

THE SOU'WESTER



What exactly is all the fuss in Egypt?

See Pages 2 & 4

February 2, 2011

The Weekly Student Newspaper of Rhodes College

Campus safety tightening the leash on students?

By Alex Yu
News Editor

Some students seem to have the opinion that campus safety has become more strict on student alcohol consumption by limiting off-campus parties and by having increased presence at on-campus parties. There definitely seemed to be an ambulance arriving to campus at least once each weekend or week last semester, transporting students to the hospital due to alcohol poisoning or an alcohol related injury. However, the paranoia over whether or not campus safety started a crackdown is just that: paranoia.

I met with Ike Sloas, our new Director of Campus Safety to see what seemed to be going on, and he presented me with the following data. According to campus safety statistics, the number of alcohol violations between 2009 and 2010 dropped dramatically from 145 issued violations in 2009, to only projected 92 issued violations in 2010. That's nearly a 37% decrease, meaning that only 5% of the student body received an alcohol violation in 2010. If anything, it would appear that campus safety would be easing up on issuing violations rather than cracking down.

Sloas mentioned how the old policy was more strict, which more than likely forced many of the parties to go off-campus, but that, with the new policy, they were trying to get students to come back on. He said, "If the students feel like they have to take the parties back off campus again because they feel we are being more restrictive, the data do not support that claim." In fact, Sloas also said that they are not trying to limit the number of parties off-campus at all and that they have events scheduled for the upcoming weekend.

As far as their presence at on-campus events, most of the alcohol violations issued are not related to parties specifically. Sloas stated, "A third of the numbers [referring to the 92 viola-

tions of 2010] come from students who are sick in their dorm, and have nothing to do with a party or us working a party." He said that the remaining violations came from RA's and other school disciplinary boards such as Social Regulations Council. Whenever they do give violations at parties, it is usually because the student is "doing something stupid at a party, such as being a minor and drawing attention to oneself by carrying around a bottle." Violations given to students "urinating in public or puking in a cab" are given as a means to make the students aware of their behavior. "We are focusing on education, students know the policy, and we are focusing on responsibility. We are looking out for the safety of the college and the safety of the students," says Sloas.

So why are students paranoid? A possible answer was pointed out by the Assistant Director of Campus Safety, Robert Seals, who had been listening to our conversation and offered his insight. Seals suggested that a combination of recent events tied with how students undertand the outcome could be to blame. Big events at parties involving campus safety are remembered more so than those that aren't. Therefore, when the host of a party decides to chill out and reduce the numbers of parties, campus safety receives the blame due to an association with a previous event. The recent drama with several fraternities could also be a reason. With a major incident at hand, they may have decided not to have a party one week and it resulted in students suspecting campus safety was involved.

Whatever the case, students can rest assured. Campus safety is not out to get you or prevent you from having a good time on the weekend. Just be smart and be safe, and most importantly make mature decisions, because if you're going to be dumb, you better be tough and ready to face the consequences.

Internet woes gone for good?

By Julia Fawal
Staff Writer

It was Finals Week this past December, and you would have been lucky to find a good study spot if you arrived in the library after 6:00 pm. Trips to the Middle Ground for coffee were frequent, as was the tapping of keyboard keys that echoed throughout the room. Everyone was (relatively) quiet. And then, it happened. Once again. A student's worst nightmare, particularly during Finals Week. The internet went down.

Every student here can think back to last semester and remember the frustration of the frequent internet crashes. That Finals Week night one could look around and see students fiercely pounding on their keyboards trying to get the internet to connect, or asking their friends next to them if their internet was down, too. Facebook (accessed through phones) exploded with status updates that included comments such as, 'Really, Rhodes???' or 'Come back, internet!' It was the topic of conversation for the rest of the week, and talking about it replaced Facebook as a way to procrastinate and take a brief study break.

"It's unacceptable," some said. "Tuition is high enough that this should not be happening," said others. "I need the internet to study!" was another big complaint, and it was a valid one. Now that the administration is so adamant about professors putting everything online, losing internet can severely inhibit one's study process. Without internet, one cannot find sources for a final paper, email a professor an important question or document, look up terms for a final, or access files posted on the server.

The number of network interruptions last semester was greater than the sum of all the problems during previous years combined, so

what happened?

Bob Johnson, VP for Student and Information Services and CIO since 1999, understood the frustration of the students and, with the help of his team, began attempting all things possible to pinpoint and solve the issue. He explained that the switches that handle the data traffic internal to the campus were intermittently failing, and that led to the internet outages. The problems began towards the end of a process to install new equipment to increase network speed, and, initially, Johnson was unable to tell if the new equipment, the remaining old equipment, or a combination of both was to blame. Vendors and engineers struggled, too, for the problems did not follow any pattern or leave behind clues. "This was one of the most frustrating and maddening experiences we have ever had," Johnson said.

However, this semester things seem to be running smoothly as far as the internet connection goes. To solve the issue, Johnson and the ITS team reverted all the switches back to the original equipment. Once everything was back to where it was at the beginning of the school year, the internet became stable and back to normal. Though there is still a plan to replace the old gear, it is clear that a different company's products will be used this time.

"Speaking for the good people who work in ITS specifically and in Information Services generally, I have to say that all of us wanted to provide a better experience for the students and the rest of the campus community, especially at the end of the semester," said Johnson. "We know it was just as frustrating and maddening for everyone else as it was for us, and we are grateful for the support we got while trying find solutions!"

Letter to the Editor from Rhodes Dining Director



Rhodes Dining Director, Sam Sciara

Dear Rhodes Community,
My name is Sam Sciara (pronounced "Shy-Ruh"), and I am your Rhodes Dining Director. I began working at Rhodes College in 2005 as your Campus Executive Chef and became Dining Director in May of 2010. I received my culinary degree in 1986 at the Culinary Institute of America and have worked in the restaurant business for over 25 years. I love it at Rhodes, and I love our students, employees and visitors. I have many responsibilities, but my number one priority is to satisfy you by providing a safe, nutritious and exciting dining program every day. I am writing to you, in part, to address some concerns that were voiced as a result of last week's article in the Sou'wester. But, mostly, I am writing to let you know who I am, and to tell you more about the standards of your

program and how I plan to continue to improve your dining experience.

Food Safety is our number one priority. All products we use are sourced and identified at the Aramark corporate level to ensure I have the best quality products to choose from when producing your menus. There are no "short-cuts" or "discount" products used or even available for me to purchase. Many of our products, particularly meat and poultry, are a grade or quality level above what is available in most name-brand grocery stores. All graded products are always "Grade A" and our whole beef products are "Choice" cuts. Some examples include Smithfield Pork, Tyson Chicken, Armor Meats, and other brands like General Mills, Nestle, and Dannon to name just a few. So you can rest assured you are always receiving the very best restaurant quality ingredients EVERY time you dine with us. I am happy to grant any person a tour of our back-of-the-house facilities and invite you to see our products first-hand.

