Some Septembers, New York only has one team to root for

By ANTHONY ANGELILLO
Copy Editor

Brielle Saracini was 10 years old when she wrote a letter to Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter. Three days earlier, her father, Victor, had been the captain of United Flight 175, the plane that crashed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center in 2001.

Jeter read the letter and invited her family to a game. Now, 25 years later, Saracini will throw a ceremonial first pitch on Friday, Sept. 11, in the Bronx alongside her husband, Sean McGuire, whose father, Patrick, was working on the 84th floor of the same tower.

Brielle and Sean met in 2003 at Camp Better Days, a program built for children who lost a parent on Sept. 11, 2001. Almost 14 years later, on Sept. 9, they would get married.

The New York Yankees host the New York Mets on Sept. 11, 12 and 13. Friday's first pitch at 7:05 p.m., with ceremonies beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Ten months before the attacks, the rivalry was at an all-time intensity. In the 2000 World Series, both the Yankees and Mets would face off in the first Subway Series since the Los Angeles Dodgers were in Brooklyn.

The Yankees would win the series in five games, but by mid-September the following year, MLB had stopped play for six days, the longest in-season shutdown in decades.

However, when it was time to return, both New York clubs were doing anything but playing baseball.

On Sept. 15, 2001, the Yankees met for their first workout since the attacks. Players rode into Manhattan afterward, stopping at the 23rd Street Armory and St. Vincent's Hospital. Two employees in the club's ticket office had sons who worked at Cantor Fitzgerald.

On Sept. 23, about 20,000 people filled Yankee Stadium for a city service, "A Prayer for America," co-hosted by James Earl Jones and Oprah Winfrey.

That fall, MLB clubs would add "God Bless America" during the seventh-inning stretch. Now, only the Yankees still keep that tradition alive.

Shea Stadium, the Mets' former home ballpark, would become an assembly area for Ground Zero, with cots in the tunnels and trucks loaded overnight. Mets manager Bobby Valentine moved boxes alongside players.

Ten days later, on Sept. 21, the Mets would play the Atlanta Braves in the first professional sporting event held in New York since the attacks. In the eighth inning, the Mets were down 2-1 when catcher Mike Piazza, now the face of the Mets, became the face of New York, hammering a fastball by Braves reliever Steve Karsay into left-center field for what would become a 3-2 Mets win. Piazza's home run was a healing moment for everyone in the stands and around New York.

Mets players gave their game checks from that night, roughly $450,000, to Rusty Staub's fund for police, fire widows and children.

Mets first baseman Todd Zeile was handed an FDNY hat by the widow of a rescue worker.

Teammates asked where to get their own. When MLB said the hats were not part of the uniform, the Mets wore them anyway, and Zeile said the league would have to "tear the hats off us."

The MLB spent most of the next two decades refusing the caps. Joe Torre, former manager of the Yankees, and then the league's executive vice president for baseball operations, denied the Mets wearing first responder caps on the 10th anniversary in 2011 and told The Associated Press it was a "unanimity thing."

MLB relented in 2020, and when both teams played each other for the first time on Sept. 11 for the 20th anniversary, they wore responder caps at Citi Field in 2021.

That night was the representation of this rivalry. Players from both rosters stood along the baselines with first responders for the anthem. Then, just a few minutes later, Mets fans booed Yankees infielder DJ LeMahieu on the game's first at-bat.

Now, five years later, the Yankees and the Mets play in the Bronx on the 25th anniversary of Sept. 11.

Honor guards from the NYPD, FDNY and the Port Authority Police Department will present the colors; players from the 2001 Yankees team will take part, and current players will lay a wreath beside the 9/11 monument in Monument Park that afternoon. In the seventh inning, FDNY Lt. William Arce will sing "God Bless America."

On Sept. 2, the FDNY added 36 names to its World Trade Center Memorial Wall. More than 600 have died due to illnesses tied to rescue and recovery, with 343 FDNY members killed on the morning itself. Commissioner Lillian Bonsignore called them 36 more reminders that "the legacy of September 11 doesn't end on one single day."

The Yankees-Mets rivalry picks back up on Saturday, because Friday belongs to the people the caps were made for.



ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY ANGELILLO

Notes from a freshman: Year in progress

By KELSEY SWEET
Contributing Writer

College is often perceived as a time when you're up late with friends, reviewing a packed schedule and managing a whole new level of freedom you have never experienced before. But somewhere in between the excitement and the independence, you have to learn lessons that are not engraved in the syllabus.

