

REED JONES / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Breein Tyree scored 19 points in the 75-67 win over Mizzou on Senior Night on Wednesday.

## UM reacts to virus outbreak

WILL CARPENTER

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As concerns about the coronavirus grow with each new reported case, the University of Mississippi announced on Wednesday that it is canceling or suspending all university-related travel to China, Italy, Japan, Iran and South Korea — countries under varying levels of government warning.

In a campus-wide email detailing the travel restrictions, Provost Noel Wilkin also requested that students abroad in the prohibited countries return home immediately.

Addie Perkerson, a junior finance major, has spent spring semester studying at Florence University of the Arts, but she returned home to the United States on Thursday. She said Florence was “almost apocalyptic” after returning from a trip to Switzerland last week-end.

“When we got back to Florence that night, every single pharmacy had big signs on the door saying ‘No Masks, No Hand Sanitizer,’” Perkerson said. “So that was almost kind of terrifying. We had no way to have anything preventative.”

The University of Georgia, University of Colorado Boulder, University of Tennessee, Villanova University and New York University are among the several other institutions that have canceled their study abroad programs in Italy since the alert level was increased.

Perkeson said she thought Ole Miss took longer than she expected to make the decision to cancel its study abroad program in Italy.

“We went out to an American bar here, and someone was like, ‘I’m from Syracuse, and I’m getting sent home’ or ‘I’m from UMass, and I’m getting sent home,’” Perkerson said. “It’s stressful that I met people being sent home, and our program is still open.”

Italy is one of the most popular study abroad locations among American students, second only to the United Kingdom, and almost 37,000 students studied in Italy for the 2017-2018 academic year, according to the Institute for International Education.

At least two upcoming university-sponsored trips have been canceled or suspended because of the virus. The Trent Lott Institute for Public Policy and Leadership canceled a

SEE VIRUS PAGE 3

## Tyree’s last dance

Breein Tyree, one of the most prolific scorers in program history and a player whose jersey will unquestionably hang from the Pavilion’s rafters one day, played his final home game Wednesday night.

Student section t-shirts were adorned with his #4 on the back and highlights from an illustrious career were displayed on the jumbotron. A video played at halftime featured Tyree thanking his

JOSHUA CLAYTON

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coaches, managers, family and fans for four years of support. After the game, those that he thanked returned the favor; he even got a shout out from Morgan Freeman.

“Thank you Tyree. I mean it, I really mean it,” Freeman said in a video posted to Ole Miss Basketball’s Twitter.

Head coach Kermit Davis leveled high praise toward his star senior after the game.

SEE TYREE PAGE 8

## The many faces of Eli Bettiga

How Oxford’s ‘Brother Thomas’ reveals himself through music

ELIZA NOE

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There’s a saga happening in Eli Bettiga’s mind.

It’s a story that’s years in the making — starring Moon Boy, the main character in his new album, “Oakseed.” Eli and his friends developed Moon Boy’s fantasy journey

over many nights of playing Dungeons and Dragons and Magic the Gathering. Their character started as simply “the guy,” then “Michael,” after the biblical angel, and then he was named “Moon Boy,” a nickname given to Eli in high school. Moon Boy is small, in his 30’s, wears a robe and has

SEE FACES PAGE 2



BILLY SCHUERMAN / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Eli Bettiga, also known as Brother Thomas, will headline a show at Freddy’s Basement tonight. Bettiga has used music to represent himself in the world, and his new album “Oakseed” is the epitome of that.

## FACES

continued from page 1

a scraggly beard and long hair.

In a way, Moon Boy is also Eli. He's a pseudo-version, a sort-of stand-in that Eli says represents how he would react to the trials and tribulations that Moon Boy faces over the course of the album. Though Eli, who performs under the name Brother Thomas, doesn't experience the powerful visions, personal demons and addictions that Moon Boy has, he still empathizes with him. Moon Boy isn't exactly a reflection — he's more of an alternate or projection.

