LOUIS' LISTS – WORLD CUP EDITION

Which World Cup identity resonates with each faculty member?

by Louis Marchand '28

As we traded our awe of Cistercian's finest faculty members for that of the world's finest "football" players over the summer, a question sparked in my delicate mind: which World Cup identities resonate with each faculty member of our beloved schools? Here's my take on who some of our favorite faculty members most resembled at this year's FIFA World Cup.

1. Mr. Mehen / Ousmane Dembele - Mr. Mehen is one of the few people in my life who has accumulated an immense amount of social recognition (or what the kids call "aura") without, at least from the outside perspective, any effort at all. He pours a remarkable amount of effort into his class and, as far as anyone can tell, none whatsoever into his aura, which only keeps growing. It is an extremely mysterious phenomenon, but one that I also noticed in the French Ballon d'Or winner. While Mr. Mehen gains his by standing casually in the Form V classrooms, Dembele earns his "aura" through quiet domination and, on occasion, an admirable celebration. Oh, and if you think about it, their hair styles are oddly similar.

2. Mr. Novinski / Rodri - If you were to ask both of these stellar personalities how much enjoyment they find in foolish behavior, it would be unsurprising if they were to answer with "The Mbappe Special." That is, they know nothing worse than foolishness. Two all-business rockstars who run a tight ship.

3. French Class / Cape Verde - An almost candid event for what some would call an "unlucky" freshman is learning that French class is nowhere near the abysmal GPA-destroyer that many advertise it as, but is instead the epitome of a class that displays an immense amount of both linguistic mastering and hilarity. The memories made in that tightly packed classroom are ones that can be made nowhere else. Just as French class was and is given a bad rep, Cape Verde was counted out from the start at this year's World Cup. However, through the fantastic efforts of stars like Sidny Cabral and Vozinha (whose impact, in my humble opinion, does not come close to Madame's), they managed to become the shock of the entire tournament. So, to the incoming freshmen who have stumbled upon the gem that French class is, cherish those moments, and don't let the uneducated words of your espanol-learning classmates deter you from doing so.

COSTA RICA

A summer mission trip of Spanish, service, and black beans

by Charlie Kane '27



Ardere et Lucere - Students bring the Cistercian spirit to Costa Rica

Costa Rica was everything I could have wanted out of a mission trip. Not only did I have the opportunity to put into practice the three years of Spanish classes I took, but I also made many new friends, served an incredible community, and grew closer to God.

Over ten days, my group spent time painting the outside of the main dining building, assisting in English lessons at the nearby elementary school, and visiting the houses of people all over the town of Santa Maria. One weekend, we even attended the confirmation ceremony for many of the Costa Rican youth in the area, followed by a meal and an inclusive game of soccer on the nearby field. We also spent lots of time tasting and learning about the rich coffee industry that powers the nation, and participating in the consecrations of houses to celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

To any freshman, sophomore, or junior reading this, I cannot recommend signing up for this trip enough. I guarantee that if you ask any Cistercian student who has gone on this trip in the past, they will share many other stories about the trip and urge you to participate as well. Just make sure you can handle black beans with every meal!

Important Dates

AUG 18	Opening Ceremonies (Noon Dismissal)	**AUG 28**	Football @ Coram Deo Flower Mound
AUG 21	Back to School Bash	**AUG 29**	XC @ Norbuck Park
AUG 22	Home XC Meet	**SEP 4**	Football vs. St. Mark's (Freshmen Baptism)
AUG 22	Freshman Mixer	**SEP 5**	XC @ Denton

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WORLD CUP IN DALLAS

What the world's biggest tournament brought to North Texas

by Ewan Dilley '29



Kickoff in Dallas — AT&T Stadium under FIFA branding during the tournament

Crazy Europeans chasing us out of bars, FIFA branding all over North Texas, a natural grass pitch, and, possibly most surprising of all, no Cowboy-defeating sun in AT&T - excuse me - Dallas Stadium? No one can argue that the World Cup brought a lot to Dallas, many things both good and bad. From Messi insanity to French heartbreak, this summer was certainly eventful.

The Dallas experience. Many foreigners (including my own Irish family) have never heard of our lovely city. When Europeans think of Texas, they see cowboys toting large guns and somehow develop a cult-like obsession with Buc-ee's (which is understandable). However, let's think about what the World Cup brought to Dallas. Nine games of one of the most watched events ever are... a lot. It brought international attention and spectacle to North Texas and throngs of fans.