Flames of revolution engulf Egypt

By Rami Abdoch
Staff Writer

The recent series of protests in Egypt has thrown the country into a most uncertain path. Especially as someone who was in the country recently for nearly half a year, this is quite unsettling. However, before analyzing the significance of the demonstrations against Hosni Mubarak's regime with respect to the country and the Middle East at large, it is important to contextualize what sparked the protests and detail some relevant aspects of Egyptian society.

The two driving reasons for the recent protests, as I see it, are minimal economic opportunity and marginalized voices. The minimum wage has not changed in 25 years, essentially since the time Mubarak became President, remaining at about \$6 a day. Even given the favorable exchange rate and relatively low cost of food, this is not nearly enough. He has been in power for nearly 30 years, and the Egyptian people have not seen their social condition change by any measurable degree in that time. Despite widespread poverty – the GDP is roughly \$1000 – what keeps people alive is hospitality. Few people ever go hungry in Egypt. Professor Asef Bayat posits in his book *Life as Politics* that the ordinary people of the Middle East change the region by the way they act in day-to-day life. An example is the hospitality evidenced by the Egyptian people, even considered overwhelming to many foreigners in my experience, which helps curb potential starvation.

Mubarak has forcibly put down any potential threat to his power, primarily via the police, as opposed to the army. This distinction is important because much of the population have had personal encounters with the police force and have built a hatred for their very presence. The army, by contrast, has largely been on the side of the people since protests began. They have primarily been attempting to keep buildings intact and prevent property from being destroyed. Prior to the million-man march, the army made an official press release saying that they will not interfere with protestors so long as they remain non-violent. This indicates implicit agreement on the part of the army for the removal of Mubarak. The army, I maintain, will prove to be a deciding factor on whether Mubarak is removed or not, since his first statement indicates that he has no intention of stepping down, despite the explicit chants of the people in the streets. The people have reached their breaking point, so merely patting them on the head with the hand of empty rhetoric will only anger them further. But what gave them the vigor to challenge head on the autocrat that cemented his dominion over Egypt for almost three decades?

Tunisia's revolt, dubbed by some as the "Jasmin Revolution," was apparently sparked by a young man named Mohamed Bouazizi setting himself on fire, feeling hopeless at his potential in life. His fruit stand was seized because he did not have a permit, even though he had a university degree. It is difficult to imagine the ethos

and proverbial lock felt in the heart and mind of a person that would lead him to do such a horrendous thing to himself. Afterwards, some 3 or 4 individuals from both Egypt and Tunisia did the same to themselves, seemingly without knowledge of this initial incidence. A mere coincidence? These incidents spread via Internet, ballooning into the week long protests in Tunisia that caused president Ben Ali to be deposed. My sense is that the people of Egypt, filled with hope after seeing Ben Ali ousted, took that hope and began mass-scale protests in Egypt. This spurred the Egyptian government to shut down the Internet completely to slow the mobilization of its people and protests, as social media was the driving force behind Tunisia's revolt, largely as a result of tech-savvy youth. The importance of social media cannot be underscored enough. Youth quickly got to work on posters, slogans, and organized rallies, primarily via Twitter and Facebook. The majority of Tunisia's population is under 30, which is also the case in Egypt. Youth, then, is also a driving force: the vigor of a young population has enabled these movements to spread at tremendous speed. Also, both countries' citizens have largely the same misgivings, primarily economic. Egyptians thought to themselves: "If Tunisians can do it, we can do it." Thus, the ripple effect of revolution. Carpe diem, Middle East style.

It is important to note, however, that this is not an Islamic revolution, despite the fact that the country is 90% Muslim. Those who are protesting have not made any. Muslims and Christians are taking part and both want Mubarak ousted. The danger here is that if the people get their wish and Mubarak is removed, there will be a vacuum. Nobel laureate Al-Baradei seems to be a potential frontrunner for taking his place, but that presumes that democratic elections would take place. Opposition groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, considered by many to be extreme, might also fill the vacuum. They still have ideological inconsistencies with mainstream Islam, but they have largely reformed their violent image of the 50s and 60s, which resulted from the leadership of the radical Sayyid Qutb and not the leadership of the movement's founder, the pious Hasan Al-Banna. Interestingly, they have made an official statement endorsing Al-Baradei. It seems that whatever political disagreements might exist between them will be overlooked in light of the common goal of getting rid of Mubarak. At least for now.

Despite the overwhelming call of the Egyptian people for self-determination across political divides, it is in the US's interest for Mubarak to remain in power as an authoritarian. Why? Egypt receives over \$1.5 billion in foreign aid from the US annually, second only to Israel. Egypt is considered a buffer against other countries in the Middle East that could potentially attack Israel, so it is no coincidence that they receive the most aid after Israel. The AIPAC lobby the one of the largest in Washington. Hence, US interests in the region are inseparable from Israel's. Egypt becoming unstable means regional stabil-

ity goes out the window, because there is no immediate "check" against Israel's neighbors. That said, it makes absolutely no difference to US foreign policy whether Egypt is democratic or not; what matters is whether the country is stable or not, regardless of what type of government it has. If an authoritarian government like Mubarak's is more stable than a democratic government led by, say, Al-Baradei, the US would certainly rather support Mubarak. What a tremendous hypocrisy, then, given the rhetoric of "spreading democracy" across the region as has been espoused by neoconservatives and other politicians alike, whether Republican or Democrat. Can the US really afford to ignore the voices of the Egyptians any longer?

The million-man march is the most concerted and organized effort yet to bring and end to Mubarak's reign. According to a contact of mine in Egypt that was able to bypass the internet disruption, there are well over 2 million gathered in Cairo, another 2 million in Alexandria, and another estimated 3 million across Mansoura, Ismailiyya, and other cities, as of midday Tuesday, February 1st. Ash-Sha'ab yuriyd IsqaaT ar-ra'iyis: this has been the rallying cry of the people that has been chanted almost ceaselessly since the protesting began. It means: "The people want the overthrow of the President." In response, Mubarak made his second official statement via Egyptian State TV at just before 11pm Egyptian local time. Arguably, it was more condescending than his first: he insisted that he has been just and has worked in the interest of the Egyptian people for his entire rule. Furthermore, he claims that he will not run for another term – his current one ends in several months, however. Clearly his ego and determination to cement his place in history and, in his words, "die on the soil of Egypt" is a verbal slap in the face to protestors. He continues feeding them proverbial crumbs of what he might call a reasonable concession on his part. The Egyptian people are not just hungry for food, they are hungry for change as well. The emotional force of the people's response has been astounding and cannot be quieted. His speeches have only fanned the passionate fire of their collective voice. It should be abundantly clear that all of Egypt wants him gone and there will be no remote sense of stability until he is removed, willingly or otherwise.

J.F. Kennedy once said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." Such foreboding words speak volumes in light of what has transgressed in the past week. The most unclear thing is what will happen after Mubarak is removed. I contend that his removal is inevitable, but how will the country function without him? I am highly concerned for the availability of food, water, and other necessities for the lay people in the coming weeks. In any case, there is no question this will forever change the Middle East and by extension the world. The revolution, it seems, will begin and end in flames.

