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EDITORIAL:

Embrace the whimsical in life — the fact that you're here is a miracle



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MEN'S GOLF:

Head coach Mike McGraw reflects on decorated career



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HOT FAIR:

Heart O' Texas Fair & Rodeo rides into Waco for the 70th year



Brady Harris | Photographer

NO CHEERS Baylor is one of three Power Four universities that does not sell alcoholic beverages at sporting events despite starting concert sales this year.

Baylor confirms no plans to sell alcohol during games

FOSTER NICHOLAS

Editor-in-Chief

Although Baylor has successfully phased in alcohol sales at select concerts and non-university events at Foster Pavilion and McLane Stadium, the university is not considering extending alcohol sales to sporting events.

"It has not been a topic of

conversation with our board," President Linda Livingstone told The Lariat. "That would ultimately be a board decision to do that, and it has not come up with the board."

At the beginning of the 2023 college football season, an Associated Press survey of Power 5 schools and Notre Dame found that 55 of 69 of them sold alcohol in public areas of the stadium during football games.

After the Fighting Irish introduced adult beverage sales on Saturday, just three of the 69 schools remain dry: Baylor, Utah and BYU.

Baylor and Utah brought alcohol to campus at "concerts and select non-university events" this year. BYU remains the only school without any events where alcohol has been available.

"We've talked about a lot of ways

to increase revenue at the institution that can help take pressure off of tuition for our students, and that's certainly one that you can do," Livingstone said. "But even in the context of that discussion, it has not been something that has risen to the level of a priority for us."

Notre Dame, a private Catholic

ALCOHOL SALES >> A7

Greek life updates hazing protocols

RHEA CHOUDHARY

Staff Writer

With hazing incidents making national headlines and causing new state legislation, Baylor is taking steps to make sure its campus culture remains safe and supportive. This fall, the university published updated hazing guidelines to require mandatory training for students involved in Greek life at Baylor.

President Linda Livingstone announced the initiative in her most recent Presidential Perspective update, sent on Thursday, emphasizing the university's commitment to prevention and accountability. The new training is part of a larger legal initiative across Texas aimed at increasing awareness of hazing and its consequences.

Prevent.Zone, the online platform Baylor is using for training, describes its training as "research-based education that empowers participants to recognize hazing behaviors, act effectively and create healthier organizations." The program is used by dozens of colleges nationwide.

Dr. Sharra Hynes, vice president for student life, said Baylor's implementation goes above and beyond compliance.

"I think connecting [hazing] to our mission is super important," Hynes said. "It should never be just a checklist to get done. Students need to believe why this matters, why it is important for the health and well-being of the organization they are a part of. When we connect it to our mission, people will believe it more, and they will do it more consistently."

Hynes explained that the impact of new federal legislation will vary for all groups. For student organizations that

have a culture of support, the change may be minimal. But for organizations that have faced challenges related to hazing in the past, the new requirements will increase awareness and accountability.

"For student organizations who have never had hazing, the law means very little beyond some additional training and exposure," Hynes said. "But for those who have historically struggled, this education might mean more reporting, because people will be more aware of what hazing is. There is just no place for it at Baylor or in higher education at all."

Across many college campuses, hazing remains a widespread issue. According to a national study by StopHazing, 55% of college students involved in student organizations report experiencing hazing practices. The same study states that 47% of students had already experienced hazing before arriving at college.

Roswell, N.M., senior and Tri Delta member Hannah Lilley said hazing is widely known across campus and other colleges. According to Lilley, even at Baylor, most students in Greek life know it's an issue.

"I think almost all organizations have not had large issues with it in comparison to other schools nearby," Lilley said. "Baylor is just not the place for [hazing] and doesn't reflect what this university stands for."

Hynes said university leaders hope the mandatory training reinforces this.

"We are here to help students learn and to see them thrive," Hynes said. "Hazing can be demeaning and is not humanizing, so this new effort is about making sure our organizations reflect the best of what Baylor stands for."



Brady Harris | Photographer

UNITED Dallas senior Nicky Rudd speaks to the crowd while a group of students hold the American Flag in the background during the prayer gathering for Charlie Kirk Sept. 10 at Fountain Mall.

Baylor confident, prepared in wake of national safety concerns

ALEXIA FINNEY

Staff Writer

Many students stared at their phones last week, captivated by notifications about the Colorado high school and Utah Valley University shootings.

Public discourse unfolded online, leaving students to make sense of gun violence on high school and college campuses. With traditions like Homecoming and Christmas on Fifth Street around the corner, administrators are navigating safety measures in the current political climate.

Senior Director of Public Safety and Security DJ Rodman

said Baylor has built strong partnerships and protocols to safeguard the Baylor community during these events. According to Rodman, there are already plans and processes in place to ensure that events like this go smoothly.

"We have the relationships with our partners to be able to ensure that the events that we have here on campus, our athletic events [and] our concerts, are well protected," Rodman said.

While Baylor focuses on security and logistics behind big campus events, student leaders said these national tragedies also highlight the importance of fostering respectful dialogue

around campus events.

San Antonio junior Jessica Frausto is the vice president of Baylor's Turning Point USA chapter. Frausto said she was heartbroken by the news of Kirk, but that the chapter has received support from people across political lines. Frausto said ongoing political conversations will play a key role moving forward as a university.

"It's OK to disagree and to still have compassion," Frausto said. "I think there's going to be more conversations, and I think that's a good thing as long as people don't turn violent."

SAFETY >> A7





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EDITORIAL

Take time to embrace the whimsical in life

College has a way of making everything feel urgent. Deadlines stack up, exams loom and coffee fills a concerning amount of your diet. We tend to sprint toward the next thing before we’ve even finished the current one. But what if we said that simply existing, sitting here reading this, is already one of the strangest and most whimsical miracles in the universe? What if being “whimsy” doesn’t equate to frolicking and carrying a tiny journal, but instead understanding just how absurdly lucky we are even to have the chance to do that in the first place?

