John Harvard's Journal

SPORTS

Triple Play

For Quinn Hoffman, baseball is the family business.

Quinn Hoffman, a Harvard freshman on a 13-game hitting streak, stepped up to home plate at Fenway Park.

Batting second in the 2017 Beanpot baseball championship against Boston College, he looked out at the pitcher’s mound, where his father, Trevor Hoffman, had pitched in the 1999 All-Star Game. Beyond the mound, the shortshop was standing where his uncle, Glenn, had played with the Red Sox from 1980 to 1987.

Now, with the first pitch, it was his turn. “I was just able to get a good pitch, and put a good swing on it,” he recalls, “and I didn’t realize I was going to be able to hit it out.”

The ball shot off Hoffman’s bat, over left field, toward Fenway’s Green Monster—and cleared the 37-foot wall for his first college home run.

“To be in a place so special to Boston, and to be able to hit a bomb there, is something pretty special,” he recalls. “I was running around the bases with a smile on my face, like I was in Little League again.”

The son and nephew of major-league ballplayers earned his own reputation as a standout last season. Hoffman, the Crimson mental architecture. Some psychologists play with those few remaining philosophers who say that there’s something transcendent about us. They claim that our Selves cannot be found in our brains. Others like to think about people as computers: our brain is hardware, our mind software. Maybe some people think like physicists because nature built their CPUs a certain way. Maybe people from different countries had different programs installed in their heads by their parents.

The brain-as-computer analogy seems dehumanizing to me. That, or I don’t know how to process information the way I should. One night back in freshman spring I tried studying in Lamont, the main undergraduate library, and a familiar restlessness returned to my body. I fidgeted and walked around. I accomplished nothing. I noticed everyone else. They sat in their cubicles, in rows and rows, typing and paper-shuffling and nose-sniffling and eyebrow-furrowing and draining coffee cups: the small things that all sum up to the steam of academic concentration. Perhaps, inside themselves, they struggled, too. I could not see this. I saw them sit down and just do it: whatever they had to do. I left Lamont, thinking of the red pods in The Matrix films where all of humanity is plugged in and bubbled into energy for maleficent artificial intelligences. And I thought of server-rooms in the basements of big corporations, each little computer whirling its CPU fans and hard drives to become fantasy thoughts that fly through the air into our little cellphones, on which we type up our own small fantasies.

Psychology is a good choice for me, since I can’t seem to avoid seeing mind-body problems in the form of college students working in libraries. I care about people, I care about minds. Psychology is a useful way of organizing this care. It is now sophomore spring. Schoolwork still bothers me (midterms, deadlines; morning classes), but at least I’m now anxious and interested instead of just anxious. The psychology department decides that I need to take Science of Living Systems 20, “Introduction to Psychological Science,” before I can do anything else in William James. Our lectures on Monday afternoons are fun, though a little long. On other days, we have small sections led by teaching fellows. My first one of the semester is held in Lamont. On my way to the second-floor classroom, I pass by the rows and rows of other students plugged into cubicles who...
Near Misses

The basketball teams fall short of the NCAAs.

They each had their shot. After a season that yielded some strong wins but also unfortunate losses for the men's and women's basketball teams, both came up just short of reaching the NCAA tournament.

For the men, the shot at the NCAAs was literal: with five seconds left in the Ivy League tournament championship game and his team trailing Penn 68–65, Justin Bassey ’20 hoisted a three-point shot that would have tied the score. It caromed off the backboard, but the Crimson grabbed the rebound, leading to a corner three-