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**March 28, 2019**

The Daily Mississippian

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**Recommended Citation**

The Daily Mississippian, "March 28, 2019" (2019). *Daily Mississippian (all digitized issues)*. 155.  
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THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2019 | VOLUME 107, NO. 88

THE DAILY

# MISSISSIPPIAN

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI | SERVING OLE MISS AND OXFORD SINCE 1911

## Battling Catholic church corruption

As more accusations of child sexual abuse in the Catholic church come to light, Father Joe Tonos of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Oxford reflects on his interactions with accused ex-priest Father Bernard Haddican.

**MAKAYLA STEEDE**  
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Accusations of sexual abuse have rocked the Catholic church since 2002. In August 2018, the scandal intensified following an investigation in Pennsylvania that found more than 300 priests accused of child sexual abuse — leaving at least 1,000 survivors.

This report led to further investigations in Illinois, West Virginia, Texas and Mississippi. On March 19, the Catholic Diocese of Jackson released a list of 37 Mississippi clergy members accused of child sexual abuse. Bernard Haddican, one of the 17 priests accused, was a pastor at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, which neighbors the University of Mississippi campus.

In 1998 and 2002, two accusations against Haddican, who died in 1996, came to light. The period of abuse is suspected to have taken place from 1964 to 1984.

The current St. John's pastor, Joe Tonos, was only an infant when Haddican's term as pastor at St. John's began.

Haddican served as pastor



PHOTO: REED JONES

Over the past several years, many child sex abuse allegations have come to light all over the nation, including some affecting the Oxford community.

of St. John's in Oxford from 1965 to 1968, but Tonos did not become personally acquainted with him until college. From the start, Tonos said, he did not like the pastor.

"I knew him when I was in college because I went to Delta State (University) in Cleveland, and he was the pastor there at the time," Tonos said. "I did not like

him at all."

While attending Delta State, Tonos was the cartoonist for his school paper, and Haddican expressed disdain at the satirical cartoons Tonos drew.

"He found, for whatever reason, the need to tell his parish that I was anti-Catholic because he did not like some of my satire, which I thought

was distasteful," Tonos said. "I just really didn't care for him."

However, it was not until many years later, when Tonos became a pastor himself, that he heard about the accusations of child sexual abuse against Haddican.

Mark Belenchia, founder of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), gave a detailed account of the abuse he suffered from Haddican in a recent interview with The Clarion-Ledger, where he said the abuse began in 1968 in Shelby, where Haddican was a priest at St. Mary's Catholic Church.

While there are only two formal accusations against Haddican, Tonos suspects there may be more survivors who have not come forward.

"I'm pretty sure that there may be more than two, from the way it sounds, but one's enough," Tonos said.

Tonos has not heard of any instances of abuse from Haddican's time at St. John's.

"Most of the stories that talk about his notoriety come from when he served in the Delta," Tonos said. "Not a lot is said about him one way or the other. There are not a lot of parishioners who have a lot

of history here — well, a few, but they do not remember him as much as other priests from the '80s who they have good memories of."

According to Tonos, the parishioners did not say much about the accusations of abuse against Haddican or the other priests when the list was released. However, there were concerns about clergy members' abuse of vulnerable adults.

"People have come and said, 'I was abused by a priest, but I was over 18,'" Tonos said. "Sadly, it looks like some priests were waiting until they turned 18."

Olivia Myers, a sophomore international studies major who regularly attends St. John's, said she is glad the Catholic church is finally punishing those who have perpetuated a culture of silence around abuse in the church for years.

"While this is something that would have been covered up in the past, I believe the Catholic church is trying to complete its own penance by finally calling out these



PHOTO: REED JONES

The current pastor at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church on University Avenue remembers the time he spent with one of his church's former priests, who was named on a list of more than 300 priests who have been accused of sexual assault.



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ANALYSIS

# ASB debate: candidates clash with little to say



PHOTO: REED JONES

At the annual ASB debate, which was held on Monday night, candidates had similar platforms to one another, and some decided to not take firm stances on controversial issues that have surfaced this year. Presidential candidates left to right: Barron Mayfield, Tom Fowlkes, Leah Davis.

