

President Carvajal settling in - pg. 3

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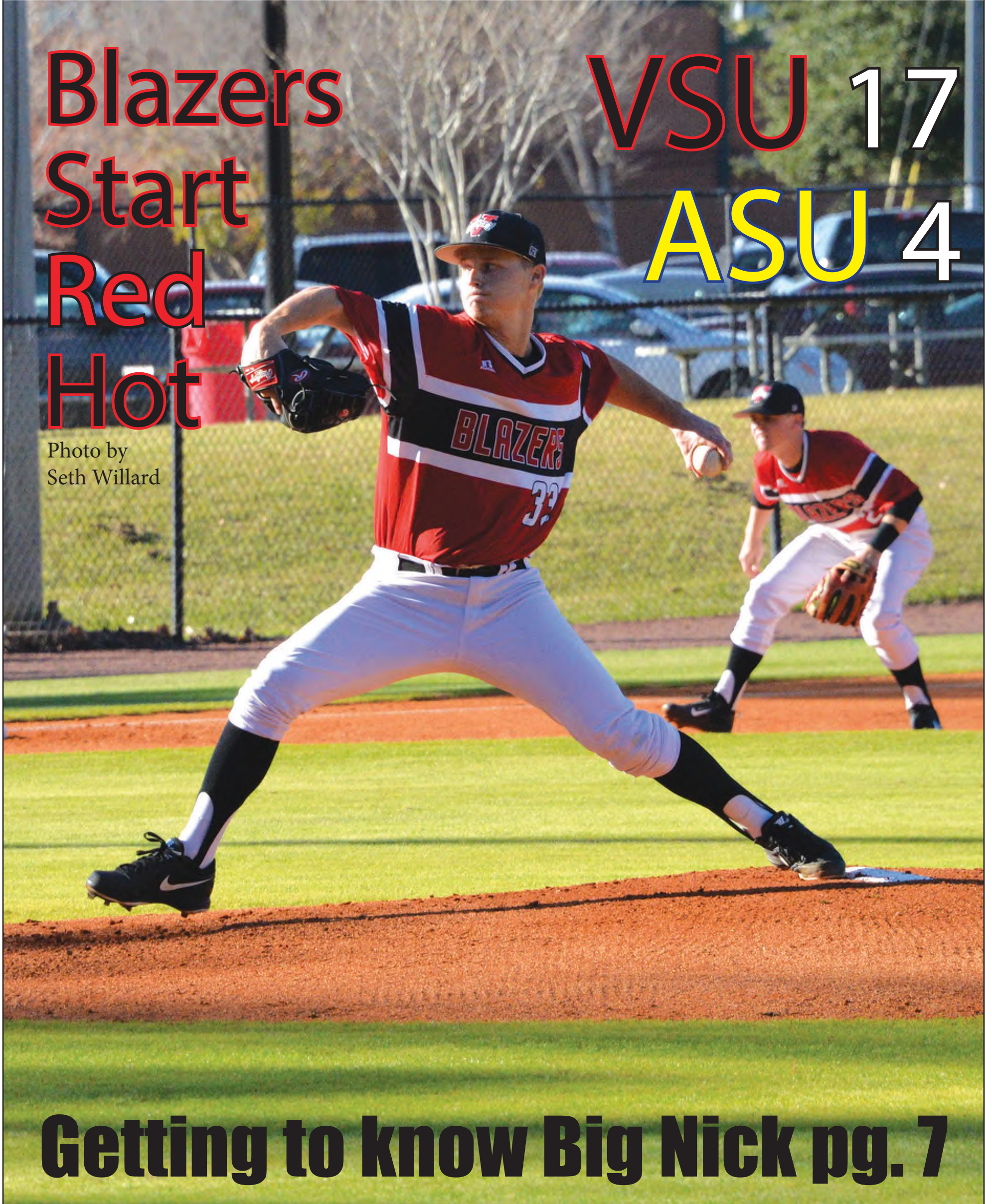
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Blazers
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VSU 17
ASU 4

Photo by
Seth Willard



Getting to know Big Nick pg. 7

NEWS

Lieutenant Governor visits tornado devastation



Courtesy of Samuel Hoffman
Pictured from L - R: Sheriff Ray Paulk, San Nix, Mark Nix, Lt. Governor Casey Cagle, Greg Nix, Doug Nix, County officials.

Courtesy of Samuel Hoffman
Greg Nix explains the damage to Lt. Governor Casey Cagle.

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Announcements

Campus Rec Closure

Campus rec will be closed Sunday, Feb 5.

Sink the Cabinet

Campus Rec is hosting Sink the Cabinet Feb 2, featuring President Carvajal. The event will take place at the Campus Rec pool at 7 p.m.

VSU Gravity Check

Campus Rec is hosting VSU Gravity Check Feb. 11. Activities will include top rope, bouldering and a crate stacking competition. Pre-registration will cost \$35. Day of competition will cost \$45. Registration at 7:30 a.m. Competition at 8 a.m.

Career Opportunities resume walk-ins

The Office of Career Opportunities will host resume walk-in hours throughout the spring semester. Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon.

A HEALTHY TIP from VSU Student Health Center

Take a few minutes to make sure you have all of your required immunizations. You can contact Student Health at 229.219.3203 to find out if you have met the University System of Georgia Board of Regents (USG BOR) immunization requirements. Keeping our campus healthy takes you and Student Health.

Want to have your event featured in our Announcements section? Email your information to Editor-in-Chief Gabe Burns at gcburns@valdosta.edu.

The Spectator Classifieds

The Spectator prints free classifieds for current students of Valdosta State University only. These must be no more than 40 words, or a \$18.50 charge will apply. Classifieds for faculty, staff, student organizations, student-owned businesses and the general public cost \$18.50 for up to 40 words.

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NEWS

The continual pursuit of excellence

New VSU president promises to listen and learn from community

Gabe Burns

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

gcburns@valdosta.edu

For new VSU President Dr. Richard Carvajal, it's about trusting those who came before him.

At the beginning of the semester, Dr. Carvajal sent out an email to all students, staff, faculty and supporters. It included three basic questions that'd tell him about the individual.

"I'll probably receive over 1,000 replies," he said. "And I will read every single one of them. Because I've come in and asked 'what are our strengths' ... I'm pretty new here. I don't know VSU as well as I need to yet. So why would I walk in on day one and have all the answers? But what I know is there are people here who love this place, who have been thinking about the issues for a long time. It's already a great institution. They want to make it exceptional."

Dr. Carvajal said he values what the community thinks. He admits he's still learning the campus, and a large aspect of that is listening to those who've been here longer than him.