Before even arriving at the game, many had to contend with the most feared word in our dictionary - traffic. Getting to the game was very difficult, not helped by Dallas's woeful lack of decent public transportation, which caught many of our international guests by unwelcome surprise. Upon arriving at AT&T (hopefully this doesn't get us copyrighted), I, along with hundreds of thousands of other fans, was met with many stark changes. There was none of the usual AT&T branding, which so often surrounds the stadium. Signs were replaced with FIFA and "WC26," and Cowboys' logos were nowhere to be found.

Even more surprising (and controversial) was the covering-up of the large windows on the west side of the stadium. This has been a subject of debate for a long time, as the sun through those windows has resulted in NFL fans overheating, and the dropping of a potentially game-changing TD pass by CeeDee Lamb. Jerry Jones refused to cover it up all NFL season but has now seemed to change his mind. Only time will tell what could come of that.

The games Dallas got. Some of the best teams in the world played crucial matches in Dallas, none less than the semifinal between defensive stalwarts Spain and tournament favorites France. In a surprising turn of events, Spain won 2-0 in dominant fashion and went on to win the whole tournament. Some considered it the best game of the tournament, and it remains a favorite of World Cup attendees in Dallas.

Dallas also got its dose of Messi magic, witnessing a 2-0 win by Argentina over Austria. Though only a group-stage game, it brought a sea of blue and white to AT&T and frantic shouts for the GOAT of football (arguments not accepted at this time). Overall, Dallas was not pushed aside and used for small games, as unfortunately happened to some other host cities. It got its fair share of marquee matches, and the economy received a noticeable boost, as did the traffic on I-30.

Watching the World Cup in 2022 from our classrooms was certainly a fun experience, but all the way over in Qatar, it felt a world away. This summer, it was in the backyard of Dallas residents. The international attention and love from visiting fans changed the city and put it on the global map. Four years after seeing the World Cup thousands of miles away, it came to us.

> Four years after seeing the World Cup thousands of miles away, it came to us.

CROSS COUNTRY LOOKS TO CLIMB

After an all-time best third-place finish, the Hawks target SPC 3A

by Rishi Gopal '27



Podium Finish — three Hawks after the race

This year's Cross Country season will be one to remember for Cistercian (mark my words). The Hawks look to take on the SPC 3A division after an all-time best third-place finish last season. Additionally, with the re-ranking of both Awty International School and John Cooper to the 4A division, the Hawks have a greater advantage. The team will watch out for a new 3A school, The Military Institute, who sports some speedy lads.

Led by senior captains Will Oliver and Rishi Gopal, the Hawks will make their stand as a formidable opponent to opposing teams. Oliver, who finished third at last year's Southwest Preparatory Conference championships with a time of 16:35, will look to improve this season after spending his summer running at high altitude in Taos, NM. Gopal will strive to improve on his PR of 18:11 (also from SPC last season).

This year, Coach Harris and Officer Edwards have swiftly implemented a consistent and comprehensive training regimen. Monday and Wednesday will be long aerobic runs, while Tuesday and Thursday will contain track workouts, hills, and other speedier training forms. Coach additionally has begun enforcing quick sprints, or strides, after each long run to loosen the legs and open the chest.

In Cross Country, the heartbeat is everything. Training well allows easy runs to be sustained at lower heart rates, allowing harder paces to be achieved. These sprints (usually 50-150 meters) elevate the heart rate and prepare the team for the opening of races, in which everyone rushes out the gate at a quick pace, before settling down.

Furthermore, the team's practices will involve aerobic, easy, threshold, and race-pace workouts. Any good team must mix in workouts of each variety to improve fitness. For example, take a gym session: if you do the same exercise every day, say curls, your bicep strength and size will drastically increase. However, all other muscles - quads, triceps, lats, etc. - will remain constant. To gain fitness, the whole body must be properly engaged at all times. This is why people use the PPL, Full Body Split, or Arnold Split. Running is no different. There has to be a healthy combination of 60-100 minute easy runs, 45-80 minute aerobic runs, 15-30 minute threshold runs, and 400-3,000 meter race-pace runs.

Coach Harris, an unofficial dietician and health enthusiast, has provided the team with resources and tips to improve their efficiency and skills off the track. Some notable practices include 40-60 minute bike rides to "flush the lactic out" (AKA "the burn" you feel in your body when you've hit a certain limit - XC is all about pushing that limit), sodium bicarbonate smoothies, and juicing fruits to clear out the bodily systems. Whether the boys utilize these options is up to them, but one thing is clear: Coach Harris is a guide, mentor, and leader for the team.