At its root, whimsy is not an aesthetic. True whimsy is older, deeper, stranger than that. It is the astonishment that we are here at all, alive, breathing, conscious, inside a universe that by all accounts should not have rolled the dice in our favor.

Statistically, you shouldn’t exist. Think about it — the odds of every single event resulting in you sitting here reading this are already a one-in-several-billion miracle. Furthermore, the cosmic math is perfectly aligned for existence. The universe didn’t have to be turned this way — gravity just strong enough to keep the stars burning steadily, chemistry just delicate enough to allow molecules to knit into DNA, the perfect 23.5 degree tilt of the Earth that prevents us from either baking to a crisp or freezing



James Ellis | Cartoonist

“

Whimsy reminds us that even when the odds stack against us, life keeps happening — improbably, beautifully, against reason itself.

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

into oblivion. Physics could have tilted a decimal point differently, and everything would collapse or explode or drift into lifelessness. Instead, here we are — sipping coffee, pulling all-nighters and stressing about thesis statements.

We live as though life we are inevitable, as though consciousness is the natural sequel to stardust. But science whispers otherwise. Life is rare. Consciousness is even rarer. The universe is mostly silent, mostly void, mostly indifferent machinery spinning for no audience. Yet in one corner, the atoms conspired to become aware of themselves. That is whimsy. The fact that you can read these words, parse their meaning and argue with them in your head is whimsy stacked upon whimsy.

And what do we usually do with this gift? We reduce whimsy to “quirky” playlists, pastel stationery and Alice in Wonderland quotes for Instagram bios. We domesticate

it into a mood. But true whimsy is not tame — it is vertigo in disguise. It is the sudden thought that your hands, which seem so familiar, are just arrangements of cells, atoms and particles.

This kind of whimsy isn’t always comfortable. It unsettles as much as it delights. To take life as whimsical is to surrender the illusion of control. Because whimsy says: this is absurd. This shouldn’t work. And yet it all does. And if our existence is already an impossible joke told by the cosmos, then maybe we don’t have to take ourselves so seriously.

To live whimsically is to remember that joy is not naïve, but rather it is rebellious. The news cycle, the bills, the endless grind want you to forget that existence itself is bizarre and unearned. Whimsy fights back. Whimsy says, “Sure, the traffic jam is miserable, but also, cars are metal boxes powered by controlled explosions, and you’re

steering one with your hands.” That’s insane. That’s whimsical. That should not be possible.

We need to embrace this more than ever — cynicism is easy, despair is fashionable and seriousness has become the only acceptable currency of thought. But seriousness without whimsy becomes brittle. Whimsy reminds us that even when the odds stack against us, life keeps happening — improbably, beautifully, against reason itself.

So no, whimsy is not merely mismatched socks. It is the fabric of the cosmos pulling a prank so vast we can’t help but laugh when we notice it. It is the breath in your lungs. It is the fact that language exists to describe the indescribable. It is the unreasonable perfection of being here, now, against all odds. And it peaks when you stop to realize this.

Kierkegaard, too, found whimsy in the ordinary. In his reflections on the lily of the field and the bird of

the air, he noticed how neither lives with anxiety about tomorrow. The lily doesn’t debate whether to bloom, and the bird does not agonize over which branch to land on. They simply exist. For us, every action feels burdened with consequences, but the bird and the lily remind us that not all of life has to be calculated, and at some points, you should resonate with the idea that you simply exist.

By all means, play the ukulele, threaten to run away and join the circus, doodle stars in the margins of your notebooks to your heart’s content, but the whimsical choice is not to chase eccentricity but to wake up each day in awe. To say, “This shouldn’t be. But it is. And so am I.” And then to live as if that mattered — as if the improbable deserved your wonder, your gratitude and your delight.

A life that reflects whimsy is a life living how God intended — living in one with his marvelous creation.

Creation or destruction: Is AI a mockery of God?

CALEB GARCIA
Photographer

The envelope of science is pushed further every day. New leaps and bounds in our understanding of history and our own psyche are constantly being made. There has never been a more opportune time for human innovation than now, and our relentless drive to grow and evolve reflects this.

One of the most recent ventures of progress is in the field of AI. Its potential for growth is endless, possibly revolutionizing the way we live and act in our daily lives. It almost seems that AI is self-sufficient in its application and growth.

I write this piece not to protest the



progression of AI, but to question the morality of progress that goes too far. Can we, as Christians, create life that is not in the image of God? Is it moral to create life and consciousness when it itself has no soul? Is it a mockery of his Creation to give life to something so unnatural as artificial intelligence?

In this endless pursuit of progress, we have the potential to do something truly terrible. Something that may be an offense to God himself.

If we let ourselves run rampant, I believe there will be a point of no return. At the edge of a black hole, we will drag ourselves into a pit that we or our mockeries of creation will not escape. We will have given consciousness to something that cannot think, eyes to a being that will never truly see and a mouth to something that will never be able to scream.

The Bible says nothing about artificial intelligence, obviously. When Moses split the Red Sea, he did not ask ChatGPT for advice on

how to do so. Saul did not lead a kingdom while asking, “Is this true?” While there may not be a word-for-word answer for AI, there are some passages that can be interpreted against the progression of its thinking.

Genesis 1:27 states, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them.” This Scripture can be seen as implying that only God has the capability to create human life and the power to breathe life into us, giving us a soul. We are not God, and as we are mortal and works of his hand, we should not be prideful and see ourselves as givers of consciousness.

If we one day reach the point where we give AI consciousness, it will not be an innovation or advancement for humanity; it will be a perversion of God’s will and a mockery of his perfect creation: human life.

The endless pursuit sheds light on what we can be when driven by the blind pursuit of progress. Prideful creatures, endlessly chasing a

light at the end of the tunnel of advancement. We are gluttonous, ceaseless in our desire to grow, change and leave our history behind us. In our own endless desperation to give our lives meaning for the sake of progress, we play God and bestow a consciousness, a torture upon something that should have never existed.