"I don't claim to have all the answers," he said. "What I bring is a process. We have a group of people who have great love of place. If we get them working in the same direction, using the same resources, we can make a lot of difference ... My goal is to



Juston Lewis/THE SPECTATOR

Dr. Carvajal joins the student section to root on Blazers basketball Jan. 26.

come up with a collective vision where people can see their own words and thoughts, where we've all bought into 'this is what we're going to be' ... Then, we'll put a very detailed plan in place to use the resources we have to focus on the things we believe will have the biggest impact in helping us to live up to that billing."

Dr. Carvajal stressed he wants to enhance the student experience and make VSU an "attractive" and "fun" place to go to school. That's

not to be No. 1 on the party list, he said, but instead bettering the classroom experience and what the university can do to make students' stay at VSU the best it can be. He acknowledged VSU has emphasized recruitment, but he said he wants to bring more attention to the time between first-year move-in day and commencement.

He said there have been a lot of past efforts, many different people, working to improve student relations, but what it lacked was

coordination. He said he wants to understand everyone's point of view, then organize and centralize those concepts.

Dr. Vince Miller, the vice president for student affairs, is one who has embraced Dr. Carvajal's message.

"In my interactions with Dr. Carvajal I appreciate that he is a seasoned president and has experience with institutions in the state of Georgia," Dr. Miller said. "This will be helpful to Valdosta State University as we continue to define our vision and direction in the upcoming years."

One reason for the respect is Dr. Carvajal's resume. Most recently, he was the interim president at Darton State College. He said his role wasn't one of a standard president – his assignment was to lead a consolidation with Albany State, at the chancellor's request. The chancellor told him an especially qualified leader was needed.

"What I realized was we had an opportunity to help a region of the state that I care a lot about," he said. "That it might end up being, whenever I retired, the most impactful professional thing I ended up doing if we get it right. So I said yes."

The area required a neutral moderator because neither university had previously negotiated with the other. Despite being four miles apart, the schools hadn't met with each other in the 50

years before the consolidation meeting. Dr. Carvajal said he facilitated the creation of the new foundation of the schools and provided "organization structure."

He said what he took from that experience is seeing passionate people come together to overcome disagreements and find a solution; the exact formula he wants to use at VSU.

"If anything (the consolidation) motivated me to come here and do it even more," Dr. Carvajal said. "I think this process works."

Dr. Carvajal often speaks of the continual pursuit of excellence. He said he'll need to be reminded to stop and celebrate any university success because he's always looking at the next project. He compared his mentality to that of Nick Saban, the head coach of the University of Alabama football team.

"Being in first place, which is where we'll aspire to be, whatever first place looks like, you won't stay there unless you keep trying to get better," Dr. Carvajal said. "I'm not an Alabama fan, but I can marvel at what they do. You watch them blowout a team by 50, then hear their coach in the press conference and you'd think they got beat by 50. That's how the best coaches are."

If Dr. Carvajal has a tenure reminiscent of Saban's at Alabama, VSU is going to be just fine.



Ira Flatow hosts "Science is the New Sexy."

Courtesy of YouTube

Flatow to visit VSU

Jyrell Wynn

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VSU will be hosting speaker Ira Flatow and his lecture "Science is the New Sexy" as part of VSU Presidential Lecture Series.

As host of Public Radio's hit weekly talk show Science Friday, Ira Flatow discusses important issues with science, technology, health, space and the environment. With a career of more than 35 years in public radio and television, he has appeared twice on "The Big Bang Theory" and "Brain Dead." His other credits include being host and writer for PBS Newton's Apple, and a science reporter for CBS This Morning, wrote and hosted Transistorized! An hour-long PBS documentary, and host of PBS series Big Ideas, and work featured

on Oprah, Charlie Rose, CNBC, BBC, and CBC.

Flatow has accumulated numerous accolades, including the Isaac Asimov Award. He completed his recent book, "Present At The Future," and is president of Science Friday, Inc. and founder and president of Science Friday Initiative. He has also hosted numerous science related Web Casts for Discovery Online and the American Museum of Natural History in New York. His articles have appeared in magazines such as Woman's Day, ESPN Magazine and American Lawyer. His commentary has appeared in The Los Angeles Times and other newspapers.

The event will be at 7 p.m. in Whitehead Auditorium Feb. 21. It's free of charge, but requires a ticket due to limited seating.

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OPINIONS

Our point of view...



Falcon fans show excitement.

MTC CAMPUS

Celebrate Super Bowl LI, stay safe and sober

This Sunday might be one of the most anticipated annual sporting events in the nation, especially for Georgia-natives. Falcon fans and Patriot fans alike will come together to watch the SuperBowl 51, meaning the celebratory drinks will be passed just as many times as the ball.

According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2015 10,265 people were killed in vehicle crashes in the United States, all of which involved an impaired driver.

Even seemingly small amounts of alcohol can weaken judgment and reaction times, making driving highly unsafe. The driver is considered intoxicated with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher, so even if it is just "one beer" it can be the difference between being charged with a D.U.I. or underage drinking.

As businesses and individuals host game day parties, it is imperative to also remember to offer non-alcoholic beverages, provide plenty of food and encourage people to space their alcohol beverages throughout the night.

If one has had too much to drink, fortunately The Auto Club Group Traffic Safety Foundation and Budweiser placed the program, AAA Tow To Go, to prevent under-the-influence drivers from getting behind the wheel.

This is offered in Valdosta as well as other taxi services like 244 Taxi, Five Star Taxi and Topsy Transit.

This Super Bowl weekend, "Rise Up" and help keep impaired drivers from getting behind the wheel and make sure everyone has a game plan for a safe ride home.

This editorial was written by a member of the editorial staff and expresses the general opinion of The Spectator.



MTC CAMPUS

Women stand solemnly in Washington in protest against POTUS' latest executive orders.

4.8 million people participate in worldwide Women's March against Trump

Geneva Crooks

STAFF WRITER

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On Jan. 21, 4.8 million people made history by protesting in the Women's March. The Women's March was an organized march to protect women's rights, the LG-BTQ community, workers' rights, immigration reform, freedom of religion, healthcare reform, the natural environment, racial equality and a great deal of other human rights.

The protest started as the Women's March on Washington and spread globally. There were around 500,000 marchers in Washington alone and 673 marches worldwide, according to womensmarch.com. This march spread across all seven continents and marked the start of the "10 actions for the first 100 days," campaign, a continuous fight for equality and encouragement of activism.

This protest followed the inauguration of President Donald Trump. And if we're being honest, there has never been a time when a march of this size was more needed. Not only has President Donald Trump shamelessly de-

nounced women and their rights, but he has also made vulgar and disrespectful comments about assaulting them using his status and power.

Trump can be quoted stating that if he likes a woman he will grab her by the genitals to get his way. Very presidential.

Although it has been a little over a week since Donald Trump has been in office, he has passed a number of policy changes that are dehumanizing and downright cringe-worthy.