Teachers, please forgive XC boys for running late to class in the morning, slyly devouring a muffin or smoothie during a Chemistry lecture, or simply for falling asleep. We promise we care!

Look forward to some cool months ahead!

Rishi Gopal is a captain of the cross country team, and is therefore thoroughly biased and eager to stay on Coach Harris' good side.

> In Cross Country, the heartbeat is everything.

Season Snapshot

- Target: SPC 3A division
- Last year: all-time best 3rd-place finish
- Captain Oliver's PR: 16:35 (SPC)
- Captain Gopal's PR: 18:11 (SPC)
- Watch for: The Military Institute
- Coaches: Harris and Officer Edwards

HAWKS FOOTBALL 2026 SEASON PREVIEW

Preparing students for the best games on the 2026 slate

by Caedmon Hendricks '28



Offseason Grind — Hawks put in work in the weight room over the summer



In Formation — the Hawks line up for an agility drill

Some of the top games the Hawks will play this year:

vs. Greenhill (Scrimmage) — HOME, Aug. 21, 7:30 p.m. Greenhill beat Cistercian for their only win last year, and the Hornets seem to be returning most of their team. While not a full game, this will be another metric by which the potential of this team can be measured. If the Hawks play a physical game and keep it close, the coaches and fanbase will have high expectations for the rest of the season.

@ Coram Deo Flower Mound — Aug. 28, 7:00 p.m. The Hawks' regular season opens on the road as the 2026 campaign begins in earnest against the Lions of Coram Deo Flower Mound. My personal favorite matchup, this one will be physical, tight, and spirited.

vs. St. Mark's — Sep. 4, 7:30 p.m. The Rivalry returns to home turf as the Hawks take on St. Mark's, and it doubles as Freshmen Baptism. The Lions' only conference win was a 21-14 victory over ESD, a foe the Hawks will face later in conference play. A win here would definitely have many Hawks fans dreaming of a playoff run come November. Home-field advantage will have a say in this matchup, and if the Hawk faithful show up loud and proud and stay engaged, the odds tip in favor of the home team.

vs. Bishop Dunne — Sep. 11, 7:00 p.m. An offensively challenged Bishop Dunne squad makes the trip to Hawk Field, where Cistercian looks to control the trajectory of the game. Bishop Dunne scored only 44 points last season and went winless in nine contests. This game appears to be a momentum and morale booster — or a chance for bench players to gain valuable in-game experience if things go well early.

Vs. St. Stephen's — Sep. 18, 7:00 p.m. St. Stephen's makes the trek from Austin in mid-September, and the battle should be well worth watching. Not a part of any football conference, the Spartans went 7-1 last year, losing to future Hawk opponent TMI Episcopal 60-26. As the Hawks gain more experience and confidence, they may be able to play a close game, but the odds of winning look to be a coin flip at best. Prove me wrong, boys. Please prove me wrong on this one.

Vs. Episcopal School of Dallas (SPC) — Oct. 2, 7:00 p.m. Relocating to 3A, ESD looks to get back into playoff contention, and after beating Trinity Valley 21-0, it looks like they could be a threat to the Hawks' playoff hopes. Winless in 4A play last year, the Eagles are desperate to establish their dominance somewhere. At the same time, the Hawks are trying to regain the glory days of the 2023 campaign, so this one may simply come down to who wants it more.

@ Trinity Valley School (SPC) — Oct. 16, 7:00 p.m. The Trojans of Trinity Valley look to be one of the more lopsided teams the Hawks will face this year. Many key defensive figures will be missing from their roster, but their offensive threat shows no signs of abating. In all likelihood, they will be returning their star QB from last year, who threw for 22 touchdowns in 2025. If the Trojans can piece together a good defense, it would take nothing short of the Hawks' best game in the last two to three years to pull off a win. It can be done, but it's a tough mountain to climb, especially on the road in Fort Worth.

vs. St. Andrew's (SPC — Homecoming Game) — Oct. 23, 7:00 p.m. And now the one you have all been waiting for — the St. Andrew's Highlanders. Yes, bring the confetti cannons; you'll be using a lot of them. The only team the Hawks have beaten twice in the last two years, the Highlanders bring many of their top players back this year. The good news is, we've beaten them before. Handily. Again, not to be too confident, but I'm anticipating an offensive explosion for Homecoming.

