

the

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TESTS AND TRIUMPHS

The Spyglass Staff

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Front Cover Artwork

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Back Cover Artwork

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 spyglass.newspaper@gmail.com

 @TheSpyglassNewspaper

 @spyglass.newspaper

 www.thespyglassnews.com

OUR MISSION

The student press of Braden River High School has a mission: To publish news, information and opinion articles for and about student, faculty and administration activities, interests and policies. To maintain high ethical standards with regard to fairness, personal and legal rights, responsibilities and accuracy. To provide a forum for free and responsible expression of student opinion and present well-balanced, locally researched coverage of issues and broader student interest. To welcome diversity and increase the scope and depth of our coverage in order to heighten mutual understanding and awareness throughout our entire school and community.

The BLM Movement brings change

Anyone can take action and vote to ensure a better future for Black Americans.

Maya Dean-Elois
WEB EDITOR

Art by Mackenzie Cook

During the summer of pandemic, a spirit of racial activism fell over the U.S. and the world; yet, this wave did not overlook the River's own community.

In June, the BLM movement gained traction, marking one of the U.S.'s largest civil rights moments in history. Protests were

incited by the death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black male, who died after being

handcuffed and pinned to the ground by an officer's knee in a video published online. This shed light on the prominent victimization of the Black community, but it also sparked a new social movement and conversation on police brutality.

Long before 2020, the BLM movement originated after the death of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black teenager who was shot in Sanford, FL, by George Zimmerman. The organization behind BLM was formed by three women: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi. They centered their work around diminishing racially motivated violence against Black people.



It is not acceptable for society to keep ignoring these issues; Floyd was not the first or the last African American to be targeted. In order to combat and prevent these tragedies, there needs to be change among the people and those in power.

According to the New York Times, An estimated 15 to 26 million people participated in this year's protests against police brutality. Citizens have been lying in streets in solidarity against the death of George Floyd, spending hours in the heat; others have been tearing down statues of slave traders like Robert Milligan, in hopes of bringing light to their racist history.

Black lives have always mattered, and the new generation is

enforcing a larger sense of responsibility. The word "vote" should not be a new term to upperclassmen at the River; not only does voting in the current election decide the next president, but it holds an impact on the years to come. According to Kids Voting USA, an estimated 4 million teenagers are turning 18 before the 2020 election, and registering to vote takes less than five minutes. Florida's ballot contains major decisions that will be enforced in the next few years, including raising the minimum wage and even creating a different primary system.

Although voting might not make most jump for joy out of excitement, it is a responsibility for everyone and key to clarifying that Black lives matter.



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Manatee-Sarasota citizens may submit ballots by mail, early, or in-person.

Fiorella Recchioni
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Democracy does not cease in the midst of a pandemic; Nov. 3, millions of American votes will be tallied to decide the future of the U.S. presidency.

Regardless of which candidate it is for, may it be former Vice President Joe Biden or current President Donald Trump, voting is an essential part of being a U.S. citizen. For Florida citizens, this year's ballot will also include other items such as school board members and a possible law raising minimum wage.

"One of the biggest reasons why young people don't vote is because they feel like their vote doesn't matter," AP U.S. Government teacher Brian Kirchberg said. "There's smaller elections as you go down that fewer people are involved in... you get to decide who's in charge from the local level all the way to the federal level."

To make this decision count, it is important to know how to cast a ballot. In November, nearly all Americans - including some students at the River - will have the opportunity to vote by mail, early or in-person.

Mail-in Voting

During this election year, mail-in voting became a politicized issue as both parties have opposing views on its effectiveness. While controversial on a national level, most states - regardless of partisanship - have expanded voting by mail and ensured easier voting access to Americans.

A common concern with mail-in ballots is that attempted fraud could skew the election. The rate of voting fraud, however, was found to be between 0.00004 and 0.0009 percent, according to a 2017 study by the [Brennan Center for Justice](#).

"Mail-in ballots have been around since the 1700s, this is nothing new," Kirchberg said. "The risk of fraud is so absolutely remote, it's ridiculous. It's perfectly safe."

