

Mason Sajna

2024 NSPA Photojournalist of the Year Entry Portfolio

Blitzing Barrage

For this photo, I used a 14-24 and an extended shutter. I wanted to capture their movement since in Bullet they move pretty fast.



01

Junior and chess club co-president Jackson Burrows watches as juniors Max McMahon and Ethan Brown play a type of chess game called bullet at East's chess club. Bullet, compared to other types of chess, is the fastest variant with only one minute of playtime for each person. Out of all of them, it is the least common type of game played at the club. "I think the strongest strategy in bullet is to move very quickly regardless of the quality of the moves," Burrows said.

02

Junior and Link Leader Rachel Condon talks to freshman Spencer Thornhill beside the crowd as he holds a balloon to his chest on Friday, Aug. 18 2023. The Link Dance is a tradition meant to welcome the new freshmen to East. The Link Crew and freshmen all came dressed in pink outfits to fit the dance's Barbie theme. "I knew that he would feel comfortable talking to me," Condon said. "I wanted to make sure that he knew that he had someone that he could hang out with and feel comfortable. [I] just didn't really want to leave because he was having so much fun and I was having so much fun with him." Along with being a link leader, Condon also participates in the special ed P.E. class, which is a class where students, called 'peers', work with special ed kids who may not want to enroll in normal P.E. classes.

For this photo, I used a 14-24 and a flash from a low angle up pretty close. I also used a diffuser on my flash to spread the light out.



<https://smeharbinger.net/gallery-freshmen-link-dance/>

Uplifting Spirits

For this photo, I used a fisheye along with my Z5 and got up really close to get that wide effect. To get rid of the distortion, I edited it in photoshop.



03

During what many students consider to be the biggest East sports game of the year, the East vs. Rockhurst boys varsity basketball game, senior Claire Schudy and other pep execs celebrate the starting lineup at the beginning of the game on Friday, Jan. 26. During the starting lineup, the student section threw their harbinger newspapers into the air after pretending to read them as Rockhurst's starting lineup was announced.

Perfect Angle

For this photo, I used a 14-24 and a flash and a long exposure. I was done shooting the dance but then ran over when I saw this.



https://saisi.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/01_2014-2015_pages_4-5

04

At the end of the Fantasy themed WPA dance on Feb. 3, sophomore Emerson Lindberg takes a selfie on the cafeteria floor with sophomores Julian Van Doren, Kaleb Rickey, Aiden Young and Jerald Daniels. "I was laying on the floor because I was tired from the dance. And then [Julian] just told everyone to get on the floor and take a picture."

05

After flying through the finish line and placing eighth individually in her race, senior Lida Padgett cries as she hugs freshman and teammate Molly Scott after finding out they got third place in their state meet; concluding their season with a third place cross country 6A state win on Saturday, Oct. 28, 2023 at Rim Rock Farm.

For this photo, I used a 70-200. I knew she would be emotional so I was ready at the finish.



<https://smeharblinger.net/gallery/cross-country-state-meet-at-rim-rock-farm/>

State Success

Being the national photojournalist of the year is a high accolade. Accomplishments like these, especially those at the national level, require a lot of talent. And also a lot of work, both in and out of school and on one's own time. My intention with this letter is to tell you the story of my photojournalist career, and to indicate why I am a prime candidate for this award.

After being an editor on my middle school yearbook staff and getting through the struggle of Journalism 1, I first started on the Harbinger staff the second semester of my freshman year, the earliest time I could start. From then on, I became fascinated with photography, shooting as many events as I could. As I continued to learn and grow, the following two years were where I really began to take off. During my sophomore year, I became much more involved with the photo team, and some with the video team, which led into my junior year. This year, I made it my goal to contribute to the staff in every way possible, giving it my best effort to do as well as I could. And it worked.

This year, I won 17 total awards for both photo and video work, including being the Harbinger's nominee for the KSPA Photojournalist of the Year, and winning it. I also received a first place international award in YIJ International, two national third places in ATPJ, a first place at KSPA regionals and many more Kansas placings.

To win any amount of awards is symbolic of a person's effort towards their passions, and the quality of their work. The numerous awards I have received are indicative of both my continued and valuable contribution to the Harbinger staff as a whole, and the quality of my work. The continued contributions I make to the staff inspires others to do the same and bring a similar level of value to the team. Any amount of awards also indicates that the person has learned a lot. In my years on the staff, I have learned many things.

The first thing I learned was the time management required for this craft. We operate on a two-week issue cycle, where we are required to shoot three events and to post within three days of the event; which was a daunting

task as a first-year photographer. This year, I learned how to balance my work for the photo and video staffs at the same time. From this experience, I have also been more successful in other areas because I have become extremely persistent and hard working at whatever I do.

The second thing I learned was how to handle rejection. My vision for myself during my sophomore year was that I would be the Assistant Photo Editor; but I was rejected. This devastated me. I felt as if all the events I had shot and extra work I had done had meant nothing. But I knew my own potential and that if I kept at it, I could prove what I was capable of. I could become a leader, even without an editorial position.

A third and final thing I have learned from my experience of being on the Harbinger staff is that if you want to be really good at something, it is going to take work. Though anyone can start photography with some amount of talent and do well, to be good at it, you have to be passionate about the photos you are taking and the process—and you have to do a lot of it.

To conclude, being on the Harbinger staff has been one of the best decisions I have ever made. Through my awards, consistency and quality of work, I believe I have contributed greatly to the staff; and through my journey I have learned time-management, rejection and the value of consistency. These have all translated into other areas of my life, making me a better photographer, but also a better person accustomed to meeting any challenge.

My Experience