Trump blocked immigrants and visa holders from seven countries from entering the United States.

Trump has also brought back the "Global Gag Rule," which prohibits federal funding to organizations that provide, or even discuss, abortion.

Trump also put a hiring freeze on all jobs in the federal government, except for the military and national security.

Trump made it clear that he has no intention of helping out his fellow man, and he plans to follow through with all of the things he boasted about during his campaign.

This is why the Women's March did exactly what it needed to do.

The Women's March made it clear that the public is aware of the issues and the battle we are about to face, and we are here for it.

Although personally unable to march, I stand with those who did. As a woman, as a mother and

This march spread across all seven continents and marked the start of the "10 actions for the first 100 days," campaign, a continuous fight for equality and encouragement of activism.

as a minority, I will continue to stand with those who marched. We will not go down without a fight, because women's rights are human rights.

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OPINIONS



MTC CAMPUS

Independent coffee shops decide to limit wifi availability to customers.

Cafes and stores receive mixed reviews on pulling the plug on public wi-fi

Darla Dunning

ASST. OPINIONS EDITOR
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Coffee shops around the nation are pulling the plug by not providing Wi-Fi to their customers. Instead, they want their customers to enjoy the environment surrounding them by unplugging from their virtual reality.

According to Brooklyn.com, independent coffee shops are now implementing limited Wi-Fi access via single-use codes and have a “no laptops” policy on weekends.

One coffee shop owner, Allison Stuart, expressed her opinion on people coming into her coffee shop to just use the Wi-Fi and not buy coffee.

“The issue with Wi-Fi isn’t just a dollar figure,” Stuart told Brooklyn.com. “It has more to do with how blue screens and studious freelancers impose upon an otherwise community setting, subduing customer conversations to a library-like hush and prevent-

ing organic interactions from taking place.”

Surprisingly, coffee shops banning the use of Wi-Fi has actually brought in more customers with positive feedback.

One avid Starbucks drinker shared her opinion on the limited Wi-Fi that is arising in coffee shops.

“I actually like the idea of limited Wi-Fi use,” Elizabeth Wilson, a psychology major, said. “When I go to Starbucks, I want to sit down and talk with my friends, but sometimes I can’t even find a seat because they are taken by people who are just there to use their laptops without buying a coffee.”

In addition to Wi-Fi being limited at coffee shops, multiple stores are preventing their customers from using their Wi-Fi because they want customers with laptops to be considerate of those who want to sit down with a coffee and talk to friends, so customers do not have to turn away because they couldn’t find a place to sit.

Although, there are some people that are enraged with coffee shops limiting their Wi-Fi use to customers, that is not everyone’s point of view.

According to Betanews.com, free Wi-Fi has become a “major factor,” when consumers are faced with eating and drinking choices.

“It’s a bad idea to me,” Brandon Gulnick, a graduate assistant for the English Language Institute, said. “I go to different coffee shops and use their Wi-Fi to do my homework, while drinking their coffee. I like the environment, and I would probably stop going to places that limited their Wi-Fi.”

If Wi-Fi is removed from all coffee shops and even fast food restaurants, customers will have the opportunity to potentially connect with other customers and the employees.

It will allow customers to unplug from the virtual world, so they can have momentary connections with the outside world.

Chipotle plans to make 2017 their year

Shanice Barnes

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Last year was an extremely unforgettable year for the Chipotle Mexican Grill restaurant food chain, and not in a good way. News of an E. Coli outbreak that occurred in late 2015 caused their sales to plummet in 2016.

Chipotle was once among the top selling fast food corporations, before the E. Coli outbreak. The classy atmosphere really set the restaurant apart from other fast food chains, and once people discovered that the food was just as great as the atmosphere, they were hooked. They offered fresh never processed ingredients, which was perfect for people trying

to live a healthier lifestyle.

You may remember the popular quote on social media “Chipotle is my life.” Chipotle was really a lifestyle choice, and part of people’s everyday lives; although many people still eat at Chipotle despite the outbreak, their sales are nowhere close to where they once were.

Despite the bad year they had, they hope to make 2017 they’re comeback year.

They plan on launching a huge ad campaign in April to capture the consumer’s attention.

Another strategy they’re hoping will catch consumer’s attention, is their mobile ordering app. The mobile ordering option is perfect for people who just want to catch a quick bite to eat during

their lunch break, and don’t have time to wait in those ridiculously long lines.

“I always have and will be a Chipotle lover. And it sucks that there isn’t one down here” said Francesca Dalton, junior art major.

Though Chipotle is trying their best to please their consumers, they plan on increasing prices to help with their sales. People may not be receptive to this strategy, and may find a cheaper equivalent. Although this strategy could potentially hurt their consumer rate, they have to do all they can in order to recover from their low sales last year.

Is it too late for Chipotle to recover, or will 2017 be the year for their comeback?

Local Tex-Mex grill serves up bold burritos

Erin Turner

STAFF WRITER
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If you have a yearning for Moe’s or Chipotle, Burritos Mexican Grill is a substantial replacement. It is located on Northside Drive by Cross Pointe Church.

The restaurant gives you a laid-back feel with a touch of true Mexico.

Prior to the visit, I heard mixed reviews about the Mexican grill, so I was ready to try it for myself. I visited the restaurant with friend Glorius Tutt. The aroma of Pico de Gallo mixed with perfectly seasoned carne asada filled the air, and I had to try it out. The service was great. The employees were eager to help and had great attitudes toward the customers.

Being at a restaurant called Burritos, I had to order a burrito. The Mexican grill has different flavored tortillas, such as flour, sun-dried

tomato, garlic herb, spinach and more. I like the classics, so I chose the flour tortilla, chopped steak, sautéed onions and peppers, tomatoes and pico de gallo.

One highlight from the restaurant was the warm and crispy tortilla chips that went along great with the burrito. The food looked delicious, aside from the chunks of steak.

While I was ordering the burrito, I guess I failed to notice the massive pieces of steak, and so chewing the burrito was a hard process. Tutt ordered the steak as well and could not finish her food because of the oversized pieces of meat.

Overall, the Mexican grill was not bad. The atmosphere was chill, and the price wasn’t too bad. The burrito was \$10, including a guava jarito. The important thing is it satisfied my hunger. On the grading scale, I give Burritos Mexican Grill a solid B-



Erin Turner/ Hunter Terrell

Burritos offers various Tex-Mex options including fajita bowls, burritos and taco salads.

FEATURES

Scenes from the storm



Seth Willard/THE SPECTATOR

Wreckage cleanup in Adel, Ga., last week after the storms. Houses across middle and south Georgia were torn down as a result of high wind speeds and tornadoes. Sunshine Acres, a trailer park in the same town, was virtually eliminated that over that weekend.