As long as they are registered to vote, anyone 18 years or older will be able to request a mail-in ballot. To do this, Florida residents can visit their county's election website; locally, this may be [Manatee](#) or [Sarasota](#). The state deadline to request a ballot is Oct. 24, so citizens should request their ballot as soon as possible.

Once the ballot is received, voters need to properly fill it out. While this may sound easy, human error resulted in over

550,000 mail-in ballots rejected in the 2020 presidential primaries, according to an [NPR survey](#).

The most common mistake made is in signing the ballot. The signature needs to be up-to-date and goes on the outer envelope of the ballot.

If the voter is mailing their ballot, their election official needs to receive it by 7 pm Nov. 3. It is recommended that when the voter receives the ballot, fill it out and return it by mail as soon as possible.

If a citizen is concerned about their ballot arriving on time, they can also leave it at one of several designated drop-off boxes in their area. For Manatee County, drop-off boxes are located at all [Early Voting Centers](#). For Sarasota County, drop-off boxes are located in all [supervisor of elections offices](#).

Senior Mackenzie Cook is one student from the River who will be voting by mail.

"I just feel like it'll be the safest," Cook said. "Voting is important to me because I know a lot of women fought for the right to vote... they did it for me, so they trusted in my generation of women and young girls to follow their own path and make their own decisions."

Early / In-Person Voting

Though much of the country will be voting by mail, voting in-person is still a largely accessible method and about as safe as a trip to the grocery store, according to [COVID-19 Recovery Consulting](#).

Voting centers will open on Election Day, Nov. 3. Those who plan to cast their ballot at a voting center should take the proper precautions. Voters should wear a face covering and sanitize or wash

hands before and after entering (washing hands is a more effective way of killing viruses, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)). It is also recommended to socially distance, which may be easier at less busy hours.

For those who still want to vote in-person but would rather do so before Election Day, early voting is available in [Manatee](#) and [Sarasota](#) Counties from Oct. 19 to Nov. 1.

Millions of modified mosquitoes

The Florida Keys approved gene-altered mosquitoes to be released to help combat Zika.

Cara Bailey
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In 2021, state officials plan to release 750 million genetically modified mosquitoes into the Florida Keys - hoping to reduce the population of mosquitoes carrying dangerous diseases.

The plan is to modify the males' genetics so, after mating with the females, the offspring are less likely to survive; in theory, the population of infectious insects would decline.

There are some opposed to the idea: nearly 240,000

people signed the Change.org petition for Florida trials. The activists argue that ecosystems are a balance and there is no way to foresee the negative impacts of gene alteration in a lab.

"Personally, I think the one 'Jurassic' reboot was enough," senior Jonah Jacobi said. "I don't think we need another."

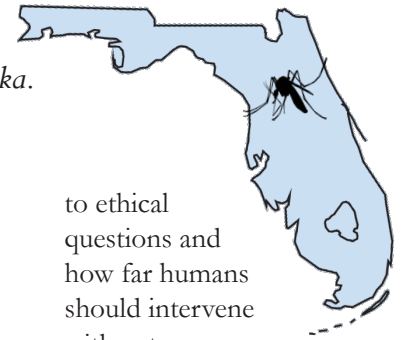
This genetic modification also opens the door to the question of eradicating the species in itself. The portion

of mosquitoes that need blood, while only a small population of females, carries diseases that led to the deaths of over one million people. "I am a very big supporter of eradicating mosquitoes," junior Naomi Greenwood said. "They are vile and I really don't see a need for them as a species." Still, others counter that the niche of the mosquito would be replaced, and possibly with an insect far worse than the mosquito.

It opens the door

to ethical questions and how far humans should intervene with nature.

"[The release] sounds scary; it can go wrong at any time, or maybe even mutate into something worse," junior Sarah Diaz said. "But [Covid-19] should be something we should focus on at the moment. It is just an odd thing to think about if we are going through this tough time right now."



Remembering Ruth Bader Ginsburg

The Supreme Court justice lived a life of firsts, battling and overcoming gender discrimination at every turn.

Fiorella Recchioni
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Art by Ayaka Quesen



Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg passed away Sept. 18, leaving behind the legacy of a pioneer for civil rights and an inspiration to all women, young and old.

