens free agents should be a priority to re-sign?

Four Ravens starters are set to become free agents, all on offense: Wallace, tight end Ben Watson, offensive guard James Hurst and center Ryan Jensen. Other pending free agents include oft-injured defensive end Brent Urban and oft-injured tight end Crockett Gillmore.

Other free agents include Campanaro, former starting running back Terrance West, backup quarterback Ryan Mallett, offensive lineman Luke Bowanko, linebacker Steven Johnson and defensive back Brandon Boykin, who spent all season on injured reserve.

Given the Ravens' needs, the organization should focus its internal efforts on Wallace and Jensen.

Cleaning out his locker after the season, Wallace, 31, said he's interested in returning to the Ravens but noted that at this stage of his career, he is most focused on being "in the best situation that I can to win a Super Bowl. Hopefully it is here, but ... football is business. You never know how things are going to go."

Jensen, 26, thrived as the Ravens' starting center and no doubt noted that Green Bay Packers center Corey Linsley signed a three-year, \$25.5 million extension last month. Jensen proved to be a key factor in the Ravens' improved run game, and the Ravens love his physical, play-to-the-whistle (and sometimes past it) mentality.

If Jensen hits free agency, the Ravens could be outbid by a team with more cap space. His absence would leave a sizable hole in the middle of the offensive line.

4. Which players could be cap casualties?

As always, the Ravens are likely to create some cap space by letting veterans go. Their two key offensive acquisitions from last offseason -- Maclin and running back Danny Woodhead -- both could be

on their way out.

Maclin carries a \$7.5 million cap figure for next season, and the Ravens would free up \$5 million in space by releasing him. Woodhead (\$3.3M cap figure, \$1.8M savings if cut before June 1) doesn't create as much space, but with the emergence of Alex Collins and the expected return of Kenneth Dixon, his role would be limited regardless.

Ditto for veteran cornerback Lardarius Webb. Once Maurice Canady returned from injured reserve, Webb's playing time was reduced to a handful of snaps, and Tavon Young is expected back as well. Cutting Webb would free about \$1.75 million.

Cornerback Brandon Carr has a \$7 million cap figure for next season, and the team would free up at least \$4 million cutting him, but with Jimmy Smith returning from an Achilles tear, and the team's past problems with depth in the secondary, the durable veteran might still be worth the price.

Cutting tackle Austin Howard could clear up \$3 million in cap room, but in that case the Ravens would need to find a starting right tackle.

5. How do the Ravens placate their disenchanting fan base?

The Ravens' organization has heard the boos and has noticed the empty seats. In December, team president Dick Cass acknowledged as much in a letter sent to season-ticket holders. "There are a number of reasons for the no-shows," Cass wrote, "but surely the one-time protest in London has been a factor."

So too has been the team's .500 record during the past five seasons. The team has lacked offensive firepower for much of that span, and the return of Mornhinweg suggests more of the same.

There is no doubt that the organization understands its relationship with its fan base has cracks in the foundation. Although some issues clearly extend beyond the field, nothing will help seal those cracks more than winning games.

"I think [our fans] have great passion," Harbaugh said at his season-ending news conference. "I think they love football. I think they want to see us be really good. I think they're tough people. That's what I love about Baltimore and their fans. Let's get it going again. Let's make it exciting. We'll do that by playing great football." •



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2018 HOME SCHEDULE



RICHMOND
Saturday, 2/10 @ 12:00pm



MARIST
Saturday, 3/10 @ 7:00pm



STONY BROOK
Sunday, 3/18 @ 12:00pm



MICHIGAN
Saturday, 3/24 @ 3:00pm



ALBANY
Saturday, 4/7 @ 3:00pm



HARTFORD
Saturday, 4/21 @ 12:00pm

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2018 HOME SCHEDULE



LIU BROOKLYN
Saturday, 2/17 @ 12:00pm



VCU
Saturday, 2/24 @ 12:00pm



AMERICAN
Saturday, 3/3 @ 12:00pm



COASTAL CAROLINA
Wednesday, 3/7 @ 4:00pm



JOHNS HOPKINS
Wednesday, 3/14 @ 5:00pm



NEW HAMPSHIRE
Saturday, 3/24 @ 11:00am



SIENA
Wednesday, 3/28 @ 12:00pm



ALBANY
Saturday, 4/7 @ 12:00pm



VERMONT
Saturday, 4/14 @ 12:00pm



HARTFORD
Saturday, 4/28 @ 12:00pm

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With Terps Relying On Him, Anthony Cowan Jr. Makes Sophomore Leap

★ LUKE JACKSON



Although Maryland point guard Anthony Cowan Jr. played as well as could have been expected last year, the jump the Bowie, Md., native has made from his freshman year to his sophomore year has been substantial.

The 6-foot, 170-pound Cowan has made improvements in all statistical categories while running Maryland's offense for nearly every minute of Big Ten play and typically guarding the opposing point guard.

Cowan's improvement can be partly traced back to the summer, when he competed in the Kenner League for the second consecutive year. The Kenner League, which draws players from the collegiate and professional ranks, is based out of Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Cowan played for the Darren McClinton All-Stars.

"It's really a testing ground," Cowan's Kenner League coach, Mike Glasby, said, "and some things that maybe your college coach has asked you to work on, it gives you that opportunity to go out there and kind of put it into full motion.

"You're playing under a whistle," Glasby explained, referring to the fact that the competition is structured with referees. "Especially for the college guys, they get an opportunity to get together and play pickup during the summertime and work out with their teammates and work out with alumni, but there's nothing like actually getting under the whistle and playing those meaningful games in a situation like that."

Cowan, according to Glasby, honed in on utilizing his quickness more effectively to keep opposing point guards in front of him on the defensive end; striking the proper balance between looking for his own shot and creating for others, and improving his decision-making in the pick-and-roll game. Cowan said before the season that improving his shot -- he shot 32.1 percent from 3-point range last season -- and becoming stronger were points of emphasis during the summer, as well.

The work Cowan put in came to a head during a Kenner League matchup against the Sam Ballers in July. The Sam Ballers were led by former DeMatha and Duke point guard Quinn Cook, who is under contract with the Golden State Warriors organization.

"I think that one game that I guess stands out to me from the Kenner League," Glasby said, "was when we had a chance to match up with ... a guy that I know that Anthony has kind of looked up to from the time that he was a high school student and also when he was playing on the AAU circuit. I think Anthony really took the challenge of playing Quinn and getting the chance to match up with him.

"Anthony was really solid in that matchup. I want to say he had somewhere around in the high 20s, maybe even 30 points in that game, and we ended up pulling that game off. That's just one of the examples of Anthony looking at a matchup, and then also looking at a team that was a little bit older and leading our team statistically as well as just the other intangibles that come with being a good leader out there on the floor."

Several months later, Cowan is averaging team highs in scoring (16.2 points per game) and assists (4.6) for Maryland through 18 games. He's added 4.7 rebounds per game and upped his 3-point shooting percentage to 36.6 percent. He's also played 195 of a possible 205 minutes during the first five games of Big Ten play, proving to be the most indispensable player on head coach Mark Turgeon's roster.

Cowan shared the responsibility of running Mary-

land's offense with Melo Trimble a year ago, though Trimble was the beneficiary of most ball screens and always ran the offense during crunch time. With Trimble having moved on and no true backup point guard on this season's roster, Cowan runs Turgeon's offense for the entire game outside of a handful of possessions with freshman Darryl Morsell or sophomore Kevin Huerter at point.

"I think it's determination," said Zach Suber, Cowan's AAU coach with DC Assault and later DC Thunder, in explaining why Cowan made a big jump this season. "Everybody always whispers about players that played before him and have left. Will Maryland be in shambles? What are they going to expect out of Anthony? Is he going to be a leader? Can he lead? Because he had such a dominant figure playing with him last year, so everybody was kind of focusing in on that dominant player versus [seeing] what Anthony can actually do. I think that kind of pushed him and just to show everybody his talent, that he can play basketball. He played at a high level all his life."

The Terps depend on Cowan to put pressure on a defense by driving to the hoop, finding big men Bruno Fernando and Michal Cekovsky in pick-and-roll situations, knocking down open jumpers and pestering opposing guards on the other end. Cowan's also become a reliable crunch time scorer, like when he scored nine points during an overtime win at Illinois Dec. 3.

Cowan also showed off his moxie in a losing effort at Michigan State Jan. 4. With the Terps unable to run

much offense against the Spartans' swarming defense, Maryland had to lean heavily on Cowan to create his own chances to score points in the second half. Cowan finished with 26 points against then-top ranked Michigan State.