**TAYLOR VANCE**  
THEDMOPINION@GMAIL.COM

There was not a clear breakthrough moment at the Associated Student Body executive candidate debate, as most of the candidates chose to stick to their campaign platforms and tout broad promises of transparency, communication, accountability and accessibility, and despite candidates' vows to make ASB a more inclusive government, the stage only saw two minority candidates and one non-Greek candidate, which is far from reflective of the student body's demographics.

**President**

During the presidents' debate, the three candidates — Leah Davis, Tom Fowlkes and Barron Mayfield — didn't seem to differ with each other much on policy, which was largely due to the fact that none of them specified the policies they want to pursue. Instead, the trio of ASB veterans went back and forth reiterating their platforms and former achievements, debating problems on campus and tossing in discussion about the relocation of the Confederate monument from the Circle to the Confederate cemetery. Even though the amount of substance at the debate was low, the candidates offered clear paths forward for the university with enough differences among them to be significant.

**Leah Davis:** Leah Davis, the only non-Greek candidate for any contested position, took

advantage of her experience helping draft the resolution that called for the Confederate monument to be relocated to show she would continue advocating for an inclusive campus. However, when Davis was questioned after the debate about why none of the findings of the Elections Reform Task Force has been implemented, she simply said the work is still being completed.

**Tom Fowlkes:** Tom Fowlkes's charm was undeniable, but it did not compensate for his half-hearted stances on issues. He represents the outsider candidate after staying out of ASB for the past year, and he wants to approach the office with a casual air while placing an emphasis on making ASB less exclusive. During the debate, Fowlkes was the only candidate to remain silent on the issue of the Confederate statue's relocation. When questioned after the debate about why he chose to remain silent, Fowlkes called the compromise "wise" but didn't explicitly indicate whether or not he agreed with the statue's relocation.

**Barron Mayfield:** Barron attempted to brand himself as an advocate for students by claiming that students have long been ignored in conversations that take place on campus, but he failed to say how his plan would be different from previous efforts to make sure students were represented in important campus discussions. As the Senate's current president pro tempore, the highest ranking ASB senator, Mayfield is the inside candidate who wants to

operate student government as efficiently as possible. When Mayfield was questioned about the Confederate statue, he took a firm, if strangely-worded, stance. He called the statue's relocation a "compromise" and brought up the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's campus, saying that students there tore down their Confederate statue, Silent Sam.

**Vice President**

In the vice presidential election, the five candidates — Sarah Doty, Brady Kies, J.R. Riojas, Charlotte Shackelford and Nick Weaver — all share similar backgrounds in ASB. They are currently serving in the ASB Senate together, with Doty, Riojas, Shackelford and Weaver acting as senators and Kies serving as Vice President Walker Abel's chief of staff. The fact that the candidates had relationships with each other prior to campaign season was evident in Monday's debate. They were not afraid to call each other out on specific proposals, and they did, to the entertainment of the audience.

**Sarah Doty:** Doty, one of most critical candidates of the night, said ASB tends to "focus a lot on ASB instead of students." She chose to remain silent on many questions that other candidates answered but rolled her eyes and spoke up to criticize other candidates for parts of their platforms that they could have implemented in ASB without running for a position. Her public speaking chops were evident in her ease on stage.

**Brady Kies:** Kies, the chief of staff to current

ASB Vice President Walker Abel, spoke with a seeming indifference about missteps he made in campaigning and his platform promise to increase training in Senate. He good-naturedly told the audience to support the candidate with the best ideas, not their friends, to enact real change.

**J.R. Riojas:** Riojas was the most theatrical candidate, standing up at times and relating questions back to his campaign acronym "R.E.A.L.," and he had the most ideas, such as creating leadership workshops for youth in the Oxford community and creating Senate seats for international and transfer students. Riojas proved he was a candidate full of robust ideas, but he didn't deviate much from his platform while addressing debate questions.

**Charlotte Shackelford:** Shackelford, the second-highest ranking ASB senator, took on the role of correcting the other candidates and trying to establish herself as the most knowledgeable about Senate policy and procedure. Shackelford did provide new ideas, but they were mostly about creating new positions within ASB to solve ASB problems.