Even before her career, Ginsburg had humble beginnings and encountered adversity during her education.

Learning the value of education from her mother, she went on to study and graduate from Cornell University, first in her class. She later enrolled

in Harvard as she navigated motherhood and being a law student all at once. She was one of eight women in a class of 500 and repeatedly encountered sexism; even a dean scolded her for "taking a man's seat". Regardless, she went on to excel and became the first female member of the prestigious legal journal, the Harvard Law Review.

She made a name for herself arguing over 300 gender discrimination cases for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and became the director and

founder of the still-running Women's Rights Project.

After serving on the D.C. Court of Appeals for 13 years, she was appointed to the Supreme Court for 27 years. In this time, she authored about 200 opinions and continuously advocated for gender equality.

"Ruth Bader Ginsburg fought tirelessly for justice," junior Sheridan Benson said. "She used her voice to really speak to the people who would listen."

May her memory be a blessing and a revolution.

Teachers step up to the plate

New modalities have teachers taking a stand in leading students.

Jillian Turner

LIFE & FEATURES EDITOR

In a time of a panic-inducing pandemic lingering from the previous school year, the school district designed a never-seen-before plan to accommodate all of their students' needs, including the options of eLearning, Hybrid and Brick-and-Mortar.

The River's teachers are going above and beyond to ensure education does not suffer in these circumstances. Though at times it is hard to keep those at home engaged, teachers are confident they can turn things around for the better.

"I believe many students are taking advantage of learning and developing their work ethic because they're having to learn career skills such as time management and problem solving," eLearning science teacher Sharron Itts said. "[However,] eLearning is a bit more challenging to have students really invested in class. Many young scientists just try to get done as quickly as possible with their assignments, and not really dive into the nitty gritty of information."

Depending on the teacher and the subject they

Art by Hannah Barker

teach, modality options vary. Some teachers instruct all three options, while some teach one or two. Manatee County teachers who teach a second or third option of schooling evidently get a supplement for each. This was, in part, recommended by history teacher Brian Kirchberg who realized the amount of effort that went into teaching multiple modalities needed to be rewarded.

When attending school, there may be a fear that the virus could be lurking. However, the River fortunately took precaution to keep everyone safe.

"I feel as safe as I could be," Kirchberg said. "I will say that I am more confident in our administration and in Mrs. Scarbrough than I would be with some of the other principals. I feel like we have done the best we can."

When teachers have taught for several years, they grow accustomed to ways of doing things, and that includes the experience they have with students in their typical face-to-face classrooms.

"Selecting a modality was a daunting task for students and parents this year," science teacher

Cynthia Cooper said.

"In my opinion, nothing replaces the 5-day brick and mortar experience in terms of quality and depth of learning. Being in school pushes us beyond the comforts of our pj's and our couch and forces us to

grow in new directions as people and learners...

I was uncertain that we would make it beyond a few weeks into the school year in person, but here we are, still moving forward. The whole process is trial and error and we seem to be the frontline."

In a pandemic, the uncertainties are endless. One thing to keep in mind is that teachers are the superheroes to our little town - sometimes, students seem to forget how much they do.

"Teachers are doing well with the differing modalities," senior Lenora Galeziowski said. "As an eLearning student, communication is sometimes a challenge, but the teachers are putting in the extra time to communicate one-on-one with me. I think Mr. Kirchberg is doing a good job as he makes himself available to his eLearners weekly, posts lecture videos, and quickly responds to emails. Mrs. Helfrick also does well with creating pre-recorded PowerPoints and attempting to include the eLearners as much as possible."

"I believe that handling different modalities has lacked a little when it comes to effective handling of lectures and lessons; that being said, the modality model is a new experience for both teachers and students, so I certainly understand the difficulty," junior Andrew Landers said. "To have to orchestrate three different teaching plans with all of the safety guidelines can't be easy. Ms. Dubois has done a fantastic job at adjusting the AP Capstone course model to include me as an eLearner, and has provided a lot of support and assistance when it comes to completing the work from home."

Meet Mrs. Pesognelli

Jillian Turner
LIFE & FEATURES EDITOR

When asked about the most impactful student in her career so far, Mina Quesen takes the title.