Students re-live the chaos

"The lights and water got cut off for a whole week. My mom had to stay with my cousin in Smithville and had to throw out the groceries she just bought."

- Dekovias Mathis, sophomore, Albany, Ga.

"Before the tornado hit, there was a break in bad weather, and even though it seemed calm, there were sirens going off in the distance and alerts coming to our cell phones. My mom opened the front door out of curiosity and commented 'It's white out there' and it was like she was frozen in fear."

- Cleopatra Poole, recent VSU graduate, Albany, Ga.

"The entire roof of a Wal-Mart was ripped off. A lot of power lines and trees were down."

- Di'Laine Jones, senior, Warner Robins, Ga.

"Nothing happened to my house, but just a few miles up from me was devastated."

- Justin Myrick, junior, Thomasville, Ga.

*Quotes collected by Bryce Ethridge, Spectator staff writer

Creative's couch

Darian Harris

MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

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With Spring Break coming up, there's always a sense of saving money and stretching and maximizing the dollar. We tend to spend excessively and live fast because YOLO, right?

Well, when the week of fun is all said and done and real life comes back into play, those few extra coins that you start to manage and save while spending smart during spring break will come in handy when it's time to pay those bills that seem to never go away.

Saving money is imperative to any college student no matter what age or stage in their collegiate journey. My favorite apps to save a few coins here and there are:

Fuel Rewards by Shell:

This app is the go to app of gas saving excellence. You earn variable cent discounts on anything from certain restaurants to grocery shopping to even linking

certain types of debit cards to your profile. Your rewards are capped at 20 gallons but that usually serves enough to fill up any vehicle. There's no maximum amount of savings you can collect but there are expiration dates on all rewards that differ.

Flash Foods/GoBlue Mobile Pay: This app saves \$0.05/gallon on an unlimited amount of gallons but works with a linked card.

Acorn: Why pay your bank to "keep the change" when you can pay just a \$1 a month (for accounts grossing \$5,000). The extra change to round off the dollar will be deposited into a specified account that collects until you withdraw it.

There are many ways to help a student manage and save money that will come in handy later on. Remember you only live once but why not save a little now to play later.

Four Directions holds meeting

Briana Salem

STAFF WRITER

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The student organization Four Directions held its first interest meeting on Jan. 24. The meeting was open to all students, faculty, and staff.

"We work in conjunction with the Native American studies minor to promote it and discuss basically anything we want, but most of the things we discuss are centered around Native Americans in the surrounding community as well as worldwide," Johnson said.

Students are welcome to come to any meeting to pitch ideas for activities or to join the organization. During the meeting held on Jan. 1, the students discussed ideas of what they would want to do throughout the spring semester.

"Each meeting we all get together and discuss whatever we want," Dr. Lovern said. "One semester we worked completely with learning and studying different languages, and during another we focused on more charitable work."

During meetings, the members consider activities, such as bake sales, movie nights and fried bread night, an event started by

the Department of Social Etiquette in the fall 2016 semester that Four Directions partnered with the group to hold, and since the event was a success, the two organizations are coming together in March of 2017 to hold the event again.

The members of Four Directions discuss national issues as well. For example, the students in the organization are concerned about the pipeline that President Donald Trump has approved to be built throughout the Dakotas; the land threatened is sacred to the Native Americans in the area.

To start off this semester, members discussed donating canned goods to the surrounding counties that were affected by the storm that hit a week ago. The members are going to donate and help out the victims of the storm.

"I am sorry it happened, but it would be a great way to start off our semester by helping the victims of the storm," Johnson said.

Created in 2012, the organization Four Directions meets every other Tuesday at 5 p.m. to discuss what students want to do in the community. Most meetings are conducted by the faculty adviser, Dr. Lavonna Lovern, and staff adviser, Pamela Johnson.



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FEATURES

SPOTLIGHT

Big Nick roasts and hosts

Edward Rella

STAFF WRITER
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Many know Nick Harden, 35, simply as the owner of Big Nick's, a lively soul-food restaurant located on Baytree Road.

He is also the radio host of 109.7 The Beat here in Valdosta.

When you first meet Harden, you might first notice his Southern-tinged accent or his large generous smile, but there is much more than meets the eye for this businessman.

Nick Harden was born in Detroit, Illinois and lived with both of his parents for years before his late father passed away. He then moved to East Atlanta to Decatur where he graduated high school and played football at Southwest DeKalb High School.

"I was surrounded by some really good family members and some really good people and, you know, made it out," Harden said. It was a very crucial factor of making him who is today.

He expanded his thoughts and said "... even though we stayed in areas that weren't the best, I always knew to advance that, and that didn't make me."

Harden has a very positive mindset. He aims to better himself almost every day and to help and to give back to others as much as he can. "I love him, he has a heart of gold and just loves people, loves to help them and he's a great leader," said Ruby Riesinger, the Director of Sales at Black Crow Media who has known Big Nick for many years.

"I always like to entertain folks," Harden said. "I remember in high school, I used to host these parties and everyone in Decatur that was my age would come through and promote it." At a young age, Harden knew he would be an entertainer. Throughout high school he threw many parties at clubs like Shyrans' Showcase in Atlanta.

"We probably had like 500 kids come, we had DJ's, and Tight to Death, a dance crew, battling P-Funk and everyone was going crazy," Harden said, remembering his younger days. "It was just fun."

Throughout high school, Harden was a football player, and announcer/DJ for his high school's basketball team.

Harden began attending VSU on a football scholarship for

childhood education after being scouted but sustained injuries early in the season, benching him. Despite being unable to play, Harden could show his Blazer Nation pride by recording football games and practices while still hosting entertainment when possible.

Throughout his college career, Harden still hosted a variety of parties in the nightclubs throughout Valdosta, furthering his involvement in the entertainment scene.

Eventually, Harden changed his major from childhood education to business administration; this helped solidify Harden's legacy as a successful business owner.

After becoming a VSU alumnus, Harden stayed close to what he knew. "I never liked working for someone, I liked being in control of what was happening," Harden said. This was one of the things that contributed to the opening of Big Nick's.

"My father was a big business owner; he was involved in everything, pretty much. I saw how it was to run them firsthand," He said. Even at a young age, Harden knew how he would live his life and sees himself as an extension

of his father's legacy.

Harden also contributed to Toyz-in-da-Hood, which helped get over 800 toys into homes that couldn't afford them for Christmas. "It felt great, the boxes of toys just never stopped coming and it was a great success. Every time I turned around, another box was right there," he said.

Harden continues with his community centered lifestyle today

by teaming with a fellow radio station to give away scholarships, as well as giving VSU students a chance to intern at 109.7 The Beat.

"Interns are important, they help with the work flow around here and some of them continue to get a full-time position at the station," Harden said. If anyone is interested, just check online," he said.