THE SOU'WESTER

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ASSOCIATED
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Dishwasher won't work? Blame it on Uncle Sam

By Patrick Harris
Staff Writer

These United States are in something of a funk, between dismal levels of unemployment, political deadlock, lingering foreign wars, and the continuing popularity of "Jersey Shore". To this litany of national tribulation one can add: dirty dishes. Government regulation has recently led to the introduction of "green" dishwashing liquid to minimize environmental impact, a noble goal to be sure. The question arises, nonetheless, as to whether the new eco-friendly soaps work.

Not so much. Dishwashing detergent manufacturers across the nation have been inundated with complaints from customers taken aback by stained plates or greasy utensils. The problem lies in the chemical compound phosphate (PO₄, for those of you keeping score), which, under the new guidelines governing dishwashing liquid production, can only compose 0.5% of the detergent, in comparison to something like 9% under the old formulas. The reduction in phosphate run-offs is intended to reduce algal blooms in waterways and the resulting deaths of fish and other aquatic life. Unfortunately, the lower phosphate levels proved to be less than conducive to actually washing dishes. Faced with a patchwork of state and local bans on the old products, manufacturers nevertheless opted to simplify matters by transitioning to "green" detergents nationwide. As of today, the only high-phosphate dishwashing liquid left in the USA presumably belongs to enterprising hoarders with a taste for clean flatware.

The movement towards the new dishwashing liquids seems to have originated in Spokane, where a combination of lawsuits by the Sierra Club and pressure by the E.P.A. (here the Federal government finally comes in!) left the city with the need to reduce phosphate levels in local waterways in order to gain approval for a new, desperately-needed water treatment plant. The eventual result was a bipartisan bill that banned phosphate-based detergents in all of Washington state, despite relatively little evidence that household dishwashing liquids were a major contributor to water pollution. As we have seen, the idea quickly spread nationally; all Americans can now be assured by the faint stains on the china that they are doing their bit for Mother Earth.

Surely, one might argue, the health of America's waters are a worth a spot of inconvenience in our daily lives? Possibly, if this were the only consideration. Alas, as with much regulation of this sort, the campaign against phosphate-based detergents has disregarded any unintended consequences that may result. The most obvious is the tendency for Americans to use more water to wash their dishes, either by hand or by using more cycles on an automatic washer, to obtain the same level of cleaning as before. Modern dishwashers are impressively efficient users of water, but their effectiveness is (or was) dependent on exactly the sort of phosphate-based detergents that have now gone the way of the dodo. The drive to reduce water pollution has thus become a serious disincentive to water conservation, but one doubts the Sierra Club stops to consider such complexities when there are fish to be rescued.

The same sort of crusaderism lies behind the transition from incandescent light bulbs to fluorescent lighting; the sale of the former will be banned completely after 2014. Fluorescent lamps are generally held to be more energy efficient than incandescent bulbs, and for this reason the government is coercing the public to reject its patrimony from Thomas Edison in favor of lighting that is expensive, short-lived, and contains poisonous mercury. As with dishwashing soaps, ill side-effects are discounted, to say nothing of individual choice, as long as some particular environmental goal is (theoretically) advanced.

There are legitimate circumstances for public action to protect the environment (the *Deepwater Horizon* spill comes to mind). There are also circumstances under which the government would do better to keep its censorious snout out of the private affairs of Americans. The government already regulates the amount of water that can flow through your toilet; what, if anything, is more private than that? As a protest against this sort of insipid managerialism, your humble columnist proposes to begin stocking up on as many incandescent light bulbs as possible prior to the 2014 deadline, to ensure a steady supply of genuine Al-Gore-defying illumination for years to come. Interested parties are encouraged to contact the author to offer their participation in this scheme, which, if successful, will single-handedly defeat the USA's targets for emission reductions under the Copenhagen Accord. Edison would be proud.

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State of the Union address gives hope for future

Jacob Long
Staff Writer

President Obama addressed a chamber of Congressmen that, for the first time since the institution of the State of the Union came to be as we know it, sat together undivided by party lines. Partisan reaction was much harder to gauge, and the mix seemed to result in less crowd reaction generally. President Obama liked the gesture, but perhaps said it best: "What comes of this moment will be determined not by whether we can sit together tonight, but whether we can work together tomorrow."

The President spelled out an agenda that seeks to invest in American ingenuity and work ethic. While the rhetoric of improving education and funding meaningful projects certainly is engaging and hopeful, if policy decisions in the remainder of the President's term take on this type of focus, re-election may prove difficult. While improving education and supporting the type of innovation that has always pushed the United States forward is absolutely necessary and is perhaps the best and most sustainable way of assuring success, the voting public usually lacks such foresight in the midst of a still stalled economy. Knowing this, the President highlighted the positive effects each of his proposed ideas would have on job creation.

Education reform is said to be coming in more than one way. First, at the primary and secondary levels, No Child Left Behind is finally being abandoned. President Bush's attempt at education reform, largely maligned and lacking in positive results, will be replaced by Obama's "Race to the Top." While the President did not elaborate a great deal on the specifics of the program, the general concept is that the schools that can show innovative methods working in the classroom will then be rewarded with more funding. What has not been described, however, is what was lacking in No Child Left Behind as well. What about the schools that are not performing well, the ones lacking in innovation? These schools need attention, and in most cases, need funding. Time will tell if Obama's education plan will bring reform and

money to the schools that need it, instead of rewarding only those that have established a productive system.

While showing concern for the United States' falling ranks in primary and secondary education, President Obama was proud to declare that the college and university system is still number one in the world. Nonetheless, utilizing the system still requires action. The President emphasized making college more affordable, citing only a \$10,000 tax credit over four years as part of making college possible for everyone. Despite not spelling out a more comprehensive plan for getting students into college, post-secondary education is a cornerstone of his plan to keep the United States on track. Innovation comes from well-educated citizens, and a strong economy comes from citizens using their education to land better jobs.

The final aspect of President Obama's plan to encourage the country's continued inventiveness is through research and development, which is in his opinion largely a responsibility of the government. He acknowledged that businesses will often see research funding as a bad investment and therefore says that the government must fund these projects as has been done in the past to create new industry. Al Gore's much-maligned claim to have invented the Internet is rooted in government funding of that type of research. Funding a hugely successful project could be a great political gain, but it is far more likely that Republicans will call these types of proposals wasteful spending as the campaign season approaches.

As Obama moved on to other topics, he highlighted many issues, never settling on anything in particular as much as he did on education and innovation. Another potential political folly, albeit one that will benefit Americans, is his proposal to continue creating more infrastructure projects. Much like his first ideas on education and innovation, the positive effect on job creation that infrastructure projects have is indirect. While investment is essential, the average voter is more likely to respond to the spending as merely spending instead of an investment for the economy.