"Honestly, I just think he looks comfortable," said Sean McAloon, Cowan's coach at St. John's College High from 2013-2016. "I know he played a lot last year, but he didn't look like himself, probably. And that's understandable because Melo was there. And so now he just looks more like himself. I don't know that much of a change outside of, he just looks comfortable to me. That's just from me watching. He feels more comfortable; he looks more comfortable. He's doing things that he was doing when he was playing for us in high school."

Cowan's former coaches all described a special work ethic that allows him to get better. McAloon said Cowan has "a mountain-sized chip on his shoulder" and would use free periods his senior year at St. John's to practice his craft in the gym. Suber said Cowan's drive comes in part from competing against future pros such as Dennis Smith Jr. and De'Aaron Fox on the AAU circuit growing up. Glasby said Cowan used this past summer to "show that he could command the team and be the lead guard on the team and help that team be successful with every aspect of the game."

Now, Cowan is indeed helping Maryland be successful in every aspect of the game -- even if it means playing all 40 minutes.

"I'm taking a lot of pride," Cowan said after his team beat Iowa Jan. 7. "Everybody keeps talking about how many minutes I'm playing, but I'll just get a massage tomorrow and stretch a little bit and I'm good. Do a little bit of extra conditioning. I'll be alright. I'm going to give this team everything I have." •

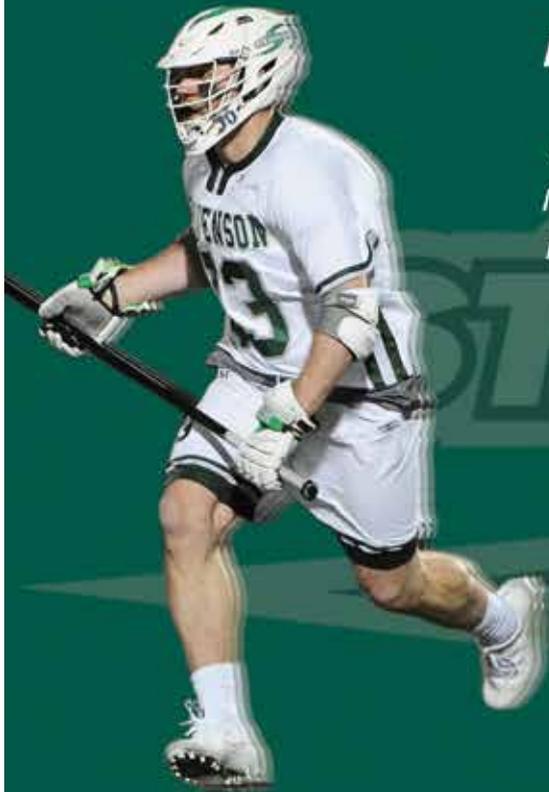


Anthony Cowan Jr.

KENYA ALLEN/PRESSBOX



2018 MEN'S AND WOMEN'S LACROSSE HOME SCHEDULES



MEN'S SCHEDULE

- Feb. 25 Denison - 1 PM
- Mar. 3 Gettysburg - 7 PM
- Mar. 16 Dickinson - 8 PM *
- Mar. 17 York (Pa.) - 8 PM *
- Mar. 20 Tufts - 7 PM
- Mar. 23 Cabrini - 7 PM
- Mar. 27 Alvernia - 7 PM
- Apr. 3 Stevens - 7 PM
- Apr. 14 Messiah - 7 PM
- Apr. 21 Arcadia - 7 PM
- Apr. 27 Widener - 7 PM

* Mustang Classic



WOMEN'S SCHEDULE

- Feb. 17 Salisbury - 1 PM
- Feb. 21 McDaniel - 5 PM
- Mar. 3 Randolph-Macon - 1 PM
- Mar. 25 Buffalo State - 1 PM
- Apr. 4 Albright - 7 PM
- Apr. 11 Lycoming - 7 PM
- Apr. 18 Lebanon Valley - 7 PM
- Apr. 24 Hood - 7 PM

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Towson Men's Basketball Eyeing First NCAA Tournament Bid Since 1991

★ SIMON HABTEMARIAM



at Skerry is a numbers guy.

No matter where the Towson men's basketball team is in its schedule, the head coach is often able to recall individual and team shooting statistics, offensive rebounds versus defensive rebounds, turnover margins and more.

Whether Towson is ranked 166th in the country in field-goal percentage or 154th, Skerry will often have that information committed to memory.

But beyond all the metrics, there's one number that sticks out: zero.

That is the number of regular-season championships, conference tournament championships and NCAA Tournament appearances the Tigers have recorded since joining the Colonial Athletic Association in 2001.

Skerry's teams have posted 20-win seasons three times -- during the 2013-14 season and back-to-back in the 2015-16 and 2016-17 campaigns -- but have fallen short in CAA tournament play.

After getting off to a 10-1 start -- the program's best in its Division I history -- in 2017-18, the Tigers look poised to post a third straight 20-win season. But after years of falling short of their goals, Skerry, now in his

seventh season with Towson, is looking to make 2018 the year the Tigers return to the Big Dance for the first time since 1991.

"That's what I came here for," Skerry said. "That's what the guys on staff are here for. That is the goal. We've been in the mix; I feel like we're going to be in the mix. But we've got to figure out a way where, hopefully, with a little bit of hard work and a little bit of good fortune, to get over the hump."

One metric that may favor the Tigers' postseason hopes is their revamped offense. Having a dynamic backcourt has been a key factor in the CAA Tournament the past few years. The University of North Carolina Wilmington, which has won back-to-back CAA championships and has built its offense around guards such as Chris Flemming and Denzel Ingram, led the conference in points per game and scoring margin during both championship campaigns.

In previous seasons under Skerry, the Tigers have emphasized a solid defense and an offense centered around its frontcourt. Now, the Towson offense is built around a trio of guards in sophomore Zane Martin and seniors Deshaun Morman and Mike Morsell.

"There's a million different ways to win," Skerry said. "I believe it's usually not easier to win shooting jump shots and things like that on consecutive days. Now, our group this year is built a little bit differently.

We have a little bit more offensive firepower than we've ever had."

Another significant set of numbers for Skerry may have come in December. After the Tigers' fast start to the season, the university rewarded him with another contract extension -- his second since March 2016 -- through the 2020-21 season. Details of the new deal have not been made public.

"I hope to be here a long, long time," Skerry said. "I work for great people, and I've got an awesome place, and we're certainly not done yet. I would hope it helps out staff and recruiting, because a lot of times when you have some success, other schools use that against you recruiting. I think the hope we can get across by this is that the grass is not always greener. We're very, very happy here."

With a new deal, a new offense and a historic start to the 2017-18 season, Skerry hopes to finally make a postseason bid with Tigers. The veteran coach knows, however, that a bit of luck also plays into the final equation.

"I was with Coach [Jamie] Dixon at Pitt," Skerry said. "I remember people complaining about never making it to the Final Four, and I remember thinking, 'This is the winningest coach in the history of the Big East in conference games.' And the reality is they got beat a couple times at the buzzer in the Big East Tournament. These things are not series, they're not best-of-three or best-of-seven. It's part of the beauty of college basketball with the Final Four. Rarely does the best team win it all, and I'm not saying the best team doesn't win the conference tournament, but you got to have a little bit of good fortune, too." •



PHOTO: TOWSON UNIVERSITY

Pat Skerry



CONNOR KELLY Is 'One' Special Player For Defending Champion Maryland

By Todd Karpovich



Connor Kelly

One.

It's a number that is not taken lightly by the University of Maryland men's lacrosse team.

Not only is the goal to finish the season as the nation's top-ranked team, but the player who wears that number traditionally bears significant responsibility for the program.

So, when head coach John Tillman called Connor Kelly during the summer and asked if he wanted to switch his jersey number from 40 to 1, the All-American midfielder embraced the opportunity. Kelly, a senior, is part of a talented cast of returning players for Maryland, which is the defending NCAA Division I national champions.

"Knowing the tradition and the players who have worn the number, it was a no-brainer," Kelly said about the change. "Matt Rambo, Mike Chanenchuk, Grant Catalino and Joe Walters are some of the legends I think of when I put on this jersey, and to be able to represent them when I step on the field is a complete honor."

Kelly, who has established himself as one of the most talented players in the history of the program, is the seventh consecutive USILA All-American to wear the No. 1 jersey for Maryland, dating back to Andrew Whipple of the 1996-1998 seasons.

Last season, Kelly was named a first-team All-American after starting all 19 games and scoring 46 goals -- the most by a midfielder in Maryland history. In addition, he was ranked eighth nationally in goals scored and was best among all Division I midfielders. He also led the team with six game-winning goals, helping Maryland (16-3 overall, 4-1 in Big Ten Conference) win its first national title in men's lacrosse since 1975.

This year, Kelly plans to take on an even bigger leadership role.