THE ODYSSEY

Nolan's retelling exceeds astronomically high expectations

by Grant Birdsong '27



Now Playing — the theatrical poster for Christopher Nolan's The Odyssey

photo by Universal Pictures

Walking into the theater with friends on opening night of The Odyssey, the atmosphere was pulsing with excitement. As a Christopher Nolan fanboy, I had been looking forward to The Odyssey for well over a year, and I was caught up in the fervor. Thankfully, The Odyssey exceeded my astronomically high expectations, providing an entertaining and thought-provoking retelling of Homer's epic, even with some notable missteps.

Nolan's uncharacteristic misses involve casting choices and historical inaccuracies. The first major issue of the film arrives when Elliot Page's character Sinon (not in the original poem) comes running onto the scene. Having Page in the role after so much surrounding controversy takes the viewer out of the film at exactly the moment it needs them locked in.

The star power of the rest of the cast also poses a difficulty for some viewers to become fully immersed in the world of ancient Greece. For a while, viewers might feel like they are watching Jason Bourne try to get home to Catwoman and Spider-Man and then kill Batman. Of course, as many reviewers have noted, there are also issues with anachronistic costumes, inauthentic armor, and the jarring use of Viking longships to represent ancient Greek vessels.

Thankfully, Nolan's moviemaking genius still shines through. Christopher Nolan famously detests using CGI, so every scene felt more "real" than most other movies today. They actually filmed Odysseus and his crew during storms in the sea. They had a giant cyclops puppet. They built an actual Trojan horse, and filmed scenes inside of it. They got actual 7-foot-plus people to play the Laestrygonians. The sack of Troy was one of the best sequences in any Nolan movie. If you want to marvel at expert moviemaking magic and cinematography, The Odyssey is must-watch.

But the most thought-provoking aspect of the movie is how Nolan changed both Odysseus and the story itself. In the original poem, Odysseus is portrayed as a classic ancient warrior: sacking cities, sleeping around, and being an overall cunning, dishonest strategist. But in Nolan's retelling, Odysseus seems more remorseful and virtuous in the Christian sense.

Throughout the movie there are constant references to "Zeus's law." This "law" basically required hosts to treat guests with respect, generosity, and honesty. In the movie, Odysseus breaks Zeus's law with his idea for the Trojan horse. But when Odysseus watches the sack of Troy, it's with a sense of regret in his face. He realizes he broke Zeus's law, which will cause irreversible consequences.

We realize the consequences when Telemachus and Penelope discuss the evil "sea people": a group of dangerous barbarians sacking cities and leaving destruction in their wake. When Odysseus finally returns home, he realizes he has to break Zeus's law one more time by killing the suitors. Because Odysseus understands the serious consequences of breaking the law, Odysseus and Penelope decide to exile themselves and leave Telemachus in charge, rather than risk more violence coming to Ithaca. This combination of regret and self-sacrifice makes Odysseus a more complex, Christianized character than he is in the original poem.

Although some conservative commentators critique this movie as "woke," many of Nolan's themes actually portray traditionally conservative values and priorities. The idea that there are principles and laws that, once broken, open the floodgates and can destroy a civilization; the idea that no one should be above those laws: such ideas are inherently "conservative."

Of course, much more could be said about other historical issues, narrative changes, and messaging in Nolan's movie. But to save space, here's a bulleted list of my top pros and cons from The Odyssey.

PROS: All filmed in IMAX. Argos. Menelaus. Matt Damon's performance. Practical effects. Agamemnon. No "actual" gods.

CONS: Length. Historical inaccuracies. Scylla. The "Other Mommy" trailer before the movie.

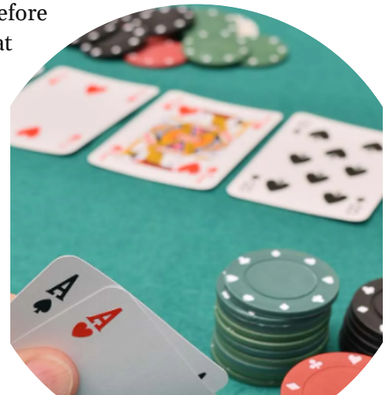
If you want to marvel at expert moviemaking magic and cinematography, The Odyssey is must-watch.

The House Always Wins

How cards, sports betting, and futures trading found a generation of young men

by Grant Birdsong '27

A monk taught me poker. The summer before my first year at Cistercian, I participated in a Cistercian summer camp, which involved "normal" camp activities like eating snow cones, playing games, building with Legos, etc. But one day, some of the monks taught me and my friends how to play poker. As a mere nine-year-old, I had never gambled in my life and immediately loved it. Fast forward to junior year, and my friends and I love our regular poker games. Sometimes we've had them with girls, sometimes with Hungarians, and sometimes with monks.



