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Creightonian

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Suspended fraternities to return



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Rallying up their horns, Phi Kappa Psi students are performing a rally concert playing miniature horns with their leader. In 1980, the fraternity performed at a CU basketball home game.

ELIZABETH JONES
News Reporter

Two previously suspended fraternities will soon be returning to Creighton University's campus: the Nebraska Beta Chapter of Phi Kappa Psi, which will return in fall 2026, and the Theta Lambda Chapter of Pi Kappa Alpha, which will return in 2028.

Enough time has passed that none of the people who were previously in either fraternity are still students on campus.

Their return comes as membership in Fraternity and Sorority Life (FSL) is growing at

the university.

"Back when they were removed from campus, they had a contract saying they could come back after a certain amount of time. But it also coincided with [a time when] we were starting to look into growing the community because there's a lot of growing interest in FSL at Creighton," Katie Bodlack, the assistant director for FSL, said.

Once both organizations have returned, the number of fraternities apart from Creighton's Interfraternity Council will be seven — up from the five fraternity chapters currently on campus — and the total number of FSL organizations at Creighton will be 25. The

university's FSL also has seven Divine Nine organizations, four multicultural organizations and seven Panhellenic Council sororities.

About 37% of Creighton's undergraduate student body participates in FSL, according to the university's website.

The Nebraska Beta Chapter of Phi Kappa Psi — set to return before Pi Kappa Alpha — was suspended by both the university and the Phi Kappa Psi National Headquarters in spring 2017 due to "violation of university policy," according to the "Student Formation and Misconduct Processes" webpage on the university's website.

The suspension followed an investigation that was launched after a pledge, Christopher Wheeler, attacked another student on campus. Wheeler then claimed substances in his system from hazing were the reason behind his actions.

"I wasn't here during that time, but I know that's what led to the investigation," Bodlack said.

After Creighton suspended the chapter, the Phi Kappa Psi National Headquarters followed suit.

"In the spring of 2017, in response to Creighton University's decision to suspend the chapter, the Phi Kappa Psi Executive Council revoked the charter of the chapter and ordered current members of Phi Kappa Psi to cease operations," Benjamin Sigler, the senior director of chapter operations for Phi Kappa Psi, said in an email.

Wheeler, a 19-year-old premed student, was banned from campus in February 2017 after he entered another student's dorm and cut her throat with a pocketknife, according to a 2017 article from KETV. The victim survived the attack but sustained injuries.

Wheeler, who could have faced up to 20 years in prison, took a plea deal and was sentenced to 30 days in prison and five years of probation, a 2018 WOWT article said. Wheeler alleged that he unknowingly cut the victim due to extreme intoxication after he was coerced into drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana during hazing, although a judge did not allow him to use that defense in court.

The victim went on to file a lawsuit against Phi Kappa Psi, and Wheeler was not listed as a defendant. The case was dismissed by a lower court, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit affirmed that dismissal in a 2022 opinion.

According to the Eighth Circuit's opinion, the lawsuit stated that Nebraska Beta Chapter of Phi Kappa Psi was already on social probation from the university at the time of the incident because they had "violated multiple provisions of Creighton Student Conduct policy, Creighton Greek Event Guidelines and State Law." It went on to claim that the chapter's 2017 initiation activities violated the terms of their social probation.

"These activities included 'multiple occasions of forced drinking, drinking games, providing alcohol to minors, going to local bars and encouraging alcohol consumption by pledges [i.e., recruits who accepted the bid,] to the point of vomiting and/or blacking out.' Wheeler, an underage student, was among the pledges required to participate in these activities," the Eighth Circuit's opinion said.

The lawsuit alleged that the hazing was an issue with this fraternity on a national level.

"Initiation activities began on January 30, 2017, and lasted about a week. This week was

TURN TO "Two" PAGE 3

When office hours end, the art begins

ISABELLA DIZONA
News Reporter

The Lied Art Gallery opened Jan. 23 with the Studio Arts Faculty Exhibition, a showcase of work by Creighton University art faculty that runs through March 1. The exhibition features photography, ceramics, painting, drawing and printmaking, offering students and visitors a look at the artistic practices of the professors who teach on campus.

Curated by Gallery Director Jess Benjamin, the exhibition brings together faculty from multiple studio arts disciplines and serves as both a professional showcase and an educational resource.

"This is something we do every few years as a way for students to see what faculty members produce," Benjamin said. "We're working artists, and this helps students understand who we are as people and as educators."

Faculty members selected the pieces they wished to submit, while Benjamin determined placement, lighting and how the works relate to one another. Artist statements are displayed alongside the pieces, explaining the concepts behind the work and identifying the courses each faculty member teaches. Benjamin said

the statements help students connect what they see in the gallery with classroom learning.

Among the featured artists is Fr. Michael J. Flecky, S.J., a professor of fine and performing arts, who exhibited black-and-white photographs of storefront mannequins. Flecky said his work explores themes of consumerism, identity and perception by capturing layered elements such as glass reflections, signage and displays.

"Black and white abstracts from the way things appear in reality, and it makes us think about what's behind the surface," Flecky said.

He added that the images also raise questions about value.

"We're always talking about values: human values, Christian values, economic values," he said. "The pricing, the display, the color — the values we place on things are arbitrary."

Benjamin, who is also a ceramics professor at Creighton, contributed sculptural works constructed primarily from clay. Her pieces, which include faucets, buckets and vessels, comment on environmental concerns surrounding water usage in the Great Plains. She said material choice plays a critical role in reinforcing the themes of her work.

TURN TO "Your" PAGE 2



JONAH LAGRANGE/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Emily Stokes, a Resident Assistant Professor of Studio Arts, enjoys building language of iconography from overlooked or everyday, such as definitive childhood experiences like her toddler. Professor Matt Hill cried viewing the piece as he reflected about his own son.

Your professors are artists too



JONAH LAGRANGE/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Fr. Michael Flecky S.J. creates a series entitled "Storefront Madonna's" features haunting visual displays of humanoid presence combined with fashion clothing (or lack of both: "1/2 off") for sale in commercial settings. The pieces featured both fashion and sleek artificial humanity are posed for artistic appeal, admiration, curiosity, shock, even reverence and worship—all on commercial display accessible and shown to pedestrian shoppers in Kobenhaven DK. Flecky first photographed in U.S. Rochester New York in 1978 when window arrangements were skillfully made.

Continued from Page 1

Rachel Mindrup, the Richard L. Deming, MD Endowed Chair in Medical Humanities, exhibited printmaking and oil painting portraits of her sons from their early childhood, using color and composition to reflect stages of motherhood. In one painting, she chose to

depict her sons in black and white.

"My boys aren't little anymore," Mindrup said, noting that the surrounding elements remain in color because they have stayed the same over time.

Drawing instructor Kristin Pluhacek displayed pastel paintings of plants and mushrooms that balance realism and abstraction.

She said her work emphasizes careful observation.

"You can walk past the same plant a hundred times," Pluhacek said, "but one day the light hits it differently, and suddenly you have to do something with it."

With many students balancing academic and personal demands, the Lied Art Gallery

provides an accessible way to experience contemporary art on campus. Faculty members said exhibitions, visiting artists and gallery events help spark creativity and inspire student work.

The Studio Arts Faculty Exhibition is free and open to the public at the Lied Art Gallery through March 1.



Weekly Campus Safety Report

This is a selection of incidents chosen by the Editor in Chief and is not a comprehensive weekly report. The full report is compiled in the Daily Crime Log which anyone can access in the Public Safety office located at 2222 Burt St.