"It's really easy to play with songwriting that way, because you can just say, 'Oh, it's about the character. It's not about me,'" he said. "If I were talking to you about my personal life, that would be way more difficult for me than to just say Michael went through that. It's definitely autobiographical."

Eli, a junior biology major, has been producing music since seventh grade and hasn't stopped since then — including three albums and countless hours recording, editing and re-recording songs. He's still sitting on Oakseed's sequel album, "Kudzu," that's set to be released over the summer.

On Friday, he's headlining a show at Freddy's Basement — his show, those words being something that he said feels strange to say out loud. Brother Thomas is yet another facet of Eli; he's the storyteller of "Oakseed," further complicating Oakseed's storyline. Eli is writing about Eli who's writing about Eli.

"It's like the writers of the books of the Bible," he said. "Like, they had parables; they write stories to tell lessons. I am writing albums about this specific place to tell points to my audience. So it's like Brother Thomas is me as a scribe, but instead of writing books in the Bible, I'm writing music."

Like his music, everything Eli does is 100%. He smiles with his entire face and laughs with his whole body. He can't sit still, and he created an entire day's to-do list before the



interview for this article. He's a pre-med student with a 4.0 GPA and still makes time for music every day while maintaining close-knit friendships with his hometown buddies — and taking care of a pet frog.

He doesn't know how he balances it all, but he does, though not without his own anxieties.

"With (music), it's like I can put (my anxiety) on paper and look at it and analyze it and be like, 'Okay, this isn't it. This part is unrealistic...'. If I can put it into the song then analyze myself over and over, it makes it a lot more linear. I can organize my thoughts that way, so instead of keeping a journal like people do, (music) would be like mine," he said. "There's so much on 'Oakseed' about that — spreading myself too thin."

A self-proclaimed "power freak," Eli said that "Oakseed" was the first album that he allowed others to help



PHOTOS: BILLY SCHUERMAN / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

him. On the previous ones, he did everything: vocals, mixing, lyrics, production and composition, all from his bedroom. Despite his need for control, Eli said that once his album was released, it no longer belonged to him.

"Hopefully, the messages that are conveyed in my songs also help people deal with whatever problem that song addresses," he said.

"Moon Boy," the last song on the album, has been of particular interest to listeners. Many — including some of his friends — assumed the sad song is about a recent break up, but according to Eli, the track was written three years before about an argument he had with one of his brothers.

"You can take it that way if you want. If you've listened to it, it 100% sounds like a break-up song. It wasn't, but if that's how you take it, take it that way," he said.

According to Eli, he's not an open person. He struggles to express his feelings to the ones he said are closest to him. His music, however, gives him a

voice and gives others a small glimpse at who he is and what he's feeling.

"It's crazy because people don't realize that I made (the album) cryptic on purpose. I don't want you to know it is about my personal life because that's not the point. The point is I'm not really an open person with what I've got going on personally, but music is how I deal with it," he said. "I don't deal with problems as in, I talk about what I do. I just make (music) to forget about it."

Before becoming Brother Thomas, he played as Lost Puppet Society — "sad boy Eli," he calls that version of himself. He released an album, "The House on the Hill," during his senior year of high school. That album, he said, represents a darker time of his life — a feeling he wants to leave in the past.

"The hardest year of my life was my junior year (of high school), and you can see that in 'The House on the Hill's' cover — it's black with a white house on it. It's big (and) oppressive, dark, moody, and you can se-

riously hear that. Like, the whole album is just so dark and sad-sounding," he said. "I had to move on completely from that."

In "Oakseed," he speaks about his vulnerabilities. However cryptic or tortuous the process of writing the story of Moon Boy, Eli uses it to face the problems that are before him.

Still, the problem-solving qualities of self-reflective music are practices, not permanent solutions for Eli. His future isn't certain, and anxiety will continue to be a part of his life.