Students at the River come and go, but occasionally a four leaf clover emerges from the untouchable grass - for Lisa Pesognelli, she witnessed the clover grow from a young seed to a blooming flower.

Librarian assistant Pesognelli has worked with countless student aids, volunteers and frequent library-goers over the

years. Though she loves talking and helping all of them, there are some people who stay in your heart. For her, that student was Mina Quesen. Their bond started as young as kindergarten when Pesognelli worked at Tara Elementary as a teacher assistant where Quesen attended. Then, after losing contact until Quesen's freshman year, they sparked a long-lasting bond.

Pesognelli engages with all her media center aids, including Braden Pentz (pictured). When the topic of college is brought up, she reminds them that they can bring back a pennet from their future school to hang up for memory.

Photo Courtesy: Jillian Turner

"I only knew her for just a few months as a little kindergartener that came in and I knew she was special just by the interaction at the age that she was," Pesognelli said. "When she got to be a freshman here at Braden River High School, I was fortunate enough that she spent a good majority of her time here."

Though all the student aids are special to Pesognelli, Quesen was prominent

in her life and the bond they shared was more than mutual. Quesen loved being around Pesognelli, whether it was listening to her stories or telling her about her future college plans. Even though they only spent a small portion of the day together, she looked forward to it.

"She was a genuine person, very smart, very caring," Pesognelli said. "The connection was really

to the library, she was an avid reader. She always said she enjoyed, whether she did or not, listening to me tell my stories... I would go on and on and she would just politely listen."

Though she knew there was something defining about Quesen, it was the dedication and drive to succeed she had at such a young age that caught Pesognelli's attention. Although Quesen may have

moved on to univesity, she will never depart from Pesognelli's heart.

"She was always interested in what she was going to do with her future," Pesognelli said. "I knew whatever she said she was going to do with her future, she was going to do it. She is off to college now, and I wouldn't expect anything less from her becoming the woman she said she would become."

A tribute to Mr. Desmond

My favorite teacher, out of all the teachers I have had in my entire life, is Mr. Desmond. Not only does he attend to the emotional needs of his students, he pushes them to be better people. Mr. Desmond tenderly teaches us to find what makes all of us unique, and how to best highlight those qualities. He

creatively immerses us in the vibrating world of music and technique. He gives us the courage to dig deep and present our true selves. Ever since I joined that choir, my whole perspective of the word "choir" completely shifted. Choir is a place where you are accepted and celebrated for being no one other than yourself.

Jayden Green
FEATURED WRITER

Choir is a place where you can relax, relay, and release all the tension and diffuse it all into heartwarming harmonies. Before I knew it, singing itself became so much more than just a continuous sound coming from my vocal chords. It became our secret garden of escape and safety. A place where anxiety and pressure

is non-existent. A place where our hearts pollinate in our decrescendos, blossom in our crescendos, and rise in our concord. Even though my journey in Braden River Chorus has ended, I will always remember the passion and meaning behind the notes that I sing. I will always remember the oneness of our minds and the resonance of our sound. Thank you, Mr. Desmond.



Art by Haley Dragon

Chadwick Boseman: fighting battles on- and off-screen

A tribute to Chadwick Boseman.

Clara Kaiser
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Aug. 28, the world lost a hero. Chadwick Boseman was, among many other things, an actor, best known for his role as T'Challa, the African king and hero of Wakanda in the movie "Black Panther".

His movie persona brings light to African-Native culture and is the first superhero movie to include a person of color as the main hero. Countless children and adults alike were inspired by T'Challa.

"It's honestly really inspiring," junior Andruw Dulka said. "It was a big eye opener, not only for the Black community but the community as a whole."

Off-screen, Boseman was fighting his own war, with stage III colon cancer. The appraised actor fought this battle privately while filming and helping create iconic Marvel movies.

In "Black Panther", T'Challa takes his rightful spot as king - receiving help from his sister, mother and chosen family. Based

on a fictitious African nation, Wakanda, the phrase "Wakanda Forever" emerged. Boseman brought life to this character through an awe-inspiring performance and made many ecstatic in his portrayal of this role.