- 1** January 10 - 2:56 a.m.
Public Safety observed an intoxicated student on campus KFC with non affiliated friends. Student was breathalyzed and transported to CHI-CUMC - University Campus for entry into the TRAAC Program.
- 2** January 10 - 4:38 p.m.
Public Safety responded to a call at St. John's for possible property damage/theft. Two planters were knocked over.
- 3** January 12 - 11:16 p.m.
RAs spotted open alcohol containers on walk through. After conducting a room search, other alcohol, nicotine, and cannabis products were discovered and confiscated in Graves Hall.
- 4** January 21 - 3:02 p.m.
Public Safety and OPD responded to the J.E. Dunn construction to remove a belligerent employee terminated for death threats and verbal altercations, who will be issued a Ban and Bar Notice by mail.

Creightonian

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JONAH LAGRANGE/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Construction in Omaha closes down roads at the intersection of Farnam & 13th St. by campus.

PARKER LUND
News Reporter

The City of Omaha's Streetcar Project, expected to finish in 2028, is meant to make Omaha "more connected, more accessible, and even more vibrant," according to the Omaha Streetcar website. In the process of its construction, however, it may have had the opposite effect.

Even as the temperatures continue to drop, local businesses around Creighton have continually felt the heat from the project. In 2025, following the expansion of Creighton's Jaypass to the wider Omaha Metro system, students had greater access to businesses like Bad Seed Coffee, a shop that used to serve customers on 25th and Harney.

The Streetcar Project necessitated the demolition of the Harney Street Bridge. Following the subsequent rerouting and detours in

Omaha's price of progress

the streets, co-owners of Bad Seed Brenna and Matt McCrary made the hard decision to close it down. Their last day of business was in September.

City officials are aware of the effect that the Streetcar project is having on local businesses. On December 10th, 2025, Mayor Jon Ewing held a press conference addressing the concerns of small business owners.

"We know that many small businesses have been affected by the Streetcar construction program. Nothing I say today can ease the impact on their bottom line, and ongoing frustrations our businesses owners and customers have experienced during this process. I can tell you we are listening," he said.

One of the ways that the city has transformed listening into action is through the "Future Riders Passport Program", a program that encourages citizens of Omaha to visit businesses that have been affected by the project. Participating businesses in the program offer stamps to passport-carrying citizens, and if a certain number of stamps are collected, the passport can be submitted for a prize. The top prize is a "dreamy staycation."

The program runs until March 31, according to the Streetcar website.

But the efforts brought by programs like the Future Riders Passport Program have yet to be effective. Emily, a manager at Smokin Oaks at Midtown crossing, said that the construction has hurt their business.

"You can only get to us now from Dodge Street. There's not a lot of parking, because of the construction. They're not making the parking free, so people aren't happy because they have to pay, considering the extra walking they have to make."

Smokin' Oaks participates in The Passport Program, which is supposed to mitigate the loss to business. But even though they've got the passports to show for it, Emily says it hasn't drawn many people in.

"As far as people coming up and asking for the stamps, I've gotten like five or six."

As the construction continues to develop, more businesses in Omaha are affected. Whatever the full impact the Streetcar Project is yet to be realized – 2028 is two years away.

Two fraternities rejoin campus

Continued from Page 1

widely known as 'Hell Week' within the Chapter," the Eighth Circuit's opinion said. "[The victim] alleged that the initiation activities were 'expressly directed by the National Fraternity' and included, but were not limited to, a slave auction, surrendering one's cell phone, keeping all activities secret, minors consuming alcohol at the Chapter House, forced consumption of alcohol by minors to the point of vomiting and/or loss of consciousness, and withholding food and/or water."

Also according to the court's opinion, Wheeler was required to pass a test about the chapter and the National Fraternity. After he failed, he was allowed to re-test the next week; and after his re-test, he was taken to the fraternity-owned house (which has since been demolished) and given alcohol and marijuana. He was then left alone on Creighton's campus, which is when he entered another student's dorm and attacked her. Wheeler and the student did not know each other.

"Witnesses who knew Wheeler and allegedly saw him on campus that early morning described Wheeler as confused, out of character, and, at times, belligerent," the Eighth Circuit's opinion said.

The lawsuit was ultimately dismissed because the court found no violation of state law.

"At some level of generality, it is foreseeable that a black-out drunk, underage college student who was hazed and harassed for a week, abandoned on campus during the early morning, and considered disoriented and belligerent could harm himself or others. But Nebraska's foreseeability pleading requirements require more than generality — specificity is required," the Eighth Circuit's opinion said.

Creighton was not involved in this lawsuit.

"I'm getting caught up on everything, but ... I think all the court cases were handled. They weren't university court cases," Bodlack said.

The process of bringing Phi Kappa Psi back to campus is already underway. Last week members of the National Headquarters visited campus to meet with student leaders, Bodlack said.

"The Phi Kappa Psi Fraternity strives to be a strong partner with Creighton University by providing a unique student experience that fosters personal growth, leadership and a sense of community. With our return to Creighton, we aim to create an environment

where students can thrive and make a lasting impact on their peers and the broader university community," Sigler said via email.

Representatives from the fraternity will come back in the fall to recruit the founding father's class, and a staff member will be living in Omaha to oversee the transition. According to Sigler, they're looking for students who embody leadership, academic excellence, community service and a desire to positively impact Creighton.

Bodlack said the reinstatement of Theta Lambda Chapter of Pi Kappa Alpha in 2028, likely in the spring, will be done similarly.

The chapter was suspended by the university in spring 2019 "after the fraternity violated the terms of its Social and Behavioral Probation," according to the "Student Formation and Misconduct Processes" webpage on the university's website.

Prior to this 2019 suspension, they had been suspended by the university in 2012 and reinstated in 2016, according to a 2016 Creightonian article. A 2012 Creightonian article said they were suspended following violations of university policy in alcohol-related incidents.

Bodlack is not concerned that being suspended and then reinstated will become a continuous pattern for the chapter.

"I wasn't here during that time, so I didn't see what happened then [during their previous suspensions]. But it's going to be all new people, so I think that's the big difference. ... There's also just a really strong commitment in the overall fraternity and sorority community of having strong risk management systems," Bodlack said. "So, we really want to set up the organizations for success. Obviously, we don't want any chapter on campus to have a negative perception or people not having a safe experience. So, as a community, we're really committed to ensuring that this group does have success and is set up from the ground up with a really strong risk management."

Bodlack also said that, since these two fraternity chapters were suspended from campus, Creighton has done a lot to prevent hazing. Additionally, she said the university is required to comply with the Stop Campus Hazing Act. Passed in December 2024, this federal law is an amendment to the Jeanne Clery Campus Safety Act and requires institutions of higher education that participate in federal student aid programs to report hazing incidents. At the state level, hazing is also a Class II misdemeanor under Nebraska Re-