**Nick Weaver:** Weaver kept his positions moderate and even stated that he wants to work toward completing current ASB goals before moving on to new ones. Weaver is the kind candidate who wants to get to know everyone, but he was more passionate about his love for other students on campus than taking a stance on an issue.

THE DAILY  
MISSISSIPPIAN

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Main Number: 662.915.5503  
Business Hours: Monday-Friday,  
8 a.m.-5 p.m.

ISSN 1077-8667

The Daily Mississippian is published Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays in print during the academic year, on days when classes are scheduled. New content is published online seven days a week.

Columns do not represent the official opinions of The University of Mississippi or *The Daily Mississippian* unless specifically indicated.

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Letters should include phone and email contact information so that editors can verify authenticity. Letters from students should include grade classification and major; letters from faculty and staff should include title and the college, school or department where the person is employed.



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# CHURCH

*continued from page 1*

abusive individuals for their behavior," Myers said. "People in the Christian community need to know that Catholics are proactive in their efforts to eliminate remnants of hypocrisy from the past."

With the increase of awareness about abuse within the church, the Catholic Diocese of Jackson is attempting to combat the abuse of child and adult parishioners in Mississippi Catholic churches by requiring mandatory training of those working for the church.

Tonos explained that every person who works in the church, whether they are Catholic or not, has to complete ongoing training.

Though the church has created systems to prevent abuse, scandals continue to surface.

Tonos also wishes that priests were not moved from church to church so often. He believes that having longer terms would increase the accountability of the priests and make it easier for accusations to be handled. Frequent parish reassignments are common in the Catholic Church, and priests are generally moved every one to three years.

"Instability creates a sense of anonymity," Tonos said. "When you're anonymous, you might

get up to no good because you know that you're moving out. Whereas, when you have to stay, you actually have to live and deal with the people and their families."

Tonos urges all survivors of abuse by clergy to contact the police before they talk to their churches.

"Don't go to your church," Tonos said. "Don't go to your priest. Do not call your bishop until you have called law

enforcement. If you're violated with a criminal act like rape or molestation, don't go to the bishop. Go straight to the civil authorities."

In order to help ensure the safety of children in the church, the Office for the Protection of Children at the Catholic Diocese of Jackson also encourages any survivors to reach out to Victims Assistance Coordinator Valerie McClellan at (601)-326-3728.

“Don't go to your priest. Do not call your bishop until you have called law enforcement. If you're violated with a criminal act like rape or molestation, don't go to the bishop. Go straight to the civil authorities.

Joe Tonos  
St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church Pastor



Bernard Haddican, who served as pastor of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Oxford from 1965-1968, was recently accused of child sexual abuse by two survivors who came forward.

PHOTO: REED JONES

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# ARTS & CULTURE MORE

## THE BOOK ISSUE

Oxford filled with prominent writers from across the country yesterday. Edmund White spoke about the books that have inspired him and have fueled a lifetime of writing and speaking about LGBTQ+ issues. Bella St. Amant attended White's session and wrote about it for our cover story today. Along with out-of-towners, the conference also allows locals to show off their work. Tonight, Rex Jones, a filmmaker based on campus, presents his film "La Frontera," centered on a book about a 1,000-mile walk along the U.S.-Mexico border. Read Zach Hollingsworth's preview of that event on the next page.

Liam Nieman  
Arts & Culture Editor

## Exploring 'The Unpunished Vice'

Foundational gay author Edmund White recounts his life in books, praises diverse literature



PHOTO: KATHERINE BUTLER

Prominent LGBTQ+ author Edmund White (right) discussed his most recent memoir with his husband and fellow writer Michael Carroll (left) at the Overby Center yesterday.

### BELLA ST. AMANT

THEDMFEATURES@GMAIL.COM

A seminal voice in the continually developing world of LGBTQ+ literature, novelist and essayist Edmund White read from his memoir, "The Unpunished Vice: A Life of Reading," on Wednesday afternoon at the Overby Center. White also fielded questions from his husband and fellow author, Michael Carroll, as well as a number of questions from the audience.

"Unpunished Vice" is the latest publication in White's expansive body of work that includes memoirs, essays and fiction. Together, these works present a retrospective view of White's life through the lens of the books he was reading at the time.