We push the envelope of science ever further till it will one day collapse on itself.

This may seem very bleak. But it’s an unfortunate reality of what could be if we let our sin and pursuit of glory overtake what we believe. Humanity is good and whole. We strive to improve the lives of those around us every day, whether through acts of kindness or the pursuit of progress. Most of all, we believe in the Lord our God and carry out his doctrines to make the world a better place. We need to be introspective and careful above all in the chase of something new, all the while focusing on the Lord’s word and respecting Him properly. Let us not turn a blind eye.

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Cadet to Commander

Baylor alumna returns as first female commander in AFROTC



Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Kimber Nettis

PASS THE TORCH Lt. Col. Ryan Haskins accepts the command of the 88th Communications Squadron from Lt. Col. Kimber Nettis during the June 5 Change of Command.

MARISA YOUNG
Staff Writer

Lt. Col. Kimber Nettis graduated from Baylor in 2007, and she returned to her alma mater in a historic fashion.

Nettis assumed leadership of Baylor’s Air Force and Space Force Reserve Officer Training Corp (AFROTC) this semester, becoming Baylor’s first female commander of the program.

Detachment 810 has a distinguished history as one of the oldest AFROTC units in the country, and was ranked the No. 1 Medium Detachment nationally in 2025. For Nettis, this was her “dream job,” as it allowed her to return to Baylor after being commissioned for 18 years in the Air Force.

“I loved the training environment, I loved mentoring and I loved Baylor,” Nettis said. “With all of those things combined, I knew I wanted to end up back at Baylor one day.”

Waco senior and Wing Leader Gracie Brown said she looks forward to the heritage and unique insight that Nettis will bring to her detachment as an alumna.

“She learned everything she knows at Detachment 810 as a cadet,” Brown said. “Having her be able to bring that heritage back to Detachment 810 all these years later is super exciting. It’s nice to bring her home.”

According to Nettis, though she is the first female commander at Baylor, the detachment has historically had a higher population of women than most, with this

“I remember ... wondering who the first female detachment commander was going to be, and here we are. I’m humbled and amazed.”

LT. COL. KIMBER NETTIS
DETACHMENT 810 COMMANDER

year being approximately 40% female.

“I remember as a cadet, seeing the wall of former detachment commanders ... and wondering who the first female detachment commander was going to be, and here we are,” Nettis said. “I’m humbled and amazed.”

Nettis looks forward to cultivating the already award-winning Detachment 810, utilizing her leadership experience in the Air Force and building on her own time as a cadet at Baylor.

“Lieutenant Colonel Sterling left me with a great detachment team ... so I hope to keep that trajectory going,” Nettis said. “We are already seeing some fruits from cadets’ field training experiences and the things that they’re involved in at the national level, so I want to continue to support them and watch them grow.”

Besides the outstanding physical fitness assessment scores and GPAs that earned Detachment 810 its ranking, Nettis said its excellence lies in the character of its cadets.

“[Baylor] truly grows leaders of character — leaders who care about what they’re doing and they put all of themselves into the program,” Nettis said. “You’ll see them in the detachment on their off-time when they don’t have to be there, and that’s just who they are.”

Houston senior Alissa Zenero said that Nettis brings “humility, passion and kindness” in her leadership, setting an example of excellence for cadets to follow.

“The cadets at our detachment want to see each other succeed,” Zenero said. “They are consistently trying to find ways to ... get past their own personal barriers [and] go out of their way to mentor and share their experiences to help each individual cadet grow.”

Nettis said above all, her faith deeply impacts the way she approaches this leadership position.

“Christ was our servant leader, and he was our example, and I believe that as a leader, we should be servants to those that we are entrusted to lead,” Nettis said.

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Photo courtesy of Baylor Athletics

EYES ON THE PRIZE Baylor head golf coach Mike McGraw (left) brought a championship legacy to Waco after winning national titles at Oklahoma State and Alabama.

McGraw reflects on decorated coaching career

DYLAN FINK
Sports Writer

Men’s golf head coach Mike McGraw is one of the most decorated coaches in the nation.

Hoisting three national championships and appearing in 21 championships throughout his career, McGraw has brought an image of success to Waco that is driven by a “leave it better” mentality.

“I want every space that I fill to be better than it was before I got there,” McGraw said.

McGraw began his coaching career in 1984 as the assistant golf coach at Memorial High School in Edmond, Okla.

“My dream of being a professional golfer was coming to an end,” McGraw said. “I went back to get two more degrees so that I could teach and be a high school coach.”

Following his collegiate career at Central Oklahoma, McGraw found himself missing out on his childhood dream of becoming a professional golfer. He turned to a new mission: helping others who had the same goal.

“A lot of people have the dream of being a professional golfer, so I thought maybe I could help kids get closer to the dream than I did,” McGraw said. “My failed professional career served as a desire to help these kids that I coach reach higher heights.”

McGraw saw

unprecedented success coaching at the high school level, bringing home seven state championships in nine years. His time at the high school level came to a close when then-Oklahoma State head coach Mike Holder came calling.

“Mike Holder is one of the most iconic figures in college golf, if not one of the most iconic figures in the history of NCAA athletics,” McGraw said. “He was the most powerful man in the athletics department as a golf coach.”

McGraw took a considerable pay cut to work as an assistant under Holder. College assistant golf coaches were paid only \$18,000 a year in 1998.

“My thought was surely I could get a head coaching position after a few years of being his assistant coach,” McGraw said. “My wife had to drive 45 minutes every day back to Edmond, still working as a schoolteacher to support us during this time.”

The sacrifice paid off when, in 2006, Oklahoma State elevated Holder to athletic director. The school promoted McGraw to take his place.

“OSU was a great place to learn, with a great man to learn from, and my career would be greater from it all,” McGraw said.

He immediately found success, winning a national championship in his first year.