"As a senior captain on the Maryland men's lacrosse team, it is my job to represent myself as well as the university in the best manner possible," Kelly said. "It is a privilege to play for this historic program and represent all the great players before me. With that being said, it is now my job to set the example and emulate what it means to be a Terp every day."

In addition to playing for Maryland, Kelly had been training with the U.S. Men's National Training Team in preparation for the 2018 World Championships. The level of competition has helped him as a player, and the camaraderie of working with so many great players has also been beneficial.

"It has been everything I could have dreamed of," Kelly said. "Not only are these guys the best players in the world, but they are great people as well. Every guy on the team is so positive and friendly it makes playing so much fun. Not to mention, their energy and passion for the game is second to none."

"Being able to play at such a high level and compete against the best players in the world is the reason why I play the game, so I can't wait for our next session in January."

Despite all his success, Kelly has worked hard during the offseason on improving his game, especially his "overall lacrosse IQ." The goals, though, have not changed, and the team always comes first.

"My goals have been the same every year," Kelly said.

"They are to help put the team in the best position to have an undefeated season, win the Big Ten regular-season title, win the Big Ten Tournament title and win the national championship. Besides those tangible goals, I intend on being the best teammate and player I can be."

While the national championship has elevated the Maryland men's program to even loftier heights, the team has stayed grounded. This is a new season that will bring about new challenges. Kelly and his teammates are embracing the notion of having a "bull's-eye" on their backs.

"As competitors, we want to face every team when they are at the top of their game, and I like to believe our success has stemmed from the fact we are conditioned to play at our best at all times," Kelly said.

JOHNS HOPKINS (2017 RECORD: 8-7; 3-2 BIG TEN CONFERENCE)

The Blue Jays lost to Duke in the first round of the 2017 NCAA Tournament, but they have enough firepower to make a deeper run this year.

The team is led by senior attackman Shack Stanwick, who is a two-time USILA All-American honorable mention. The Boys' Latin alum finished 2017 with 26 goals and 21 assists for 47 points and was named second-team All-Big Ten. Stanwick has scored at least one point in all 48 of his career games.

Junior attackman Kyle Marr is also back for head coach Dave Pietramala after scoring 25 goals and adding 20 assists last season. He was an honorable mention USILA All-American and a second-team All-Big Ten selection.

Stanwick and Marr will get support from midfielder Joel Tinney, a second-team USILA All-American and first-team All-Big Ten honoree last season. Tinney finished the season with 19 goals, nine assists and 40 ground balls. Senior Brinton Valis will also help anchor the midfield. He has recorded five goals and three assists during his career and earned Academic All-Big Ten honors.

LOYOLA (2017 RECORD: 10-6; 6-2 PATRIOT LEAGUE)

The Greyhounds fell to Ohio State in the first round of the 2017 NCAA Tournament. Head coach Charley Toomey leads a dangerous team that is poised to win its fourth Patriot League crown in the past five years.

Pat Spencer (Boys' Latin) is one of the top attackmen in the nation and was named first-team All-America last season. He finished the year with 28 goals and a school- and Patriot League-record 55 assists. His 83 points are tied for fourth-most in a single season in Loyola history.

Goalie Jacob Stover (McDonogh) leads the defense after starting all 16 games last season. He led the Patriot League and finished fourth in NCAA Division I in goals-against average (7.74). Short-stick defensive midfielder Brian Begley could also make an impact after picking up All-Patriot League honors last season.

TOWSON (2017 RECORD: 12-5; 4-1 COLONIAL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION)

The Tigers had one of the most successful seasons in school history, advancing to the NCAA Tournament semifinals. This year, they have another talented group of players capable of making a deep run for head coach Shawn Nadelén.

Junior Zach Goodrich played in all 17 games as a defensive midfielder and was named second-team All-America. Goodrich finished the season with seven goals and one assist. The Kent Island alum also picked up 47 ground balls and caused 19 turnovers. Alex Woodall (St. Mary's) established himself as one of the best faceoff specialists in the nation. He was an honorable mention All-American last season after winning 188 of 319 draws (.589).

Towson's entire starting close defense returns with Sid Ewell, Chad Patterson and Gray Bodden.

Ewell and Patterson started every game last season, while Bodden missed one start due to injury. He was spelled by Calvin Livingston, who also returns. Towson had the fourth-best defense in Division I last season, allowing 7.65 goals per game.

UMBC (2017 RECORD: 6-8; 4-2 AMERICA EAST)

The Retrievers, who advanced to the America East semifinals last season, have a solid group of players returning for second-year head coach Ryan Moran. Long-stick defensive midfielder Billy O'Hara (South River) led UMBC in ground balls for the second consecutive season with 51 in 2017. He also had 18 caused turnovers. Defenseman John Tornabene (Archbishop Curley) had a career-best 24 ground balls and caused 15 turnovers. Tornabene will get support from fellow defenseman Jason Brewster, who was named to the America East second team and the league's All-Academic Team and All-Tournament Team. Gunnar Schimoler (South River) will help anchor the midfield after scoring five goals last year.

NAVY (2017 RECORD: 6-8; 4-4 PATRIOT LEAGUE)

The Midshipmen, who lost to Holy Cross in the Patriot League quarterfinals, need to make up for the loss of All-American defenseman Chris Fennell (Milford, N.J.) and long-stick defensive midfielder Matt Rees. However, junior midfielder Greyson Torain (DeMatha) is ready to help carry the load. Torain tied for the lead with 23 goals and also had 15 assists. He was also a unanimous 2017 first-team All-Patriot League selection. Ryan Wade will lead the attack. He had 13 goals and a team-best 25 assists in 2017. Wade ranked No. 21 nationally, averaging 1.79 assists per game.

Division III

STEVENSON (2017 RECORD: 14-6; 8-0 MIDDLE ATLANTIC CONFERENCE)

The Mustangs will look to make a deep run in the post-season. Stevenson is led by Dominic DeFazio, who was the IMLCA South Region, ECAC South and MAC Commonwealth Defensive Player of the Year. He started all 20 games and finished with a team-high 44 caused turnovers. DeFazio also had 69 ground balls, which ranked second on Stevenson. Sophomore Justin Burnette (Owings Mills) will also play a key role after being named to the MAC Commonwealth first team last year. He won 62.6 percent of faceoffs (219-350) on the season while picking up a team-best 88 ground balls in 2017 •

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2018 HOME SCHEDULES

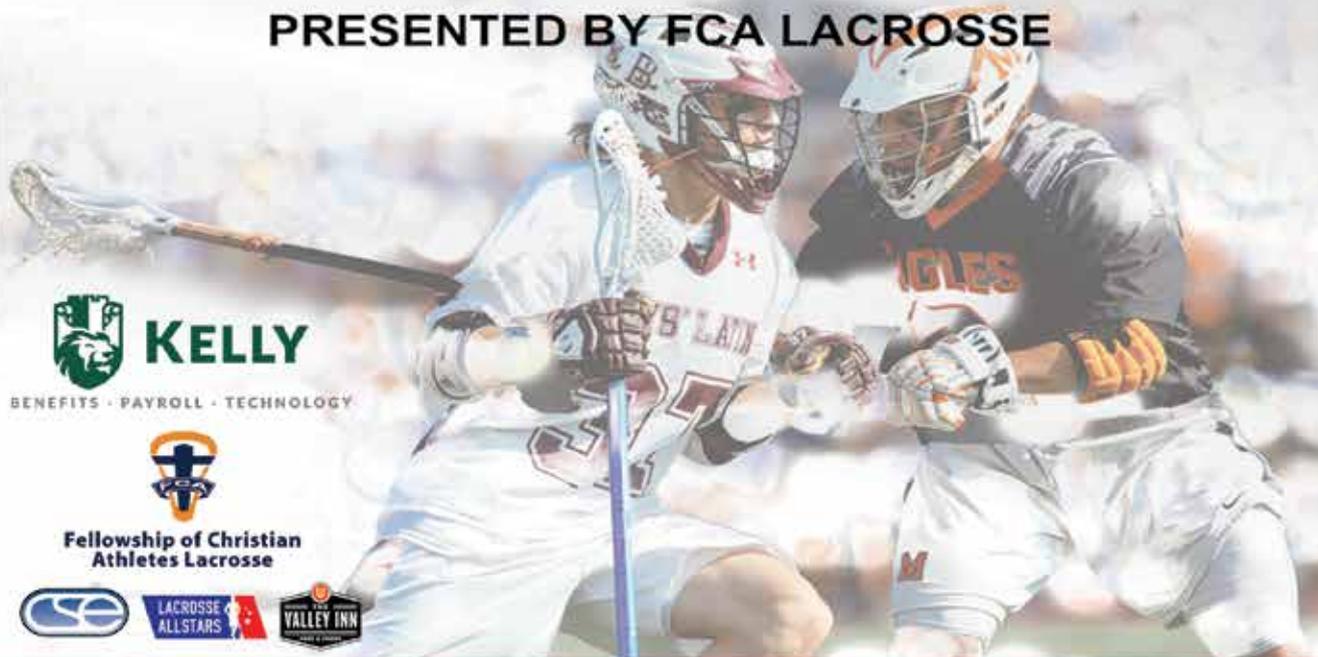
1/27	Men vs. North Carolina (Scrimmage)	12:00 pm
2/3	Men vs. Richmond (Scrimmage)	1:00 pm
2/17	Men vs. Johns Hopkins	1:00 pm
2/24	Men vs. Lafayette *	12:00 pm
2/28	Men vs. Towson	4:00 pm
3/10	Men vs. Duke ^	3:00 pm
3/24	Men vs. Bucknell *	1:00 pm
4/14	Men vs. Boston U. *^	12:00 pm
4/20	Men vs. Army West Point *	7:00 pm
3/7	Women vs. Towson	7:00 pm
3/10	Women vs. Princeton ^	12:00 pm
3/14	Women vs. Virginia	6:00 pm
3/17	Women vs. Army West Point *	1:00 pm
3/28	Women vs. American *	6:00 pm
4/5	Women vs. Syracuse	4:00 pm
4/14	Women vs. Lafayette *^	3:00 pm
4/28	Women vs. Holy Cross *	1:00 pm