Edward Rella/THE SPECTATOR

In addition to his restaurant, Nick Harden (right) hosts his own radio show 109.7 The Beat, where members of the community can guest star. VSU students also have opportunities to intern at the station.



Darla Dunning

STAFF WRITER
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Instead of yelling at his students for not showing up to class, this professor decided to fire off a series of hilarious but heart-breaking tweets that went viral on Twitter.

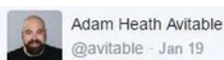
Adam H. Avitable, professor at a college in Central Florida, teaches GED-prep courses to students who lack transportation or resources to get the help they need. Avitable is relatively new to teaching and said none of his students showing up was a new experience for him.

"There have been days when I've only had a couple (out of the 10-15 expected) students show up, but this was the first time that nobody was there for the first 90 minutes," Avitable said.

Avitable's tweets went viral when he hilariously started to question his sanity by tweeting, "Is everyone else in the world dead? Was there a sudden zombie attack and I survived, alone in my classroom?"

Unfortunately, there was not a zombie apocalypse, and he had to face the stone cold truth: none of his students showed up.

"It was a nice day with really nice weather, so it wasn't too surprising that attendance was low," Avitable said.

Adam Heath Avitable
@avitable · Jan 19

Classwatch 2017. Class started 30 mins ago. No students yet. I thought one was coming but it was just an administrator. Who laughed at me.

Courtesy of Adam Avitable

Professor live tweets to an empty classroom

Instead of leaving, Avitable decided to wait it out and tweet during the whole class period by using the hashtag #Classwatch2017. Avitable even brought candy for his class that day but had to eat it alone, according to his tweets.

Avitable's tweets became even more hilarious when he tweeted about an administrator coming into his classroom and laughing at him for his students not showing up for class.

Avitable even tweeted about a bird that landed outside his classroom window, and he invited the bird in to learn algebra. Sadly, the bird declined the offer and flew away.

After 95 minutes of patiently waiting, two of his students finally arrived to his classroom and did not show any remorse for being late, according to Avitable's tweets. Avitable shrugged it off and still gave them candy.

After Avitable's tweets went viral, his class attendance was a different story.

"Today was the next day of classes, and I had four students there even before classes started," Avitable said. "I tweeted about it, and included a picture too."

Hopefully, Avitable's students will keep showing up for class, so he doesn't have to tweet another heartbreaking tale.

'We Need To Talk' gives students expressive outlet

Kevin Paul

STAFF WRITER
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The world seems to be accelerating at record speed, with history, politics and culture shifting daily.

With these rapid changes, an expressive outlet is now needed to balance and bring together differing beliefs and emotions, and that outlet has come in the form of "We Need To Talk".

"We Need To Talk" is a VSU student organization that aspires to be a channel that students can use to express their opinions about any topic. These subjects can range from President Trump's first week in office, to the VSU Basketball Team's 16-3 record, or even the severe storms that recently passed through South Georgia.

Dominique Wilters is the Organizational Director of "We Need To Talk" and plans to have the organization's first convention Thursday.

"This group is more than an

organization, but a movement that promotes consciousness and culture to bring about a meeting of minds," Wilters said.

Wilters first brought the organization from South Carolina in September 2016, after receiving positive feedback from students and faculty at his previous high school and earning multiple accolades for event of the year and organization of the year.

"It is a movement that's able to stir people of all walks of life..." - Marcus Colon

However, when Wilters first brought the idea of expanding "We Need To Talk" to his director and board, they thought that the

difficulty of transferring the organization's customs from South Carolina to VSU would serve to be problematic, yet the contrary happened.

Schools such as VSU and the University of Phoenix will be the first national expansion for We Need To Talk, with both schools taking interest in the accessibility of speech it gives students.

Marcus Colon, Associate Director of "We Need to Talk" was one of the first members that Wilters brought onto the team.

Colon agreed that student opinions should be able to be shared in a non-hostile, encouraging environment. "It is a movement that's able to stir people of all walks of life, giving students an avenue to express themselves as equals," Colon said.

We Need To Talk is a movement that will bring together students for discussion weekly starting this Thursday at 7:15 p.m. in Ballroom C of the Student Union.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Prepare to get 'Lost in Time' with MAG

Erin Turner

STAFF WRITER

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Media Arts Geniuses, or MAG, is an organization that serves as a platform to showcase the talents of students on campus.

On Feb. 4, MAG will hold a showcase in the Student Union.

President of MAG, Roderick Stillwell, provided a few statements about the organization's showcase.

"'Lost in Time,' is the theme of this year's MAG showcase that the organization came up with," Stillwell said. "The performances in the showcase will feature covers and original songs that span across several decades into the past [and] all the way up to present day."

The performance will showcase the students' talents while also giving the audience a blast from the past.

MAG will also have a performance especially dedicated to the Atlanta Falcons.

This year's showcase will be MAG's first performance since November 2012. Many students on MAG's twitter, @MAGvsu, are excited about the performance and what MAG has in store.

Stillwell explained the true purpose of holding the "Lost in Time," showcase.

"The performances in the showcase will feature covers and original songs..."

*-Roderick Stillwell
President*

"We are holding the MAG showcase to fulfill the mission of MAG, which is to showcase the talents of students on Valdosta States Campus," Stillwell said. "We also will be donating a percentage of our earnings from the event to support victims of the recent storms to hit South Georgia."

Presale tickets are available for \$2, while the door price is \$4. "Lost in Time," will be held in the Student Union ballrooms on Saturday. Doors open at 5 p.m., and the performance starts at 6 p.m.



MCT CAMPUS

The psychological thriller, "Split" features a main character with dissociative identity disorder.

'Split' offers viewers a suspenseful work of pseudo psychology

Tiana Foster

STAFF WRITER

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Ever met someone with split personalities? Imagine interacting with a man who had 23.

"Split," begins with the abduction of three teenage girls, Claire, Marcia and Casey, after attending a birthday party. The girls' kidnapper, Kevin, suffers from Dissociative Identity Disorder.

Dennis, one of Kevin's personalities, decides it would be a good idea to kidnap three girls and keep them locked up inside of a small room. He tells the girls they will be used as food in order to unlock his 24th personality. As soon as the girls realize Kevin's condition, they try to manipulate his other personalities in order to escape.

A childhood trauma caused Kevin to defensively create sev-

eral different personalities, and, throughout the movie, the audience meets a few: Dennis who has OCD, Patricia who portrays the feminine side of Kevin, Hedwig who is an immature 9-year-old and Barry who is a friendly fashion designer who visits a counselor once a week.

Claire, Marcia and Casey are clueless as to why Kevin chose them, and they make several attempts to escape. The plot thickens after Casey, the quiet misfit, reveals her own little secrets. Casey is the only one who can counteract Kevin's different personalities. She instructs the other two girls to follow her lead, as she tries to manipulate Hedwig into showing her the way out.

