

Mock trial team bonds through shared interest in law and an ongoing tag game

GAME OF LAW

SPOTLIGHT

What type of court case would you want to judge?



"Probably a social case because I relate the most to social issues," **Skye Slater**, 10, said.



"Probably civil because it seems the most non confrontational so it would be easier to deal with," **Dylan McCall**, 9, said.



"Criminal because I like to learn about what people do as a crime, and why they did it, their motives," **Hanna Awdeh**, 9, said.

Hheavy breathing. Two pairs of shoes sprint down the halls, their thuds shaking the floors of the school. Two people race, their clothes whipped back by the force of their acceleration. The person behind the other reaches out, and with a flush of victory, yells "TAG!" as he hits the back of the person in front of him. This is the Wando Mock Trial Team.

Scotty Faltynski, 12, a member of Mock Trial and the creator of the team's tradition of tag, recalled where he found the idea for a perpetual chase.

"I saw some post [online] and it said, 'You're probably still it from a game of tag 10 years ago.' I was like, 'Sounds like a great idea to keep everyone on their toes, so hey, let's go play tag!'"

Faltynski said.

The team even went so far as to create their own rules.

"Anytime you're at practice, whether it's school or another person's house, that's a safe zone. Anywhere on campus, if your fingers are crossed, you can't be tagged. Otherwise, fair game. Also, if your parents get tagged you're automatically it," Faltynski said.

Faltynski mused over the many unexpected places the team has jumped suddenly into the game. He laughed as one instance popped into his head.

"One time Joy [Katzburg] ran into Ben [Wallace] at the DMV," Faltynski said.

Joy Katzburg, 10, also laughed as she remembered the day she saw Wallace. She experienced a feeling of relief when she knew she was no longer going to be 'it'.

"One day, Delaney [Winn] comes up to me and tags me. I thought I was screwed because it's Spring Break. The next day I go to the DMV to get my learner's permit. I'm waiting in line, and then, at the corner of my eye, I see Ben. I'm like, 'Dad I gotta tag that kid.' Ben doesn't notice me and he walks past me and I tagged him and said 'you're it,'" Katzburg said.

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Tag itself, Katzburg admitted, had helped unite the team in a way nothing else could.

"At the beginning of Mock Trial, we were super separated and were barely friends with each other. We wouldn't be in touch with each other that much. Scotty came up with the game tag at the end of state cause because we all weren't close. Tag allows us to interact with each other even more," Katzburg said.

Crawford White, 10, another member of Mock Trial, has witnessed the unity Faltynski brought to the team. His constant encouragement and support helped the team bond.

"Scotty does not have a formal position as a team captain,

but the way he helps and encourages everyone—during practice or just in day to day life—makes him a great leader," White said.

The senior accepted his informal leadership role. He helped organize case questions and coached other members with their roles.

"I guess it just sort of happened, to step up to the plate. Basically we're a fake court system. We get a case and for Empire we get it in July and for State we get it October thirty-first. We jump straight in, assign people to be witnesses, attorneys, and make questions to prove each side," So people will ask, 'Hey does this fit the character I'm trying to play.' Those are some of my jobs," Faltynski said.

The two-hour long practices, sleep-deprived weekends of competitions, and constant thinking on his feet made Faltynski appreciate the people within Mock Trial all the more.

"Getting to spend a lot of time with the people who are on the team is my favorite part," Faltynski said. "As someone who didn't have very many friends in middle school and the beginning of high school, Mock Trial is probably the highlight of my day because I'm surrounded by people I love and who love me."



photographer s. bartholow



photographer a. reynolds

LOOKING FORWARD: (top) **Ben Wallace**, 12, and **Joy Katzburg**, 10 listen to the opposing team during a competition while composing a rebuttal. "Mock Trial is not just about the law; it's about the experience and the connections you make doing it," Wallace said

RESUME WORK: (above) **Trent Simmons**, 12, works on a computer during his English 4 class, which is focusing on career planning. "We were making practice resumes for jobs... to get us ready for the real world," Simmons said.

Customer is allowed to have objects outside of the margin.

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