Game times and dates subject to change.
* Indicates Patriot League game. ^ Indicates Doubleheader.

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MIAA GAME OF THE WEEK

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SCHEDULE

MARCH 6TH
Haverford @ Boys Latin

MARCH 29TH
Culver @ McDonogh

APRIL 3RD
Gilman @ Calvert Hall

APRIL 6TH
St. Pauls @ Loyola

APRIL 10TH
Calvert Hall @ McDonogh

APRIL 13TH
McDonogh @ Boys Latin

APRIL 17TH
Boys Latin @ Loyola

APRIL 20TH
Calvert Hall @ Boys Latin

APRIL 27TH
Severn @ Calvert Hall

MAY 1ST
FLEX* (Loyola @ McDonogh)

MAY 4TH
FLEX* (Calvert Hall @ St. Pauls)

MAY 8TH
Rivalry Day--FLEX*--(St. Paul's @ Boys Latin)

MAY 11TH
Quarterfinals--FLEX*

MAY 15TH
Semifinals

MAY 18TH
Championship

*SUBJECT TO FLEX

Where to watch: miaalacrosse.com | [@CSETV](https://www.facebook.com/CSETV) | [@CSELax](https://twitter.com/CSELax)



After Historic Season, Navy Again Poised To Be National Contender

By Scott Lowe



Jenna Collins

For all of its success under head coach Cindy Timchal, the Navy women's lacrosse team had one major hurdle it couldn't overcome until the 2017 Patriot League championship game.

When the Midshipmen finally cleared that obstacle, defeating a Loyola University team that hadn't lost a conference regular-season or tournament game since entering the league in 2014, it was like an enormous weight had been lifted.

After capturing the league title and an automatic NCAA Tournament berth with a 15-5 victory last May, the Midshipmen continued to raise their level of play. They went on to earn the program's first victory against a ranked team by beating No. 7 Penn in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, knocked off UMass in the second round and stunned second-seeded and defending national champion North Carolina in the quarterfinals to become the first women's service academy team to advance to a national semifinal.

"Loyola is always a very tough team," said Timchal, who has guided the Navy program since its inception in 2006. "... It took us some time once they entered the league to adjust to their level of play. There were times we were beaten badly and times we were right in there but they broke away. It was always a little disappointing to us how we played against them. Maybe it was the intimidation factor, but sometimes they were just flat-out better than us."

Navy ultimately fell to eventual national runner-up Boston College, 16-15, in the semifinals to finish the year 18-5 and ranked fourth in the nation.

It was the first time in program history the Midshipmen had earned a national top 10 ranking, and they also earned the respect of the lacrosse world.

With All-Americans Jenna Collins and Kelly Larkin returning, Navy is ranked seventh in the *Inside Lacrosse* preseason poll. Collins, a senior, was a second-team All-American and the Patriot League Midfielder of the Year. Larkin, a sophomore attacker, was named the Division I Rookie of the Year by *Inside Lacrosse* and the Patriot League Rookie of the Year.

Collins is joined for her final season by her twin sister Julia, who is an attacker. Jenna recorded 72 goals and 42 assists last year to lead Navy in scoring, with Julia ranking fourth on the team in scoring with 48 goals and 27 assists. Larkin ranked second with 54 goals and 54 assists.

Despite losing Morgan Young (79 points last season) and Patriot League All-Tournament defender Meghan Hubley to graduation, Navy returns 85 percent of its goals, points and assists and appears primed to again be a national contender. Goalkeeper Ingrid Boyum returns to anchor the defense after setting the school record for victories with 18.

Timchal will continue to challenge her team with a schedule that, in addition to 23rd-ranked Loyola, features No. 4 Boston College, No. 5 Florida and No. 13 Virginia.

"We're going to have to be prepared to compete hard every time we step out on the field," Timchal said. "It's always been a battle against Loyola, and it will be a battle again this year, but the Patriot League is more than just us and Loyola. We barely beat Boston University up there last year, and they have a great young team. BU and Lehigh are both strong. Sprinkle in Army now, and on any given day we all know what can happen with the Army-Navy rivalry."

MARYLAND
(2017 RECORD: 23-0; 6-0 BIG TEN CONFERENCE)

Coming off its 14th national championship (the Terps beat

Boston College, 16-13, for the title), Maryland spent most of the fall figuring out how its 11 newcomers will fit into the lineup as the Terps try to replace 2017 Tewaaraton Award recipient and National Midfielder of the Year Zoe Stukenberg and National Defender of the Year Nadine Hadnagy. Despite the losses, Maryland enters the season ranked fourth in the *Inside Lacrosse* preseason poll.

Two of the newcomers for head coach Cathy Reese -- midfielder Meghan Siverson, a transfer from Louisville, and defender Kathy Rudkin, a transfer from Syracuse -- figure to see plenty of playing time. Senior Megan Whittle returns to lead the offense after capturing a bronze medal with England at the 2017 FIL World Cup. Whittle led the team in scoring a year ago with 71 goals and 16 assists.

National Goalie of the Year Megan Taylor also returns for her junior season, while classmate Julia Braig will anchor the defensive corps.

LOYOLA
(2017 RECORD: 11-8; 9-0 PATRIOT LEAGUE)

The Greyhounds enter the 2018 campaign ranked 23rd in the *Inside Lacrosse* preseason poll and with their 34-game Patriot League regular-season winning streak intact despite falling to Navy in last year's conference title game. Head coach Jen Adams' Greyhounds face their usual daunting early-season schedule, taking on No. 25 Johns Hopkins, No. 5 Florida, No. 6 Penn State, No. 24 Towson, No. 11 Princeton and No. 13 Virginia before getting into Patriot League play.

The Greyhounds will have to replace two-time first-team All-Patriot League defender Bailey Mathis but return second-team All-Mid-Atlantic Region attacker Hannah Powers, who led the team in scoring with 45 goals and 28 assists, as well as second-team all-region midfielder Taylor VanThof, who ranked fifth on the team with 23 points, 17 goals, and recorded 146 draw controls. Kady Glynn, last year's starter in goal, returns after posting an 11.71 goals-against average and .470 save percentage.

TOWSON
(2017 RECORD: 12-7; 4-2 COLONIAL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION)

The Tigers return seven starters from last year's team that earned an at-large bid to the NCAA Tournament. With four of its top five scorers back along with three defensive starters, head coach Sonia LaMonica's Tigers enter the year ranked 24th in the *Inside Lacrosse* preseason poll.

Sophomore All-American Olivia Conti anchors the defensive unit after becoming the first freshman to be named CAA Defensive Player of the Year. Conti set school and conference records by causing 49 turnovers and ranked among the nation's top 10 in turnovers caused for much of the season. She is joined on defense by senior Tianna Wallpher, an All-Mid-Atlantic Region selection who caused 38 turnovers.

Senior all-region midfielder Kaitlyn Montalbano also returns after spending last season on the Tewaaraton Award Watch List and being named the CAA Preseason Player of the Year. She ranked fourth on the team in scoring with 45 goals and 13 assists.

JOHNS HOPKINS
(2017 RECORD: 11-7; 3-3 BIG TEN CONFERENCE)

Janine Tucker's Blue Jays return eight of 12 starters from last year's team that advanced to the Big Ten semifinals.

Johns Hopkins enters the season ranked 25th in the *Inside Lacrosse* preseason poll.