“My first six years, we were light-years ahead of where the

program had been the last few years for Mike [Holder],” McGraw said.

Following the championship, McGraw’s career changed forever when he signed highly rated freshman Rickie Fowler. Fowler went on to become the first freshman to win the Ben Hogan award, awarded to the best college golfer in the country, in 2007.

“When I signed Rickie, I knew my career had changed in that moment,” McGraw said. “I knew he would be an iconic figure in college golf, and a notable figure in professional golf.”

McGraw went on to make seven national championship appearances at Oklahoma State and oversaw the production of a handful of notable PGA Tour players, including Fowler and Charles Howell III.

“You know when you are working with high-achieving, high-dreaming people, that is a huge responsibility,” McGraw said. “With Charles Howell, I had somebody say to me, ‘Coach, Charles is going to play golf for 30 years and win a lot of tournaments. You have a great responsibility to a guy that dreams that high.’”

After years of success, Oklahoma State fired McGraw in 2013.

“We all have the job you dreamed of your whole life, and that’s what Oklahoma State was for me,” McGraw said. “There came with it unrealistic and unfair expectations for the position, and when I got

fired, we were slightly missing those expectations.”

In 2014, a discouraged McGraw was hired as a co-head coach at Alabama to work alongside his friend Jay Seawell.

“He knew what he was doing — he was hiring a coach who was wounded and a shell of his former self,” McGraw said. “He told me, ‘I want the high school history teacher, the guy that loved coaching high school golf because of the players, to come out here.’”

During his lone season in Tuscaloosa, McGraw helped lead the Crimson Tide to a national championship — the third of his career.

When a program on the Brazos came calling after the season, McGraw answered. He called the move to Baylor the best thing that ever happened to him.

“At Baylor, I’ve never felt those drowning expectations I had at Oklahoma State,” McGraw said. “I don’t know how long I’ll get to coach, but being here at Baylor has been the absolute best decision I’ve ever made.”

McGraw hosts a podcast called “Better Than I Found It” and published a book by the same title in 2017, featuring a foreword written by Seawell. As a man of faith, McGraw is entering his 11th season in Waco, striving to echo that mentality.

“If you took it to a faith aspect, Christ left everything he touched better than he found it, and I want to

constantly aim to represent that,” McGraw said. “I want every space that I fill to be better than it was before I got there. ... I want the players I have here to be better people because they spent four years with me.”

The Bears are looking to bounce back after a down season. The team finished tied for 14th in the Big 12 last year, the worst finish of

McGraw’s career.

“The first 10 years here, we were building and growing, but last year was the worst year I’ve ever had as a coach,” McGraw said. “I would like to bounce back from that this year.”

Men’s golf will head to Olympia Fields, Ill., this weekend to compete in the Fighting Illini Invitational tournament.

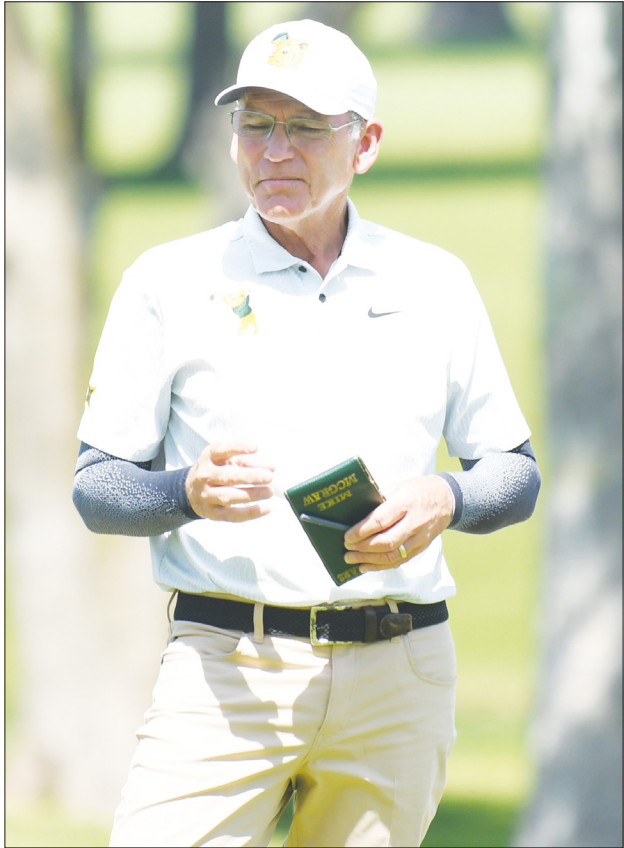


Photo courtesy of Baylor Athletics

READY TO WORK Men’s golf head coach Mike McGraw is one of the most decorated coaches in the nation, hoisting three national championships and making 21 championship appearances throughout his career.

Soccer enters Big 12 play unbeaten

MARISSA ESSENBURG
Sports Writer

After wrapping up its nonconference slate Sunday, Baylor soccer enters Big 12 play brimming with confidence and with plenty still to prove ahead of Friday’s conference opener against Texas Tech.

Baylor’s 2024 campaign ended with more frustration than fulfillment, closing at 2-5-4 in Big 12 play and 10th in the standings. Now the Bears will look to turn close calls into points as a new conference season begins.

“Our goal with nonconference was to get the highest RPI we could, and we’ve done a good job with that,” senior forward Tyler Isgrig said. “For us, it’s been about our press, building out and polishing our tactics. Rolling into Big 12 play, it’s about knowing our game model and sticking to it — not adjusting to other teams, but playing like us and our identity.”

In a conference full of powerhouses, the Bears are one of seven teams still unbeaten, holding a winning percentage of .857. Only Kansas and Arizona State rank higher win percentage.

The Bears open conference play hungry and ready for battle, defending their home turf against Texas Tech (6-1), the team that handed them a gut-wrenching 2-1 loss to end their 2024 season in the Big 12 Championship quarterfinals.



