

grade," my brother informed me. He wasn't lying. There was a reason why I had known some of the answers.

Late Friday afternoon, more fun and games: the parents came to a staff meeting at the *Crimson*. It was a discussion about a recently launched blog, about new media, about our coverage strategy, about demographics and philosophy and marketing—things that seemed remarkably important in our universe, in which Plympton Street loomed large. The parents sat together, squished on a couch in our conference room. One of them urged us to proceed as if they weren't there. Ten minutes later, they must have wished they hadn't and filed out, one after the other, leaving us sitting on our torn, black furniture. Out in the newsroom, somebody snapped a picture.

If there was a theme to parents' weekend, this was it. Somehow the presence of these adults, these outsiders to our little world, pointed us beyond its boundaries, making us aware of just how inconsequential some of the things are that consume our attention on a daily basis. Forced to imagine my college experience through my mother's eyes or those of the parents at the *Crimson* meeting, I found that things seemed smaller somehow, the normal gravity of the moment removed. All of a sudden, the usual obligations, activities, snarls weren't painted in the bold and urgent colors they usually were.

This dose of perspective was all the more potent coming on a weekend when the end of my undergraduate experience seemed more immediate than ever—when the University's president, addressing the assembled parents and students on Friday afternoon, noted that we sat before her contemplating, or beginning to contemplate, the end of our time at Harvard. There was talk of jobs, of 15 months until graduation, of the economy. And there was talk of entering Tercentenary Theatre wearing a cap and gown in May 2010.

Sanders Theatre has a way of raising the ghosts of the several freshman-year orientation events that took place there, those wisdom-laden addresses from Yard deans whose names, God willing, you never remembered afterwards. It's one of those places that, for me, has always felt like the beginning. And yet, there we

were, talking about the end. The juxtaposition was jarring. But it wasn't unwarranted. At our blockmate parents' dinner, it wasn't hard to make the connection: there was only one event that would bring everybody together again like this, and it involved leaving with a diploma.

In a way, this was sad. Our parents came whirling in, bringing the flavor of the outside world to our insular little universe at the precise time when it seemed to be careening towards its final turn. The pace of college life, especially at Harvard, is never slow. As a freshman, this was the thing that most surprised me: how the days seem to slide by, scheduled to the brim with academic or extracurricular responsibilities, or with fun. Two years ago, I recalled, my classmates had filled online message-boards with excited chatter about concentrations and campus organizations. Now, those same classmates were leading clubs and preparing for theses. How disorienting it was, at the very moment when these things seemed most important, to confront the notion that in only 15 months, blogging technicalities, not to

mention van Gogh paintings and Aristotle, would matter very little.

Not a comfortable realization, but perhaps a useful one: a reminder to savor a little more and stress a little less while we're here, to see the things that seem pressing now—the Lit and Arts B tests, the all-nighters, the interminable proof shifts at the paper—for the fleeting pleasures that they are.

Back at the Charles, the blocking-group dinner over, I started working on my mom to let my brother spend the night out with me—hitting a couple parties, maybe, and then sleeping over on the faithful futon back at Eliot House. When that failed, I tried to convince a friend's dad, a lawyer of some repute, to argue my case. (I seemed to be making some real progress before his wife put a stop to it.) Smiling me down, my mom held firm. Maybe, I thought later, that was for the best. College goes so fast as it is, and beyond that, who knows? Let the lad anticipate it while he can. ♡

Berta Greenwald Ledecy Undergraduate Fellow Christian Flow '10 is busy preparing for his Greek examination.

SPORTS

Class on the Grass

Golfer Emily Balmert keeps carding milestones.

THE EIGHTH HOLE at the Granite Links Golf Club in Quincy, Massachusetts, is an uphill dogleg right, a short par 5 at 401 yards. On May 8, 2006, Emily Balmert '09 was playing it in the Warren Smith Memorial Tournament, a fundraising event named for the late coach who started the Harvard women's golf program in 1993. Balmert struck a good drive to the crest of a hill on the left side of the fairway. Blocked from sight of the hole, she hit a four-iron for her second shot. Director of golf Fred Scherneck '89, playing in Balmert's foursome, was standing on the right side of the fairway about 80

yards from the green when he saw her ball hole out for a double-eagle 2, three under par. He gave a shout, but Balmert didn't let herself believe what had happened until she reached the green and saw her ball "happily resting in the hole."

Later that day, Balmert shared the exciting incident with her roommate Adriana Benedict '09, who has scant knowledge of golf, explaining that double eagles are the rarest of golf scores, far scarcer even than holes in one, which are a possibility on any par 3. As luck would have it, Balmert carded her first hole in one the following season. Once again, she recounted the event to Benedict, who re-



Emily Balmert

plied, “Didn’t you get something better than that last year?”