In addition to the eight starters, 13 of 15 players who scored for the Blue Jays return, and those players accounted for 75 percent of the team's goals and 85 percent of its assists a year ago. Defensively, Hopkins graduated four starters, including goalkeeper Caroline Federico, from a unit that ranked second in the Big Ten and 30th nationally in scoring defense.

Senior attacker Emily Kenul leads the returners on offense after earning All-Big Ten and IWLC A All-Mid-Atlantic Region honors last season. Despite missing four games because of injuries, she led the team in draw controls (39), ranked third in goals (26) and assists (16) and was fourth in points (42). Leading the midfield returners is senior Shannon Fitzgerald, who was second on the team with 33 goals to go along with 10 assists and 26 ground balls. Senior Emily Verica is the lone returning starter on defense.

UMBC
(2017 RECORD: 11-6; 4-2 AMERICA EAST)

The Retrievers return nine starters from last year's team and feature a nice mix of youth and experience, with six seniors joined by a promising freshman class of nine.

Sam Nolan's 78 points will be missed, but the Retrievers return their next six top scorers. Leading the way among that group for head coach Amy Slade is junior attacker Sara Moeller, who finished with 38 goals and a team-best 35 assists. Moeller was followed by junior midfielder/attacker Lauren McDonald, the team leader with 62 goals to go along with six assists, senior midfielder Carolyn Jamison, who recorded 39 goals and 22 assists, and junior attacker/midfielder Payton Van Kirk (29 points).

UMBC will look to replace goalkeeper Ashley Peacock, who made 15 starts a year ago. Junior Carly Tolino appeared in six contests, starting twice, and posted a 10.26 goals-against average.

Division III

STEVENSON
(2017 RECORD: 10-8; 6-2 MIDDLE ATLANTIC CONFERENCE)

The Mustangs will try to reach their sixth consecutive MAC Commonwealth final after falling to fourth-ranked Messiah for the third straight year last May.

Stevenson head coach Kathy Railey will have to replace the team's top four scorers.

All-conference selections Sarah Roerty, Jamie Bittner and Mack Ferguson all return to help ease those losses and anchor a strong defensive unit.

Roerty, a sophomore defender, was a first-team all-conference pick after leading the conference in ground balls per game, pacing the team with 57 ground balls and causing 28 turnovers to tie for the team lead. Bittner, a senior, is a two-time second-team All-MAC defender who tied Roerty in caused turnovers. Those two teamed with sophomore goalkeeper Mack Ferguson to bolster the defense. Ferguson was an honorable mention All-MAC pick who recorded six games with 10 or more saves.

Sophomore attacker Kiely Bunce is the returning scoring leader, having ranked fifth on the team last year with 25 goals and eight assists. •



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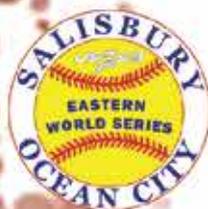


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Andrew Chavarria Named U.S. Army Impact Player Of The Month

★ WICK EISENBERG



Tuscarora High School wrestler Andrew Chavarria has been named the U.S. Army Impact Player of the Month for December.

Chavarria, a junior who competes in the 170-pound division, was nominated for the award by Trey Coates, the head coach for the Tuscarora (Frederick County) wrestling team.

"He not only works hard and sets an example for the rest of my team during practice, but does it in a humble manner," Coates wrote in his nomination email. "Andrew never speaks about himself or complains about anything."

If there's one thing Chavarria has proved it's that he's a hard worker, starting in the classroom where he has a 3.92 GPA. Chavarria has also done well in classes that are advanced for his grade. He's currently taking advanced placement English language and composition, a class that's intended for seniors.

Chavarria's teacher in that class, Jonathan Araujo, said his diligence and determination make him stand out, as does his affable demeanor.

"His high marks on his assignments are to be commended, but equally so, his genuine interest in everything and how it all connects," Araujo said. "Andrew's brain is clearly engaged in his work, and he is willing to assist others to develop the interest and excitement he has for whatever project he's currently completing. His genuine interest in others also helps to make him an exceptional student. He greets me and his classmates with a warm welcome and smile every day and actively participates with the coursework."

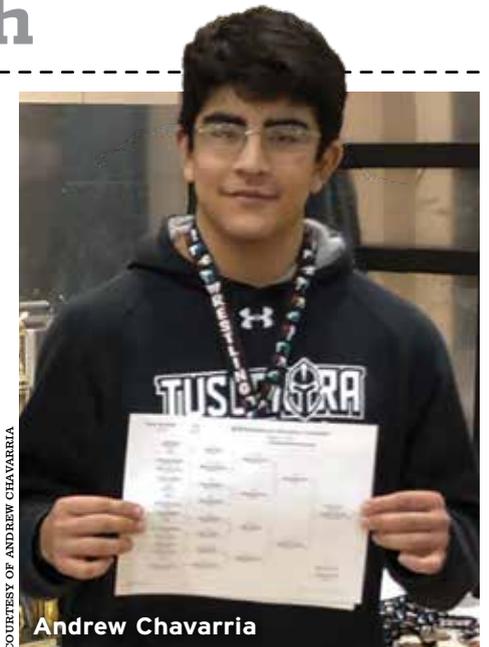
Chavarria has done such a good job academically that Coates asked him to help tutor a teammate that was in danger of not being eligible to wrestle. After his first few tutoring sessions proved useful, Chavarria began helping more teammates.

"Coach kept pulling me for tutoring during my free period," Chavarria said. "I'm now helping three teammates in algebra, science and Spanish. I want to see our team succeed. Wrestling is an individual sport to an extent, but in a lot of ways it isn't."

That camaraderie is one of the main reasons Chavarria loves being a member of the Titans' wrestling program.

"Tuscarora is really diverse and our team definitely reflects that," Chavarria said. "Our team is made up of people with different perspectives and points of view. It's very cool to see everyone come together and bond over wrestling."

On the mat, Chavarria is doing his part, as Tuscarora aims to qualify for the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association dual meet regionals for the first time in program history. Individually, Chavarria has



Andrew Chavarria

seen his skills improve and hopes to qualify for the state tournament later this season.

Add in the leadership he provides for his teammates and it's clear to see his positive impact on the Tuscarora wrestling team.

"We're definitely an improving team," Chavarria said. "We've won meets this year that we haven't won before, and, individually, I've started to beat kids I couldn't previously. I'm feeling way more comfortable and confident in my matches. I like to lead by example. After we get dressed we start running on the mat and I always try to be one of the first ones to do that. During drills I always go my hardest."

Though Chavarria has a lot to focus on in the classroom and on the wrestling mat, he's just as busy outside of school.

Chavarria works part-time at Manna Taqueria, a restaurant in Frederick that is owned by his parents. While there, he does whatever the restaurant needs help with, ranging from being a cashier to helping in the kitchen.

Chavarria said he gets his work ethic from his parents and that he's seen firsthand how important it is to try your best.

"It might sound corny, but once I saw how hard my folks worked to bring our business that wasn't doing well initially to becoming successful, a light just went off in my head," Chavarria said. "Having a work ethic applies to all facets of life -- business, school, wrestling, and so much more."

Though he doesn't ask for any rewards for all his hard work, that doesn't mean it's gone unnoticed.

"I'm not sure where he finds the time to do everything he does while also maintaining a good GPA and a successful wrestling season," Coates wrote. "I would like nothing more than to have the kid who asks for nothing and gives everything to gain a little recognition." •

The Impact Player of the Month Award is given to an individual who has impacted his or her team in a positive way, both on and off the field.

VARSITY REPORT

Perry Hall's Anthony Higgs, Laquill Hardnett Forged Friendship Through Basketball

★ WICK EISENBERG

For Anthony Higgs, it appeared to be just another normal day early during his freshman year of high school.

Higgs was playing pickup basketball games with his classmates on the outdoor basketball courts at Perry Hall High School. Higgs wasn't just participating in the games, though; he was dominating them despite the fact he wasn't the most experienced player. Easily being the tallest kid on the court at 6-foot-4 definitely helped, however.

That quickly changed when a boy Higgs didn't know, who also was 6-foot-4, came to the court, and the two decided to play one-on-one.

"He came in and blew me out," Higgs said. "I think it was 13-2. He absolutely tore me apart. It was a wakeup call for me that I had to get better. We did immediately hit it off, though, and I remember thinking that if we ever played on the same team together we could do something special."

That first instinct was correct. Higgs and the other boy, Laquill Hardnett, haven't just thrived together on the court; now as seniors at Perry Hall High School, they've created a legacy together that few tandems can match at the high school level.

Hardnett and Higgs spent their freshman year improving their games while playing JV before getting called up for the postseason. The duo made varsity as sophomores and proceeded to guide Perry Hall through its best two years of basketball in its history. During Hardnett's and Higgs's first two years on Perry Hall's varsity team, the Gators went 47-5.

