

ATHLETES

ASSERT

Mid-season Super Bowl contending teams



The Lombardi Trophy, a shiny seven pound trophy that only the greatest can hold. 32 teams fight for it every year but only a couple good enough to hoist it at the end of the year

Justin Herbert, the MVP of the league thus far has led the Chargers to a 4-2 record, along with the best receiving pair in the NFL (Mike Williams and Keenan Allen) and this offense is giving the chiefs a run for their money for the best in the NFL. While the defense is not close to a Super Bowl caliber group, the offense is just so good for anyone to pass on them and a Bills vs Chargers AFC Championship could be in the works.

The Bills are the best team in the AFC this year as Josh Allen and Stefon Diggs are continuing their tear from last season and dominating their competition and with running back tandem Zach Moss and Devin Singletary helping establish a powerful run game the Bills offense is in go mode and shows no sign of slowing down. As long as the defense continues to play great I wouldn't be surprised if Buffalo finally gets the Super Bowl trophy they deserve.

How bout dem Cowboys. After an abysmal 2020 campaign filled with injuries, the Cowboys have come out firing to a 5-1 record putting them atop the NFC East.

After last year's season-ending injury Dak Prescott has shown no sign of injury as he is top five in both completion percentage and passing touchdowns. Add in a hard-hitting defense and the Cowboys much to the dismay of all of America could be returning to their super bowl ways.

The Cardinals are flying high as 3rd-year quarterback Kyler Murray and star receiver Deandre Hopkins have led a high powered offense to a 7-0 record. This offense was expected to be great, but the defense has been the real shocker as they are 6th in interceptions and 5th in the least rushing yards allowed. If the Cardinals continue their stellar play then a deep playoff run could be in their cards.

In the early 2000s, the Rams had the greatest show on turf, with the turn of the decade it looks like the show is back in town. Led by the offseason acquisition of Matthew Stafford and the improved game of Cooper Kupp the Rams offense is rolling.

With the defense still dominating as they have been for the last couple of years with Jalen Ramsey and Aaron Donald and the Rams could follow in the footsteps of the greatest show on turf and bring the Lombardi trophy back to L.A.

The reigning super bowl champion Buccaneers have continued their run of dominance. Led by the G.O.A.T. Tom Brady and their dominant defense which ranks 1st in the least rushing yards allowed, 4th in interceptions, and 4th in the least rushing touchdowns allowed, and a repeat could ensue if they keep this up. ■

On par with the disc golf team

*New sports team strives to perfect the variation of the classic golf game*

Ben Tillisch

Dispatch Reporter

Known as the gentleman's game, golf is played all across the world, and is a sport synonymous with prestige, talent, and excitement. By the laws of evolution, different variations of golf have formed over time, and consequently, disc golf was born. Now a growing club, the Disc Golf team gives students an opportunity to engage with peers socially and nature physically.

Joining the long list of school clubs, the disc golf team was formed at the conclusion of the 2020-21 school year. The teacher-sponsor Bowman Brannon, a disc golf enthusiast, readily took on the role of organizing a club for all students aspiring to play.

"My students know that I love to play disc golf," Brannon said. "It's a game that is played outside with a low-cost entry, and an opportunity to enjoy time with friends and family while also social distancing, so it is the perfect hobby for our current situation."

Played competitively or for fun, disc golf offers a way to socialize with peers, while maintaining an active and healthy body. Club president Zack Munger appreciates the low stress level of the activity and the friendships he has built with other members of the club.

"One thing I've learned

I've enjoyed playing disc golf because it's pretty laid back and I'm able to just enjoy myself while playing with my teammates.

Sawyer Boyd

Sophomore

through playing disc golf with other members is that the friendships outweigh the venue," Munger said. "Having a good time is more important to me personally than being the best."

The sport's versatility in location has allowed it to thrive in the world's battle with COVID-19. With over 30 courses across the general Austin area, disc golf has made great strides in

popularity in the past year within the school population and among Austinites as a whole. "As it turns out, the pandemic is largely responsible for the exponential growth of the sport in the last year or so," Brannon said. "The current club has more than twenty members, most of whom just started playing in the last year or so."

Honed through consistent weekly practice and a positive mindset to get better, the disc golf team preaches positivity, assuming a stress-free environment, while they continue to improve. By doing this, students are able to compete without too much pressure, forming a friendly atmosphere for all types of students.

"It's important to focus on smaller things in the game that need work such as putting and [specific] drills," Munger said. "[Brannon] also talked to me about challenging myself by competing against better players than me to get better;



**GONE WITH THE WIND:** Captain Zack Munger preparing to throw the disc at the target he's aiming at. The team practices on Thursdays after school at the Circle C Park. **PHOTO BY** Reagan Zuniga

it's okay to lose sometimes."

As a growing club, disc golf is open to all students, meeting once a week on Thursdays. Experienced in the sport, sophomore Sawyer Boyd discusses the advantages and attraction of disc golf.