"With 'Oakseed,' at any time I'm not thinking about school, all I'm thinking about is my album or whatever else going on at the time," he said. "I haven't thought about it since I released it. I'm done worrying about it because it's out. But then I fill my time like worrying about 100 other things."

Whether as a profession or form of therapy, Eli will continue to create Brother Thomas, and Brother Thomas will continue to create Eli.



# Fifth Circuit judges visit Oxford



PHOTOS: KATHERINE BUTLER / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

From left to right: Judges Rhesa Barksdale, Stephen Higginson and Stuart Duncan.

## HADLEY HITSON

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Since 1984, a randomly selected panel of three established judges from the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals has presided over oral arguments in the University of Mississippi Law School courtroom every three years. Judges Rhesa Barksdale, Stephen Higginson and Stuart Duncan have heard 11 cases this week and will hear two more at 9 a.m. on Thursday.

“The legal academy has been criticized for being too disconnected from the profession,” Higginson said. “Hopefully, little efforts like this allow that interaction, so the students get to really see how cases and issues play out.”

Barksdale, who has been on the court for nearly 30 years, said the idea behind the three-year rotation is that every student who graduates from the law school will get to hear from the court at least once.

“We think it’s important for the students to see the appellate courts,” Barksdale said. “Our court system sits in a few law schools from time to time throughout our circuit in Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. I think it’s good for them,

and I think it’s good for our court.”

While Ole Miss is not the only university campus where the Fifth Circuit hears cases, Barksdale, Higginson and Duncan agreed that it is the school where they feel the most welcome.

“The people who come to hear our arguments in New Orleans are engaged, but the students here have a different level of engagement with the arguments,” Duncan, who was on faculty at the university before his judge-

ship, said. “We feel that much more valued in terms of what we’re doing up here.”

Intellectual property, admiralty, tax and federal criminal cases are some of the case classifications that the judges have heard on campus.

“We have such diverse cases. I doubt any circuit has more diversity in its cases than we do,” Barksdale said. “The Ninth Circuit, perhaps, but I doubt it.”

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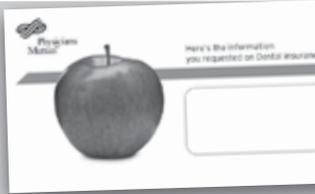


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## VIRUS

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summer trip to China, and the School of Journalism and New Media suspended a summer trip to Italy. If the State Department deems Italy a level one warning before April 1, the trip will continue as planned.

The office of the provost recently released an official page on its website for updates and information about the virus.

Coronavirus is not an immediate threat to Mississippians, but an increasing amount of person-to-person cases are expected in the coming days, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The best way to prevent the spread of coronavirus is to practice heightened flu-prevention techniques.

Cases have increased exponentially in the United States in the past week, and according to Dr. Bhagyashri Navalkele at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, there is limited data to know what makes it so contagious.

“The COVID-19 strain is completely new, thus there has been no previous exposures and development of immunity in population. A new virus has potential to infect and cause illnesses in multiple individuals due to lack of immunity against the virus,”

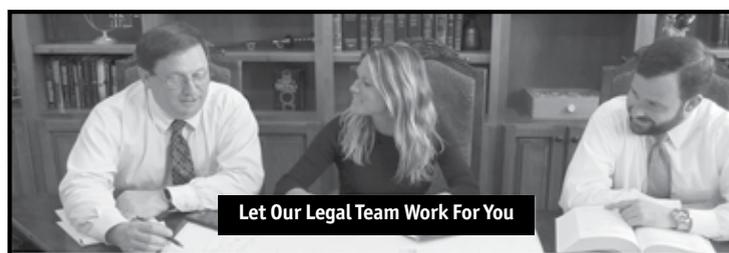
Navalkele said.

Though the illness is highly contagious, more than 50% of those infected have recovered, according to a continuously updated coronavirus data tracker created by Johns Hopkins University.