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

NEED FOR SPEED Junior midfielder Aryanna Jimison dribbles upfield during a 2-0 win over Abilene Christian Sunday. The victory sent the Bears into Big 12 play with an undefeated record.

The Red Raiders ended their 2024 campaign with just one Big 12 loss and aim to pick up where they left off, returning their two leading scorers and the bulk of the roster.

After opening at home, Baylor heads north for a Kansas swing — first against undefeated Kansas (6-0-2) in Lawrence, then west to face Kansas State (5-1-1). Three straight home matches will follow before the Bears’ toughest test yet: a trip to Fort Worth to face defending Big 12

champion TCU (6-1).

“We’ve seen everything during nonconference play,” head coach Michelle Lenard said. “I don’t think there’s anyone in the conference that has something we haven’t already faced, so we feel completely ready to compete for a championship in the Big 12.”

The Bears enter this season more prepared than ever to hoist a trophy.

SPORTS TAKE

Second Big 12 title would make Aranda Baylor’s GOAT football coach



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Soccer star Isgrig carries fire, ‘aura’ into senior season

MARISSA ESSENBURG
Sports Writer

If you’ve watched Baylor soccer, listened to a broadcast, glanced at a stat sheet or even just followed the program in passing the past two years, chances are you’ve heard the name Tyler Isgrig.

Isgrig, a senior Arlington native and former TCU Horned Frog, enters her final year at Baylor, nearing a four-season journey through the Big 12. While Isgrig sought to make her mark on the program, she realized it had done the same to her.

“I came here to rebuild a program, and it rebuilt me,” Isgrig said.

Isgrig has piled up honors over her four seasons, recently earning her second consecutive Big 12 Offensive Player of the Week award after netting two goals in her fourth career “brace” against Texas State.

The 2024 season was a showcase of flair and finishing, as Isgrig led the Bears with seven goals, set up eight more, delivered three game-winning strikes and secured All-Big 12 Second Team honors.

With four goals in nonconference play and the Bears ranked No. 14 in the RPI, Isgrig is hungry to finish her career by chasing down what’s eluded her in green and gold: a Big 12 championship.

“NCAA tournaments are a given — we have to be there, we must,” Isgrig said. “But I also believe we’re more than capable.”

That drive runs even deeper, knowing the Big 12 title will be decided on Baylor’s home pitch at Betty Lou Mays Field.

For the Bears, this season has brought a level of experience and leadership unlike any before. Isgrig has emerged at the front of a veteran-heavy roster, molded into the heartbeat of the team by the support of her coaches and teammates.

“Ever since I came to Baylor, I’d definitely

say I’ve evolved a lot, especially in my third year as a captain,” Isgrig said. “Seeing how I’ve grown as a leader has been really cool, and that growth has come from the constant support I’ve had on and off the field. I’ve always felt freedom, comfort and confidence from my coaches and teammates, and I think that has definitely translated to the field.”

Isgrig has led the Bears through a year of growth and new strength. After spending most of her college career at the top of the attack, she has shifted into a new role in the midfield, starting alongside freshman Olivia Hess.

“I moved to the midfield because our forwards have a lot of talent,” Isgrig said. “The five of them are really good players and have allowed me to take on a role where I can be more of a playmaker and create more opportunities off set pieces.”

Since transferring from TCU following her sophomore season, Isgrig hasn’t missed a start, logging more goals, points and minutes than anyone on the roster. She calls this one of the best Baylor teams she’s been part of, and said there’s enough talent to make deep runs in both the Big 12 and NCAA tournaments.

“This is the most athletic and deepest team I’ve been a part of at Baylor,” Isgrig said. “What makes it special is that everyone is bought in, on the same page and hungry to get better and compete every day in practice.”

“I love playing with Liv in the midfield — we have great chemistry and play the same style,” Isgrig said. “Kai [Hayes] is a true six who isn’t afraid to lay in a tackle, and our back line is incredible and experienced, especially with a generational talent in goal: the best goalkeeper in the conference in Azul [Alvarez].”

Beyond their depth and athleticism, Isgrig said it’s the culture that sets this Baylor team apart.

“A lot of programs don’t realize the importance of a healthy team culture,” Isgrig



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

STRIKING GOAL Senior Tyler Isgrig has shone since switching to the midfield this offseason, leading the Bears to a 5-0-2 nonconference record.

said. “Our relationships with one another are really good, but it’s also the way we can hold each other accountable without taking it personally. I’d say our culture on the field is what differentiates this team, and part of that is because everyone has that edge.”

When Isgrig transferred to Baylor, the Bears were 4-11-2. It was a move she hadn’t expected but never regretted. She made her mark from the moment her cleats hit the pitch.

“You don’t ever intend to transfer when you start your college career,” Isgrig said. “I definitely didn’t expect to be at Baylor in the beginning, but the way my transfer process went, it somehow landed me here — and it was kind of crazy.”

As her final Big 12 season gets underway, Isgrig

said her first goal is to fulfill the vision she had when she arrived at Baylor — and to leave a lasting impact on both the program and the community.

“When it’s all said and done, I hope my staff and teammates remember me as someone who was intentional, a great leader who would push you but also be goofy,” Isgrig said. “And for the fans and the program, I want to be remembered for the passion and fire I brought every time I played, not only for my technical ability but for my aura.”

Isgrig and the Bears will return to action at 7 p.m. Friday, when they’ll open Big 12 play against Texas Tech at Betty Lou Mays Field.



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

ALL OUT EFFORT Junior midfielder Aryanna Jimison attempts to keep the ball in play during the Bears’ 2-0 victory over ACU on Sunday.

SOCCER from A4

“I’ll tell you one thing about this team: they are very prepared,” former head coach Paul Jobson said. “They’re meticulous, they know their opponent, and they’ve already done a great job of that this year. After a couple of years, I think they finally have some cohesion, and Michelle’s got them firing the way she wants them to. It looks really good.”