"I've enjoyed playing [disc golf] because it's pretty laid back and I'm able to just enjoy myself with playing with my teammates," Boyd said. "I didn't know there was a club for the disc golf

team, but I would definitely be interested in looking into [joining] it, because I'm sure it offers a good way to exercise and socialize."

Despite its increase in popularity, Brannon and Munger believe even more students would benefit from the tranquility of a club like disc golf, and the process and background of the actual sport. As of now, the team is composed of a small group of devoted disc golfers, but it lacks female representation.

"I would like for the club to experience the work that goes into developing and maintaining local courses, perhaps joining a workday with Austin's Waterloo Disc Golf club," Brannon said. "Most students in the club see it as a fun, relaxing way to socialize and get some light exercise in nature. I think it would be great to see more females involved in the club as Austin has a great support system for talented female Disc Golfers." ■

Mid-season injuries plague the cheerleaders

Amilia Velez

Dispatch Reporter

The start of football season has been exciting for the varsity cheer team, but concussions and various other injuries have been a major roadblock. This season alone, three girls have gotten concussions and the team has had to perceive and adapt to have a successful season.

Sophomore Emily Gallia, a base on the varsity cheer team, got a concussion preparing for a pep rally. Stunting requires everyone to play their role and there is little room for error, especially in a pyramid, teamwork is so important and the team dynamic needs to be spot on.

"My flyer got unstable and fell out of the stunt so she grabbed my head," Gallia said. "I basically broke her fall with my head. After she hit me, I felt dizzy, my vision went black and I saw stars."

Gallia's concussion happened so quickly and left little time for the rest of the team to process because of the sport's fast pace; her concussion was pretty jarring for the team, according to Gallia. With injuries being so common in cheer, a JV cheer member was able to step in and take Gallia's place.

"The team didn't really see me get hit except for the people around me, but once I got hit everyone was in shock," Gallia said.

In a research study done by the Journal of Athletic Training, during a one year period, more than 30,000 cheerleaders go to the hospital for cheer leading injuries such as concussions and muscle strains. When Bowie cheer leading injuries increased, Bowie head cheer coach Alex emphasized the needed to strategize and

make difficult decisions in other to protect the health of her athletes. Coach Alyssa Alex needed to strategized and keep in mind the health of her athletes, and had to make tough decisions regarding their injuries. She believed that while it was important for the team to push themselves, concussions are serious and the team could not afford any more.

"The athletes who were injured, for the most part, did everything they needed to do to heal quickly," Alex said.

"With concussions that means limiting how long you are in loud places and the amount of time you are on the screen, so they all had to make sacrifices to get better."

Because the team had to push forward and keep practicing for performances despite the several injuries that were occurring, more responsibility fell on the healthy athletes to get their routines cleaned, especially for big performance opportunities like pep rallies.

"The team was very flexible and hard working," Alex said. "They knew that the athletes being out might cause formations and other things to change, but they continued to work everyday. I was more than impressed by how quickly they learned other stunting positions and spots in routines."

Using data from the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance study from the 2013-2018 school years, the researchers identified that cheer leading

had the second highest number of concussions, behind football. In most cases concussion recovery can take about seven to 10 days to resolve, but sometimes these injuries can take longer.

After more cheerleaders were injured during this football season, some of the varsity cheer members, including Madi Noe became worried for their own safety as well as the health of their injured teammates.

"Watching people get hurt either during practice or at games made me a little nervous because concussions are pretty serious," Noe said. "This experience showed me that I have to be careful because you never know what can happen."

According to Noe, overcoming these obstacles was a huge triumph for the team. Despite several injuries, both major and minor, the cheerleaders were able to successfully complete all of their performances and the injured girls are currently working on recovery.

"We just kept practicing after the injuries kept coming, we kept practicing our technique to hopefully prevent future injuries," Noe said. "Sometimes injuries can just happen because cheer is a dangerous sport. You just have to keep pushing through and do your best."

In light of the upcoming competition season, Alex believes that the team will have to keep up motivation, even with the chance that possible injuries may occur. They have spent a lot of time practicing with different stunt groups and becoming more versatile.

"The team morale was more positive than I originally expected," Alex said. "We were all stressed, but the girls were focused and really made sure they were all giving 100% so the program could still succeed despite the injuries." ■

KEEPING HER BALANCE:

Junior Zoe Kanz and Emma Kloninger practice a stunt. The cheer team performs at football games as well as competitions. **PHOTO BY** Sophia Sanchez

POSING STRONG:

Senior Sophia Baer poses on top of a trio during practice. This is Baer's third year as a flyer for the varsity cheer team. **PHOTO BY** Sophia Sanchez



**November 5** Varsity girls basketball vs. Vista Ridge @Vista Ridge

**November 6** Varsity boys basketball vs. Judson @Bowie

**November 9** Varsity girls basketball vs. @House Park

coming UP in SPORTS



**November 10** Track meet @Round Rock HS

**November 10** Varsity softball vs. @Liberty Hill HS

**November 13** Bob Stallings Swim Invitational @A&M University