Along the way, Perry Hall won a pair Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association 4A North regional titles. Last year was particularly exciting, as the Gators also won the Baltimore County crown and the MPSSAA 4A state championship. Before Hardnett and Higgs joined varsity, Perry Hall had never won a post-season championship of any kind.

"They know where they're going to be all the time, and it really comes from playing together so much," Perry Hall head coach George Panageotou said. "After four years of playing together, they just have fantastic chemistry. What's great about Laquill and Anthony, though, is they're as good as they are because of each other. Both were pretty raw when they got to high school, but get-



(from left to right) Laquill Hardnett and Anthony Higgs

ting to go against a really talented player who's their size every day in practice has definitely made them better."

Finding a contemporary that's their size would've been difficult if they didn't have each other -- Hardnett now stands at 6-foot-9, while Higgs is 6-foot-8. Though both players are classified as forwards because of their height, both have guard capabilities to go with their rebounding and blocking skills.

Higgs is a sensational shooter who can hit shots from 24 feet away from the basket, while Hardnett plays like a point guard, utilizing his excellent ball-handling and vision to make sublime passes to find the open man. Both are also excellent athletes who are capable of getting up and down the floor in Perry Hall's transition game.

Last season, Higgs averaged 15.7 points and 8.8 rebounds per game, while Hardnett contributed 12.9 points, 10.2 rebounds and four assists. While some highly touted players might struggle with having a teammate who also gets a lot of attention, Hardnett and Higgs haven't had any issues sharing the spotlight.

"It's definitely easier to get noticed by colleges when you have a 6-foot-8 shooting guard on your team," Hardnett said. "Coaches are going to come in the gym to see him. That's helped both of us a lot during the recruiting process -- having each other."

When the duo played together on the Nike national summer circuit this past summer, their already high stock with college programs continued to rise. As recruiting began to intensify for both, each would use the other as a sounding board for what

was going on in their individual process.

In fact, Higgs said how Hardnett reacted after Higgs told him he was close to committing to the University of Mississippi was

a factor in his decision to become a Rebel.

"Laquill loved how Ole Miss recruited me," Higgs said. "He told me I was dumb if I didn't go there. That was one of the things that solidified my decision to commit there, because I know Laquill has never misled me on anything."

Hardnett is yet to make a decision on where he wants to play in college, though he's currently being recruited by a host of schools, including St. Bonaventure, Cincinnati, Kansas State, Buffalo and Murray State. He hopes to have his list of schools narrowed to three by the end of February.

Before the two go to college, though, they still have one more season to play for the Gators. Both want to finish their careers with another state championship, though it'll be trickier this year since Perry Hall graduated eight players from last year's team.

When the duo graduates later this year and goes off to separate colleges, Panageotou doesn't expect Hardnett and Higgs to lose touch. The two are extremely close away from the court, and both plan to watch each other play in college as much as they can.

They have even started thinking about sharing the court in college someday.

"We've already started talking about hoping to play against each other in March Madness," Hardnett said. "Hopefully we could get everyone from Perry Hall to come out for it -- that would be pretty cool if it happened." •

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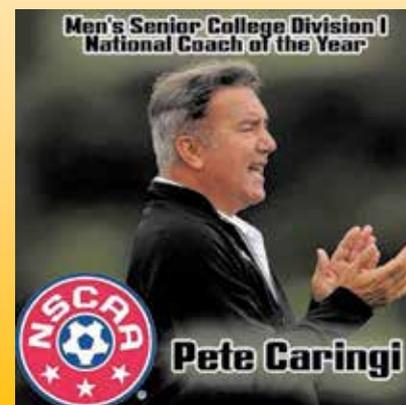
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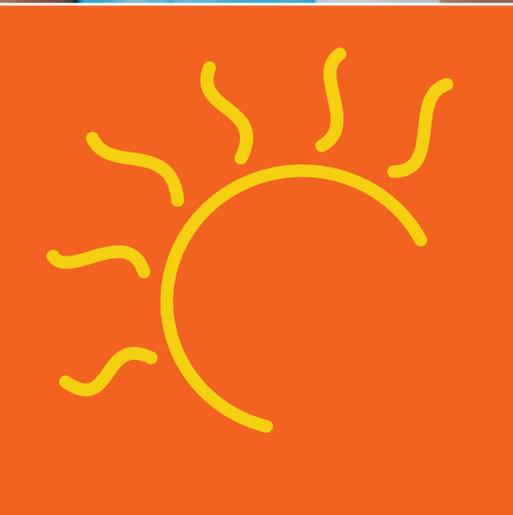
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FEB. 10 -- CUPID'S UNDIS RUN

Join the 1-mile fun-run, and then have some more fun at Power Plant Live! at the Inner Harbor to benefit Children's Tumor Foundation. To register, visit cupidsundierun.org/city/baltimore/.

FEB. 24 -- TRI TO HELP

Seasoned triathletes and first-timers can compete in Towson to raise the most sponsors, which funds epilepsy research at the Johns Hopkins Epilepsy Center. To register, visit stroupkids-forkids.org/md.

MARCH 11 -- SHAMROCK 5K

Grab your green and run through Baltimore City for the Under Armour Kelly Shamrock 5K before finishing at Power Plant Live! for an epic after party. To register, visit runsignup.com/Race/MD/Baltimore/UnderArmourStPatricksDayShamrock5K.



★ BASEBALL/SOFTBALL

FEB.10/MARCH 10 -- BASEBALL CARD SHOW

A sports card and memorabilia show to benefit Monsignor Slade Catholic School will be held at Monsignor Slade Catholic School in Glen Burnie from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. For more details, call Leo at 443-416-6447.

BLUE DEVIL UMPIRE ASSOCIATION

New baseball umpires are needed to officiate in Baltimore, Carroll and Frederick counties. No experience is necessary. Email Bob Frank at lawyerfrank@comcast.net or call 410-493-7011, or contact Larry Silverman at Bluedevilumps@comcast.net or call 410-484-2118.

ADULT BASEBALL

Join the Eastern Baltimore County over-40 baseball league, which plays with wood bats on 90-foot diamonds. Players of all skill levels are encouraged to visit over40baseball.org or call Mike Lockett at 410-446-0443.

COCKEYSVILLE RECREATION

For updates about baseball registration for the Cockeysville Recreation Center, visit leagueathletics.com/?org=cockeysvillereccouncil.org or call 410-887-7734.

MUSEUM OF NEGRO LEAGUES BASEBALL

Visit the Hubert V. Simmons Museum of Negro Leagues Baseball

at the Owings Mills Metro Centre. The museum is named after Bert Simmons, who played for the Baltimore Elite Giants. The museum is open daily and admission is free. Volunteers are always welcome. For more information, visit smnlbinc.org.



★ LACROSSE/SOCCER/RUGBY/SQUASH

FEB. 19 -- LAX SHOOT-OUT

There will be lots of action at the LAX Shoot-Out at Du Burns Arena. For more information, visit marylandsports.us/event/baltimore-lacrosse-shoot-out.

SPRING LACROSSE

Baltimore Youth Lacrosse is registering for spring lacrosse for kids ages 4-13. This Baltimore City-based program is open to beginners as well as experienced players. Visit our website at baltimoreyouthlax.com or call 443-863-8377 for more information.

CELTIC SOCCER CLUB

Tryouts for the Celtic Soccer Club are for boys ages 6-18 and girls 6-12. Registration and additional information is available at baltimoreceltic.com.

SQUASH

SquashWise provides incentives for middle school students to excel academically, athletically and socially, as well as the opportunity to compete in local and national squash tournaments. No squash experience is necessary to become a tutor. Visit baltimoresquashwise.org to make your tax-deductible donation. To make equipment donations and/or become a volunteer tutor, email abbym@baltimoresquashwise.org.

YOUTH COACH

Baltimore Youth Lacrosse is looking for volunteer youth coaches for all age groups for the 2018 spring season. If interested, call 443-863-8377 to apply.

MIGHTY KICKS PUP LEAGUE

The Pup League provides year-round soccer training for boys and girls of all abilities ages 2-7. It's designed to build motor skills, self-confidence and basic techniques. Ongoing programs are available around Baltimore. For more information, visit mightykicksbaltimore.com.

RUGBY

The Baltimore-Chesapeake Rugby Club, the region's only Division I men's rugby club, is looking for experienced players or those new to the game. For more information, email baltimorechesapeake rugby@gmail.com or visit baltimorerugby.net.



★ FOOTBALL

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★ OTHER ACTIVITIES

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FEB. 24 -- LIVING THE DREAM GALA

Support efforts at the Zaching Against Cancer Foundation for cancer patients and their caregivers through greatly needed funds, services, scholarships and more. The event takes place at M&T Bank Stadium and features food, an open bar, music and a live and silent auction with great sports memorabilia. Visit zachingagainstcancer.org for tickets.

