the experiences it offers. But just as three years of Friday-night outings with my roommates, intersession trips, lectures in Sever 113, and conversations in the Barker Center have become the Harvard experience I speak of fondly and enthusiastically during my tours, late-night tears over a project started too late, a heart too easily hurt, or other, smaller, dreams not realized have also made it easier for me to speak of Harvard critically, even dismissively. Though I now know the joys of a Harvard education, I also know its occasional sorrows and frequent frustrations. And just as I certainly understand having an unrelenting desire to go to one’s college of choice, I also now see a certain pointlessness in such passion.

This is why I wanted my Chinese students to think about both Michael Phelps and Jay Gatsby, and why I give admission tours—I want to share with these 16-, 17-, and 18-year-olds what it’s taken me three years to learn. Getting into Harvard turned out to be easy and, in a sense, unimportant. It’s growing up that’s been the challenge.

Berta Greenwald Ledecky Undergraduate Fellow
Brittney Moraski ’09 is working on her history and literature senior thesis, about mental health in post-World War II America, and starting her job search.

FIELD HOCKEY, though relatively unknown in the United States, is a global game, and Francine Polet ’09—who grew up in Malaysia and the Netherlands before going to high school in Hong Kong—has seen styles as diverse as the people who play them. Europeans favor a quick game, with hard shots and fast passing. Asian players, particularly those from India and Pakistan, boast unparalleled stick skills and deadly trick shots. The American game is based on fitness: outrunning and outlasting the competition.

Despite picking up inflections from around the world, says Harvard head coach Sue Caples, Polet remains identifiably Dutch in her style—especially in the zip she puts into her passes. “I have a hard hit,” says Polet, “so distributing the ball has always been one of the things I feel is my strength.” She plays sweeper, the final defender in front of the goal—a “lock on the back door,” as she puts it. (In addition to a sweeper, Harvard’s starting lineup includes a goalie and three defenders, midfielders, and forwards apiece, a relatively common formation.) From Polet’s deep vantage point she can survey the whole field and pass to open teammates, ideally defusing the offense’s pressure and jump-starting a counterattack.

Polet is also responsible for marshaling the defense in front of her. She uses what Caples calls her “good game-sense and vision” to assign teammates to opposing forwards. “You’re constantly thinking and communicating and also trying to play your own game,” says Polet. “It’s a lot at the same time, not just for me, but for everybody. Even when I step up, I expect the next person behind me to be telling me, ‘Go to the ball,’ or ‘Stay on your man.’” The Crimson defense has been the Ivy’s third stingiest during the past two years, allowing only 19 goals in 14 league games. (The team tied for fourth in 2007, and for second in 2006.)

Polet sometimes finds herself ahead of her defensive line because, given the opportunity (such as an intercepted pass), she dashes up the field. “I like attacking,” she says. “My coach always tries to pull me back. She thinks I press too high.” Caples concurs in part, but at other times encourages her sweeper’s aggressiveness because it gives the team a temporary advantage in midfield. In the past two years, Polet has scored three goals and dished out six assists, making her the second-highest-scoring defender on the team.

Polet also plays a vital role on “short corners,” scoring chances that arise when the referee calls a minor foul near the net. Major fouls result in point-blank penalty shots, but short corners are trickier af-
Soccer Summary

Men’s Soccer
The Crimson (4-3, 1-0 Ivy) lost three games on the road in early season play, but was undefeated on its home turf. Senior Michael Fucito (see “Back on the Field,” September-October 2008, page 65) leads the team in goals, followed closely by Andre Akpan ’10. But it was Kwaku Nyameke ’10 who secured the team’s first Ivy win, 1-0 against Yale, when he blasted a loose ball off a free kick into the Yale net.

Women’s Soccer
The women booters (4-3-3, 1-1-0 Ivy) have been paced this season by freshman phenomenon Melanie Baskind, who leads the team in points. Against Yale, which the Crimson defeated 3-1, Baskind scored the game-winning goal and added two assists.

Bumps in the Road

For the fourth time in the 15-year reign of head coach Tim Murphy, the football team entered the Ivy League lists as defending champions. The 2007 squad—like those of 1997, 2001, and 2004—had gone unbeaten in Ivy play, finishing with a 37-6 demolition of previously undefeated Yale. This year’s preseason media poll picked the archrivals as co-favorites to win the league (followed at a distance by Brown and Penn), but both hit speed bumps in their first Ivy outings: Harvard lost a 24-22 squeaker at Brown, while Yale was upset by an unheralded Cornell team, 17-14.

The Brown game, played in a downpour, was a hard-fought affair in which a few inches of soggy turf proved decisive. With Harvard behind, 24-16, and time running out, the deft passing of quarterback Chris Pizzotti ’08 (’09) generated a 70-yard drive that advanced the ball to the Bears’ three-yard line. Backup quarterback Liam O’Hagan ’08 (’09) then threw a scoring pass to receiver Matt Luft ’10, cutting Brown’s lead to 24-22. A two-point conversion would have evened the score, and with only 1:03 to play would almost surely have forced an overtime tie-breaker. But a roughing-the-quarterback penalty put the ball on the one-and-a-half-yard line, limiting Har...