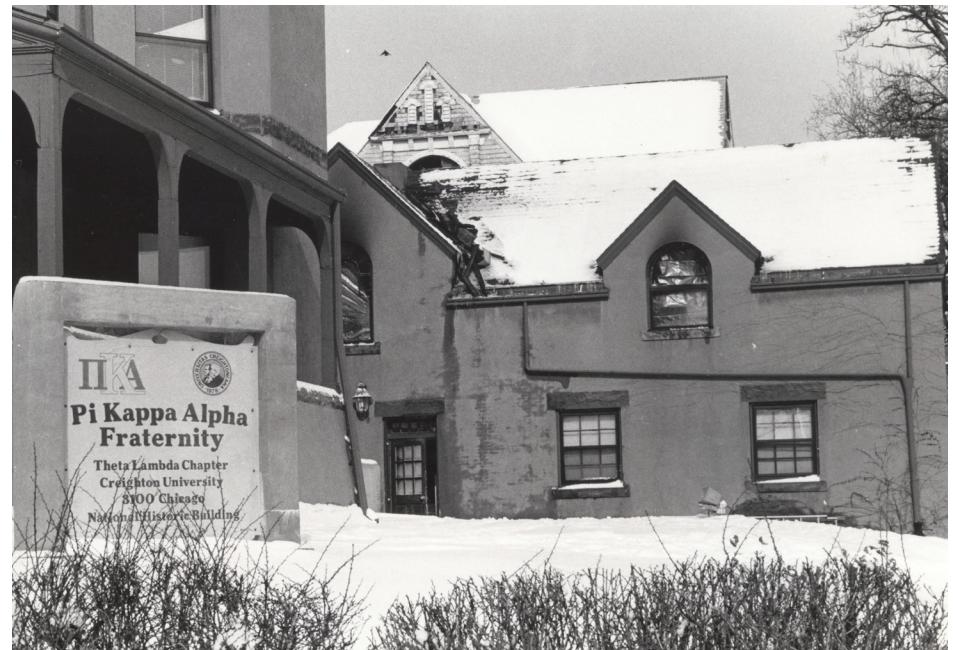


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Pi Kappa Alpha (PIKE) Theta Lambda chapter at Creighton University previously occupied a house at 3100 Chicago St., which is recognized as a historic building. Followed by a period of absence, the fraternity returned to campus in 2016, with its alumni association continuing.

vised Statute 28-311.06.

"I'm really proud of all the work that we've done to make this a campus culture that doesn't accept hazing," Bodlack said.

Anti-hazing initiatives include new member education, which is required for everyone who joins FSL and covers topics including drug and alcohol safety and hazing prevention. Creighton also hosts a hazing prevention week each fall and has started bringing in anti-hazing speakers in the spring. Last spring speakers from "Love, Mom and Dad," a program run by the Hazing Prevention Network for parents to share stories about how hazing has impacted their families, came to the university.

"We have multiple different points throughout the semester that we do education on it [hazing prevention]," Bodlack said. "And I'd say overall that we've established a culture that if someone sees something, they say something and [hazing] is not accepted in our community."

A new webpage, "Creighton Anti-Hazing Policy," launched on Creighton's website during winter break. The webpage has space to report an incident and make an anonymous report. It also outlines Creighton's

policy, defines hazing and offers additional resources for reporting hazing incidents in other ways, including the phone number for the Anti-Hazing Hotline. Furthermore, the "Campus Hazing Transparency Report" linked on the webpage shows whether hazing was reported on campus dating back to the 2021-2022 academic year (only one incident, during 2022-2023, has been reported since that time).

Bodlack doesn't think that bringing back these fraternities will bring back hazing.

"I think it's [their return] a really exciting opportunity for the campus. I know there's a history with both organizations, but we're a couple of years out from that. It's a new group of people, and I'm confident that our students are going to have a really positive experience with these organizations," she said. "We're working really closely with their headquarters, too, on their establishment and creating strong organizations. So, I'm excited for more of our students to get to meet them."

She added that students will have more opportunities to interact with Phi Kappa Psi in the fall when they begin recruiting and hosting events on campus.

Forever your vacation rewatch

Rom-coms return with “People We Meet on Vacation”

CHLOE CARRILLO
Scene Editor

“People We Meet on Vacation,” the movie adapted from the novel by Emily Henry, hit Netflix’s streaming on Jan. 9.

The movie follows Poppy Wright, portrayed by Emily Bader, a spunky and adventurous travel journalist, and her unlikely relationship with Alex Nilsen, played by Tom Blyth. With both actors highly known in the film realm, Emily for her work in the Amazon Prime series “My Lady Jane,” and the film “Fresh Kills,” and Tom for his work in “The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes,” “Billy the Kid,” and “Wasteman,” this movie was extremely anticipated. It brings a new and exciting revival to romantic comedy, with a tasteful soundtrack and all the yearning a person could need, especially if they are missing shows like “The Summer I Turned Pretty.”

Poppy and Alex’s story begins as an unlikely travel duo. Both students at Boston College and from the small town of Linfield, Ohio, the pair first vacation together as they make the drive home. Their lifestyles couldn’t be more different. At first, they loathe each other and get stuck overnight in a different city. To pass the time, they talk about their dream

vacations, which sets them up for a lifetime of adventure together.

From there, the movie time jumps often, from the present, when Poppy and Alex are seemingly not on speaking terms, and back in time to their vacations in New Orleans, Squamish, Tuscany, and their almost-vacation to Norway. They may not see each other at all during their normal lives, but on vacation, they return to being best friends.

Throughout the film, viewers see their relationship grow, although they never date. They travel the world together, and suspense is built as the viewer tries to find out why Poppy and Alex are no longer speaking.

In the present, Poppy is invited to the extravagant wedding of Alex’s brother in Barcelona, but she is hesitant to attend because she knows Alex will be there.

Throughout all of the time jumps and snippets of Alex and Poppy’s life, viewers can see their fondness for each other grow, and their struggles as they navigate busy lives, relationships, and of course, vacations together.

The film features internal struggle, relationship building and beautiful memories, all with a nice vacation view.

In addition to the beautiful global scenes, the film features a soundtrack that is sure to resonate with many viewers. Songs in the film include “Forever Your Girl” by Paula Abdul,

“Genesis” by Grimes, “august” by Taylor Swift, “Cool About It” by Boygenius, “X’s” by Cigarettes after Sex, “L-O-V-E Italian Version” by Nat King Cole, amongst other hits.

There are some differences between the novel and its screen adaptation, but the premise stays the same. For fans of the novel, I recommend watching and seeing if you can

find the little moments that were translated to the screen. And, keep an eye out for an author cameo by Emily Henry.

If you are looking for a good comfort rom-com, some good songs over film, rainy love confessions or even just vacation inspiration, “People We Meet on Vacation” could be perfect for you.



A\$AP Rocky’s genre-bending return

CHLOE CARRILLO
Scene Editor

A\$AP Rocky’s fourth studio album, “Don’t Be Dumb,” came out on Jan. 16. This marks his first album release since “Testing” in 2018. The album debuted at number one on the



Being a Grammy-nominated artist and a big name in the music industry, this was a highly anticipated release.

The album’s

lead single was “PUNK ROCKY,” featuring a familiar A\$AP sound, comparable to “I smoked away my brain.” The music video sparked interest, with actress Winona Ryder, who was most recently in the beloved show “Stranger Things,” starring in the video.

The rest of the album is a mix of old A\$AP, featuring new genres and experimentation with newer and story-telling lyrics.

The album also has a lot of different features, including Tyler, the Creator, Brent Faiyaz, DoeChii, Gorillaz, will.i.am, Jon Batiste, among many others. Rocky’s wide array of collaboration and artistry on the album contributes to the unique new sound that “Don’t Be Dumb” features.

“Don’t Be Dumb” creates a space for A\$AP to explore a variety of genres, ranging

from jazz, to rap, and R&B.

Standouts from the album include “STAY HERE 4 LIFE” featuring Brent Faiyaz, “PLAYA,” “PUNK ROCKY,” “ROBBERY” featuring DoeChii, “WHISKEY (RELEASE ME)” featuring Gorillaz and Westside Gunn, and “FISH N STEAK (WHAT IT IS)” featuring Tyler, the Creator and Jozzy. These are among the most exploratory songs on the album, with the DoeChii feature being a slow jazz, and each song exhibiting qualities from all kinds of genres.