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The improved Babe Ruth Birthplace Museum has reopened next to Camden Yards. Babe Ruth's legacy shaped the sports and American life we live now. Consider making a tax-deductible donation. Visit baberuthmuseum.org/donate or call 410-727-1539, ext. 3012.

HOMESCHOOL SPORTS

Baltimore-area homeschooled boys and girls in grades six-12 interested in playing interscholastic sports -- such as soccer, volleyball and baseball -- can register for the upcoming school season. For more information or to register, email chensports@verizon.net.

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Interested in becoming a high school swimming official in the Baltimore-Anne Arundel area? Experience as a competitive swimmer or coach at the high school, college or masters level -- or prior experience officiating -- is strongly preferred. Email mdcommish@comcast.net or call Mike Connors at 410-653-7307.

DUCKPIN BOWLING

There are openings for youth duckpin-bowling leagues for ages 3-21 at various duckpin centers in Baltimore. Most programs run Saturday mornings and include bowling, shoe rental and coaching. For more information, visit ndya.org, call Stacy Karten at 410-356-0936 or "like" duckpin bowling at facebook.com/theduckpinnews.

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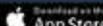
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MARYLAND GAMING

Dick Cass, Ted Leonsis Shed Light On Future Of Gambling In Sports

★ **BILL ORDINE**



Recent public comments by two high-level area sports executives bring into focus the inevitable future of sports during the next few decades.

In one instance, Ravens president Dick Cass tried to assuage disenchanted fans in what amounted to an open letter in late December referencing noticeable swaths of empty seats at M&T Stadium during the season.

In the other instance, Ted Leonsis -- owner of the NBA's Washington Wizards, NHL's Washington Capitals, WNBA's Washington Mystics and Arena Football League's Baltimore Brigade and Washington Valor -- flatly stated on a podcast, "To me it's the only thing that will save the NFL."

The "it" to which Leonsis referred to is sports gambling.

That and other comments reinforcing Leonsis' opinion about sports gambling were made on a podcast with Bram Weinstein not too long before the Cass letter was sent.

On the surface, Cass' concerns about empty seats at Ravens games, a phenomenon attached to player protests during the national anthem and on-field disappointments, and Leonsis' opinion about sports gambling may not appear to directly intersect -- but these threads eventually entwine.

The NFL's iron grip on America's attention and wallets is beginning to loosen, as evidenced by slipping TV ratings and unoccupied stadium seats.

For some time, the NBA, NHL and even Major League Baseball have had to scrap to capture fan interest while all the NFL had to do was kick off on Sunday.

It could be argued that's why NBA owners, such as Leonsis and the Dallas Mavericks' Mark Cuban, as well as league commissioner Adam Silver, have been bullish on sports wagering. They understand what it means to compete for fans and they are progressive and proactive when it comes to fan engagement.

Let's admit it: Having a financial interest in a sports event makes for engaged fans.

That's a lesson that will dawn on NFL owners as well, if it already hasn't.

Leonsis' advocacy for legalized sports

wagering is rooted in pragmatism.

"It's not like people aren't gambling," Leonsis said on the podcast, comparing it to the Prohibition era when folks imbibed routinely in speakeasies.

Leonsis went on to enthusiastically describe the evolving world of sports wagering that includes real-time betting on unfolding events as a game is in progress, a concept that's been tinkered with for years in Las Vegas and overseas and has been made more practical with advances in technology.

And that's where Leonsis got around specifically to football, noting that the natural pauses between plays presented wagering opportunities with the augmentation of play-by-play odds analysis.

Now, that's how you keep fans riveted to game action.

In his letter to fans, Cass talked of the Ravens organization's lofty goals and worthy aspirations. He emphasized the team's commitment to community service and offered that sports can be a unifying influence.

"When the Ravens win, we can bring families and the community together," Cass wrote. "We've done that before, and we can do it again."

There is no fault to be found in what Cass wrote. However, there are deeper is-

sues at work when it comes to the NFL's popularity. The controversial events of 2017 -- as they affected game attendance and TV ratings locally and elsewhere -- simply exacerbated what was already happening in the fan universe.

Tedious stoppages for replays that sometimes create even more controversy; player suspensions; legal battles over those suspensions; horrible Thursday games; and serious injuries occurring at epidemic rates are among the issues with which the NFL must grapple.

Eventually, the NFL -- even if it can mitigate some of the aforementioned problems -- was going to find out that it needs to fully embrace gambling to hold its place with fans, especially in another decade or two. What occurred in 2017 will simply hasten that moment of realization.

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Sports gambling figures out of Nevada in November produced a couple of historical events. For the first time, sports wagering handle at the state's legal book-making operations exceeded \$500 million for three straight months.

Handle is the total amount wagered and should not be confused with revenue.

To put the financials in perspective, sports bettors wagered \$538 million in November and the bookmakers kept \$9.8 million (that's about 1.8 percent). If you figure that sounds low, you're figuring right. The average hold on sports wagering is closer to 5 percent or better.

For November, the books got smacked on baseball betting because of the timing of the World Series Game 7 Nov. 1 and the fact that it was the Houston Astros who beat the Los Angeles Dodgers. That perfect storm created another historical footnote.

For November, Nevada books paid out \$11.5 million on baseball, which reportedly was an all-time single-month loss for that sport. All those futures bets on Houston placed throughout the year hit the bottom line of the November ledger. But as already pointed out, other sports had the bookmakers in the black overall, although by a slim margin. •



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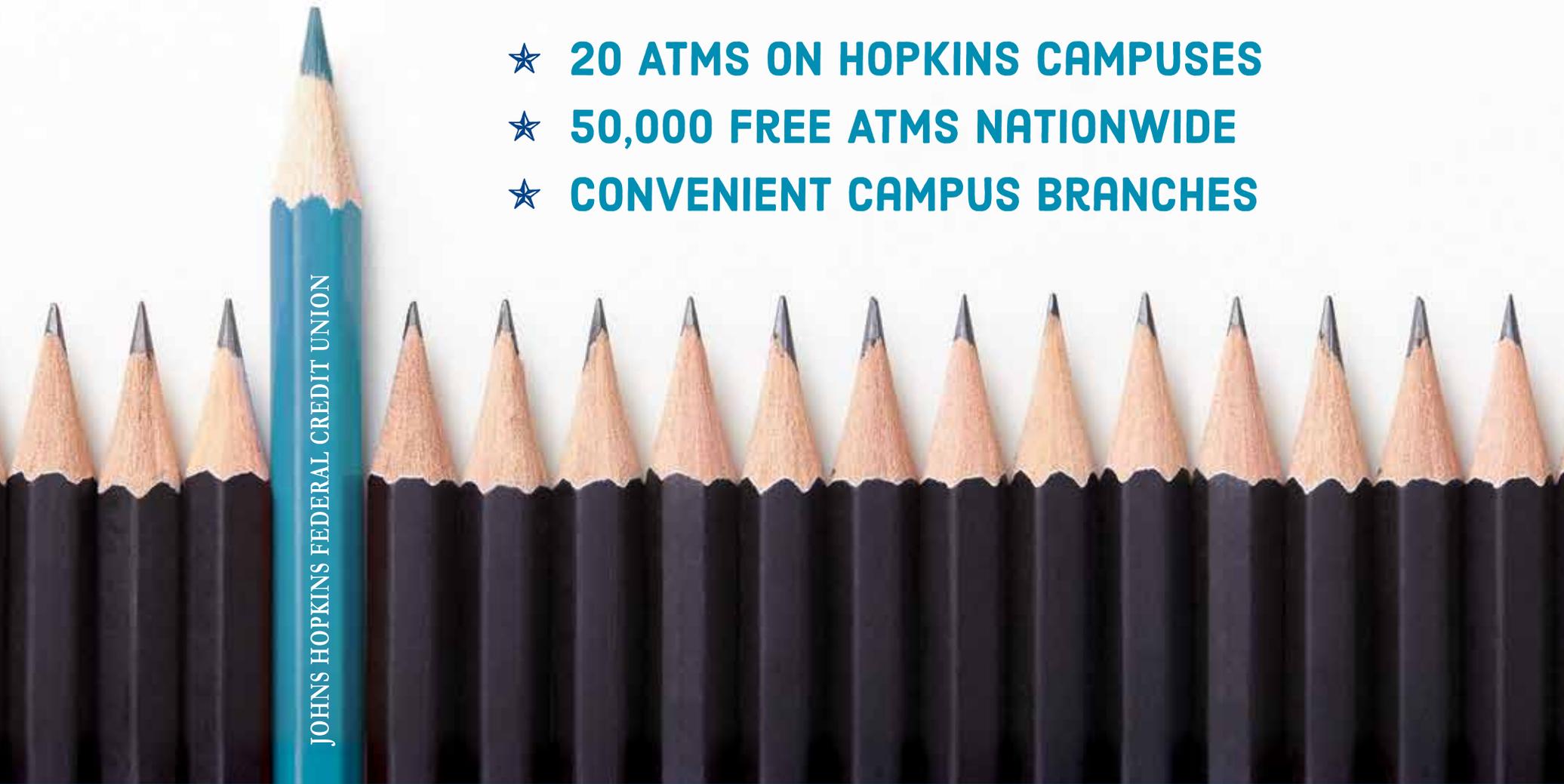


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THE REALITY CHECK

After First Win At Coppin State, Head Coach Juan Dixon Reflects On His Journey

★ **GLENN CLARK**



bout 14,500 people attended Juan Dixon's first win as a college basketball player.