The milestones of his life are remembered fondly with the works of poetry, prose and

nonfiction that have contributed to his writing, teaching and research, as well as those that have provided entertainment and personal revelations.

The author began his presentation by explaining the title of the memoir and its origin: the French translator and writer, Valery Larbaud, who was the first to call reading an "unpunished vice." White expanded on the phrase's personal significance for readers and writers.

"Reading can be a vice in the sense that people can choose it over living, or writers can choose it over writing," White said.

The preface of "Unpunished Vice," which White read at the event, referenced major titles that have influenced his professional life and works that shaped his identity as a gay man living in the U.S. in the 1940s and '50s.

On the Overby stage, White

shared anecdotes ranging from his first time reading to escape his chaotic home life at 6 or 7 years old to the books he's had to read so he could review them for publications or judge them for literary contests.

When pressed on why he chose to write another memoir — "Unpunished Vice" is his fifth — White said he had already exhausted the angles used to recount his 16 years in Paris or his time as a young gay man living in Manhattan in the 1960s. His decision to write a memoir based on what he has read came after he suffered a heart attack that left him with no desire to read.

White spoke to the integral role reading plays in teaching writers the nuances of their craft. In creative writing courses he teaches, White said he often includes literature that strays from classic American realism.

His hope in including non-Western authors is to expose students to other genres, cultures and writing styles. In his own work as a writer, he credits the importance of the books he read in college for their role in developing his voice.

"In a way, writers are the luckiest of so-called artists because everybody can read and everybody has written a letter," White said. "So, we all feel that it's sort of within our grasp."

As the hour drew to a close, White continued to field questions from audience members. Among these questions, White was asked if he ever rereads books.

White said he does reread some of his favorite books once a year — including Leo Tolstoy's "Anna Karenina," which he claimed is as close as possible to the perfect novel.



# They walked the border then made a book, film about the trek

**ZACH HOLLINGSWORTH**  
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As part of the Oxford Conference for the Book, Mark Hains and Rex Jones will present their connected works about the U.S.-Mexico border — Hains’s novel “Border Walk” and Jones’s film “La Frontera” — in a panel at 8:00 tonight at the Powerhouse. The event will feature a discussion, a screening of the film and a Q&A session.

Hains was the research coordinator for the Longleaf Alliance and a research associate with Auburn University before he dropped out of both in November 2014 in order to walk the entire 1,000-mile length of the U.S.-Mexico border. He was perhaps the first person in history to do so.

“From right-wing ranchers to cowboy poets to human-rights activists to fence or wall opponents, Hains met a myriad of people along the way who were eager to discuss the balance between border security and immigration justice,” reads the conference program’s description of Hains’s book.

Of course, one doesn’t just drop everything to risk his or her life on a 1,000-mile trek without a good reason.

“I attribute my decision to walk the Texas-Mexico border to a mid-life crisis,” Hains said. “I had taken on too many responsibilities, and I was utterly burned out. I needed a clean break, a chance to test myself against something significant and to figure out where I was going next.”

Jones, a documentarian for the University of Mississippi’s Southern Documentary Project, found out about Hains’s journey while researching another film. The two were talking on the phone when Hains offhandedly mentioned that he was about to head out on his journey.

“That physical feat alone was enough to pique my



Mark Hains (left) hikes along the southern border while Rex Jones (right) follows along with film equipment.

PHOTO COURTESY: SOUTHERN DOCUMENTARY PROJECT

interest, but back in 2015, as the rhetoric over a border wall was heating up, I knew the film could also be very topical in exploring the tension between immigration justice and border security,” Jones said.

Supported by the Southern Documentary Project, Jones followed and recorded Hains for a period of eight weeks from Oct. 27 to Dec. 21, 2014. That film became “La Frontera,” a feature-length documentary about Hains and his walk across the border.

To say that the two were a little hesitant to take the trip would be an understatement.

Along with having to face, in Hains’s words, “extreme weather, speeding automobiles, undocumented immigrants, drug runners, suspicious law enforcement (and) really mean dogs,” Jones was concerned about “horrific violence and unbridled chaos on both sides of the border.” Jones also said he was advised on multiple occasions to carry a weapon, although he ended up not doing so.