Perhaps aware of the notion that his speech was lad-

en with spending proposals, the President addressed the budget. A freeze on discretionary spending, 12% of the overall budget, looks to begin cutting into the federal debt. The military has also pledged to cut some excesses, which is important since the United States spends more on its military than all other countries combined. Obama pledges to cut spending whenever possible, even in programs that he cares about. However, he refuses to cut programs that are not excesses, which is a description that will be debated by each party. Republican and Democratic definitions of government excess will differ greatly and may make achieving agreements on these cuts difficult. A final aspect of his monetary policy is to not hurt the "most vulnerable Americans" in order to fix the deficit. "Before we take money away from our schools or scholarships away from our students, we should ask millionaires to give up their tax break." This type of rhetoric may help make up for some of his other proposals as he seeks re-election.

A final step in reducing national debt is a proposed radical reorganization of government. A more efficient government, in his opinion, can be achieved and greatly reduce operating costs. He is not clear in what such a reformation entails, but perhaps that can be explained by the fact that the research has yet to begin. This, like his hope to reduce spending without costing middle and lower class citizens, is very ambitious. If achieved, this type of reform can be extremely meaningful and historic. The "if," however, is enormous here.

On the whole, President Obama presented many hopeful and potentially great ideas without too much flowery rhetoric, showing his true desire to get things done in the second half of his term. His willingness to do what he feels is right despite perceived political gains is certainly admirable. A great deal of ambitious proposals, a divided Congress, and at times a lack of spelled out plans should leave Americans skeptical of how much of this speech will be put into action instead of being repeated a year from now.

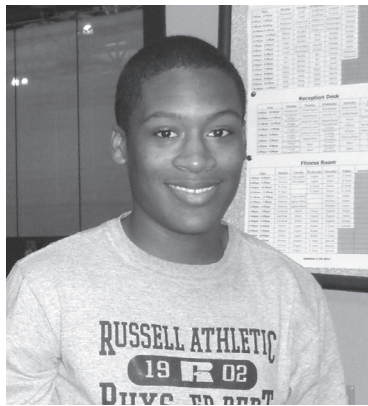
Student Voice

Who are you rooting for in the Super Bowl?



“GO SAINTS!!!!”
-Allie Dillon (‘12)

“I’m rooting for the Packers. I am a Cowboys fan, so it’s impossible for me to root for the Steelers.”
-Ronald Booker (‘14)



“I’m rooting for the Packers because I don’t cheer for rapists like Ben Rothlisberger”
-Justin Nekofar (‘14)

“I hate the Steelers! Brett Favre rules!”
-Alex Fine Petraglia (‘12)



“I’m not rooting for the Steelers. Even though they are the only team I know that is in it, I still don’t like them.”
-Alex Finkleson (‘14)

Rhodes Dining, continued from Page 1

Once our top quality ingredients arrive at Rhodes, the menu is produced using the HACCP procedure, a process identified by the Food and Drug Administration as the most effective method to ensure safe and quality food. If you ever have any issues with the taste or quality of an item, please immediately bring it to my attention or to the attention of another Rhodes Dining manager. I am in the process of conducting additional training for all dining employees so that they, too, know to bring all customer issues directly to a manager, no matter how small or insignificant the issue may seem to the employee.

After eight months in my new job as Rhodes College Dining Director, I see an opportunity to do more to involve you in the decisions I make regarding your program. Here are a few of the things I have done or plan to do in the immediate future:

- Updated website at rhodesdining.com where you can email me directly with questions, concerns and requests. EVERY email will be answered!

- Expanded participation at our bi-weekly Student Food Service Committee meetings by offering rewards for attending. Also, we are improving the way the minutes are recorded to ensure every issue is clearly addressed and available for all to see.

- I will be implementing “Friday Favorites” the third Friday of every month where the students vote for their favorite entrée and I will serve it!

- Beginning today I have instituted the “Sam Cares Hot-Line”. Text any concern or issue directly to my cell phone at 901-598-1931. I personally care and want you to know that no issue is too small for me to care about.

In addition to increasing your involvement, I would like to let you know about some more good things on the way:

- An Aramark culinary expert will be visiting campus next week to help me introduce some new and exciting vegetarian items to our menu.

- Look for exciting developments at the pizza and grill station in the coming days and weeks.

- Per the request in the article last week, I will be adding Morning Star Black Bean Burgers to the menu at the Lair.

- February Special Events: Hot Chocolate Bar (2nd), Super Bowl Party at The Lair (6th), Cup Cake Day (9th), Valentine’s Day Dinner (14th), International Day (24th), Chocolate Fondue (28th)

In closing, I am honored and privileged to be your Dining Director. We all want the same thing: the very best dining program possible at Rhodes College! I look forward to doing more to understand your wants and needs and provide a program that delivers to your expectations. Please do not hesitate to reach out directly to me at 901-843-3541 or sciaras@rhodes.edu. Or feel free to drop by my office in the Refectory. I would love to hear from you.

Political unrest in Egypt

Alex Yu
News Editor

On January 25, 2011, known as the “Day of Anger,” thousands of protestors took to the streets of Cairo, Alexandria, Suez, and Ismailiya to express their concerns, which include police brutality, lack of free elections and free speech, corruption, and for the end of the Hosni Mubarak regime. Seven days later and the riots continue, being one of the largest demonstrations seen in Egypt since the 1977 Bread Riots.

As of February 1, 2011 unconfirmed totals of up to 300 people may have been killed with another 3,000 or more injured. As the Central Security police numbers dwindle and become replaced by military troops, looting has occurred at several of Egypt’s key sites. In response to the looting, some civilians have stood watch over important buildings such as the Cairo Museum in which Egyptians from all walks of life formed a human chain around the building.

The international response to the protests has been significant, with most nations being supportive of the cause, and, due to the increasing use of Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, many activists and onlookers have been able to communicate, coordinate and record events as they happen. In response to the use of social media, the government created a nationwide blackout, shutting down internet and mobile phone service in Egypt as a means to stifle communi-

cation between activists on Friday.

What is the cause for all of the rebellion? For starters, Egypt has been under the rule of Hosni Mubarak since 1981, heading the semi-presidential republic as one of the longest serving Presidents in Egypt’s history. Under Mubarak’s rule, the nation has been under a continuous state of emergency which extends police powers, suspends constitutional rights, legalizes censorship, and allows the government to imprison individuals indefinitely without reason. The emergency law, which is practiced under a state of emergency also limits any non-governmental political activity and non-approved political organizations.

Why is Egypt under a constant state of emergency? Mubarak uses the threat of terrorism as a reason to extend the law and claims that opposition groups would take over if the main government were not allowed to forgo parliamentary elections and detain group figureheads. In other words, the citizens of Egypt have been robbed of their democracy over false claims of terrorism by a ruler who wants to operate the country on his own agenda.

With increased power came increased political corruption within Mubarak’s administration due to the power Mubarak has over the institutional system, which is necessary for him to prolong his presidency. According to the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, Egypt has a CPI score of 3.1, with 10

being the cleanest, and 0 being extremely corrupt, giving the country a rank of 98 out of the 178 countries that were included in the report.