“The Mississippi State Department of Health’s preparations and efforts around COVID-19 continue to be focused on surveillance activities to identify cases as quickly as possible and to limit possible person-to-person transmission,” Dr. Katie Taylor, Deputy State Epidemiologist for the Mississippi State Department of Health, said. “(We will continue) assisting healthcare facilities in preparations and providing guidance to businesses, schools and other organizations in the community about community mitigation.”

As of Thursday afternoon, there are 163 cases of the virus confirmed in the United States, and 11 have died from it. On Thursday, Gov. Bill Lee of Tennessee confirmed that a 44-year-old man in Nashville tested positive for the virus, the first positive test in the state.

“We anticipate that there will continue to be COVID-19 cases in the US, including eventually in Mississippi,” Dr. Taylor said. “MSDH has plans in place to respond if a case is identified in Mississippi.”



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WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

# Is Coach Yo on the hot seat?

**JOSHUA CLAYTON**  
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The Ole Miss women's basketball team's abysmal 2019-20 season came to an end with a 64-53 loss to Missouri in the first round of the SEC Tournament.

The Rebels finished the season 7-23 on a 17-game losing streak.

Coach Yolett McPhee-McCuin — commonly known as Coach Yo — came into her new position as head coach two years ago with an unparalleled energy and quickly made herself one of the most recognizable coaches on campus. Still, that hasn't translated to the court as her teams have struggled to even come close to competing against power five opponents. The young coach has gone 3-30 against SEC opponents in her two years in Oxford.

This season marks the first time the Rebels have gone winless in the SEC since Ole Miss started competing in women's basketball in 1974. Matt Insell went 1-15 in 2017-18 in his fifth year at the helm before being fired, making way for McPhee-McCuin.

Despite the discouraging numbers and 17-game skid to finish the season, Coach Yo was still encouraged about the future after a 84-59 loss to Mississippi State in the Pavilion on Sunday.

"I don't feel anything. I think that this has happened before with a coach so I don't think this is a new record, you probably want to check that, and they weren't in year two," she said after the loss. "I just know where we're going. We just signed the No. 1 class in the SEC. There's no

secret we have a gang of kids in sweatsuits that are excited about playing and would have made a complete difference."

Results have been disappointing in the last two years has been hurt by injuries and has the benefit of better talent coming in for the next season.

McPhee-McCuin signed the No. 9 recruiting class in the country for 2020 featuring a five-star duo in Jacorriah Bracey and Madison Scott as well as Snudda Collings and Caitlin McGee. Donetta Johnson, who redshirted this season due to NCAA transfer rules, will join the top class in the SEC.

Sarah Dumitrescu is due to return next season to play a major role after tearing her ACL ear-

**"I just know where we're going. We just signed the No. 1 class in the SEC. There's no secret we have a gang of kids in sweatsuits that are excited about playing and would have made a complete difference."**

- Yolett McPhee-McCuin  
Women's basketball head coach

ly in the season. Athletics Director Keith Carter has demonstrated a willingness to shake things up when things aren't working with coaching changes in football, softball and volleyball all in his first 100 days in the position, but was quick to confirm he has no in-



tention of firing Coach Yo before next season.

"She came into a really tough situation," he said. "So we're excited about where the program was going to go and get some young ladies that are sitting out this year as transfers, and then obviously we have the top recruiting class in the SEC coming in for next year as freshmen. We're certainly committed to her and in this thing for the long term and look forward to seeing what Coach Yo can do in the future."

Coach Yo's position is safe for now, but a failure to produce wins next year could lead to another coaching search for Keith Carter.

"You'll have to get my end-of-season thoughts probably a week after the season when I have the chance to digest everything," McPhee-McCuin said. "You may not believe it, but when you're in a grind, you don't think about anything. When we were 25-4 I didn't think about our record. You always think about what's next."