PHOTO COURTESY: SOUTHERN DOCUMENTARY PROJECT  
 Rex Jones, documentary filmmaker.



PHOTO COURTESY: MARK HAINS  
 Mark Hains, author of “Border Walk.”

Both found that, upon arrival, border life was far different from what they had been told to expect.

“(The border is) a place that almost nobody understands unless they live there,” Jones said. “Reports of anarchy on the American side were grossly exaggerated, and I never felt concerned for my safety.”

By the end, the experiences they had and the people they met along the way were unlike

any other on Earth.

Hains’s and Jones’s stories are just two of the multitude being shared during the Oxford Conference for the Book.

“There’s something for everyone at this conference,” said Jimmy Thomas, director

of the conference. “Speaking from experience, there have been occasions where I didn’t know that I was particularly interested in a subject but I discover something that sticks with me for years to come.”

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RUGBY

# Ole Miss Rugby Club hosts annual Old Boys Weekend

**NANCY JACKSON**  
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The Ole Miss men's rugby club hosted its annual alumni game this past Saturday, celebrating 45 years of Ole Miss Rugby Club. The annual event welcomed past members of the team for a weekend in Oxford, culminating in a game against the current players that the alumni won 45-28.

"This weekend, every year really teaches us how much camaraderie, hard work and discipline can lay the foundation of something great for years to come," current member Wesley Roland said.

The Old Boys Weekend gives alumni an opportunity to come back to Oxford and to see how the campus and rugby team have evolved since their graduations. Most

importantly, the weekend aims to foster an environment in which the members are able to get advice and learn from alumni.

"What makes the weekend special is it's not just the old boys coming out to see us, but we actually get to play with and against them," said Dave Kosman, Ole Miss Rugby Club president. "We have guys from the '70s and '80s coming back on the field and playing the game they love."

Alumni returned from cities across the country for the weekend, outnumbering the current members on the team by about 3 to 1. The Old Boys team featured alumni from as far back as 1980 alongside players who graduated last spring.

"After our weak showing of alumni last year, I was blown away by the amount of alumni that showed up this year. It was amazing to see the



PHOTO COURTESY: OLE MISS RUGBY CLUB  
Ole Miss Rugby Club binds for a scrum with members of Mississippi State's team during this past semester. The Rebels won the match 15-12.

support we have as a club by the people that played when they were students here," team captain Luke Stratton said. "This weekend boosted the current players' faith in the club and the community that it has."

The weekend kicked off on Friday afternoon with the Captain's Run, a relaxed game of two-hand touch rugby and a walkthrough that allowed for alumni and current members to play together on teams and compare the different styles of the game, and was followed by a meet and greet dinner.

"It's a great feeling seeing the older players pull current players off to the side and

explain how they could have made a move differently and mentor them," Kosman said. "These guys that are 20 years removed from the team are still teaching new tricks and moves we can use on the field."

On Saturday, the current rugby team squared off against the alumni team for a high-energy game. The game allowed for everyone to enjoy the spring weather and sunshine while breaking out their old rugby gear.

"They came out, and they were really strong," Kosman said. "We played a combination of old-school rugby, which is more smashmouth and contact-based, and the newer kind of

rugby, which involves more swinging the ball outside and quick passes."

After the match, all of the participants attended the Man of the Match awards and Hall of Fame ceremonies. Former Rebels Bubba Cefalu, Michael Norton, Clay Cavett and Curtis Parker were inducted into the Ole Miss Rugby Hall of Fame, which only votes in new members once every five years.

"Ole Miss Rugby is like a family that does not end with graduation, and the alumni weekend is like a family reunion," said current player Joseph Carnes. "This is a great time to be proud to be part of Ole Miss Rugby."