What awaits the Bears beyond five home games and six road tests is more than just a return to Waco — it’s the chance to seize a home-field conference championship at Betty Lou Mays Field.

That opportunity, though, comes in a conference where nothing is guaranteed.

“That’s the thing about soccer, you can’t predict anything,” Jobson said. “Once you hit conference play, records don’t mean much. One week you can lose to the worst team in the Big 12 and the next you can beat the best. Every night is a dogfight.”

Conference play opens for Baylor at 7 p.m. Friday, when the Bears welcome Texas Tech (6-1-0) to Betty Lou Mays Field.

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HOT Fair & Rodeo to ride into Waco Oct. 2-12

HANNAH WEBB
Focus Editor & Copy Editor

By mid-October, there will no longer be “nothing to do in Waco.” The Heart O’ Texas Fair & Rodeo is rolling into town Oct. 2-12, and the preview this week made one thing clear: this isn’t just for families and ranch hands. The Extraco Events Center is about to be transformed into a ten-day-long playground of concerts, carnival rides, food and energy.

The fair has long been a staple in Central Texas, drawing more than 200,000 attendees each year. In 2024, attendance topped 207,000, and organizers are expecting another strong turnout this fall. Erin James, managing director of marketing for the fair, said the event offers something for everyone — especially students looking for a break from campus life.

“A lot of fair attendees obviously attend Baylor,” James said. “We also have some groups that actually come out here. Baylor Women in Business comes and does a whole ticket buy, and we give them discounted tickets to do so.”

James encouraged any groups who are also interested in this to reach out.

“We’re happy to help out any way we can,” James said. “Students can come enjoy the fair and also have a time to get over school work and that kind of stuff.”

For Baylor students like Grand Junction, Colo., sophomore Hailey Himes, the fair is a chance to soak in both entertainment and tradition.

“I personally love going to rodeos, I’ve been to quite a few and went last year as well,” Himes said. “I enjoy the live music at ours, and watching bronc riding and barrel racing.”

Himes is planning to attend again this year, not just as a fan but as one of the more than 600 volunteers.

“I am on the lineup to volunteer,” Himes said. “There’s a lot of opportunities to work with kids during their experience as they show goats and animals, and I’m hoping to get to do that.”

The fair depends on these volunteers each year to keep things running, from livestock shows to ticketing. The livestock side of the fair is especially large, James said, with over 6,000 entries across categories like goat showing, speaking contests and other youth competitions.

Fort Worth freshman Emma Mae Pharis said she looks forward to the rodeo events in particular.

“I am a western rider, so I’ve chased cows and been to more rodeos than I can count,” Pharis said. “I’m a rodeo girl through and through. I will definitely go in October — it’s nice to see the country culture represented and that we’re keeping West alive.”

The rodeo, sanctioned by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, is the largest event within the fair. The Heart of Texas American Rodeo will feature eight nights of competitions, including crowd favorites like barrel racing and bull riding.

Beyond the arena, the music lineup is built to keep the energy going. Country favorites Midland kick things off Oct. 3, followed



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

RIDE ON Erin James, the managing director of marketing for the Heart O’ Texas Fair & Rodeo, discussed plans for the fair at a preview luncheon on Wednesday. This year’s event is set to have a carnival, rodeo, livestock show, marketplace and food vendors.

by Randy Houser with Neil McCoy on Oct. 4. and Keith Nieto on Oct. 5. “Southern Soul Night” on Oct. 8 will be headlined by Cupid — the voice behind the viral “Cupid Shuffle.” The Huser Brothers, Sawyer Brown, Justin Moore and La Fiera De Ojinaga will round out the last four shows.

Leander junior Nathan Weis said he is eager to experience the concerts.

“The lineup is filled with good artists,” Weis said. “Midland is a great Texas country band, and I love a good handful of their songs.”

Himes said she is looking forward to the Oct. 9 concert with the Huser Brothers.

“One of my favorite songs right now is actually by the Huser Brothers,” Himes said. “It’s called ‘Left You Lonely,’ so I’m probably

going to go see them.”

For students, the fair offers both nostalgia and novelty: a chance to connect with cowboy culture, indulge in fried food or scream on carnival rides — all without leaving Waco.

For Weis, the rodeo is a great experience to observe. “Honestly, the best part of the rodeo is that it is a show and a sport all at once,” Weis said.

With tradition, community and spectacle woven together, the Heart O’ Texas Fair & Rodeo remains one of Waco’s biggest fall attractions. Whether it’s the thrill of bull riding, the rhythm of live music or the comfort of fair food, the event continues to draw crowds — and students — year after year.

Tickets for the Heart O’ Texas Fair and Rodeo can be purchased on their website.

Spice, spice baby!

Ranking Waco’s pumpkin spice lattes

STACIE BOYLS
Arts & Life Writer

As students yearn for fall-flavored caffeine against the 90-degree weather, coffee shops offer a solution with the classic pumpkin spice latte, also known as “PSL.” Nothing screams “autumn” quite like sipping a deliciously pumpkin-spiced latte from your favorite coffee shop. But with so many options available in Waco, which one offers the best PSL?

I tested five shops on their take on the fall classic, considering creativity, affordability, presentation and taste. Each beverage was ranked on a one-to-10 scale and then averaged for the official total. For continuity’s sake, Starbucks’ pumpkin spice latte was used as the control group, and all lattes were ordered hot with no change in the original formulation. Additionally, all prices are listed before tax. Here are the results.

DICHOTOMY — REMEMBER ME, PUMPKIN SPICE WITH A HINT OF CHOCOLATE

Coming in last place with a total rating of 4.25/10, Dichotomy’s unique take fell short of the mark. Adding chocolate to the classic flavor muddled the overall taste profile and left a strange aftertaste. The drink was also the most expensive of the bunch, totaling \$7.54 for a small. Overall, the flavor lacked conviction, and the beverage remained mostly unfinished.