It is then to no surprise why the Egyptian people have had enough and demand the resignation of Hosni Mubarak, labeled as a dictator and a thief. Tuesday hundreds of thousands of protestors took to the streets to march from Cairo’s Tahrir Square to the Presidential palace, with reports speculating that more than 1 million people had arrived by 2:00 p.m.. Also Tuesday, the American Government was urging all Americans to leave Egypt if possible, and a Google Executive Wael Ghonim has gone missing in the midst of the Egyptian chaos.

However much damage and chaos the riots have caused in Egypt, there does appear to be a light at the end of the tunnel, as Mubarak made a speech Tuesday afternoon announcing that he would not run during the next election and would step down at the end of his term in September of 2011. He did, however, declare that he did not plan to leave Egypt after the end of his term stating, “The Hosni Mubarak who speaks to you today is proud of his achievements over the years in serving Egypt and its people..This is my country. This is where I lived, I fought and defended its land, sovereignty and interests, and I will die on its soil.”

Getting to know Rhodes Professor Behr

Julia Fawal
Staff Writer

“I could tell a story about you and me just based on this interaction,” Professor Mark Behr, the newest addition to the English department, said to me as I was interviewing him for this article. “We’re in an empty office with six Masai ritual adornments hanging on the wall. There’s a fascinating story that can be embroidered from that.” While, on one hand, it is slightly intimidating to realize that your professor can skillfully analyze and create based off a seemingly simple conversation, Behr’s words are a testament to his love of both teaching and writing. Like possibly every member of the Rhodes faculty, he is passionate about what he teaches. But, better yet, he can turn any moment into a lesson about anything from literature to life, while still remaining an intriguing and entertaining conversationalist. After having three novels and various essays and short stories published, he has clearly learned a great amount throughout his life and is eager to continue learning along his journey—a journey that has thankfully brought him here to Rhodes.

Where are you from originally?

I was born in the Great Rift Valley in Tanzania, in East Africa. At that point, Tanzania (called Tanganyika) was still a British colony, but, after it gained independence, my family moved to South Africa. I grew up in South Africa and was educated there until I was twenty-five years old. However, I did my graduate work in the United States and attended the University of Notre Dame. The so-called “Fighting Irish.”

Is this your first time in the South?

I think the only two US states I haven’t been to are Alaska and Maine. So I’ve traveled around the South before, and I find it full of very diverse, fascinating people. Also, as a writer I have been influenced by writing from the Southern United States. People like Alice Walker, William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, Zora Neale Hurston, and William Styron all influenced me as a young writer, and the issues that they write about are issues that are quite similar to things I’m interested in. Issues of poverty, class differences, questions of race, gender and sexuality—all these issues are very close to the surface of much Southern writing, and they’re issues I deal with as well. So it has often appealed to me to live in the South.

Why did you pick Rhodes?

I came to visit the campus, and I was completely taken with my colleagues in the English department. They’re all smart and brighter than me, so I knew it’d be a real treat to be among people who could teach me a great deal about their different fields. It’s wise to surround oneself with people that are smarter than yourself. Then I met students, and I looked at various syllabi and attended some classes, and I was taken with the quality of the students. I also liked the beautiful campus, and, again, the idea of living in the South.

Do you like it so far?

It’s an entirely new experience living here, and living here of course isn’t the same as reading a novel. But so far I am very happy, I enjoy the students tremendously. I’m thrilled every day to go to class, and it has to do with the fact that students work really hard. I think that within the first month I knew it was a very good fit. It is a problem that the Rhodes student body is still not quite representative in terms of cultural, racial and sexually diverse minorities, but it is positive that the school is committed to changing the composition of the student body. This is not only a moral challenge, it is a pragmatic and pedagogical challenge. My concern is that where student demographics are homogenous, students aren’t properly prepared for the world. Today’s world is rapidly and irrevocably changing and it’s entirely unlikely that any of our graduates will enter a culturally homogenous working environment.

Did you always want to be a professor?

After I accepted I was never going to be a renowned beauty, a famous actress or a great ballerina, I decided I would be an academic. When I was fourteen, I started writing poetry, and I fell in love with words and with language. And at about the same time, my most influential teachers became my English teachers, which is so often the case for those of us who turn out to be writers. So roughly around that age was when I realized I wanted to be a writer. It also seemed a very good profession to go with writing because as a teacher of literature one is constantly engaging with language, narrative and the text.

Where do you get inspiration?

I am not a big believer in inspiration. I’m mostly a believer in hard work. So I think the thing that drives me is my fascination with how complex, layered and constantly astonishing the world is. Every interaction we have with each other is complex and fraught with meaning. Every encounter offers an opportunity for an epic or minute story.

What do you consider your biggest accomplishment?

My friendships. They are the most important things in my life. Making and keeping my friends has been perhaps the greatest and most enriching achievement of my life. Friendship is the apology of the gods for everything else. I have no idea who I’d be without my friends in Africa, Europe and the US.

What projects are you working on now?

I am working on a novel, a book of essays, and I just finished a screenplay. Whether the latter will ever be sold or made into a movie, we don’t know. I wrote it for my own pleasure and as an experiment. Last year only fifty original screenplays were bought by Hollywood, so it really is a gamble to write one.

Aside from writing, what do you do in your free time?

I run marathons, I travel and read a lot. I scuba dive. During the three months a year I spend in Africa, I go on weeklong hikes in very remote landscapes. I often go horseback riding. I sing. I think if we all sang more there would be less violence in the world.

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Never Fight a Shark in Water

By Joanie Williams

Never Fight a Shark in Water was a special one-night performance at the McCoy Theatre, this past Thursday, January 27. I really did not know what to expect, especially since I did not read the smaller print on the advertisements around school. As a friend of mine said when we were both coming out of the theatre: "I thought it was going to be a comedy!" It was anything but that.

Of course there are comic moments, but as noted in the little leaflet they handed out, "*Never Fight a Shark in Water*" tells the tragic story of George Bright's incarceration." The play is based off of the true story of George Bright, a Louisiana man who was wrongfully convicted and sent to jail for twenty-seven and a half years before being exonerated. It was a rather gripping tale that should have been more advertised. Some of us have heard about the injustice in prisons, but never in a way quite like this. Charles Holt, a Rhodes alumnus known for his work on Broadway, was the actor performing this one-man show. It started out slightly awkward, but then again being on the front row and not knowing what you're getting into, that is slightly understandable.

We forget how intimate a theatre can be sometimes, and such a small theatre like McCoy is needed to have that awkward moment, to let your self get ready to be challenged. Sometimes there were theatrical moments lost upon me, such as moving the only props, a bench and a bucket, around before getting closer to the audience. Yet there was rather clever use of lighting, using minimalist ideas and the audience's imagination to recreate the horrors Holt speaks of: Bright's struggle to survive incarceration, prove his innocence, and then once again survive outside of prison. Sometimes you would want Holt to belt out the songs that were woven into the play, but then again that would detract from the emotion needed at that time.