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SOLUTION TO 3.27.2019 PUZZLE

- 49 Lout
- 51 Raise a glass to
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- 56 Resembling a prehistoric human
- 59 Pillar
- 60 Fit to be tied
- 61 Kitchen addition
- 62 French friend
- 63 Covered with hair
- 64 Robert of "The Sopranos"
- 65 Soviet news service
- 66 Buffalo skater
- 67 Sun. speeches
- bodily structure
- 13 Rocky hilltop
- 21 Exodus
- 22 Cocktail
- 26 Male cat
- 28 Barfly
- 30 This one's
- 33 Biol. branch
- 34 Monopoly quartet: Abbr.
- 36 Skin tumor
- 37 Sensation
- 38 Emotional outburst
- 39 Convert into leather
- 40 Beam
- 46 Proceed in a leisurely way
- 47 Table attendant
- 48 Commands
- 50 Novelist Joyce Carol
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		9	6			7	2
					3		5
	1		2				
	5					9	
8		3				4	6
		7				2	
					2		9
4			3				
1	8				4	7	

**HOW TO PLAY**  
Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 with no repeats.

**DIFFICULTY LEVEL**

**INTERMEDIATE**

3	5	7	4	9	6	2	8	1
1	8	2	7	5	3	9	6	4
4	9	6	2	8	1	5	7	3
8	2	5	9	3	1	7	4	6
6	1	4	6	5	7	3	2	8
7	3	9	8	2	4	1	5	6
9	6	3	5	8	2	4	7	1
5	1	4	3	9	7	8	6	2
2	7	8	1	4	6	9	3	5



GOLF

# Spring season crunch time begins for Rebel teams

**FLINT CHRISTIAN**

THEDMSPORTS@GMAIL.COM

The Ole Miss men's and women's golf teams are in excellent shape as they hit the homestretches of their respective seasons and try to round into form before conference tournaments.

The women's team recently returned from the Evans Derby Experience hosted by Auburn on March 25. They finished tied for 10th place while shooting a combined score of 901, good for 37 over par. The Rebels were led by sophomore Julia Johnson, who notched her third individual top-10 finish of the spring with a 2-over score of 218.

The Rebels' top-10 finish in the Evans Derby Experience comes only a week after they finished fifth in a competitive field at the Tar Heel Classic in the Dominican Republic. Their performance was stellar. As a team as they shot 9 over and finished ahead of the 19th-ranked TCU team.

"This course played tough today with a lot of tucked pins and gusty winds," said head coach Kory Henkes after the tournament. "The team really grinded all day and played with a lot of fight. We made some clutch birdies down the stretch, and I know we can take a lot of positives from this week."

Johnson is on a streak of excellent golf, as she also played well at the Tar Heel Classic, finishing in the top five individually after shooting 3 under for the tournament.

"Coming off another solid week, I'm feeling really good about the rest of the season," Johnson said. "I've played some



PHOTO COURTESY: OLE MISS ATHLETICS

Ole Miss freshman Jackson Suber at the tournament against the University of Houston earlier this season.

really consistent golf the past few days, made a lot of ups and downs, and it gives me a lot of confidence moving forward."

Freshman Ellen Hutchinson-Kay finished in the top 15 individually and shot 219, good for 3 over par and another top-20 finish, her fourth of the

season. Hutchinson-Kay was also named SEC Freshman of the Week for her performance in the Tar Heel Classic.

The team will travel April 1-2 to Argyle, Texas, for The Bruzzy Challenge, and April 13-15 to the Liz Murphey Collegiate Classic in Athens, Georgia, as

they try to prepare for the SEC Championship, which will be held in Birmingham, Alabama, from April 17-21.

Men's golf has also been busy recently. Before this past weekend, Ole Miss had three straight runs of top-seven

finishes along with a match win against the University of South Florida. In the Lamkin San Diego Classic, senior Josh Seiple finished in the top 10 individually while the team tied for seventh at 14 over par.

The Rebels played extremely well at the Querencia Cabo Collegiate, where they placed seventh — ahead of many SEC teams such as Texas A&M, Alabama and Arkansas, who have all been ranked in national polls. There, it was senior Beau Briggs's turn to pick up a top-10 individual finish. He shot 3 under par and was one of only eight golfers to play each of his rounds at or below par.

The men's team finished last overall at the Hootie at Bulls Bay in Charleston, South Carolina, on Tuesday afternoon. The No. 48 Rebels finished 18 over, shooting 882 overall.

"This was as bad of a week as we have had in quite some time. In this game, it just happens, and you have to have a short memory and be better from it," head coach Chris Malloy said after the tough round. "What separates true champions, both players and coaches, from the rest are the ones that can handle a bad week and respond with a great tournament the next."