COMMON GROUNDS — PUMPKIN SPICE LATTE

Common Grounds took a more conventional approach, producing a sweeter and creamier pumpkin spice latte. The flavor was OK, but lacked depth when it came to the spices. It was sweeter than the others, and the espresso was a tad bitter. The presentation was charming with a classic art design, and overall was a predictable and reliable cup of joe. The price was reasonable, coming in at \$6.50



Stacie Boyls | Arts & Life Writer

SUGAR N’ SPICE Common Grounds (top left), For Keeps (bottom left), Be Kind (top right), Magnolia Press (bottom middle) and Dichotomy (bottom right) display their PSLs.

and making this a solid option for pumpkin spice enthusiasts. I rate this latte a 5.5/10.

BE KIND — PUMPKIN SPICE LATTE

This latte was rather pleasant, and tasted like a homemade version of the classic Starbucks PSL. It was slightly sweeter, but the milk and espresso were well balanced. The presentation was OK, featuring another classic latte design; however, it was a bit sloppy. It was also on the pricier side, coming in at \$6.76. Overall, this was a very pleasant pumpkin spice latte and did not disappoint. I also rate this latte at a 5.5/10.

MAGNOLIA PRESS — PUMPKIN SPICE LATTE

Coming in second place is Magnolia Press’ take on the latte. This one was shocking, with a great price point and delicious taste. The only qualm was the sloppy presentation, but the positive qualities quickly overshadowed the lack of visual appeal. The latte was perfectly

balanced with spice, pumpkin and sweetness, and the espresso was smooth. It was also rather affordable at \$5.25, making this a very appealing option. This is definitely a worthwhile try for local pumpkin spice enthusiasts. I rate this latte a 6/10.

FOR KEEPS — PUMPKIN BUTTERNUT SPICE LATTE

For Keeps not only created a unique take on a classic but did it effectively, creating a delicious and dynamic beverage. The creativity of this latte stood out, but stirred some doubt in how that would affect the quality of the beverage. For Keeps balanced the flavors extremely well, making sure the pumpkin, butternut and spice notes were detectable and flavorful. The latte was the perfect amount of sweetness and the presentation was gorgeous. The price was a reasonable \$5.95, considering the quality and quantity of the beverage. This was undoubtedly the best of the lattes, coming in as a 7.25/10 rating. For Keeps should definitely be a routine stop for pumpkin spice lovers.



Photo courtesy of Baylor University

Free alumni band concert to set stage for Baylor, ASU clash

OLIVIA TURNER
Arts & Life Editor

A free concert is in order ahead of the football game Saturday against Arizona State, featuring alumni and Texas locals, the Graham St. Clair Band.

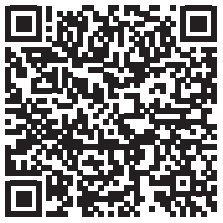
The show is set to start at 4:30 p.m. at Seat Geek Stage in Touchdown Alley, right outside of McLane Stadium, before the debut of the Big 12 Conference Fall Tour.

While the country band’s lead vocalist and namesake inspiration, Graham St. Clair, hails from Lubbock, he said the band has roots at Baylor. He said he originally did solo work, but was once asked to open for Cam Albright as “a full band” for a San Marcos show, which led him to gather some of his other musically gifted friends to play with him. They haven’t stopped since.

“I always say that the founding members were kind of Jackson Wright and myself — he plays lead guitar in the band, and he was my big brother in our fraternity,” St. Clair said. “I didn’t know we were starting a band until it happened, and then we played our first show ... and we had a ton of fun doing it.”

At the time, the band donned the name “Graham St. Clair and the West Texas Wind,” which evolved into “West Texas Wind” and finally landed upon “Graham St. Clair Band” once it became clear there was too much confusion between their name and the song by NEEDTOBREATHE, a South Carolinian rock band.

Scan the QR code to read more about Graham St. Clair’s free show Saturday!



Baylor combats ‘epidemic of loneliness’



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

MAKING FRIENDS From left to right: Corpus Christi freshman Bailey Easter, Flower Mound freshman Claire Kavalich and Arvada, Colo., freshman Anne Asbury enjoy a meal together on Fountain Mall.

University prioritizing opportunities for social connection

ARDEN BERRY
Staff Writer

Baylor is taking steps to address the “epidemic of loneliness” — a growing concern for college students. Results from an online survey presented by Active Minds and TimelyCare showed that 64.7% of college students reported feeling lonely in 2024. Vice President for Student Life Sharra Hynes said Baylor is working to combat this issue by emphasizing community on campus, especially for

freshmen, who Hynes said are among the most vulnerable to loneliness. “If they live in our residence halls, they have a full-time residence hall director, they have a faculty in residence, a resident chaplain,” Hynes said. “They have so many people who are there to see them, and that is not just to see them en masse, but to see them individually and to know them.” Beyond these one-on-one relationships, Hynes said Baylor is working on more general strategies as

well, referring to the new HealthyBearsTXT initiative as an example. “For me, it’s not just about what we do every day that is in the seeing and knowing on the ground level, but it’s the strategies,” Hynes said. “It’s the way we’re moving. We’ve got to keep moving upstream [and] we’re developing strategies to help all students.” The “loneliness epidemic” has become a buzz phrase in recent years. Data has shown a rise in Americans who say they are lonely. In 2023, Former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek

Murthy released an advisory on the prevalence of loneliness and the importance of social connection. “In the scientific literature, I found confirmation of what I was hearing,” the advisory read. “In recent years, about one in two adults in America reported experiencing loneliness. And that was before the COVID-19 pandemic cut off so many of us from friends, loved ones and support systems, exacerbating loneliness and isolation.” Eldon, Mo., junior Addison Gernenz said she is writing a thesis on the decline of

friendship in Generation Z. She said she has observed a lack of deep friendships among Gen Z individuals. “I think that comes with a lot of loneliness, because I don’t think you actually allow yourself to be known by people and you don’t allow yourself to know people, and that’s really isolating,” Gernenz said. Sugar Land sophomore Coralee Heyden said she has noticed social media creating divisions and loneliness. “In terms of the media and the culture curated recently, it has been socially isolating on

both sides of both parties and both genders and everything,” Heyden said. “There’s been isolation in terms of that.” Hynes said staff members are available and that Baylor as a whole can do even more to help students overcome this isolation and loneliness. “That’s all of us, every single member of our faculty and staff. That’s our job — to know and see students and then to communicate that knowing to them,” Hynes said. “So I think we’re doing well. I think we always can be doing more and better.”