Within the album, Rocky also includes small speaking clips, where he talks about things like his relationship, his outlook on life, and overall adds to his lyricism. He not only revives transparency in lyricism, but does it while creating his own aesthetic, which is

extremely different from his albums’ past. He even had legendary animator and filmmaker Tim Burton created the art for the album.

There is no doubt that A\$AP Rocky is influential, and this album only adds to that reputation.

“I think that we’re supposed to inspire,” he said in an interview with The New York Times. “I’m glad that I get to be the guy that people reference or go to or see some type of inspiration in, because I feel that way about me, too, you know what I’m saying?”

For anyone looking for a huge genre blend, raw lyricism, or even a nice jazz song, “Don’t Be Dumb” by A\$AP Rocky could be your next listen.

Strange ending to the Duffers’ legacy

BEHLA SCHMIDT
Assistant Scene Editor

After nearly 10 years, five seasons and 42 episodes, the beloved “Stranger Things” franchise came to a close as its final segment was released about three weeks ago on New Year’s Eve. With a total run time of over 45 hours, the show has done more than simply unite fans from across the globe. For many, it’s served as a beacon of nostalgia, becoming deeply intertwined into our childhoods and representing the transition into adulthood.

The show contains elements of horror and science fiction, taking inspiration from classic films and literature from the 1980s, such as John Carpenter’s “Halloween,” Stephen King’s “It,” as well as the game Dungeons and Dragons and real events like the Cold War. These things ultimately combine to create

an authentic and supernatural story, leaving viewers eager to know how tensions will be resolved.

(Spoilers ahead.)

Set in the 1980s, the series takes place in the seemingly normal town of Hawkins, Ind. after a local middle school student, Will Byers, goes mysteriously missing. As his friends and family attempt to locate him, a strange girl with telekinetic abilities appears. Viewers later learn that this girl, known as Eleven, is directly tied to Will’s disappearance, as he was abducted by a creature from an alternate dimension, otherwise referred to as the Upside Down.

Throughout the subsequent seasons, more details about Eleven and her abilities are revealed as flashbacks are used to depict her upbringing in the secret government program run by Dr. Martin Brenner at Hawkins Lab. Such events are also used to explain the ori-

gins and functioning of the Upside Down, which is home to other sinister characters that are later introduced.

Prior to its release, Matt and Ross Duffer, a pair of brothers who created the show, claimed season five would bring everything back in a full circle style, providing a complete ending to the main plotline. They also hinted that details from season one and two would be referenced, particularly Will’s relevance to the Upside Down and Eleven’s past.

However, in the weeks following the series finale, many began to voice their dissatisfaction with how the show had ended, claiming there were too many plot holes. Common criticisms included the lack of “Demogorgon” monsters in the final battle, the sudden disappearance of the military and Eleven’s ambiguous death. This sparked an abundance of fan theories online, all of which attempted to justify or rebut such topics, some

even suggesting that a secret ninth episode had yet to be released.

Despite these controversies, all can agree that this dissonance is representative of a common reality: many outcomes in life are the opposite of what we expect or even desire. Much of this can also be associated with growing up and leaving childish attributes behind.

So, in some ways, the ending to this sensational, sentimental show is more definitive than viewers may initially realize.

Regardless of one’s opinions on this matter, we can all agree that “Stranger Things” has taught us many important lessons about relationships and identity: true friends are worth fighting for and our individuality should be embraced. These lessons are sure to extend beyond the finale of the series, resonating deeper than any resolution ever could.

A romance that redefines hockey

CHLOE CARRILLO
Scene Editor

“Heated Rivalry,” the hit hockey romance novel adaptation, has taken the pop culture world by storm. While romance short series and sports romance novels are something this generation is no stranger to, the emotional depth and issues tackled in the series make the obsession much deeper. It’s not just about some attractive hockey players—though that can be what one perceives it as, because of the TikTok edits. It’s something much more emotional and beautiful.

The 6-episode Crave series on HBO centers around the lives of Russia’s Ilya Rozanov and Canada’s Shane Hollander, who are fictional hockey rivals. The show follows Rozanov and Hollander over almost a decade, as their relationship develops. Scott Hunter, another hockey player, and his story in love are featured in the show as well.

Jacob Tierney, the director of “Heated Rivalry,” said his vision for the show was “something extremely joyful.”

“This is a gay love story set in the world of hockey, so its very existence is an act of rebellion,” he continued in an interview with Toronto Life, “but the show itself is happily ever after. I didn’t want to subvert too many romance tropes—I love these stories. This show is queer joy for adults.”

This encapsulates the show’s essence, and Tierney creates the space for these characters to become quickly loved by many.

When speaking about Tierney’s directing, Connor Storrie, who plays Ilya, mentioned that “I think he also was just such a fan that he saw whatever the fans of the book saw—that thing that makes everyone love this story. What that is, I think, can be a few different things. I think the love, the spice, the world, the connection. I think he was just a really, really big fan, and I think that love poured over into his interpretation of it,” in an interview with Today.

While following Ilya and Shane’s relationship, the show tackles extremely large issues as well, breaking barriers and illustrating never-before-talked-about issues in sports. It’s no surprise that the show is as popular as it is. There are so many elements of deep characterization, issues, and situations that people can relate to. And the show is not without its funny, lighthearted moments.

The show features secret relationships, fame, family issues, jealousy, the importance of representation, among so many other things, and of course, hockey. The story is a beautiful take on self-discovery, romantic relationships and their balance with fame, friends, social issues, grief, and overcoming all of these in the name of perseverance and love.

The story has even inspired hockey players in real life.

Vogue wrote that “real-life hockey player Jesse Kortuem recently credited the show with inspiring him to come out as gay, telling Out Magazine: ‘I know many closeted and gay men in the hockey world are being hit hard by Heated Rivalry’s success. Never in my life did I think something so positive and loving could come from such a masculine sport.’”

Rozanov and Hollander are an unlikely pair, but Hudson Williams, who portrays Shane, and Connor Storrie’s performances create a deep connection with the audience.

While they both are somewhat new to the acting scene, it is hard to believe that it is both of their breakout roles.

In an interview with *Timid*, Williams mentioned that he hopes to “work on projects where people believe in me for something that maybe I didn’t believe people would believe in me for,” when speaking about the support for the show.

The popularity of the show doesn’t just stop with pop culture. The craze over *Heated Rivalry* has landed Hudson on “The Tonight Show,” and both Hudson and Connor were presenters at the Golden Globes awards. And just recently, the pair were Olympic Torch Bearers in Italy for the 2026 Winter Olympics.

Ilya and Shane are not the only standout performances in the show. François Arnaud, who plays Scott Hunter, does an amazing job highlighting grief, loneliness, and arguably the most important moment in the show, where he establishes representation in hockey. He builds a relationship with his local smoothie barista, and it’s because of him that the iconic “I’m coming to the cottage” line is uttered by Ilya.

The series could not be what it is without its female characters. Yuna Hollander, portrayed by Christina Chang, is Shane’s mother in the story, and is the picture of a matriarch, but a supportive one. Rose Landry, played by Sophie Nélisse, pivotal in Shane’s journey, creates an extremely sympathetic character for many. Svetlana, played by Ksenia Daniela Kharlamova, is essential to Ilya’s character and demonstrates extreme emotional intelligence.

The series is part of a 7-book series titled the “Game Changers,” written by Rachel Reid, so if you are craving more heated rivalry, fret not. The series has already been renewed for the second season. Hudson Williams told *Variety* that filming is expected to begin as early as summer of 2026, with *Forbes* speculating that the second season will hopefully be out in early 2027.

