

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'O' followed by the name 'Owen Jensen' in a cursive script.

IOWA CITY WEST HIGH SCHOOL

2022 NSPA PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR PORTFOLIO

Contributions and what I have learned

While rummaging through my email as the pandemic raged on just a year ago, I found a message I sent to my mom in 2014 that read, “Look at this.” Attached was one of my most recent creations: a PDF with the headline “Jr. Boot Heads West” and a photo of my fourth-grade football team lining up against our cross-town rivals, City High. I spent countless hours in my room growing up on my iPad Mini, designing everything from shoes on NikeiD to my own newspaper front page featuring my football team’s big win. For as long as I can remember, I’ve been creating. I first found my passion for photography at age 12 behind the backstop of various little league parks, shooting with my parent’s DSLR camera.

As high school approached and I started to think about how I could pursue my new passion, I signed up for Foundations of Journalism. With only photography in mind, I went into FOJ with no idea what else the journalism world had to offer. My dad, an art teacher at West, always brought home the West Side Story when I was growing up, so I was familiar with the publication. It wasn’t until I completed FOJ and started my first year on staff that I realized how fortunate I was to work for a prestigious high school publication like West Side Story. During the summer of my freshman year, before officially becoming Assistant Sports Editor, I photographed my first event for WSS, the [2019 IHSAA State Baseball Tournament](#). After receiving my very first press pass and making my way down onto the field alongside a handful of professional photographers, I was hooked. With every big play that I held down the shutter and a new rush of adrenaline went through my body.

Over the past four years as a part of the West High journalism program I have taken my passion for photography to places that I never would have imagined. I’ve grown into a writer, designer, photographer, jack of all trades and a true modern journalist. After serving as Online Editor-in-Chief this past year I had the opportunity to expand my knowledge and publish work in multiple different sections. Next year, I hope to continue to grow as a photographer and a journalist at Iowa State University.



Abby Cupp '22 performs "Somebody's Eyes" while playing Urleen in Theatre West's fall production of "Footloose" that held shows Dec. 2-4 in West High's Arganbright Auditorium. (Published in Iowa City West's 2022 Trojan Epic Yearbook Page 107)

Behind the Photo: 1/320 sec f/2.8 ISO 1600 185mm

In my third year photographing Theatre West's productions, I knew coming in that not only was lighting going to be a challenge, but that I wanted to focus on creating fewer wide shots and focus on the actor's emotions throughout the show. This specific scene's lighting created a perfect contrast of the actor's costume to the blue background. I locked Cupp in focus as she made her way through the choreography before holding down the shutter as she moved her arms across her face. The shot not only captures her emotion while singing but some powerful shadows cast across her face.



Waukee's Willa Hage '25 takes a breath while swimming the final heat of the 100 yard breaststroke during the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union Swimming and Diving Championships in Marshalltown on Nov. 13. Hage placed second overall with a time of 1:04.07. ([Published in Iowa City West's West Side Story on Nov. 13, 2021](#))

Behind the Photo: 1/400 sec f/2.8 ISO 1250 200mm

Despite not having any Trojan Bolts swimmers in the 100 yard breaststroke, I continued to shoot during my last appearance at the electric girls state swim and dive meet. After positioning myself in the corner of the pool, I held down the shutter as Hage came in and out of the water as she fought for a place on the podium. This shot turned out to be an ideal visual representation of the stroke as she swam across my viewfinder.



A young boy holds the Sudanese flag in his hand while protesting the military coup in Sudan at the Pentacrest in downtown Iowa City on Oct. 30. ([Published in Iowa City West's West Side Story on Nov. 9, 2021](#))

Behind the Photo: 1/1250 sec f/3.2 ISO 250 23 mm

About an hour into the protest, I made my way to the edge of the crowd for a break and a chance to get some wide-angle shots of the event as a whole. Instead, I found myself next to this young boy and his family. I immediately crouched and snapped a couple of shots as the boy looked directly at me.



Pete Moe '22 goes up for a dunk during the third quarter of the Trojans' game against cross-town rival Liberty on Dec. 10. Moe finished the night with 28 points and seven rebounds to help lead West to a 74-51 win over the Lightning. ([Published in Iowa City West's West Side Story on Dec. 11, 2021](#))

Behind the Photo: 1/500 sec f/2.8 ISO 1600 18mm

After the Trojans jumped out to an early lead in the first half over cross-town rival Liberty, Moe and the boys basketball team started to add to their lead with some more flashy points. Moe sprinted ahead in transition to set himself for this one-handed slam. I turned my lens to the widest angle, locked Moe in focus as he caught the ball, and then held down the shutter as he went up dunked the ball, and celebrated as he made his way back down the court. This shot caught Moe in a perfect Jordan-like pose as leaped into the air to dunk the ball.



Ismail Mohamed '24 celebrates his goal against Jefferson on May 13. Mohamed and the boys soccer team took down the J-Hawks 5-0 to improve to 15-2 on the season. ([Published in Iowa City West's West Side Story on May 14, 2022](#))

Behind the Photo: 1/8000 sec f/2.8 ISO 400 160 mm

Coming into the night, I knew the boys soccer team was going to have a lot of shots on goal. I positioned myself adjacent to West's goal and waited for the action to come my way. I locked Mohamed into focus as he made his way through the Jefferson defenders and held down the shutter as he found the back of the net and celebrated on his way back to the other side of the field.