When asked on her thoughts of the play, Caitie Miller, class of 2012 and an actress in previous McCoy shows, replied with, "I thought Charles Holt's show was a more interesting story than it was a play, almost leading me to wish I had just heard the subject tell his story himself." She continued, "He had really interesting elements, and the movement incorporated in the show was especially intriguing. But there were things that got passed over, like how he actually learned how to read, how he got his hands on law books, things like that, which would have interested me."

One of the best opportunities of the night was having Lara Naughton the playwright, the performer Charles Holt, and the man the play was based on, Gregory Bright, sit down and have a short question and answer session with the audience. This section was needed, since it gave certain gravity once the audience realized that the man whose tale we just heard was in the audience with us. Rhodes was on the first college tour, and hopefully it will be better advertised to open the doors to many more discussions among college campuses and communities about wrongful conviction.

Bari Ristorante brings the tastes of the Old World to Memphis

by Carolina Sánchez
Staff Writer

If you've never been to Italy, you probably have never had authentic Italian food. In America, we have not only altered Italian cooking to the point that it is unrecognizable, but we have also butchered the names of common foods, such as "panino," which refers to one sandwich, and "bruschetta" which is pronounced with a hard "sch."

Owners Jason and Rebecca Severs do it right at Bari, however. Jason's mother was born in a small town outside of Bari, which is the capital of the Puglia region in southern Italy.

I had the chance to ask Jason what his inspiration for "Bari" is and he answered: "That is the only 'Italy' I know. My wife and I wanted to open a restaurant that reflected what we felt was actual Italian food, very regional, and very simple. We felt, and still feel, that we are the only Italian restaurant in town. Italian food in Italy is much different from the Italian food here in America. We like to think that we are as close as you can get to Pugliese cuisine without actually getting on a plane and going to Bari."

The white-table cloth dining room is transformed into both rustic and elegant with photos from Puglia, wine bottles filling the wine racks, a painted gray brick interior on one side, and a chic slanted fountain in the middle. The dim lighting and quiet ambience make it the perfect destination for a romantic dinner.

To start we had the Calamari con Pomodoro, \$9, sautéed calamari with tomatoes, garlic, and black olives. The flavor



For Valentine's Day, Bari will be offering a special four course menu (with choices per course) for \$55 a person from 5 until 10pm. Photo courtesy of George Haggard

profile was the right combination of savory freshened with a hint of lemon. The bread was the right balance between crusty and soft to be able to enjoy it with the sauce from the calamari plate. Each diner is only given one piece of bread at a time and during the meal you can ask for more. This way, bread is not wasted and it is also easier not to spoil your appetite with bread prior to eating your meal.

We followed with a Cauliflower and Carrot Soup, \$8, a creamy purée perfect for a cold winter's day. Our only complaint was that one of our soups was lava hot and the other was lukewarm. We also had a House Salad, \$7, which was accented with a touch of shaved, imported parmigiano-reggiano.

Next we opted for a pasta course, deciding on the Rigatoni con Funghi, Broccoli, e Formaggio di Capra, \$8, rigatoni with portabella mushrooms, broccoli, garlic, and goat cheese. The earthiness of the portabella paired well with the freshness of

the broccoli and pungency of the goat cheese. For our next course we tried the Bronzino alla Griglia, \$21, a whole grilled Bronzino stuffed with orange and fennel. Bronzino is a Mediterranean bass that is very popular in Italian cuisine. Fennel is also widely used in Italian cooking. The fennel's aniseed flavor combined with the sweetness of the orange was a great combination to accent the freshness and flakiness of the fish. Despite the wonderful dessert choices, our meal ended here.

For the wine connoisseur, Bari has an impressive list of Italian wines, and for the cheese connoisseur, Bari has the most impressive cheese list in town with over forty imported Italian cheeses, including buffalo's milk cheeses (I highly recommend trying the Mozzarella di Bufala if you have never tried this gem), cow's milk, sheep's milk, and goat's milk cheeses. Bari offers a full menu cheese tasting for \$150.

Our experience at Bari was more than pleasant. Our waiter was very friendly and went out of his way to accommodate our tastes several times. The service was also very quick, as we did not have to wait long for any of our courses. Our tab for three people came out to be \$80 flat, so roughly \$26 per person for an elegant meal was very reasonable. So, if you've never been to Italy and are curious to experience a taste for the Old World, head over to Bari located on 22 South Cooper Street.

Black History Month: Celebrating the Arts

by Jasmine Gilstrap
A&E Editor

Since its creation in 1976, black history month has been celebrated in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. Following the original purpose of educating Blacks about their cultural background and instilling in them a sense of pride in their race, Rhodes joins in the month long salute to prominent African-American figures.

With black arts as the theme for this year's observance of black history month, the celebration at Rhodes kicked off last night at the Black Student Association's Black Arts Night. Rhodes students and members from the Memphis community showcased their expression of the arts through dance, spoken word, rap, and other musical performances. Though it is not the first time Rhodes has showcased black artists, last night was the first time for an arts night on such a big scale.

"I see Black Arts night as an opportunity for African Americans to express themselves through poetry and music," said Darren Thomas, class of 2013 and Black Student Association president. "I'm hoping the attendees see that black art is not dead but is living and that modern

black art is more than just music."

The rest of the month provides just as much educational and entertaining elements of the arts as the kick-off, with nationally known step performance group Step Afrika and the Grammy nominated Fisk Jubilee Singers to join the Rhodes celebration.

"This year, we incorporated the many aspects of art including literature with Dr. McKinney's book and the art of stepping with Step Afrika," said Dean of Multicultural Affairs Sabrina Brown.

Though the Office of Multicultural Affairs organizes the events, many departments and offices on campus have contributed to the Black History Month plans, including the English department, the history department, CODA, The Barrett Library, Career Services, Disability Support Services, The Office of Residence Life, The Office of Student Involvement and the African American Studies department. For more information on Black history month and the events, contact the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

A quick look at the Oscar nominees



Photo courtesy of Google Images.

By Shelby Lund
Staff Writer

The nominations for the most prestigious movie awards in the nation are in, and excitement is building for the big night celebrating the 83rd annual Academy Awards. Some nominations are to be expected, some are pleasant surprises, and some categories have garnered more notice for the names they omitted than the names they announced. Here's a look at who will—and in some cases who won't—be competing for Hollywood's biggest prizes come February 27th.

As predicted by other recent awards ceremonies, *The Social Network*, *Inception*, *The King's Speech*, *Black Swan*, and *The Fighter* have all garnered multiple nominations for the Oscars in multiple categories. All five films have been nominated for Best Picture, along with *The Kids Are Alright*, *127 Hours*, *Toy Story 3*, *True Grit*, and *Winter's Bone*. *The King's Speech* currently holds the highest number of nominations at 12, while *Inception* and *The Social Network* have each received eight nominations. *Black Swan* has won five nominations, including Best Actress for Natalie Portman, while *The Fighter* has received seven nominations, including two nominees for Best Supporting Actress: Amy Adams and Melissa Leo.