From Roman soldiers casting lots for the garments of Jesus, to the French game of Poque in the 19th century, to poker tables at Homecoming, games of chance and bluff have always had some type of presence in society. However, over the last few years, there has been a marked increase in gambling. These increases are a mixed bag, to say the least: they help with strategic thinking and friendships, but they also can be highly addictive and lead to adverse side effects. Unfortunately, companies such as DraftKings and Polymarket often promote their addictive product directly to young men, leading to increasing rates of gambling addiction. The increases are seen in three main areas: (1) cards, (2) sports betting, and (3) futures trading.

Games like Texas Hold'em and blackjack have been card gambling staples for centuries. Admittedly, there is little data and research on the increase of card gambling because of how long it has been around. According to a University of Pennsylvania survey, over 2 million men aged 14-22 gamble monthly in online games such as poker. More worrying, however, is the fact that 8 percent of youth have "a gambling problem": by far the most dominant way they gambled was cards.

If you go to almost any social event, there will be poker and/or blackjack tables. The ubiquity of this form of gambling is undeniable, meaning it can often be the most dangerous. Think of it like alcohol: in moderation, when it's legal, it is a neutral and sometimes positive thing for socializing. But what it can lead to, especially if abused, is a serious issue.

Sports betting is also growing at an unprecedented rate. The American sports betting industry posted a record $13.71 billion in 2024 revenue, up from 2023's record of $11.04 billion. In 2025 that revenue grew to almost $17 billion. In 2026 that number is projected to be even higher. These estimates are conservative, and only in the USA. Nearly 1 in 8 boys 11-17 who gambled in the last year bet on sports. At one high school, 74% of underage male students sports bet in the last year. Many use VPNs or similar workarounds for this gambling.

> This is like saying copying someone's test isn't cheating, it's collaborating.

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THE HOUSE ALWAYS WINS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

The prevalence of sports betting in particular is higher in men. Men have gambling-related problems at roughly double the rate of women. These sports betting companies especially target the younger generation. Most of those who bet on sports are under 55, and most of them male. Sports betting itself also leads to addiction: since wide legalization in 2018, there has been a 23% increase in Google searches for gambling addiction resources.

Of course, not all sports betting is bad. A fun wager with a friend, or even placing a small bet on a site like DraftKings, can increase your enjoyment of a game. But if you're going to be obsessed with professional sports-related games, I would recommend a fantasy football league with your friends, not solo betting online.

If you watched any of the World Cup, you probably saw Timothee Chalamet at the dentist listening to Nickelback and trying to say "Kalshi." Or you saw a Polymarket ad where people asked questions, with Kanye's "Runaway" playing in the background. These are two examples of "futures trading" companies. Legally, "futures trading" is technically NOT gambling. The CEO of Kalshi has said that Kalshi has "nothing to do with gambling." This is like saying copying someone's test isn't cheating, it's collaborating.

Three in five users of sites like Polymarket and Kalshi are under 34, with the majority of those men. Because the legal age for futures trading sites is 18, the bar for entry is lower than many other forms of gambling and addictive things. Users under 18 can use VPNs to bet anyway.

The worst part of Polymarket and Kalshi is that the majority of users do not win money. The top 1% of users won 76.5% of all the profits. The top 0.1% alone took around 50% of all profits. These prediction markets also lend themselves to insider trading. For example, President Trump's teleprompter operator allegedly won nearly $100,000 by placing bets on Kalshi on what the president was going to say. This corruption, along with these highly addictive strategies, shows the dangers of Kalshi and Polymarket. It has grown 30x in just one year and is showing no signs of stopping.

At the end of the day, a little betting never hurt anyone. Whether that be a small buy-in for a poker night or a bet on the Cowboys, betting can be a good, social thing. However, with the steep rise of cards, sports betting, and futures trading, "a little betting" quickly becomes a dangerous, harmful addiction. Because these companies market primarily to young men, Cistercian students must be vigilant and wise when it comes to gambling. Just remember: the house always wins.

> Just remember: the house always wins.

By the Numbers

- 8% of youth report a gambling problem
- $13.71B in 2024 US sports betting revenue
- 74% of male students at one high school bet underage
- Top 1% of Polymarket users took 76.5% of profits
- 30x growth for futures trading in one year
- Men face gambling problems at roughly 2x the rate of women
- 3 in 5 Polymarket and Kalshi users are under 34

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