This horror movie was good, but I do think it was drawn out with an ending that leaves the viewers expecting a sequel. While the movie advertises 23 personali-

ties, there were only six personalities shown in action. There were a few gaps, as the narration jumps around a little. Although the movie could use a few changes, the acting was outstanding.

Actor James McAvoy, who played Kevin, demonstrated an over-the-top performance. It takes great practice to be able to portray several characters in one scene. The movie is really suspenseful, not knowing Kevin's motive or why he decided to kidnap three teenage girls. The movie also leaves the audience on the edge of their seat, seeking to find out where Kevin is keeping his hostages.

M. Night Shyamalan, director of "The Sixth Sense," "The Visit," and "The Last Airbender," created a movie for people who may suffer from the same illness but added a suspenseful twist.

Madonna says she's sorry for remarks

Julie Jernigan

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After dropping f-bombs and making an extremist remark at the 2017 Women's March on Jan. 21 in D.C., Madonna took to Instagram to clarify her points.

"I am not a violent person, I do not promote violence and it's important people hear and understand my speech in its entirety rather than one phrase taken wildly out of context," Madonna wrote on her account.

Madonna is best known for her edgy style and classic pop music that took the world by storm in the 80s, beginning with her first club hit, "Everybody" in 1983.

Madonna's expletives and statement, "I have thought an awful lot about blowing up the White House," may have been well received by the crowd at the Women's March, but it drew criticism among conservatives.

During his appearance on Fox and Friends, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich stated Madonna should be arrested for her comments.

"What you have is an emerging left-wing fascism; She's part of it, and I think we have to prepare to protect ourselves," Gingrich told Fox and Friends. "The truth is, she ought to be arrested."

Madonna explained her com-

ments were made for metaphorical purposes.

"I spoke in metaphor, and I shared two ways of looking at things—one was to be hopeful, and one was to feel anger and outrage, which I have personally felt," Madonna wrote on Instagram. "However, I know that acting out of anger doesn't solve anything. And the only way to change things for the better is to do it with love."

In an interview with Fox News, President Donald Trump stated he thought Madonna's comments were disgraceful.

"Honestly, she's disgusting," Trump said. "I think she hurt herself very badly. I think she hurt that whole . . . cause . . . I thought what she said was disgraceful to our country."

Because of Madonna's remarks, a Texas radio station, HITS 105, banned the singer from its airwaves.

"Banning all Madonna songs at HITS 105 is not a matter of politics; it's a matter of patriotism," General Manager Terry Thomas said in a statement. "It just feels wrong to us to be playing Madonna songs and paying her royalties when the artist has shown un-American sentiments."

Madonna concluded her Instagram post by writing, "It was truly an honor to be part of an audience chanting, 'we choose love.'"

Shia displays latest artwork

Alex Dunn

STAFF WRITER

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Shia LaBeouf just did it.

LaBeouf started a four-year live stream project in New York City, protesting the new presidency of Donald Trump, entitled, "He Will Not Divide Us."

LaBeouf's project is at the Museum of the Moving Image and has received a lot of attention over the past few days. This is not the first time the actor has done something controversial either; last year, LaBeouf had a 72-hour showcase of all of his movies.

The stream began on Jan. 20, with people gathering to repeat the phrase, "he will not divide us." LaBeouf occasionally stepped into the stream, also chanting the phrase and rallying people around the camera, according to theverge.com.

"Beautifully and eloquently

said . . . words from an enlightened individual," Dayna commented on consequenceofsound.net.

Barely a day went by, however, when Trump supporters and white supremacists gathered at the location to offer their two-cents as well, with coded phrases said directly at the camera to let everyone know who they were and what they represented, according to theverge.com.

LaBeouf quickly got involved in these matters, shouting at and allegedly assaulting a protestor on the live stream. LaBeouf was arrested and charged with a misdemeanor assault and harassment violation after getting into a fight with the alleged neo-Nazi, according to CNN.

"'He will not divide us,' but your little protests are separating you from the rest of society who are living their lives without making spectacles of themselves," Jon White commented

on consequenceofsound.net.

Other incidents have occurred after the fact, with masked people going up to the camera with Trump signs, trying to make a statement.

Buzzfeed stated that this live stream has offered protestors a great way to make their opinions go viral quickly.

There was plenty of feedback on sites that were covering the event. Political debates were going on among people who were distressed from this spectacle or glad something was being said openly.

Whether or not this four-year live stream is going to end up being positive or negative in the future, it will never change the fact that Donald Trump is now our president. However, it most certainly will be remembered as an influential event.

SPORTS

Blazers score an impressive seventeen runs on opening day

Photos by Seth Willard



SPORTS

DID YOU KNOW?

VSU Soccer signed six players yesterday on National Signing Day. Lexie Hall (Jacksonville, Florida), Caroline Embler (Anderson, South Carolina) Madison Mascheri (Orlando) Haille Paterson (Miami) Jamey Medders (Sylvester, Georgia) Isabelle BeranThomas (Tallahassee).

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Kyle Dawson/THE SPECTATOR

Niklas Herbing is one of four seniors the men's tennis team lost to graduation. Herbing is now a graduate assistant.

VSU Tennis relying on experience

Briana Salem

STAFF WRITER
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VSU Tennis will be looking to experience for the 2017 season. The men's team lost only four players to graduation. One of which, Niklas Herbing, will return as an assistant. The women's team lost none.

Head Coach John Hansen will look for last year's Gulf South Conference Player of the Year, Leo Blay to lead the charge for VSU this season.

"We don't have captains on the team because your better players are going to be the ones everyone wants to follow," Hansen said. "Leo Blay is ranked third in the nation, so the rest of the guys know how good they have to be to at least be third in the nation just by looking up to Leo."

The men's team finished third in the GSC last season after going 12-6 in the regular season. They then played in the NCAA National Tournament, where they lost in the quarter finals to Hawaii Pacific.

In September, Blay and some of his teammates played in the Intercollegiate Tennis Associa-

tion South Regional in Lakeland, Florida. Blay was the Blazers' high finisher, as he lost in the final round of the tournament.

Hansen said the teams are a little rusty since last playing competitively last fall. Both the men and women played practice rounds against Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College on Monday. He said younger players will be more prepared for the season after gaining experience this preseason and last year.

"Our sophomores this season have great experience from last season," Hansen said. "Jorid Mas, who was scared to death last year, is playing some great tennis right now. Also, Xavier Pineda has always been the quickest guy on the team, but now his game is maturing."

The women's team's season ended last year after falling to West Florida in the final match of the GSC Championship. They will return every player including Bea Morales-Hernandez, who was first team all-GSC last year and second teamers Sabrina Schmidt and Laura Ubeda.

