

Headlight

Written by the students of Marblehead High School for our school and community
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Friday Frenzy

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Senior

Dubbed the shopping day of the year, Black Friday has become synonymous with rioting and crime, sometimes even death. Unfortunately, 2011 has been no different. All across the country stories of violence, arrest, and riots cropped up over the news the day after Thanksgiving. The most popular story occurred in California where a woman was arrested for pepper spraying 20 customers before she turned herself in. Her goal: an Xbox 360. After hearing this story, it got me thinking.

What is wrong with Black Friday? Over the last few years, people have been trampled to death, stabbed, and punched over what, a half priced DVD player? People are essentially risking their lives to save \$20 on a coffeemaker. Stores add fuel to the fire (I'm looking at you, Best Buy) by advertising these "door-buster" "must have" items for the holiday season. These midnight openings are to blame. People show up sleep deprived and anxious armed to the teeth with sales flyers. They aren't

risking a night of sleep just to find out that their half price "Call of Duty" is sold out. My prediction is that in a few years, Thanksgiving will be called "the day before Black Friday." Thanks to Black Friday, we will have our turkey and stuffing under the neon lights at Wal-Mart. Families will be camping out at 4 in the afternoon Thanksgiving Day to be the first in line at J.C. Penny, waiting for their "Buy 2 get 1 free" cashmere sweater sale.

If this is how Black Friday is going to be, we should have a universal set of rules and guidelines to guarantee a successful Black Friday. No military goes into a war without a tactical plan.

The only way to secure the "NCIS" Season 8 Box Set is with a standard issue bullet proof vest, police nightstick, and a pair of Nikes. You aren't getting that TV with a pair of snow boots on. Map out the store a few days early; you don't want to get into the store just to ask a sales person where the televisions are. Also, recruit a squad. Grandpa Joe is no good, he has a bad leg. Pick cousin Bobby, he runs track so you want him on your team. After making a map, give it an operation name- every good military operation has a title. The

Allies weren't storming the beaches of Normandy without calling it Operation Overlord. For this to work, you need a strong title, for example "Operation Toshiba." Next, you have to remind yourself that it's a battlefield out there. You are not going shopping at Target, you are the target. The music section has become a war zone. If you want that Taylor Swift CD, you have to check your corners. Those who just run aimlessly are bound to get trampled. Finally, get there early. It's okay to miss dessert with the family if you're on your way to save \$75 on a new washing machine.

If you get there past the opening, go home. You're wasting your time, unless you expect to be part of the cleanup crew the morning after, sorting through 1/2 price DVD's of "Snow Dogs" and "Stuart Little." The morning after looks like a WMD went through that store. The chance of finding any "survivors" is slim. One last note of advice, don't trust anyone and never make friends with the person in front of you. It's going to come down to them or you getting "Let's Rock Elmo." Never let it be them.

BCS Mired in Controversy-Again

Matt Lieberson
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This past Sunday, the BCS announced the National Title Game on January 9th in the Superdome would be LSU-Alabama II. Many college football fans were clamoring for a new opponent to step up to take on the Tigers, specifically Oklahoma State. But the BCS computers spoke, and they came to the consensus that Alabama, despite their prior loss to LSU, was the better football team and was more deserving of getting a title shot.

The issue isn't the decision itself. Looking at Alabama's body of work, they had an unbelievable year. The issue, though, is the fact that it was up to computers to make this decision. The BCS has always been the most maligned system of playoffs in sports, and not without good reason. In 2001, Miami got hopped over by Florida State, even though they had the same record and Miami had already beaten Florida State. In 2004, three teams (LSU, Oklahoma, and USC) were all 12-1 going into the bowl selection. This was before the National Title system, so the Sugar

Bowl was the de facto title game. USC was the odd team out, and after their victory over Michigan in the Rose Bowl and LSU's win over Oklahoma in the Sugar Bowl, the polls were split over a champion between LSU and USC. With so many difficult decisions that aren't up to teams to play and decide, it is finally time to move away from the BCS system.

The BCS is a system that is inherently flawed. First off, there are things that computers can't keep track of. Oklahoma State's loss came the night after the school lost two women's basketball coaches in a plane crash. They still lost in double OT. There are circumstances that have a human element. Second, it doesn't leave a major part of the postseason up to the players. Part of the reason March Madness is so exciting is due to all of the upsets. With the BCS in place, no intrigue is involved in who will play in the national title game. In some years, there is a clear-cut top two teams that deserve to play. Last year, Auburn and Oregon were the two undefeated teams who deserved a national title shot. But in other instances, there is no clear top two teams, and the best way to determine the champion would be

playing out more games.