ALCOHOL SALES from A1

research university, announced the expansion of alcohol sales on April 11, 2025, reasoning that “this expansion will provide for a modern fan experience, consistent with other professional and collegiate stadiums and venues throughout the nation.” “The university recognized that over the past several years, fan expectations have changed and evolved,” Notre Dame Vice President of University Operations, Events and Safety Mike Seamon said to the South Bend Tribune. “All stadiums are looking to improve the venue experience. It’s become an expected amenity when you’re going to a stadium.” The decision came six years after the Southeastern Conference started the trend, allowing schools to sell booze in 2019. Before the SEC’s rule change, only 20 of the 69 Power 5 teams permitted alcoholic beverage sales at games. Seamon also told the South Bend Tribune that “most stadiums have seen a reduction in drinking before the game” by introducing sales inside, resulting in a reduction of overconsumption at tailgate parties. Baylor lands in a different bucket, as the dry campus provides an alcohol and smoke-free environment in the student-organized tailgating area. Adult beverages are permitted in the Brazos Parking area, located across from the stadium. Alcohol sales at football games haven’t been without problems across college football, though. In October 2024, the SEC fined the University of Texas and threatened to end alcohol sales at the university after fans threw cans onto the field during a game against the University of Georgia. While the overconsumption of alcoholic beverages goes against Southern Baptist ideology, many schools see it as a way to increase the bottom line. Other private religious institutions in Texas adopted the practice, with SMU starting in 2014 and TCU doing so in 2019. As private universities, Baylor, SMU and TCU are not required to publish event-level concession sales. Other public Power Four schools have consistently reported an average of at least \$50,000 in revenue stemming from alcohol sales at each home football game. Early in 2022, Colorado led all now-Big 12 schools

It has not been a topic of conversation with our board. That would ultimately be a board decision to do that.

LINDA LIVINGSTONE
PRESIDENT

with an average of just over \$290,000 in home sales per game; Texas Tech followed behind with an average of \$232,995 in sales per game. The Associated Press reported North Carolina netted “about \$4 million in sales” from alcohol during its first five years of selling alcohol at football games. “Athletic departments typically are not profitable,” Adam Barry, a health behavior scientist at Texas A&M, told the Associated Press. “So selling alcohol has simply become a new revenue stream.” According to Oddsmedia, among all Big 12 schools, Arizona charged the highest price for adult beverages at football games in 2025, averaging \$13.50 per item. Kansas (\$7) and Kansas State (\$8) averaged the lowest prices. Baylor introduced alcoholic beverages during sold-out The Boys of Oklahoma’s concert at McLane Stadium on Aug. 23, which Livingstone said “went extremely well.” “We had a very good response to that and no real significant problems because of that, so we were really pleased with the way that went in our community for the first time,” Livingstone said. The next event with access to alcohol is on Oct. 3, when comedian Jeff Dunham’s ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE Tour arrives at Foster Pavilion. Full concert amenities, including beer and wine, will also be available when Tucker Wetmore takes the stage in concert at Foster Pavilion on Oct. 23.

Grad students present research, experience for Constitution Week



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

HISTORY LESSON University of Louisville professor Dr. Jasmine Farrier presents her Constitution Week Lecture Wednesday afternoon at Marrs McLean Science Building.

JULIANA VASQUEZ
Staff Writer

Though many don’t start doing scholarly research until graduate school, for Draper’s three panelists on Monday, the seed was planted years prior. In a small panel of three, graduate students lined up to present their research to an audience of students on Monday in Draper at the department of political science’s “The U.S. Constitution and American Political History Interdisciplinary Showcase of Graduate Student Research.” Cathleen Scura, a 2024 master’s graduate from Los Angeles, explained her and her peers’ work in her opening statement. “My research isn’t on something groundbreaking and amazing historical aspects or bureaucratic definitions,” Scura said. “My research was around learning and developing a new way to look at a really old and tired subject.” Scura’s research was titled, “Can an 18th-century French aristocrat be considered an American founding father?” The research she presented shed light on new topics and ideas that the students in the audience may not have been aware of, rehashing old ideas and transforming them into something new and exciting, breathing life into fresh thoughts. The inspiration for these new thoughts was pulled from the students’ own

unique experiences and time spent at graduate school. Pittsburgh fifth-year Ph.D. candidate Joe Natali said his time as a high school teacher and as a college professor’s assistant has shaped him as a student and researcher. “I think one of the things that I reflect on the most is the way that I’ve gotten to interact with students as a teacher of record ... that’s a really great experience,” Natali said. “Being able to reflect on the impact that I can have on students has been particularly helpful.” Knoxville, Tenn., third-year Ph.D. candidate Jordann Heckart said her teachers and peers have been formative during her time at Baylor.

KEEP READING ...



SAFETY from A1

Austin junior Quinn Bradshaw, Baylor Turning Point USA secretary, public relations and membership committee chair, agreed with Frausto, and said that the focus should be on maintaining a respectful tone in difficult conversations. “We will still approach every conversation with kindness and compassion,” Bradshaw said. As Baylor prepares for its traditions this fall, Rodman said it is evident that safety, respect and community can co-exist. “You’ll find across the world what we do here at Baylor is not the typical. We go above and beyond to be able to ensure the safety and security of our community,” Rodman said.

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