While best known for his role of T'Challa, Boseman was also an actor in multiple other popular movies, including "Get On Up", "Marshall" and "42". Watching his characters is a breathtaking experience and he never failed to create

powerful portrayals.

Boseman was said to be amiable, charismatic and devoted, bringing motivation to those around him. Many of his colleagues, as well as those who have met him, describe him to be an inspiration.

Although he was going through difficult times, he never failed to make people smile. From coworkers to fans, he was a light in a dimmed world. His character both on and off scene will never be forgotten.

“Grey’s Anatomy” persists through pandemic

“Grey’s Anatomy” season 17 plans release in a special two-hour long episode.

Clara Kaiser

ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

“Grey’s Anatomy” is a medical drama based in Seattle following lead character Dr. Meredith Grey (Ellen Pompeo) through her life as a surgical intern, resident and attending. Now in season 17, the show is scheduled to return Nov. 12, beginning with a two-hour season premiere.

Because of COVID-19, team members of the show are adjusting to new conditions. Giacomo Gianniotti (Dr. Andrew DeLuca) said that they are taking proper precautions and safety measures: “Our producers are all rapidly trying to implement all of these protocols to keep everybody safe,” Gianniotti said in an interview with

KVUE. “We’re obviously going to be tested multiple times a week and sort of separated in zones. We’re going to have a lot less personnel on set. We’re going to be wearing full PPE [personal protective equipment] of course. It’s a new world.”

Krista Vernoff, executive producer, has announced that the show will include the current pandemic so viewers will see an alternate take on the world’s current situation.

There is also hope that past characters - Dr. Cristina Yang, Dr. Arizona Robbins, Dr. Calliope Torres, Dr. April Kepner, Dr. Addison Montgomery, Dr. Izzie Stevens and even the recently exited Dr. Alex

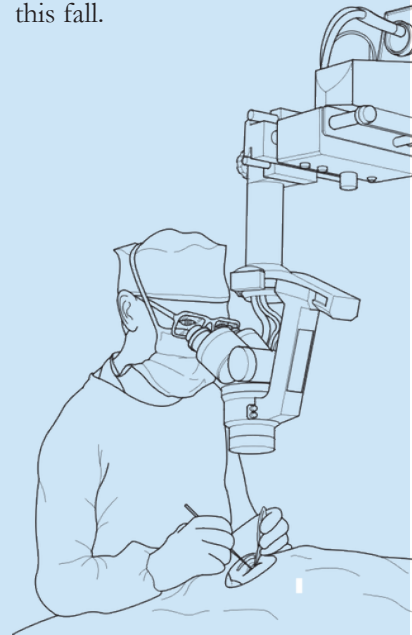
Karev - will return for at least an episode. While the show hinted to Yang’s return throughout season 16, the rest are currently hopes and conspiracies.

Pompeo has signed a contract for one more year, as her previous contact expired after the premiere of season 16. She nor anyone else has announced if they believe this will be the last season.

Many have predicted several possible endings for the show such as Grey being diagnosed with and dying from Alzheimers like her mother, and Zola Shepherd, Grey’s daughter, reading her journal similar to how Grey read her mother, Ellis’.

While these endings

are unlikely, the show’s continuous emotional endings and goodbyes imply a dramatic ending to the show, whenever that may be. For now, viewers have a brand new season to enjoy this fall.



STUDENT SUBMIT



Oh, to be a floral encyclopedia

by Sarah Douglas

I wish I knew the name
of every flower by heart
because everyone deserves
to be known and seen
for being unknown and unseen
is a cruel and lonely fate—
one that I have suffered before
and still sometimes suffer to date.
Yes, know the roses and the daisies and the tulips
but also know the cosmos and the jade vine and the parrot’s beak.
The gift of awareness is a great one
that we should use to help others how we can
until one day we ourselves bloom.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

Cara Bailey
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Jonah Jacobbi

Q: What is it like to lead the low brass in the Marching Band of Pirate, and how has that responsibility impacted you as a student and into the future?