Now, I'm not in favor of a full eight-team playoff. There are rarely eight college football teams deserving of national title shots. Personally, I like a four team plus-one system. In this system, four teams would play in BCS bowls, #1 vs. #4 and #2 vs. #3. The following weekend, the winners of each of those games would play each other. This is a sort of compromise with a BCS system, as it allows more teams a shot at a national title. Looking specifically at this year, this plus-one idea is especially intriguing. The games would shake out to be LSU vs. Stanford, and Oklahoma State vs. Alabama. We could see how Andrew Luck stacks up against LSU's vaunted defense, as well as Brandon Weeden of Oklahoma State against Alabama's traditional powerhouse defense. This potential system allows for the best teams in the country to control their own destiny.

But, instead, we are stuck with our current system. The SEC fans are jumping with joy, as they get their SEC teams in a SEC-located title game. The rest of the nation, though, isn't so pleased. Maybe, sooner or later, college football will get it right.

Schools, Homework, and Our Race to Nowhere

Alex Keraï
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I saw a documentary last year that was quite enthralling. I hadn't yet entered high school and therefore had not experienced the workload that was about to be shoved onto my back (figuratively and literally) so to me the movie was an eye-opener to what I might be experiencing next year. Three months later I began my freshman year at Marblehead High and began to brace myself for the amount of work that I would have (inside and outside of class) but I was not prepared to be met with such a large amount.

The documentary was by a filmmaker who had a teenaged child who also would complain about workload. This prompted this filmmaker to question our education standards. It was called Race to Nowhere and it has become

quite a popular film. As clinical psychologist Dr. Wendy Mogel is quoted saying in the film, "I'm afraid that our children are going to sue us for stealing their childhood." Another person is quoted saying, "What's happening these days is that kids aren't getting a chance to find out what they love to do." As the film suggests, maybe by cutting back on homework, kids will be able to embrace life more freely.

For me, along with others that I have spoken with, I am consistently sleeping past my alarm. Maybe it's that I didn't get even close to enough sleep the night before because I was up late doing homework, or maybe it's that my mind is racing towards the next day and the various homework assignments I will receive and the tests I have to prepare for. Either way, it's not a happy feeling. Each night I have math homework, some Biology notes, some

Latin papers, and maybe a section or two of World Cultures with some reading thrown in from English and vocabulary from French. That's around five hours (sometimes more depending on the notes) of homework and then I still have to tack on after-school activities which can keep me at school past 4 o'clock. Each school day begins at 7:50 and from there it is constant classes and work until 2:30 when school ends. However, after school there are many clubs to join and go to, band practices, musical rehearsals, sports practices, and other extracurricular activities like Bridging Lives that may run late into the evening. I'm not the only one who feels like this, I see kids everyday doing homework during lunch, other classes, and whenever they have a free moment (for instance: a fire drill). This isn't healthy or good for us in the long run.

The week of Novem-

ber 17, 2011 was a turning point for schools in the North Shore. Swampscott ruled that there would be no homework once a month on a Wednesday. It was a small step towards achieving nirvana in the way of school homework. Vicki Abeles, the filmmaker who created Race to Nowhere, applauded the action. As her website for ending homework - www.endtherace.org - reads: "Research studying the correlation between homework and academic achievement consistently reveals a surprising fact: Most homework doesn't increase learning, raise test scores, or prepare students for academic success. On the contrary, homework often emphasizes performance at the cost of sleep, friendship, family time, play, physical activity, and health. And it contributes to an epidemic of sedentary and anxious young Americans ill-prepared for the 21st century." In

retrospect, this is a huge step into making our neck of the woods a 'city upon a hill' for other schools in the United States. With this we can change things.

I consider a time when homework will be lenient and will drive in points without just making you busy. I await a time when I will be able to actually have 'free time'! Between two and two and a half hours of homework should be the average each night. I also wait for a time where other subjects other than the core ones will be appreciated equally with the core subjects. For instance, how many musicians, innovators, filmmakers, actors, composers, directors, artists, television hosts, writers, athletes, and inventors can you name compared with the number of scientists, mathematicians, history buffs, or writers that you can name? It is the people who have the time, the energy, and the ideas to think dif-

ferently that progress our civilization; it is with them that we move forward. I am not saying that homework is very bad. All that I am saying is that a cut-back might be necessary to instill a creative voice in many people who might not have had one due to their work overload.

Steve Jobs once wrote about these people who change the world in an ad campaign for his company, and it read: "While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do." I ask you to just remember that if it weren't for the crazy ones, we wouldn't be where we are: having electricity, music, iPods, computers, houses made from the materials that they are now without the people who thought: "Maybe this might work..."

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