With iconic moments that are spread across TikTok edits, it’s hard to miss *Heated Rivalry*’s impact on pop culture continuing into 2026. It even has the mayor of New York City, Zohran Mamdani, mentioning it.

“The snow is coming down heavily across our city, and I can think of no better excuse for New Yorkers to stay home, take a long nap or take advantage of our public library’s offer of free access to *Heated Rivalry* on e-book or audiobook for anyone with a library card,” Mamdani said in a press conference in New York City.

For anyone looking for their next show to binge, learn more about the LGBTQIA+ community and struggles that come with that, or just looking for a simultaneously heart-breaking and heart-warming love story, “Heated Rivalry” might be the show for you.

January 30
Friday

Fresh Fruit Friday
1:00-2:00 PM
KFC Spine

January 31
Saturday

Brandeis Kitchen Food Packaging
11:00-11:45 AM
Brandeis Dining Hall

February 1
Sunday

More Than a Book Club Meeting
1:00-2:00 PM
Eppley 109

Volunteering at Ronald McDonald House
3:00-4:00 PM
Ronald McDonald House

February 2
Monday

Shadows General Meeting
6:00-7:00 PM
Creighton Hall 431

Anime Club Meeting
6:30-7:30 PM
Eppley 312

February 3
Tuesday

Coffee With Commuters
9:00-10:00 AM
Skutt 104

Winter Involvement Fair
4:00-6:00 PM
Skutt Ballroom

Radical Rest: Breathe into Balance
6:00-7:00 PM
KFC Mind + Body Suite - Group Fitness Space

February 4
Wednesday

Wednesdays After Class (WAC)
1:30-3:30 PM
Skutt Student Center

Blender Bike
2:00-3:30 PM
KFC Spine

Drop-in Spanish Tutoring
5:00-6:00 PM
Hitchcock 108

Sign Language Club Meeting
5:15-6:15 PM
Creighton Hall 331

Active Minds General Meeting
7:30-8:30 PM
Harper

February 5
Thursday

Survivor’s Circle Support Group
2:00-3:00 PM
VIP Center Rise Room

Sodexo Appreciation
11:00 AM-2:00 PM
Brandeis Hall

GSA General Meeting
6:00-7:00 PM
HSLB 361

2016: false comfort of nostalgia

AINSLEY SMITH
Opinion Writer

"idc bro we're living 2026 like its 2016" is the title of a bad Spotify playlist with 16,861 saves and, also, a fitting summary of an internet phenomena that frustrates me beyond belief. Gen-Z netizens have -- once again -- directed their notoriously fickle attentions to the supposed golden age of the recent past, "the last good years," in an attempt to revitalize trends any person not blinded by nostalgia would condemn as ridiculous and superfluous.

The resurgence of Y2K, while misguided, was a matter of good taste. I respect and understand the instinct to seek aesthetic inspiration from late '90s-early 2000s America. I love Madonna's trip-hop rebrand, Lisa Frank patterned tank tops are chic and the only

good pop-rock music ever made came out in 1997. However, the repackaging of the Y2K aesthetic into fast fashion mini kits and vapid reflection on "how much better life used to be" was still wrong in principle because our attention turned backwards and stayed there, instead of returning to the present with lessons learned. Youth culture, and the zeitgeist of American culture more generally, has not taken advantage of the innovations or advancements possible through productive nostalgia. Currently, its only visible effect is stagnation.

The corruptible power of nostalgia seems impossible to do away with and is arguably part of our nature as human beings. We are less creative and less enthused than ever. The 2020s have been defined by caricatures and vacant resuscitations of things we never even experienced. It's depressing.

We are now well in the midst of our next

great Frankenstein experiment. People ran out of room reliving the good stuff and now, out of desperation, have run themselves aground on the iceberg of 2016, a year I thought we agreed was cringeworthy at best.

Despite my personal dislike for the trends and art to come out of that year, my problem with 2016 revisionism lies not in its tackiness, but in its clearly misaligned desire to seek comfort and salvation in aesthetic presentation. Unlike Y2K, the infatuation with 2016 didn't start with an interest in aesthetics that later developed into harebrained nostalgia. Instead, we actively pursued nostalgia itself, validating our desire for a place outside the present, and happened to discover the last frontier on which we could hide from our deeply ingrained and enduring fear of the pandemic, the election(s), the internet age, the phone -- the world and its consequences.

I don't think that people are actually dying

to get back to 2016. Most of us were not even old enough to remember it as anything other than childhood. In reality, what we are craving is the return of hope and optimism. 2016 seems brighter because maybe it was. Maybe enough "Live, Laugh, Love" signs could have finally ended all conflicts in the world. But the truth is that the hapless distraction of the past will do no good in the present, nor the future. The instinctual reaction to ignore or deny the reality of our current situation, to live like it's 2016, is a naive sentiment even if it is rife with good intent. Nostalgia has not saved us before. If anything, it has only made our current moment less fulfilling and more irrelevant. If you yearn for 2016 millennial good-naturedness, then implement that earnestness into your life without relying on the constraints of retrospection. Live in this year and make it a good one.

Testing TikTok-famous lattes

MIA CASTRO
Opinion Writer

We shiver as we go up the steps into the familiar brown building of the Omaha Whole Foods Market ahead of us. I fling open the green-rimmed doors, scurrying inside as the wind slams the door on our backs, ushering us in. I am freezing, naturally, as 7-below-zero winds aren't exactly nice on the skin, when lo and behold, the Whole Foods coffee bar stands before me in all its beauty and grace.

My sister and I scurry up to the register, perusing the menu to decide what to order, when suddenly something catches my eye. In large, bold print on the TV ahead of me, the words "Dubai chocolate latte" flash across my eyes and I know exactly what to try today.

My sister orders the viral brown butter cookie latte we've all seen on TikTok. I order the seasonal Dubai chocolate latte, and we agree to split the drinks so we can try both.

Our orders are called out, and I didn't know the treat I was in for. The brown butter cookie latte was smooth, decadent and truly buttery. It tasted like the true Whole Foods brown butter cookie that everyone knows and loves, so the name completely did it justice. It was exactly what I was searching for.

Alternatively, the Dubai chocolate latte was strong, earthy and foamy, but it didn't exactly taste like Dubai chocolate to me. I appreciated it as someone who likes stronger coffee, but in this instance, I felt the drink needed to be much sweeter to balance out the flavor of the coffee and the pistachio and chocolate syrups that characterize Dubai chocolate drinks. Perhaps it's because I ordered this as a hot drink, but I can't say I understand the hype behind this one.

Both drinks were 100% worth trying, but I don't think I'll be back to get the Dubai chocolate latte. It was underwhelming and much too subtle for it to be a true Dubai chocolate-inspired drink. On the other hand, the brown butter cookie latte completely blew it out of the park. Delicious and rich, I can't wait to be back to savor it again, and I recommend you try it as well.

ELIZABETH GRAVELINE
Opinion Editor

With the Super Bowl on Feb. 8, the Winter Olympics running throughout the month of February, Creighton basketball in full swing and March Madness beginning March 17, there's no shortage of sporting events to look forward to. This season, you might be tempted to watch a game on your phone during a study session, but let me encourage you to get a couple of friends together and turn your favorite sporting event into a social gathering. Big matchups are one of the easiest ways to bring people together, especially when rivals are involved.