The Calvert Hall alum scored 14 points during a 113-46 blowout of Western Carolina for then-No. 6

Maryland at Cole Field House Nov. 14, 1998. If he never won another game, the moment would have been a fitting culmination to a life story worthy of a motion picture.

Three-hundred-and-twenty-seven people attended Dixon's first win as a Division I college basketball head coach.

The former Maryland star saw his Coppin State team snap a 17-game losing streak by holding off Florida A&M, 79-78, in double overtime at the Coppin State Physical Education Complex Jan. 8, 2018. If he never won another game, the moment would have equally been a fitting culmination to a second act

worthy of a motion picture.

In the bowels of the arena after the win, Dixon became emotional.

"I've been in this situation before as a player. And I remember my junior year at Maryland," Dixon began, but at this point he had to stop to compose himself. "We [were] on a five-game losing streak. Coach [Gary Williams] came in nice and loose our next practice, and I took a page out of his book."

Dixon, in his first season at Coppin, went on to speak about the tears he shared with his assistant coaches after recording just one win -- a narrow victory against a bad opponent. When I asked him why the moment meant so much to him, he opened up about the more recent chapters in his unbelievable life story.

"I've worked so hard to figure out what my purpose is in my life," Dixon, 39, said. "I've had unbelievable family support, coaches that never gave up. And they saw something more in me than I ever saw in myself."

Before Dixon became a star at Mary-

land, he overcame a difficult childhood, in which his mother and who he thought was his father died of AIDS-related illnesses before Dixon was 17. He later discovered his biological father, Bruce Flanigan, and the two became close.

The transition from professional athlete to college basketball coach was not easy for Dixon. Those of us who covered him would regularly find him to be distant if not purely abrasive. The former NCAA Tournament Most Outstanding Player -- when the Terps won the national championship -- admits that those years brought out his worst.

"Life teaches you so many lessons," said Dixon, who played seven seasons in the NBA. "And my family has been so supportive. I've been through a lot. I've been at the top of the mountain, and I've hit rock bottom. I've treated people wrong, and I've learned that I need to treat people extremely well."

"I know I had a moment in my life where I wasn't a great husband, I wasn't a great dad. I did things out of the norm."

His ex-wife -- and current partner -- Robyn Dixon paints a clearer picture of how things went after injuries forced him to retire from the NBA.

"There is kind of like -- with a lot of professional athletes -- there is like a period of denial or not really knowing what your purpose is when you take away the sport," Robyn Dixon said. "And so he went through a really rocky time those first three years after his career ended."

"And we went through a period where we lost all our money. We lost our cars; we lost our homes. And so it's like ... starting

over. And you can appreciate everything so much more."

Coaching was the vehicle for Dixon to turn his life around.

"He had to hit his rock bottom," Robyn Dixon said, "to kind of be able to reflect and say, 'It's time for me to grow up. It's time for me to change. It's time for me to really figure out what my purpose is' and to realize that playing sports was more of a vehicle to get him to his real career and to really understand that being a basketball player was not what defined him."

Nine credits short of getting his degree, Dixon re-enrolled at Maryland in January 2013. He took the lowest-rung coaching job available under head coach Mark Turgeon. He would go on to accept the head coaching job of the women's team at the University of the District of Columbia before coming to Coppin.

"No NBA player aspires to be [a Division II women's coach]," Robyn Dixon said. "It's humbling. While they were blessings, it's still a humbling experience. So I think you just are able to appreciate life more."

After that first win coaching in his hometown, Dixon truly appreciated all of it -- his two sons putting their ears to the locker room door to try to hear their dad's postgame speech, his high school sweetheart who remained in his life despite his failings, a newly discovered biological father and a group of players reveling in their first taste of victory.

As a Baltimore sports fan, I appreciated the opportunity to share in another incredible moment for our city's most compelling athlete ... ever. •

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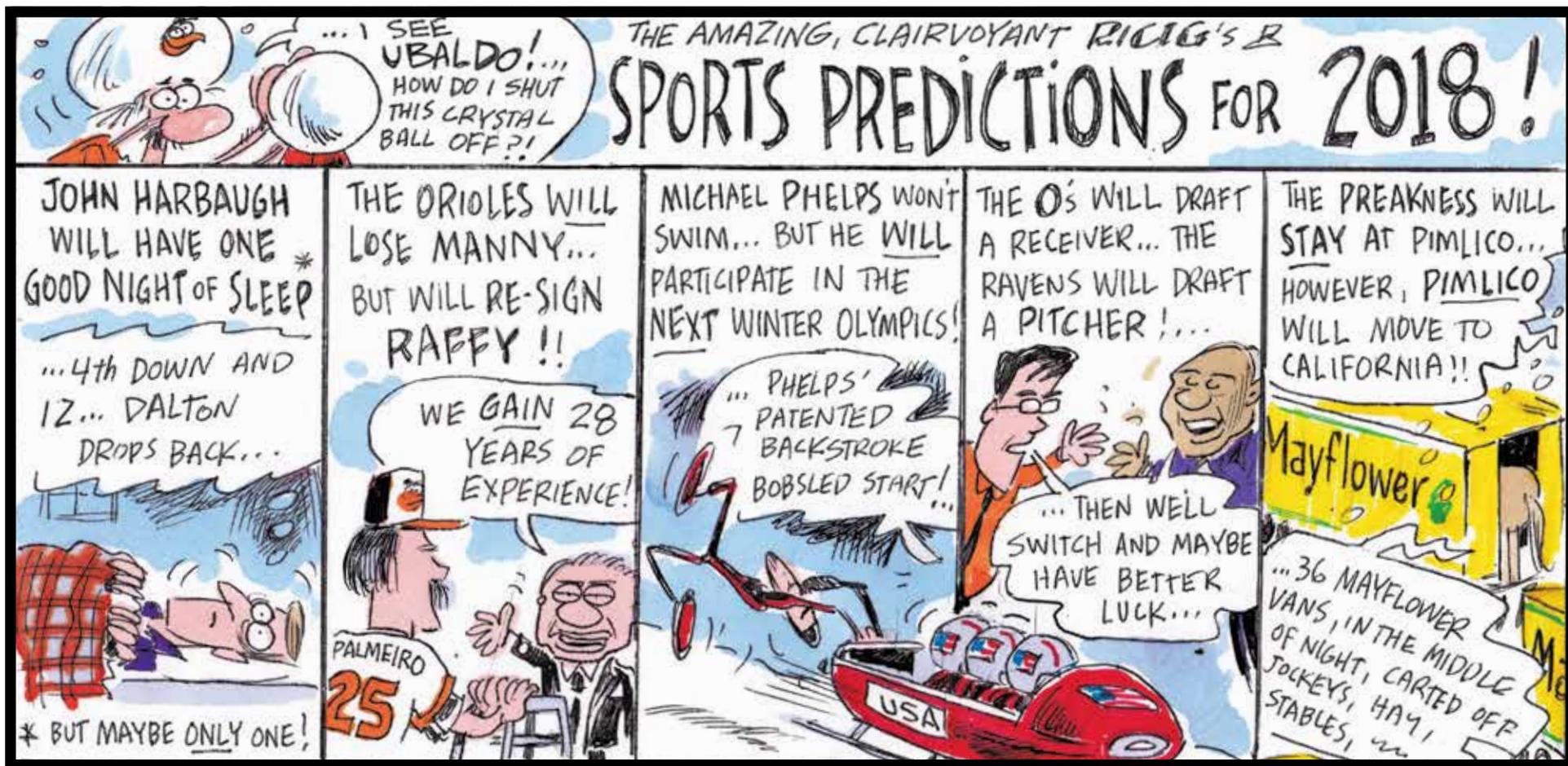
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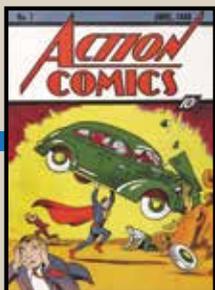
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