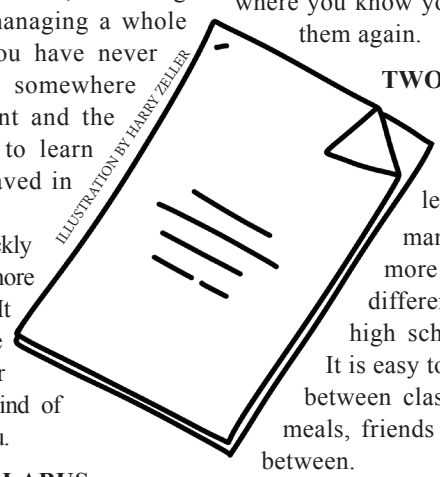


ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY ZELLER

As a freshman, I have quickly learned that college is far more than just making memories. It is also learning how to take care of yourself, manage your time and figure out what kind of routine actually works for you.

ONE: THE SYLLABUS

Some of the first things every person in your life, ever, will tell you about college is the importance of your syllabi. A syllabus is far more than a document you look at on your first day and forget about. Essentially, this will be your roadmap for the next semester.

Professors may not remind you about every assignment and deadline as they did in high school. Instead, there is now a new concept of teaching yourself how to learn the material. You need to learn how to focus on everything in school and manage your work. The responsibility falls upon the student to keep track of what is coming.

If you have not done so already, take a few minutes to truly read and annotate your syllabi, write major dates down and, more importantly, leave your syllabi in a place where you know you'll remember to view them again.

TWO: BALANCING BALANCE

One of the biggest lessons so far is that time management matters much more than you think. The difference in workload from high school to college is vast. It is easy to disappear from reality between classes, homework, clubs, meals, friends and everything else in between.

Set yourself up for success by putting yourself first. Focus on everything that has to get done for school. Every piece of schoolwork you complete will make you happy and successful. Finally, everything you need to put you first. Putting your career and education first is actually putting yourself first.

THREE: IT IS OKAY TO BE ALONE

As much as we may all love our social time, it is also important to recognize that being alone is not a waste….. I know for me, college has made me feel that I should always be doing something or spending time with someone. But sometimes the best thing you can do is have time to be your own human. Put your phone down, read, watch a movie or simply do nothing for a little while.

FOUR: FINDING YOUR PEOPLE TAKES TIME

I am also learning that you do not need to find your people immediately. I was lucky enough to make it into the Communications Living Learning Community, where I share common interests and ideas with people in the neighboring dorms. My Resident Assistant (RA), Wilson Chen, is also very inspiring and engaging with us residents and has helped all of us create a community, and I am truly thankful for that.

With that being said, this isn't high school. We should have a sense of excitement to meet new people and make connections. Don't be nervous to say "hi" to someone.

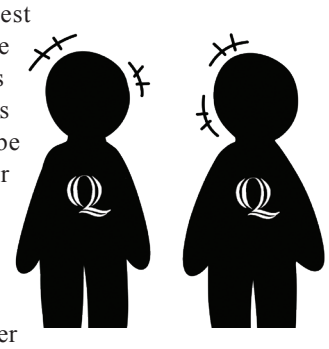
There is no "deadline" for finding your people.

FIVE: STOP COMPARING

Actually though. College has taught me that you cannot spend energy comparing your experience and lifestyle to everyone else's. Social media often highlights reels of weekend plans, friendships and the ideas of the perfect moment. What social media doesn't show us is the awkward first conversations or the moments when someone wondered if they were doing the whole college thing correctly.



There is no "right way" to be a freshman. There is no "right way" to be a student. Just be you.



The biggest thing I have come across is that it is okay to still be exploring your ideas and passions.

College is not something you master during your first two weeks, semester or year. It is a process of learning how to balance independence with responsibility, socializing with solitude and everything else that makes you, you.

One thing I would tell my peers (as someone who did this in high school); you do not have to experience everything, you do not have to know everyone and you do not need your entire life planned out.

Allow yourself time. Stay committed to your academics and have fun. You only ever get to be a Bobcat for four years until you look back. You are allowed to be a freshman and make mistakes. College is about finding your own path.

And by the way, you haven't really had "the freshman experience" until you're on the phone with your mom doing the laundry. Thanks mom.