I have grown to love watching sports -- every Olympics becomes the highlight of my year. When I'm choosing where to watch a game with friends, my main criteria are food availability, socialization potential and comfort. No matter which game is your "big game," let's review some options for watching it.

For those preferring to stay on campus, the Skutt Stairs are a great place to watch a game. The Skutt TV often plays Creighton basketball games, and students can request Skutt Operations or Event Support (located on the top floor of Skutt) to stream any other show or event. Snacks from Jed's or chicken strips from Slim Chickens are readily available. The Stairs are a great place to run into friends and make some new ones. However, I don't find them to be the most comfortable option for lounging around.

If you prefer the rowdy atmosphere and fried appetizers of a sports bar, there are several great options within walking distance

of Creighton's campus. DJ's Dugout is a classic Creighton sports bar. Expect it to be packed full of fans of all ages on a Creighton basketball game day. For big Creighton and Nebraska games, they will project the game onto the wall, making the restaurant feel like the arena itself.

If DJ's doesn't have any seating left, Addy's Sports Bar is just a few blocks away. Full of TVs, you'll have a better chance of getting a good view of the game. It has the typical sports bar vibe: good food and plenty of screens -- well-suited for watching a USA vs. Canada hockey showdown.

Lefty O'Toole's, located just between Creighton and the CHI Health Center, is known for their vibrant atmosphere; every gameday feels like a party. Though Lefty's tops my chart for socialization potential, it is reserved for the 21+ crowd. However, next door is Rocco's, serving pizza and apps in a more casual, sit-down environment.

Finally, check out Let It Fly, an upscale sports bar only a block away from CHI. You'll get the gameday feeling as you mingle with Creighton basketball fans as you walk past the arena and cheer on the team at the busy two-story restaurant.

Despite all the great viewing options on and around campus, my personal favorite



ELIZABETH GRAVELINE / THE CREIGHTONIAN

DJ's Dugout, a popular CU sports bar, sits near CHI Health Center and offers a fun environment to watch a game with friends.

place to watch a game is at your own -- or a friend's -- house or dorm. You can invite as many friends as you want and still be able to hear each other talk. As far as food, I find that a potluck-style spread is the best way to go about it. Grab some chips and queso, toss a frozen pizza in the oven and get as loud as you can cheering for your team!

Make this tournament season special by spending it with your friends. Big games have a way of turning an ordinary day into a celebration of competition, athleticism and friendly rivalry.

From sorority skeptic to sister

ADDY CROSSLEY
Opinion Writer

I am an only child who came from Good-year, Arizona and despised the thought of "rushing," or recruiting, as Creighton calls it, for a sorority. I have always heard that rushing was more about what I wear, how pretty I look, if my hair is curled enough, which boys I like, etc. I enjoy getting dressed up and curling my hair and putting makeup on as much as the next girl, but I could not see myself doing that every day. I could not see myself going out to the frat houses every weekend, as I imagined sorority girls doing. Now, I am not saying this lifestyle is bad; it is just not ideal for me. Coming to Creighton, I still had these hesitations.

However, I realized because I moved to another school in a new state, I should find out how Creighton runs their recruitment process instead of assuming Creighton recruitment is like the University of Alabama and Arizona State recruitment. I started ask-

ing around about what sorority recruitment is like on campus and to my surprise, Creighton's recruitment process is different.

Creighton's recruitment process is more about learning who you are as a person and what you value, not the clothes you are wearing or how curly your hair is. This is done through a five-day process. Starting with the first day being super relaxed and comfortable where everyone gathers and learns how the next five days will be laid out. The first official day is called Philanthropy Day. This is where each potential new member (PNM) wears a simple outfit and goes to each of the sororities to have conversations with three to four active members within that sorority. Then each PNM ranks their top five sororities. The second official day, Sisterhood Day, is a business casual day where you find out more about the sisterhood aspect of each of the sororities you get asked back to. Each person is invited back to a range anywhere from two to five sororities. Then you rank the top two sororities you connected with. From there we received a two-day break due to the start of the spring se-

mester. The third official day is called Preference Night. This is where everyone gets super dressed up and meets with the one to two sororities that selected them back and dive into deeper conversations to see if they truly connect with the girls within the sorority. This is the night most people either realize exactly the sorority they want to be in or have a hard time picking between two. After ranking our top sorority, we came back the next day, Bid Day, to find out which sorority also picked us.

Throughout this entire process, I found myself being drawn toward each sorority's philanthropy and quickly realized the connections I felt were what was going to help me make my decision at the end of Preference Night. Ultimately, if I could offer any advice to those on the verge of joining a sorority next school year, looking for a group of sisters or even a family to have on campus, I would go through the recruitment process with an open mind and look for those connections. I can confidently say those connections are how I realized I had found the group of girls I wanted to call my sisters.



ALLY SEEVERS/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Running with purpose, leading with care

ABBIE GALLANT Sports Reporter

Putting the needs of the student-athlete first. Tackling each day with purpose. Surpassing what you thought possible yesterday. Striving, pushing, working hard. These are the driving forces of Creighton head coach Chris Gannon's cross country and track programs over the last eight years, the same ones that have fueled his love and passion for the sport his entire life.

But long before leading the Bluejays to host their first Big East Championship in program history, before reviving a Creighton track program that hadn't been active in 60 years, and even before setting foot on Creighton's campus, Gannon's passion for track began on the runway of a long jump pit. He was just nine years old!

"I probably peaked in second grade to be honest — I was like top 15 in the country in the second grade for long jump ... and I can assure you that I was never that good again," said Gannon.

While the ribbons, early victories and instant success caught nine-year-old Gannon's attention, it was the thrill of pushing himself to improve that sparked his lasting passion for the sport.

"The thing I always loved about track ... is that it doesn't matter if you're throwing or sprinting or jumping ... your biggest competition is with yourself," noted Gannon. "And it doesn't matter if you're a state champion or if you're on JV or you're a freshman. It's just the opportunity to go out there and see, 'Can I be better than I was the last time I competed?'"

Gannon joked that he peaked in second grade, but his love for track carried him far beyond those early playground days.

In 1999, Gannon began his first year of college at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in health, physical education and recreation while competing on the track team.

However, things with the track team didn't unfold as Gannon had hoped. A freshman-year injury kept him off the track, limiting his participation through his junior year. By the time Gannon reached his senior year, he was forced to step away from competition entirely.

"All my friends were still on the team. I still wanted to hang out, I still wanted to travel, I still wanted to be with my friends, so the only way to do that was to start coaching," said Gannon.

Thus, Gannon shifted into a new role

— coaching his teammates. That experience eventually laid the groundwork for his first official coaching position. In 2003, fresh out of college, 23-year-old Gannon took the position of head track coach and assistant football and basketball coach at Sidwell Friends School in Washington D.C.

It was within the confines of this prestigious college preparatory school that Gannon first felt what it meant to have someone believe in him as a coach and found a mentor in the process.

"My boss, Anne Renninger ... saw something in me that I didn't even see in myself," said Gannon. "She hired a kid who was 23 years old and she told me, 'You're a coach' ... I don't know why she hired me, but she believed in me."

After a year at the helm of multiple athletics programs at Sidwell Friends School, Gannon was ready to shift focus back to his own education, returning to school at Fort Hays State University in Kansas.

Pursuing a Master of Science in human performance at Fort Hays State gave Gannon the opportunity to explore and find a passion for another side of the sport: cross country.

"I love the concepts of what's happening at the physiological level within the human body, and the outcomes of that are performance. Cross country is just that," noted Gannon.

Earning his Masters helped solidify Gannon's path as a coach. During that time, he also gained hands-on experience as a graduate assistant with Fort Hays State's track program.