Hansen said the team was disappointed after narrowly miss-

ing out on a chance to play in the NCAA Regional Championship last season.

"Last season, whoever won the conference was the team that moved on," Hansen said. "Sometimes when both teams are ranked high enough then they both could move on, but we came up short to The University of West Florida."

The team will look to bounce back from last year's showing in the GSC Championship, so they can join the men's team at the next level. Herbing said one challenge the teams will face as they have every season is the grueling length of their schedules.

"Tennis is a very physical and demanding sport," Herbing said. "We could have up to two to three games a day. It looks like a fancy sport but it is physically a grind."

Both teams' first match of the season will be in Boca Raton, Florida, against Lynn University on Feb. 5.

Super Bowl Predictions

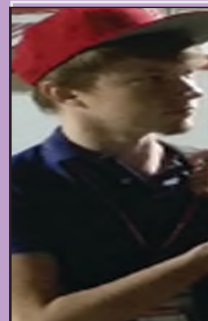
The biggest weekend in professional football is upon us as the Atlanta Falcons and the New England Patriots square off in Houston on Sunday in Super Bowl LI. Former VSU offensive lineman, Ryan Schraeder will line up for Atlanta. Members of the Spectator are giving their opinions on who will win and why here:



Kyle Dawson
Sports Editor
Senior

ATL 42 NE 21

Atlanta's prolific offense will jump out to a lead, and if Atlanta can get pressure on Brady with Vic Beasley, they should be able to force some turnovers and hold on for the win. No one can cover Julio Jones.



Gabe Burns
Editor in Chief
Senior

NE 31 ATL 23

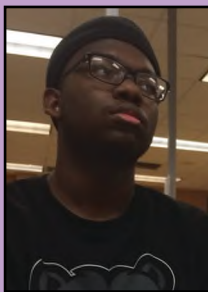
The team that controls the pace wins. Expect a heavy dose of Dion Lewis early with LeGarrette Blount finishing it off late. Atlanta has to make explosive plays to win. It doesn't matter how many catches Julio Jones gets, but rather the volume of yards. The Pats are going to stress methodical drives to keep Kyle Shanahan's offense off the field. Ultimately, Julian Edelman outgains Jones and New England's No. 1 red zone defense comes up big.



Darian Harris
Multimedia Editor
Junior

ATL 33 NE 27

I think Atlanta will be able to outscore New England. Tom Brady will make some magic near the end of the game, but Atlanta will outlast the Patriots. The city deserves this.



Juston Lewis
Asst. Sports Editor
Sophomore

ATL 34 NE 30

Falcons defense will stop the Brady Bunch. Matt Ryan will put the cherry on top of his MVP season. Julio Jones MVP - 2 TD's and 138 yards.



Seth Willard
Photo Editor
Junior

ATL 24 NE 21

The teams will be evenly matched, and in the fourth quarter, the game will come down to a field goal by Matt Bryant.

VSU Basketball Stat Leaders

Men

Points: Jeremiah Hill (377)

Rebounds: Saadiq Muhammad (126)

Steals: Jeremiah Hill (44)

Assists: Jeremiah Hill (84)

Blocks: Jimmy Kodet (21)

Women

Points: Madi Mitchell (339)

Rebounds: Madi Mitchell (173)

Steals: Kenya Samone' Dixon (26)

Assists: Sonya Franklin (67)

SPORTS



Justin Lewis/THE SPECTATOR

VSU Women's Basketball can climb to third in the Gulf South Conference with a win against Mississippi College.

VSU women look to best Choctaws

Justin Lewis

ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

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VSU Women's Basketball is looking to chop the Choctaws as they travel to Clinton, Mississippi in a rematch with Mississippi College.

The Blazers have a 9-5 conference record and are fourth in the Gulf South Conference after winning on the road at West Alabama last week.

The Blazers shot an uncharacteristic 22.2 percent from beyond the arc and less than 70 percent from the free throw line against West Alabama. They only had three points off the bench, and they all came from Jazmyn McIntosh.

However, Madi Mitchell scored 27 points, and Sonya Franklin scored 18 points with nine rebounds and five assists to lead the Blazers to victory.

"It was huge," head coach Carley Kuhns, said on winning against West Alabama. "Just to keep our momentum going ... to be able to keep getting better and finding ways to win late in the game."

While Mitchell's performance earned her a GSC Player of the Week nomination, Kuhns said Franklin was the player of the game and she pushed the Blazers to victory.

"It gives me a lot of confidence going into the next game," Franklin said of her coach's reassurance. "Very very confident in my shot; Very confident in my passing, in everything I do."

Franklin and her teammates will need that confidence when they face a Mississippi College team that beat them at home on Jan. 21. It was a game that went down to the wire and Mississippi College won after a missed three-pointer by Kenya Samone' Dixon that would've won the game for the Blazers.

"We missed a lot of free throws and we missed a lot of shots in the paint," Kuhns said on the rematch. "I don't think our game plan is going to change much, but we have to be tougher and we have to hit the easy shots that we get."

Mississippi College played zone for a majority of the first matchup, and the Blazers were

unable to knockdown the shots that they got, shooting 23-68 from the field.

"We have to expect that they're coming out ready to bang," Franklin said.

Mississippi College is currently 7-6 in the conference, and they are two spots behind VSU at sixth in the GSC. They lead the GSC in average assists per game with 18.38 and field goal percentage with .438. Kelley Allen leads the Choctaws in scoring with 14.9 points per game, and she scored 22 points in the first matchup with VSU.

"We don't really focus on what everybody else is doing," Franklin said. "We focus on getting better every day in practice and with every game. Although we have played top ranked teams and we know that they aren't that much better than us, we focus on what we can control."

With a win the Blazers would move into the third place spot into the GSC. With a loss they could slide to fifth in the conference. The game will be tomorrow in Clinton, Mississippi, at 6:30 p.m.



Seth Willard/THE SPECTATOR

Saadiq Muhammad has been a leader on and off the court for VSU in 2017.

Saadiq Muhammad From Michigan to Valdosta

Bryce Ethridge

STAFF WRITER

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You wake up one morning to play basketball with your big brother, in hopes that you'll be able to make a few points and try to do some damage. You end up getting thrashed on the court by him because he's older, bigger and has more experience than you. Then you put it in your mind that you're going to get better. You're going to practice every day just so you can get better. This is what it was like for VSU forward, Saadiq Muhammad.

Muhammad is originally from Flint, Michigan, but his parents moved to Savannah, Georgia, when he was an infant for the warm weather. When the senior lived at home, he lived with both his parents, five sisters and an older brother.

"I was inspired to play basketball because I started growing tall," Muhammad said. "My older brother also played basketball, and he beat me in it a lot."