A: When it comes to leading, it made me take a different approach to music. [When you lead,] you have to actually listen for mistakes and then have to think about what can be improved. When you're in the middle of something, you don't necessarily always know what needs improvement. But if you can mentally distance yourself and look from another perspective, you start to notice what can be fixed and improved.

Q: What do you love most about marching?

A: When I first joined marching band, I didn't understand what people liked about it. It was exhausting, it was hard and it seemed like there was no point to it. Then I had my first performance, and my mindset completely changed. When you perform a marching band show, it goes by in a minute in your head, and it feels amazing. And if it's a good performance? It's something you'll remember for a long time.

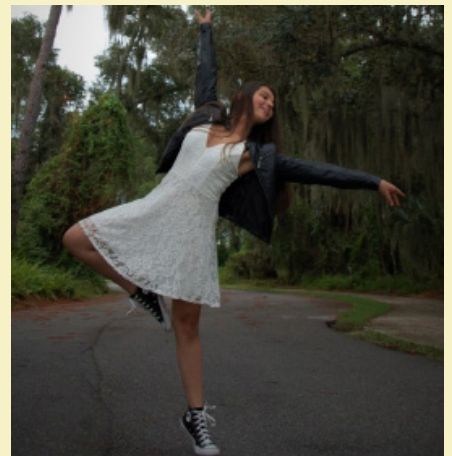
Olivia Orlando

Q: What inspired you to start / continue dancing?

A: Like any sport, it's hard to keep going especially for as long as I have. Injuries and setbacks happen all the time but what's kept me going is my love for dance and the great teachers I've had along the way. A good teacher really can make or break you in any sport and I've been blessed to have some of the best.

Q: What is your favorite thing about dancing?

A: My favorite thing about dancing is performing. I used to have really bad performance anxiety right before going on stage, and I still do, but it's the after-performing that always gets me. When the audience is clapping and you think to yourself "I did good" - there's no better feeling.





Pirates pivot to victory

Friday night football games prove to be a success through times of social distancing

Fiorella Recchioni
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Photos provided by
John Frank



Cheers sound through the masks of students and parents alike as they watch Pirates and Tigers clash in a football match Oct. 2. As the Pirates claimed their first victory of the season, it was made clear that even a global pandemic could not hinder the spirit of the River.

Starting the game as the supposed underdogs, the River was facing a team that won

their previous two matches; Palmetto achieved scores of 43-7 and 37-6 in games with their previous competitors. The Tigers led with 20 points at the end of the first three-quarters of the game. It was not until the second half that the Pirates closed a 13-point gap and ultimately took lead in the fourth

quarter. Junior running back Lavontae Youmans was

key in this match, scoring four out of five touchdowns for the River. Overall, the Pirates scored a whopping 27 points in the second half and took home a win against Palmetto High, 34-20.

Naturally, the River's stands rumbled with noise as students, parents and staff celebrated a hard-earned victory. Those who witnessed the Pirates face adversity, however, might draw a comparison between the ongoing cheers of triumphs, and the cheers of encouragement that occurred earlier in the game. It seemed that win or lose, the River maintained an unwavering energy.

"School spirit is so important," SGA officer Payton Lewandrowski said during an earlier game. "Imagine if the crowd was just silent, that would be awful. It really is what just makes the place come alive."

A week prior, the Pirates also faced the Lakewood Spartans and held

their own until a crucial point where an interception with 2:43 left in the game meant that the Spartans secured a win. The first home game of the season ended with a score of 10-3. Though the Pirates had suffered a loss, there had still been a victory that night in another regard: student turnout and precautions amid a pandemic.

"It's just another step forward to getting back to normal... and it's great to see everyone out on a Friday night," dean Craig Page said. "Number one, you got to have your mask on and students have been doing a great job with that. Just continue to social distance away from everyone and bring hand sanitizer. Just do everything that they've been doing to continue to try and stay safe."

Students are invited to take their place in the stands and cheer the Pirates on at the next home game against the Manatee Hurricanes Oct. 23.

A Tornado tackles a Pirate as he makes his way toward the end zone. A notable moment for the Pirates was at the homecoming game Oct. 9 when the Pirates beat the Booker Tornadoes 42-0.





Keith