However, being the Oscars, quite a few nominations came as a surprise to the general public—pleasant surprises, but surprises nevertheless. *True Grit*, which was largely passed over at the Golden Globes, follows *The King's Speech* with ten nominations. Directors Joel and Ethan Coen were nominated together for Best Director, male lead Jeff Bridges was nominated for Best Actor, and, in the most surprising nomination for this film, 14-yr-old Hailee Steinfeld was nominated for Best Supporting Actress. In Steinfeld's case, the surprise is less over her being nominated than the fact that she was placed in the Best Supporting Actress category—she was clearly the main character of the story and should probably have been put in the Best Actress category. Other

surprise nominations were lesser-known films *Winter's Bone* and *127 Hours* as Best Picture candidates, Mark Ruffalo of *The Kids Are Alright* for Best Supporting Actor, and Michelle Williams of *Blue Valentine* for Best Actress.

Of course, where there are surprises, there are bound to be disappointments, and this year's nominations have quite a few snubs to take into account. Ruffalo and Williams' nominations are in sharp contrast to the snubs to their co-stars. Ruffalo's co-star Julianne Moore, despite her excellent performance in *The Kids Are Alright*, was not nominated for Best Supporting Actress even after garnering a Best Actress nomination at the Golden Globes, while Ryan Gosling, who played half of a dysfunctional couple with Williams in *Blue Valentine*, was conspicuously not nominated for Best Actor. Continuing with the acting categories, Mila Kunis was not nominated for Best Supporting Actress for her role in *Black Swan* as the bad-girl ballerina who serves as a foil for Natalie Portman's character, despite garnering acclaim for her performance. Christopher Nolan was snubbed once again for Best Director, and, since *Inception* has basically been his pet project for the past ten years, it's a crime and a shame that he is not being recognized for being the driving force behind one of the best movies of the year. Other notable snubs include *Despicable Me* not receiving a nomination for Best Animated Film, despite critical and popular acclaim, and *Tron: Legacy* not receiving nominations in the Best Score and Best Visual Effects categories, despite the fact that the score by Daft Punk and the stunning visual effects were among the film's main highlights.

All in all, in many cases the Oscars chose right, honoring many actors, directors, and technical geniuses who deserve to have their work nominated for such prestigious awards. However, while every nominee is largely deserving of praise, some of those brilliant people who were snubbed by the Academy deserved the nominations more than some who actually did get nominated. One can only hope those who were snubbed will get the acclaim they deserve at some point in their careers—and that of the remaining nominations, the Academy chose well.

As for those viewers who are dissatisfied with the Oscars in general, well, there's always the People's Choice Awards.

THIS WEEK IN ENTERTAINMENT

New Movie Releases:

2/4/11
Sanctum
The Roommate

Television Highlights (1/26-2/1):

Human Target, Wednesday, 8 pm, Fox. A job reunites Chance and Harry; Ilsa goes in the field on a mission.

Modern Family, Wednesday, 8 pm, ABC. Luke and Manny have their first school dance; Jay and Phil take Luke and Manny on a mall run.

Law & Order: Special Victims Unit, Wednesday, 9 pm, NBC. The investigation into an abuse case goes awry when the wealthy suspect involves his lawyer.

\$.! My Dad Says, Thursday 7:30 pm, CBS. Ed becomes extremely jealous when a millionaire tries to win Rosemary's affection.

Bones, Thursday, 8 pm, Fox. A dead man disguised as a scarecrow is found in a cornfield; Cam doubts her relationship.

Grey's Anatomy, Thursday, 8 pm, ABC. Meredith feels left out when Derek breaks ground on his clinical trial.

Who Do You Think You Are?, Friday, 7 pm, NBC. Vanessa Williams travels to Washington, D.C., and South Carolina while researching her ancestry.

Fringe, Friday, 8 pm, Fox. A scientist dies after ingesting a cloud of blue powder that disintegrates his bones.

House, Monday, 7 pm, Fox. After Cuddy's mother complains of unusual symptoms, she is admitted to the hospital.

Gossip Girl, Monday, 8 pm, CW. Blair asks Nate to help her gain favor with her high-strung boss; Damien causes more trouble.

Glee, Tuesday, 7 pm, Fox. The glee club prepares a kissing booth for Valentine's Day; hearts are broken when plans go awry.

Southland, Tuesday, 9 pm, TNT. Lydia deals with being in the spotlight while working on a celebrity murder case.

Black History Month: Events Calendar

February 10th
State of The Black Community: Rhodes College Black Town Hall Meeting. Presented by BSA. Barrett 051, 7pm

We've seen the CNN documentary *Black in America* but what about Black at Rhodes? This is a time to get a better understanding of what it means to be Black at Rhodes, discuss the community and set collective goals for the future. This conversation will be facilitated by Dr. Charles McKinney, professor of History at Rhodes College.

February 16th
BSA Family Night. Soul Food and Sitcoms. Orgill (Clough Hall), 6:00pm

The Black Student Association would like to discuss images and the ideology of Black sitcoms. They will view and discuss *The Jeffersons*, *Good Times*, *Sanford and Son*, and *What's Happening!!* all while enjoying a wonderful soul food dinner!

February 17th
Open-Mic Night. Bryan Campus Life Center, Lynx Lair, 6pm-8pm
This event is meant to allow students, faculty, and the public to express themselves through poetry, song, dance, etc. Between performances we will have short presentations of how spoken word and performance was an outlet to the African Americans throughout time for their hardships of slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, racism, and current affairs.

February 20th
"Stepping: Beyond the Line". Blount Auditorium, 7pm
This documentary will show the history of the art form known today as Stepping. It will hi-lite the current day practices and rituals experienced through the students in the National Pan Hellenic Council, historically Black Greek letter organizations. This documentary is an original by Rhodes College's own, Dr. Dee Garceau, Professor of History.

February 21
Step Afrika. Bryan Campus Life Center, 7pm
Stepping is a unique dance tradition created by African American college students. In stepping, the body is used as an instrument to create intricate rhythms and sounds through a combination

of footsteps, claps and spoken word. The tradition grew out of the song and dance rituals practiced by historically African American fraternities and sororities in the early 1900s. Stepping comes from a long and rich tradition in African-based communities that use movement, words and sounds to communicate allegiance to a group. STEP AFRIKA is a nationally known Step Performance group. Come out and watch this amazing performance!

February 22
Color TV: *African American Careers in the Media*. Orgill (Clough Hall), 5pm

A panel discussion with a variety of professionals in TV, radio, and print journalism.

February 23
Career Services Diversity Luncheon. The Refectory (Hyde Hall), 12 noon

The Diversity Luncheon, co-sponsored by Career Services, The Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs, and Disability Services, provides diverse students with the opportunity to learn more about a company and its employment/internship opportunities in a more intimate setting. Students are able to network and explore certain career fields, while enjoying a full lunch buffet.