After two years in that role and a second degree under his belt, Gannon made another move in his career, heading to Omaha to coach at the high school level — first at Gross Catholic and then at Skutt Catholic High School.

It was at this time that the culmination of his coaching experiences began to cement the first part of Gannon's coaching philosophy. Gannon explained it simply, capturing both the mindset and the motivation he shares with his athletes.

"Dream big, work hard, stay humble. That's what we say. It's eyes up, the future is bright. It's those same kinds of themes that we're always looking forward to, but we're just present with being the best that we can right now," concluded Gannon.

He carried these principles as part of his coaching ideology, but when Gannon took the next step and got the head coaching job at Creighton in December 2018, he found the university's culture — and its emphasis

on Cura Personalis — perfectly aligned with the second, equally important part of his philosophy.

"My biggest pinnacle, foundational belief is that we have to care about people as people first and we have to take care of them as people first ... If I am not cared for as a person, I'm never going to be the best athlete I can be or the best student I can be," said Gannon.

Gannon wasn't alone in this mindset. Assistant coach Matthew Fayers, hired soon after Gannon assumed leadership of the program in 2018, shared the same values, creating a perfect partnership.

"When I look back on my coaching time here — seven years now — hiring Fayers is the best thing that I ever did. He and I compliment each other really well. We value the same things and we're very much in line with one another," noted Gannon.

But new-hire Fayers wasn't the only person to share Gannon's foundational belief as a coach. Former Creighton volleyball coach Kirsten Bernthal Booth was also a pillar for Gannon in his early years as a coach — and remains one to this day.

Having grown her own program from the ground up, Gannon credits Booth as an instrumental influence as he set out to continue to build up the cross country program.

"She had a tremendous impact on me ... The [sports] are not the same, but the people are the same. How we interact with people and how we motivate people ... get the best out of people. Booth is as good as they come," concluded Gannon.

It was the combination of these influences that gave Gannon the tools and confidence to shape his own path. Drawing from Booth's example and Fayer's energy helped Gannon start championing progress of his own, just a year after beginning his tenure at Creighton.

In 2019, Gannon pushed for the reinstatement of the Creighton track team, a program that hadn't been official since 1962. The process took three years, during which time Gannon faced a change in administration, from then-athletic director Bruce Rasmussen to McCormick Endowed Athletic Director Marcus Blossom just one week after Gannon's initial proposal.

Blossom agreed to move forward with the reinstatement, Gannon said, and after proposals, budgeting and facilities planning, Creighton once again had a track team in 2022 — the men's team returning after a 60-year absence, and the women's team making its debut.

With the program officially in place, Gannon said the next challenge was convincing

recruits to buy into this new addition to the Creighton team.

"It's about finding the right person. One of the conversations we have with people when we go through the recruiting process is, 'You can come here and you can be a part of building something. You can come here and be the first person to do what hasn't been done here yet,'" said Gannon.

It's that chance to grow and make history — and the way the athletes have seized it — that has driven Creighton's track program forward since then. Between Ryan Montera breaking school records and becoming the first Creighton male to compete in the Big East Track Championships to Marcos Gonzalez earning the program's first points with a sixth-place finish in the steeplechase, the Bluejays have steadily made their mark.

Despite all the accolades, though, Gannon says the most meaningful part of his job has always been the connections he's made with his student-athletes.

"It's Eli Vedral starting a cookie company. It's Boston [Small] and Liz [Kettler] and Ashley [Riley] and Caroline [Jachino] and Siobhan [Stoll] all in medical school. It's Margaret [Hendrickson] Stamper and Jackson [Stamper] getting married. It's Haley [Fye] Keller having a baby and Nate [Fedel] having a baby. That's the coolest part."

Now, looking back, Gannon sees these relationships as proof that the journey has mattered as much as the destination. But he's never needed a roadmap; he just shows up, works hard and lives the lessons he shares with his team.

"I don't know that we set out to build what we have, as crazy as that sounds ... I don't know that if you would have asked me five years ago that this was the goal [I could have told you]," recalled Gannon. "Sometimes when we set these goals, these goals define us. I just approach life with this, I'm going to show up, I'm going to do the best I can do today, I'm going to be better today than I was yesterday."

True to this thinking, Gannon doesn't know what's ahead for the team, but his commitment to hard work, caring for the whole person and striving to be better today than yesterday will never stop fueling him.

"Somebody asked me the other day what's next and I'm like, 'I don't know.' We're just going to show up and work hard tomorrow," said Gannon. "If I don't have an answer, I'm going to find an answer. If I don't know the way, I'm going to find the way. And if there's nobody else to help me get it done, I'm going to get it done myself."

Every second counts as Jays outlast Xavier

ABBIE GALLANT
Sports Reporter

The raucous cheers that were echoing through the rafters of CHI Health Center just seconds before came to a sudden halt. Everything was still. The crowd of 16,485 Bluejay fans held a collective breath as sophomore guard Austin Swartz emerged from the huddle and set his feet at the free-throw line.

Swartz had just made the first of two critical free throws, drawing the score within one point, though the lead barely stayed with the visiting Xavier Musketeers, 93-92. With 4.3 seconds remaining, a second made free throw would change that. But, then, Xavier took a timeout.

"I got iced out a little bit," Swartz said of Xavier's tactful use of a timeout to halt Swartz's momentum.

Out of the timeout, the second free throw shot came off Swartz's hands. But at a time when thousands of fans hoped to hear the satisfying sound of a swish, they instead heard the ball hit off the back of the rim. A unified gasp rumbled as the ball careened right. It seemed like game over for the Bluejays.

But just as fast as Swartz was standing at the free-throw line, he was gone, darting toward the loose ball. Swiping it away from Xavier guard Roddie Anderson III, Swartz looked to drive to the hoop, couldn't find an opening and instead stopped and popped a close-range jumper with time expiring.

Fans in the CHI Health Center watched anxiously as the shot left Swartz's hands. Near the bench, head coach Greg McDermott angled his body backwards as if physically willing the ball to give the Bluejays a lucky break. At the same time, Swartz took a couple steps back and watched intently as the off-balance shot flew through the air.

Off the backboard. Through the hoop. Bluejays ahead by one.

Xavier had 0.06 seconds to make something happen, and while a long pass the length of the floor got closer than the Bluejays would have liked, nothing came of it as Creighton held on to the win.

"If I make it through this season with this group, it's going to be a miracle," McDermott said by way of opening the postgame press conference. "They're hard to explain, sometimes, how these games happen and that's why you play until the end."

But before the Creighton men's basketball team executed a seconds-long sequence that scared fans — and McDermott — half to death, but won the game 94-93 on Jan. 21, the Bluejays found themselves in a 40-minute shootout against a Xavier team that wouldn't

stop pushing.

The game started off slow, a surprising fact considering that both teams eclipsed 90 points by the final whistle. Neither team scored in the first two minutes of the matchup, trading empty possessions before junior forward Jasen Green broke the 0-0 deadlock with a layup.

From there, what was once a series of trading misses became a series of trading baskets.

When Xavier's Jovan Milicevic sank a triple to go up 3-2, Green responded with a layup on the other end. When Creighton's 7-3 lead fizzled out into a tied 10-10 game with 15 minutes left in the half, the Bluejays countered with seven unanswered points.

"Obviously, we don't like trading baskets. We've got to try to get stops at the end of the day, but being able to string some scores together just to keep it close and be put in a position to, you know, do what Austin [Swartz] did, is just as important," junior guard Nik Graves said. Also important was Graves's playmaking ability. The guard delivered nine assists to pair with 16 points in the game.