FILE PHOTOS: NANCY MANROE THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Head coach Yolett McPhee-McCuin shouts to her players during the loss to Mississippi State in the final game of the regular season. Ole Miss did not win a game in the SEC this year, the first time in program history.

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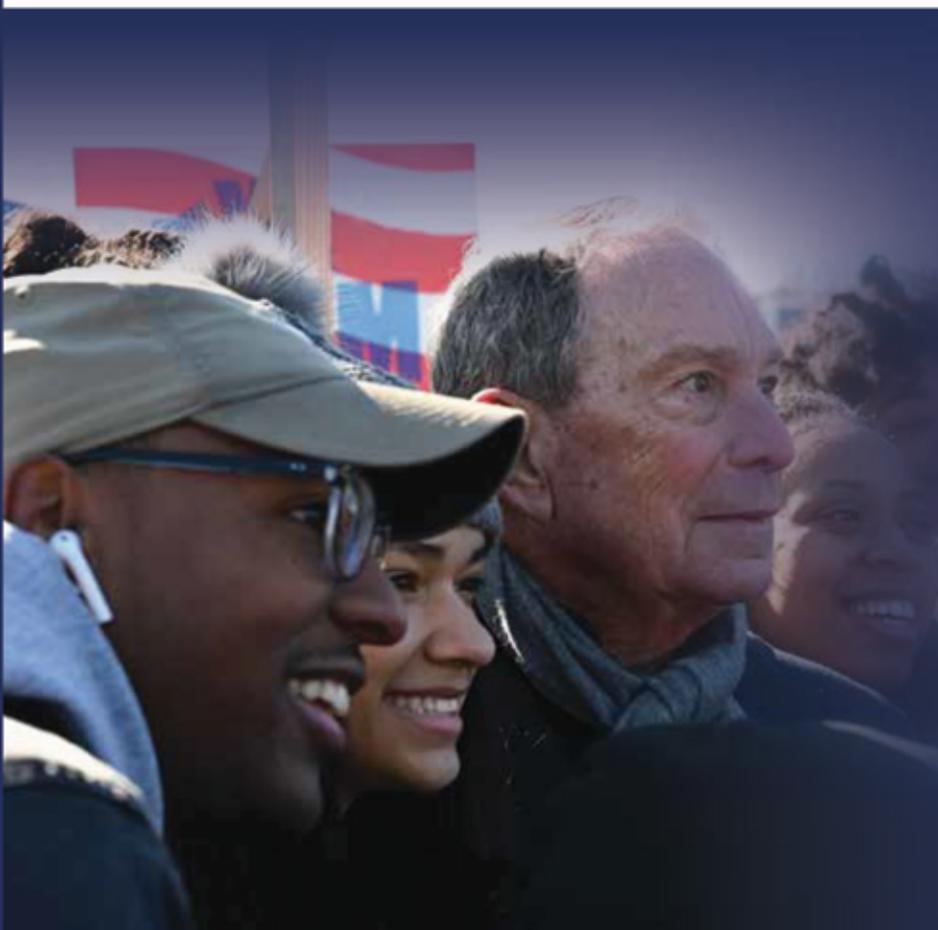
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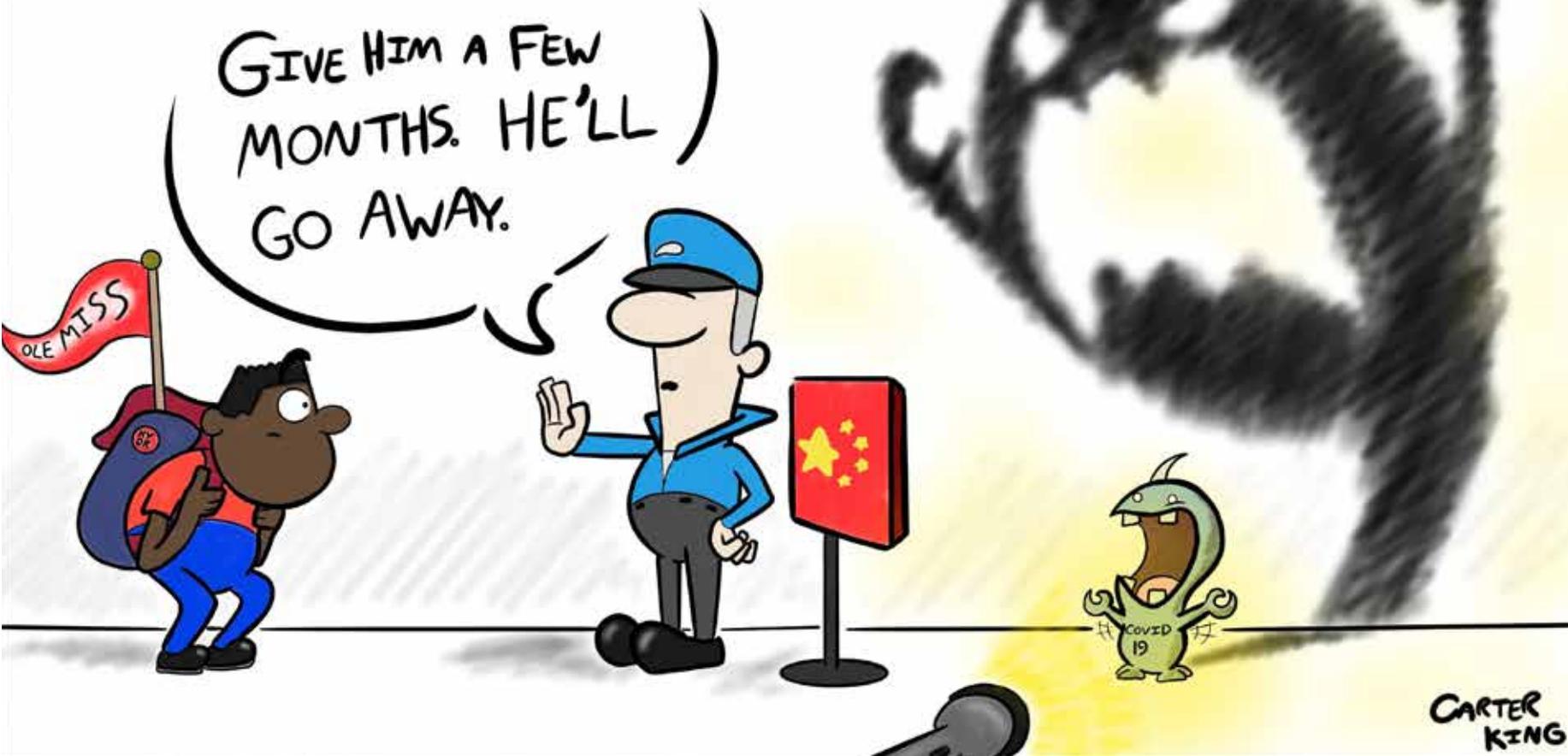
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# OPINION