Well, actually, she did, and not just the double eagle. As a freshman, Balmert won the Ivy League individual golf championship, becoming the first Harvard woman to do so. Since then, she has been part of a changing of the guard in Ivy women’s golf, which began crowning champions in 1996. (All Ivy colleges except Cornell compete in the sport.) Yale and Princeton monopolized the league titles during the first 10 seasons. But in 2007, Columbia wrested the crown from their clutches, and last year, in the season-ending tournament at the Atlantic City Country Club, Harvard gained its first Ivy title by a robust 10 strokes and placed three golfers (Balmert, Jessica Hazlett ’08, and Claire Sheldon ’10) among the seven chosen for the all-Ivy team.

In fact, Balmert, a self-admitted “perfectionist,” has made the all-league team every year to date. As a sophomore, she set a Harvard single-season record for stroke average (77.19 per 18 holes). Though she stands only five feet, four inches tall, Balmert can hit the ball 240 yards with her driver, which she invariably uses off the tee. (“I can’t afford not to!” she says, smiling.) And her chips, pitches, bunker shots, and putts are accurate enough to have earned her the Crimson’s annual

Short Game Award, for the player who used the fewest strokes inside 50 yards, in two of her three seasons.

“Emily’s biggest strength may be her mental game,” says women’s golf coach Kevin Rhoads. “She can almost *will* things to happen. On the course, she has an extremely intense focus and doesn’t get distracted. An example was when she won the Ivies as a freshman. They played in a heavy, cold downpour for two days.” Walking over a freezing, flooded course bruised Balmert’s feet and made them swell; nonetheless, her 76-39 for 115 won the title in a tournament shortened by rain to 27 holes.

(Her personal best is a 68, carded at last year’s Ivy tourney.)

Balmert grew up and lives in the San Diego area, the only child of Mark and Chae Balmert, both of whom have played golf. In fact, her father, a retired navy admiral, remains an active player with a single-digit handicap who can keep up with

his varsity daughter. Balmert was swinging toy plastic clubs as soon as she could walk, and played her first tournament at the age of six. She liked the idea of playing against the course, and being responsible for her own scoring. “Golf isn’t a direct competition—they’re not going to kick the ball away from you,” she explains. “You just happen to compare scores.”

Intercollegiate golf compares scores in tournament play—there are no one-on-one meets—with as many as 19 teams entered. Each college enters five golfers, and sums up the four lowest scores for a team total. Last year, the Crimson won six of the nine tournaments it entered, and in the fall started even stronger, winning all four events, at Dartmouth, Princeton, Yale, and Lehigh. The Ivy tourney this spring returns to the Atlantic City Country Club in New Jersey on the last weekend in April, with the Crimson aiming to repeat as champions. Balmert’s mental toughness and steadiness will help the cause, but even a player with her enviable consistency has to admit that one of her favorite quotes on the game is “Golf is a four-letter word.”

—CRAIG LAMBERT



Visit harvardmag.com/extras to see a video analysis of Emily Balmert’s golf swing.

Chasing Bogeys

Few golf books have emerged from the unlikely golfing haven of Duluth, Minnesota; in fact, *A Beautiful Friendship: The Joy of Chasing Bogey Golf* (Calyx Press Duluth, www.chasingbogey.net), by Phil Fitzpatrick ’67, may be the first. Fitzpatrick, an educator who began golfing “seriously” only in 2001, calls Duluth’s Lester Park Golf Course home. The book refreshingly mixes a commitment to golf mastery with a generous dose of whimsy; allusions range from Zen to the Rolling Stones, from Phil Mickelson to Bob Dylan.

The author (whose two favorite golf books are the Bible and the *Tao Te Ching*) suggests exercises like putting blindfolded, and titles one chapter, intriguingly enough, “The Most Important Split Second in Golf.” To Fitzpatrick, “bogey” means not only one over par, but Humphrey Bogart—gaining, with the capital B, overtones of “muscle and swagger.” The title echoes the final scene of *Casablanca*, and Fitzpatrick’s radically amateur approach suggests that most of us will do well to emulate Claude Rains and forge “a beautiful friendship” with the underappreciated bogey.



Golf bags, 1954 Masters Tournament

Photograph by Jim Harrison

MARK KAUFFMAN/SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

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At the Fresh Pond Golf Course in Cambridge, Emily Balmert '09 of the women's golf team—the first Harvard woman to win the Ivy championship—swings into spring. See page 58.

Photograph by Jim Harrison

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