February 26th
Evergreen Presbyterian. Fisk Jubilee Singers, 7:30
The Grammy nominated and Dove award-winning Fisk Jubilee Singers of Fisk University, directed by Paul T. Kwami, will perform the works of William Herbert Brewster. Dr. Brewster was a preacher and gospel music composer in Memphis from the 1920's until the 1980's.

February 28th
Dr. Charles McKinney Lecture. Blount Auditorium, Buckman Hall, 6pm

The lecture will be based on his new book, *Greater Freedom: The Evolution of the Civil Rights Struggle in Wilson, North Carolina*. A book signing and reception will follow.

**A Display in the Library of African Americans who have excelled in the arts.

Can the Grizzlies make the playoffs this season?

By Andrew Mullins-Williams
Sports Editor

Gone is the Allen Iverson debacle, forgotten is the Pau Gasol trade, and the Memphis Grizzlies look to again be contenders this year for the NBA playoffs.

Be careful not to blink because this record could just be a mirage, but entering February the Memphis Grizzlies have a record of 25-24 and are one game out of the 8th playoff spot in the Western Conference. It used to be a term associated with the likes of "Can pigs fly?" and "when hell freezes over," but the question "Can the Grizzlies make the playoffs?" is now a legitimate wonder.

Right now the Grizzlies have solid players at nearly every position, and, while very young, they still matchup well with most teams in the NBA. This offseason the Grizzlies did not add much firepower, but what they did do has made the team better. First, they didn't do anything foolish like adding another Iverson to the roster or someone else who equally would have contributed negatively to the team atmosphere. Second, they resigned Rudy Gay, which means he did not have to worry about an extension during the season giving his full attention to the team and winning. Third, while not a high profile transaction, the Grizzlies did bring in Tony Allen

from Boston, and his ability to guard various positions on the floor has helped strengthen the bench and helped relieve some of the defensive stress from other players.

Rudy Gay is averaging 17.8 points per game, and Mike Conley, O.J Mayo and Marc Gasol are also contributing in double figures for scoring. Zach Randolph is perhaps the big-

ranked 24 out of 30 teams, giving up 104 points per game. They also are forcing nearly 17 turnovers a game, while only committing 14. They are currently tied for 1st in steals with 9 per game.

While statistics are nice, they only tell part of the story. Beyond the statistical improvement, the Grizzlies have changed their attitude and demeanor when on the court. While they are not the Boston Celtics, LA Lakers or Miami Heat, they are starting to understand what it takes to win. They have avoided the 8 or 9 game losing streaks and are learning how to make sure one loss does not equal two or three. They still have the ability to give up 15 point leads (this happened in a recent loss to the New Jersey Nets), but they followed that up with three consecutive victories.

If the Grizzlies played in the Eastern Conference they would make playoffs without much hesitation. However, because of the tough competition in the West, a lot of the Grizzlies success must come against foes that are also competing for playoff spots. Portland and Phoenix currently surround the Grizzlies in the standings and both are battling injuries and other issues which could be beneficial to Memphis. Similarly, Denver (which holds the 7th seed) and Utah (which holds the 6th) have looked lost at



Photo courtesy of Google Images.

gest reason for the Grizzlies' turnaround. This season he is averaging 21.9 points and 13 rebounds. Another important improvement has been in defense where the Grizzlies are allowing only 98.4 points per game. Last season they were

times this season.

It is still very early and any injury or sustained losing streak could put an end to playoff talks, but this season the Grizzlies just might do it.

A closer look at this year's Big East Conference

By Andrew Mullins-Williams
Sports Editor

Last season, the Big East received eight NCAA tournament bids, sported the NCAA coach of the year (Jim Boheim, Syracuse), had four teams ranked in the top 10, was considered the most talented and deep conference in college basketball...and then got smacked in the NCAA tournament.

One year removed, the Big East is again basketball's top dog.

Entering February, the Big East has three teams ranked in the Top 10, eight teams ranked in the Top 25, and ESPN's Joe Lunardi currently has 11 Big East teams projected to make this year's NCAA tournament.

But how good is the Big East really?

The statistics are there, and certainly ESPN, Dick Vitale and most basketball announcers and sport anchors believe they are the real deal. However, history has spoken, and I believe the Big East will again disappoint in the Big Dance. With that said, it should be noted that I am not saying the Big East is *bad*. I am simply saying that they are not as good as advertised, and we will not be looking at an all-Big East Final Four in Houston. As was the case last year, I believe that one of the Big East teams will make the Final Four.

The problem is picking the one.

While saying the Big East has played a soft and safe schedule might not quite be doing the league justice, it should be noted that most teams did not play terribly hard opponents this year, and the result is over inflated records that help boost NCAA bids. This type of scheduling works to get into the NCAA tournament, but is very counter-productive to win games once there.

For example, Notre Dame (which is currently ranked 9th) played Georgia, California, Wisconsin, and Kentucky,—all Big-6 BCS conference affiliated schools. However, of those teams, only Kentucky was ranked at the time (# 17), and if they played those schools today, they are looking at teams that are barely .500 in their respected conferences.

While most Big East teams fall in this muddle of mediocre scheduling, West Virginia and Cincinnati have proven to be the outliers in the equation. Cincinnati is the epitome of soft scheduling. They did not play a game outside of Ohio until late December, and that was a "neutral" site game against Oklahoma. Of their non-conference games, only Oklahoma was a big conference school, but their 15-0 start has them projected in the field of 68 for this year's tournament.

West Virginia loses to Cincinnati in the battle of easy schedules—but only by a little. Their non-conference schedule included playing the likes of VMI and Davidson

(both having under .500 seasons). Of the big conference schools, they played Vanderbilt, Minnesota, Purdue and Miami. Outside of Purdue, those teams have an 8-13 conference record (and Purdue is arguably not that good either). Beyond simply playing a weak schedule, the Mountaineers ended up losing two of their easy games against Miami and Minnesota.

One of the most troubling signs for the Big East this year, beyond a mediocre performance in pre-conference tournaments and matchups, is the fact that no one (except for maybe Pittsburgh) can win on the road consistently. Villanova has lost at Providence, at Connecticut and at Tennessee. Louisville has also lost to Providence, Georgetown and Villanova, and Notre Dame has Syracuse, Marquette, St John's and Kentucky as road blemishes.

While the consistency of the Big East is certainly a worry, the real question is: who will beat them? That is a question that will play itself out over the next month. Duke, Kentucky, Texas and Ohio State look to be the top of the class in their respective conferences. Many of the Mid Majors are also closing the talent gap on the Big 6 power conferences. Last season, Georgetown, Louisville, Marquette and Notre Dame all lost in the first round of the NCAA tournament; Pittsburg and Villanova soon followed in round two. Unless some of these teams learn to win consistently on the road, we could see very similar patterns this year come March.



Photo courtesy of Google Images.