CARTER KING

CARTER KING / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

## *UM promotes religious freedom through its campus culture*

**LAUREN MOSES**

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The University of Mississippi is in the heart of the “Bible Belt” of the South. As home to more than 20 religious student organizations (most of which are in the Christian religion), it is clear to see the rich culture of religiosity and impact that Christianity has on this campus. While religious liberty is a major topic of discussion at public universities across the country, Ole Miss is leading by example in allowing students to publicly express their beliefs.

In 1975, a group of students made plans to fund the building of a religious house on campus to serve students, faculty and community members. Completed in the early 2000s, Paris-Yates Chapel has brought together religious students of all denominations.

The Peddle Bell Tower reminds us of this holy house. The bells ring hourly, and a hymn is played at 5 p.m. each afternoon, allowing students to reflect on the day with their creator in mind. The chapel serves more than a meeting place for religious student organizations like Cru and the Wesley Foundation — it also hosts community members, serving as a meeting place for St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church while its building was under construction.

Even more prevalent than the religious community at Ole Miss is the competitive athletics department. Historically, leaders of university athletics programs have aimed to create a religious culture through their departments and among athletes. Former head football coach Hugh Freeze faced opposition from the Freedom from Religion Foundation, a group

committed to the separation of church and state, for his alleged actions in promoting a Christian environment on his team. Freeze hired a team chaplain to lead worship services and gatherings, led his team in prayer and endorsed the Ole Miss Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He took to social media often, citing scripture and religious inspiration to encourage his players and followers.

Like Freeze, other prominent coaches and athletics department staff hold sincere religious beliefs, which they share with some of their players. Head baseball coach Mike Bianco and former head football coach Matt Luke have encouraged their Christian student-athletes in their spiritual walks.

As a religious student, when I see players kneeling in the endzone before a football game to ask their God for strength, it empowers me

to share their faith in public ways. The average student may not interact with such high-profile names on campus, but the impact that their prominence has can be seen in how the athletes and students feel comfortable expressing their faith during their time at the university.

Religious individuals at the university should be proud to live in a state that respects the sanctity of the First Amendment and promotes its liberty to each individual. Our state arguably leads the way in religious freedom. Christian Ole Miss

students can rest assured that Christian symbols and practices will persist despite those, such as Freedom from Religion Foundation, who fight to remove all public displays of religion. No matter race, gender or creed, Mississippi and its beloved institution are a beacon of hope for the rest of the country, fighting for religious liberty as the nation’s founders intended.

*Lauren Moses is a junior economics and political science major from Coppell, Texas.*

### Opinion Policies:

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**TYREE**  
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“That guy right there, he doesn’t come around often,” Davis said. “He’s just built to score like that at all three levels.”

And Tyree did. He scored an efficient 19 points on just nine attempts en route to a 75-67 win over Missouri. He had a quiet first half, recording six points on 2-5 shooting.

“They were doubling me off of ball screens, trying to get the ball out of my hands,” Tyree said. “I didn’t shoot a lot of shots tonight but I still feel like I affected the game.”

Sophomore Blake Hinson threatened to steal the show with a huge performance in the first half, scoring 19 points and sinking four threes before the break. He was brimming with confidence, rising over defenders with ease to knock down jumper after jumper. The undersized forward was per-



REED JONES / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Breein Tyree celebrated his last home game as a Rebel with a 75-67 win over Mizzou on Senior Night.

sistent on the offensive glass as well, grabbing three offensive boards including two instances when he successfully put back his own shot.

The Rebels led 20-10 at the 10-minute mark before Missouri hit the jets and be-

gan to put more pressure on the home side.

The Tigers scored 30 points in the final 10 minutes of the half but were unable to slow down the Ole Miss offense and put a dent in the lead.

“It was really a tale of two halves,” Davis said after the game. “The first half was really free-flowing, we got in a great rhythm offensively... the thing turned in the last three minutes of the first half... and they just kinda

kept the momentum.”

Tyree had little time to reflect after the win but did mention how surreal it was to know he just finished his last home game.

“It was crazy that that was my last time going around [the court] and shaking hands,” he said. “It’s just a great experience.”

Ole Miss plays their final game of the regular season on Saturday against Mississippi State in Starkville where Tyree will play his final regular-season game in a Rebel uniform.

“Our team has a lot of confidence. To me, that’s the most fun game on your schedule. When you can go to your arch rival’s building and play there’s nothing better than that,” Davis said.

When asked about the prospect of playing spoiler to the Bulldogs tournament hopes Tyree responded with a smile: “Oh yea. That’s my biggest motivation, just to go down there and win.”

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