Muhammad's basketball career didn't start out well.

"When I was in sixth grade, I tried out and got cut," Muhammad said.

Even though he was upset at not making the team, Muhammad practiced every day until seventh grade tryouts, when he made the team.

By ninth grade Muhammad had blossomed into a star on the court. He was able to dunk, and he made the varsity team. By the end of his senior year of high school, Muhammad earned a number of scholarships and won the state championship.

"Basketball has taken me a lot of places as far as opportunities; getting to see places I never thought I would see and getting to meet people I never thought I would meet," Muhammad said.

After high school, Muhammad started college out at Savannah State University.

"I loved it, but I was too distracted," Muhammad said. "I needed to focus on my academics and just work on being a better person. VSU has allowed me to do that."

Muhammad said his family were the people that always pushed him to do great.

"I always remember where I come from; not where I'm going," Muhammad said. "That's what motivates me."

While Muhammad said he gets along with everyone, he said Justin Simon and Marquise Simuels two teammates that he's close with.

"We push each other at practice," said forward Justin Simon. "Saadiq is a natural born leader. He's been a great leader for the team and there's no one that can stop him in the league. I'm very proud of him."

Muhammad leads the Gulf South Conference in field goal percentage with .607. He's also 12th in blocks with 18 and 13th in rebounds with 126.

Muhammad, who's an international business major, plans to continue playing basketball overseas after graduating from VSU. After he can no longer play, he said he plans to start a business overseas.

"I could see myself living overseas, but I'm not sure yet," Muhammad said. "I'm just going with the flow."

The team is currently at the top of the Gulf South Conference with a 17-3 overall record, and a 12-2 conference record. Muhammad will look to help VSU keep its winning streak going against Mississippi College today.

VSU men go streaking against MC

Justin Lewis
Bryce Ethridge

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After defeating West Alabama, the VSU men's basketball team now has now won nine games in a row. The team plans to keep their streak going as they play Mississippi College this Thursday.

"We don't look at it as a 9 game win streak," Helfer said. "We look at it as we won a game, now it's time to play the next."

Helfer said even though VSU beat MC earlier this season, being on the road is always an equalizer.

"Anytime you play on the road, in any conference, the road team can get beat," Helfer said. "Anytime you play at home, you're a little but more comfortable. We've got to make sure we're ready to be the road team

in a very hostile environment."

Helfer said the team needs to get better at screening situations, transition and some conversion defense. He also said the team needed to bring their defensive field goal percentage down.

"We cannot give up easy looks," Helfer said. "Being able to play at different paces is something we can improve upon."

VSU forward, Justin Simon said the team tries not to focus on the big picture and the future.

"We take it one game at a time," Simon said. "The key is to pay attention to the little things. We can overcome any obstacle."

Helfer said the team's best attribute is unselfishness. He says that the team plays with the same mindset as the Golden State Warriors in the NBA.

"Everybody is about the team, and not about themselves," Helfer said.

Simon said that the team "may slip up sometimes, but we have a very mature group."

The Blazers lead the Gulf South Conference in scoring, field goals, and rebounding. Jeremiah Hill received the GSC Player of the Week award after averaging 21 points a game over the last three games for the Blazers. He is third in the GSC in scoring with 377 total points and leads the conference in steals with 44.

Mississippi College has had a polar opposite season. They are in the midst of a six game losing streak. They trail the conference in a lot of major offensive categories.

The Blazers beat the Choctaws on Jan. 21 in Valdosta by 24 points. The final score was 103-79 and Jeremiah Hill finished with 27 points, 6 rebounds, and 7 assists to lead the Blazers in all categories.

The Blazers will be putting their streak on the line against Mississippi College tonight at A.E. Wood Coliseum in Clinton, Mississippi.

SPORTS

National Signing Day VSU signs 31 new players

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VSU Football hasn't been past the second round of the playoffs since 2014 including a loss last fall to the University of North Carolina Pembroke in the first round of the playoffs. Yesterday, VSU added 31 newcomers to the team on National Signing Day in hopes of getting over the hump in 2017.

The coaches' main recruiting goal was to re-tool a defense that intercepted a conference-leading 27 balls, and lost nine seniors to graduation. VSU signed 17 defensive players, including seven linebackers, seven defensive linemen and three defensive backs.

Incoming linebacker, Sam DiRoberto said he chose to play at VSU because of their potential to win a championship. DiRoberto comes from Roswell High School in Roswell, Georgia, where he played in two state championships, but never won.

"The competition there is phenomenal, not to mention they play in one of the best Division II conferences," DiRoberto said. "I want to win a national championship and that is what is expected at Valdosta State."

Defensive end Tyler Blue, who is coming off of a AAAAAA state championship with the Valdosta Wildcats, will provide even more depth for the Blazer defense. Blue said he chose VSU because the coaching staff treated him like family.

"They treated me like I was already on the team," Blue said. "The coaching staff took me in and treated me like a son or a brother. They also have a really tight defense."

VSU also focused on the trenches while on the recruiting trail. Thirteen linemen signed to play in Tiletown. Six of the 13 offensive players who signed were offensive linemen.

Evan Pulawski, an offensive lineman from Bradenton, Florida, signed with VSU out of Iowa Central Community College. He said the coaches were a big reason he chose Valdosta.

"I was familiar with Coach Bell from him recruiting me while I was in high school, and he was at Jacksonville State," Pulawski said. "I've always thought he was a great Coach with a very high football IQ, and I can't say enough nice things about [Offensive Line Coach Jeremy] Darveau. He has my utmost respect and is a great offensive line coach."

The rest of the signees consisted of four wide receivers, one quarterback, one running back, one tight end and one long snapper.

Wesley Veal, a wide receiver out of Valdosta High, said the players impressed him when he visited the team.

"The players [at VSU] are like a brotherhood," Veal said. "At my official visit, they were all pushing it, and they hold each other accountable, which I really like. VSU's offense reminds me a lot of my junior year at VHS. They like throwing the ball around, but when they can't, they run the ball and they are very successful."

Veal will be joining an offense with the best pass yards per game in the conference with 331. However, the team lost three of its best wide receivers in Xay Howard, Damien Strange and Donovan Bolden to graduation.

Many of the Blazers' top producers in 2016 were upperclassmen. The team lost 13 starters to graduation, so the door will be open to freshmen in camp to earn some playing time.

VSU will be looking to these signees to add to the winning tradition that has been present throughout VSU Athletics. Only time will tell.



Kyle Dawson/THE SPECTATOR


Tyler Blue signs his letter of intent to play football at VSU. Blue only played one year of high school football at VHS.




Kyle Dawson/THE SPECTATOR

Wesley Veal signed to play wide receiver at VSU. Veal, who is from Valdosta, played hurt for most of last season.


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