The week wasn't all bad, as Jackson Suber was named SEC Freshman of the Week for his performance at the Hootie at Bulls Bay. Suber paced the team, shooting a 2-over 218 and finishing 33rd individually.

The Rebels have the Old Waverly Collegiate Championship in West Point on April 15-16 before the SEC Championship the following week.

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## Start Your Morning Right



THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Oxford's Morning Newspaper



MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

# Busy offseason sets up highly anticipated Opening Day

**JOHN MACON GILLESPIE**  
 THEDMSPORTS@GMAIL.COM

Today isn't a national holiday, but it should be.

Today is Opening Day for the 2019 Major League Baseball season. The baseball offseason brought drama in the form of high-profile players searching for new contracts before March. Names like Bryce Harper, Manny Machado, J.T. Realmuto and Josh Donaldson all joined new teams for this spring, some even joining division rivals of their previous teams.

Some of the most notable offseason moves came in the National League East. A number of teams tried to bolster their rosters in an attempt to catch the reigning division-champion Atlanta Braves who rode breakout seasons from young talent to an improbable title and playoff appearance last year. The Phillies gained former Washington National Bryce Harper and former Miami Marlin J.T. Realmuto to strengthen an already talented roster. The Nationals, while losing Harper, gained names like former Brave Anibal Sánchez to join star talent like the budding Juan Soto and seasoned veterans Max Scherzer and Stephen Strasburg.

The Cardinals also made strides in transactions this offseason, signing Paul Goldschmidt, previously of the Diamondbacks, to boost their batting order. Although the Birds didn't sign a Harper or Machado, some believe they are in position to compete for the NL Central once again this season.

Storylines from the offseason and spring training weren't limited to the National League, however. The Angels experimented with Shohei Ohtani last season as both a starting pitcher and designated hitter, an experiment that they appear ready to stick with. Ohtani appears to be ready to shoulder the No. 3 starter role on the Angels' roster on top of handling DH duties when he's not on the mound. Two-way players aren't an entirely new phenomenon, but one of Ohtani's level hasn't been seen in a long time. The Angels want to capitalize on that talent.

One of the biggest questions heading into the season is whether the Boston Red Sox have the firepower to repeat as World Champions. The Red Sox had one of the best statistical seasons ever seen in Major League Baseball last season, as they finished with 108 wins, a franchise high. Led by



PHOTO COURTESY: R. WELBORN

Today is Opening Day for the 2019 Major League Baseball season.

names like Mookie Betts and J.D. Martinez, the Red Sox won the AL East easily last season, even with the Yankees and the Tampa Bay Rays winning 100 and 90 games, respectively.

From early in the season, it was evident that Boston was the cream of the MLB crop, but can the team repeat this level of performance in 2019? The Sox still have a strong pitching staff anchored by Chris Sale and David Price and will return a ton of offensive production from a season ago, so they could be

primed for another run.

One of the biggest threats to Boston's chances of repeating as American League and World Champions could be the Houston Astros, who have risen quickly to the top tier of the American League with their World Series title in 2017. The Astros made it back to the ALCS last season but lost the series to Boston 4-1. If the Astros can make another deep postseason run, the Houston faithful, including Houston natives who seem to make up a large portion of our campus

population, will be very pleased.

As far as the National League goes, the Dodgers are hoping to avenge their World Series loss to the Red Sox by winning the NL pennant again this year — which may be difficult considering their offseason moves. The Dodgers let go of names like Yasiel Puig, Alex Wood and Matt Kemp, and much like the Braves' fan base, Dodgers fans don't seem very content with where the roster stands heading into opening day. Los Angeles still has former MVP and Cy Young winner Clayton Kershaw as a starting pitcher, but the southpaw is now 31 years old and has struggled with injuries throughout his career, so reason would suggest that his level of production will soon decline.

Regardless of whether your team is expected to be a contender in 2019 or not, let's just be glad that baseball is back. As we've learned throughout the years, anything can happen in baseball. Injuries happen, teams go from worst to first and unexpected players have breakout seasons. Today, all teams start on even ground, and anything can happen.

With that being said, get comfortable, and let's enjoy this ride to October.

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