The first half continued in a push-and-pull fashion. Five straight points came in response to Creighton's 7-0 run with 15 minutes remaining, and 13 minutes later, the back and forth showed Xavier with a 35-35 lead with halftime looming.

It was then that freshman guard Hudson Greer delivered critical back-to-back 3s, propelling the Bluejays to a 42-39 lead at the half.

Through the first 20 minutes, though, the biggest problem for Creighton was keeping Xavier forward Tre Carroll in check.

Just over halfway through the opening 20 minutes, Carroll had stepped up and converted on 15 critical points for his team. Running Creighton's defense ragged, Carroll spent most of the half perfect from the field.

Even though a 42-39 lead pointing Creighton's way shone on the scoreboard at half, Carroll had a team-high 17 points, the collective Xavier group shot 48.39% from the field and the team had overcome a seven-point deficit to remain within three.

It was anybody's game. Second half implications were sky-high and the game was nowhere near secured when the second 20 minutes began.

But unfortunately for an already defensively-hindered Bluejay squad, Green, the backbone of Creighton's defensive scheme, exited the game with 3:51 remaining in the first half and wouldn't return to the floor.

For a Xavier team already aware of Creighton's defensive weakness and attacking full force, Green's exit was the greenlight to take the ball to the hoop. For the Bluejays, it was a humbling reality they would have to live with.



ALLY SEEVERS/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Sophomore Austin Swartz and freshman Hudson Greer celebrate after Swartz finds the net at the buzzer for the go-ahead to win 94-93 over Xavier. Swartz ended the night with 16 points.

"I wouldn't have guessed we could win it [the game] without Jasen Green, especially the way he was impacting the game in the 13 minutes he played," McDermott said, alluding to the veteran forward's 10 points, three rebounds and blocked shot. "Jasen quarterbacked our defense. He's so important to us."

With Green sidelined by injury and junior forward Owen Freeman out with an illness, Karem Konan, Greer and Fedor Zugic were inserted into brand new rotations. This meant that the Bluejays would have to heavily rely on their shooting to get the job done.

"Sometimes you're not going to have your best defense every night. That's why there's two ends of the court," Swartz said. "At least execute on offense if you're not doing what you're supposed to do defensively."

Both teams got the same memo in the second half, each shooting over 60% from the field and scoring more than 50 points just in the second 20 minutes.

To begin the second half, All Wright dropped in a layup to get the score within one. Junior forward Isaac Traudt responded, and the storyline continued in the same way.

As the offenses continued to ramp up, arguably the only solid and sustained defensive performances of the day for the Bluejays came from senior guard Josh Dix, who went from guarding Xavier's Malik Messina-Moore (12 points on 5-of-13 from the field in 39 minutes) to hot-handed Carroll midway through the second half.

Guarding Carroll, Dix managed to limit the Musketeer to 12 points in the second half, a critical silencing of a once loud player.

"I just need him [Dix] to be able to guard three different guys ... We decided to switch him to Carroll [because] we thought that's where they were going late in the game and he [Carroll] wasn't a factor with Josh guarding him," McDermott said of his decision to shift Dix's assignment.

In the end, Dix's defensive effort — paired with 19 points scored at the other end — gave Creighton all it needed: a chance.

It may not have looked that way at first, as time dwindled and the game began to shift — this time, in favor of Xavier.

From five minutes until under one minute remaining in the game, the Musketeers flirted with variations of a four-point lead, barely holding off the Bluejays.

Credit to Creighton, the team never gave up, even as the Bluejays trailed 93-89 with under a minute remaining. Instead, these comeback kids made fans and coaches sweat but found a way to win against all odds.

"At the end of the day, it's 40 minutes of basketball [that] we've got to play. We've got to fight for all 40, no matter what the score is," Graves said.

But before Swartz sealed the game on a bank shot, his teammates would put the sophomore in a position where the game was in his hands.

Swartz's game-winner came after sophomore guard Blake Harper found a lane and delivered a clutch layup with 45 seconds remaining, putting Creighton down by just one score, 93-91. And it came after a critical defensive stand and defensive rebound collected by the Bluejays with 13 seconds left, setting up a possession with the potential to tie the game.

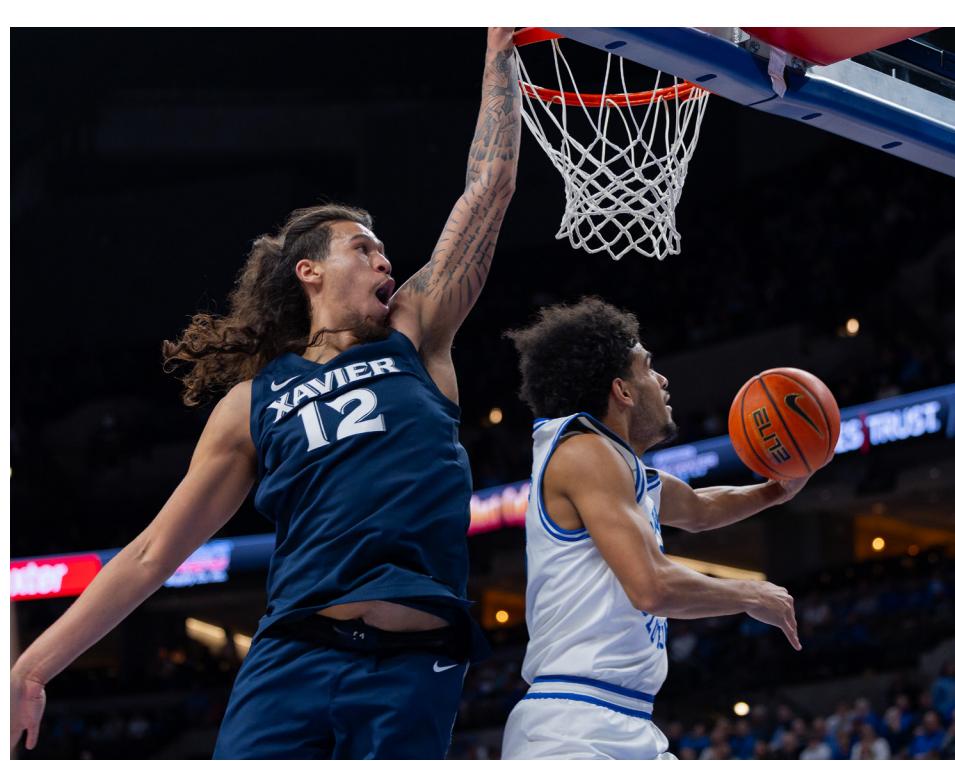
So, when Swartz's feet set at the line for the second free throw and then when the last-ditch jumper came off his fingertips, the roar from the crowd that followed the made shot reached fever pitch. The Bluejays survived another thrilling Big East battle at home, 94-93.

"After [Swartz] made the first [free throw], I thought he was going to make the second one," Graves said with a sigh as he relived the last shot from his vantage point. "But fortunately enough, [Swartz] got the rebound and finished that last shot. It wasn't the prettiest play, but it [got] the job done and won the game, so that's really all that matters."

Graves's reaction to the game-winner mirrored the mood inside CHI Health Center that night — a collective exhale and shared sigh of relief after another Big East battle survived.

Yet the roller coaster of emotions felt in conference play is far from over. With their first near week off in three weeks, Creighton looks to recover, reset and grab another win at Marquette.

After a matchup with Marquette on Tuesday, the Bluejays host No. 2 Connecticut for the annual pinkout game. Tip is set for 7 p.m.



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