OPINION

STAFF COLUMNIST

GEORGE BEEVERS

School spirit sold separately

Harvard and Yale celebrate The Game as a defining tradition of school spirit, rivalry and student life. Their ticketing policies suggest that undergraduates being in the stands is a secondary concern. This year, Yale offered a mere 40 percent of its students the chance to buy tickets through a random lottery, weighted by seniority, with additional entries available as a reward for attending other Yale sporting events. Inevitably, a lottery system resulted in many students who had no intention of attending The Game being distributed tickets, to then be sold for vast sums in secondary markets, as opposed to the "first come, first serve" system last year when Yale hosted The Game.

Amongst unlucky seniors who feel that their last opportunity to experience a time-honoured Harvard-Yale rite of passage has been robbed of them, the lottery has unsurprisingly caused some frustration. But the lottery merely distributes a shortage; it does not explain why that shortage exists. The more important question is not which students deserve the available tickets, but why Harvard and Yale have retained an arrangement that leaves so many students out. Student access to The Game should be a starting point, not an afterthought.

Harvard has long been the lowest common denominator for visiting student attendance, with their stadium being around 2.5 times smaller than the Yale Bowl. Both schools therefore traditionally agree to a 2,900-student away section cap reciprocal, based on Harvard Stadium's capacity. However, as the Yale Bowl can hold 60,000 spectators, when Harvard students come to Yale for The Game, they are able to buy relatively cheap general admissions tickets beyond the student section, whereas when Yalies travel to Boston, they have to rely on secondary black markets and commercial platforms charging extortionate prices.

This year, Harvard's infrastructure is no longer a limiting factor. If only for 2026, Harvard Stadium is out of action, and The Game will be hosted at Fenway Park. To the untrained eye, this might look like the perfect opportunity to accommodate everyone — the combined undergraduate student bodies of both schools would take up just 35 percent of Fenway's seating! However, the learned university administrator would understand that this is an opportunity to do nothing and retain the same policy. Students are naturally up in arms about administrative laziness when The Game is hosted with so many more seats and the same meager few student tickets. Surely a student-centred approach would treat the change of venue as a reason to reconsider how many students can attend? Retaining the same cap raises questions as to the core purpose of The Game for Harvard and Yale.

The answer may lie in an unfortunately obvious consideration: By limiting the student away section to 2,900, the tens of thousands of remaining seats can be converted into highly profitable revenue streams from expensive corporate sponsorships and wealthy alumni. The sentiment that the two schools might be stifling a huge community tradition for the sake of raking in some extra cash is widespread on campus, and not going down particularly well. Whether the unchanged allocation reflects financial incentives, administrative convenience or simple inertia, the result is the same: students are excluded from a tradition promoted as central to their university experience.

The need to keep alumni involved is completely understandable. The university-alumni relationship is one with mutually beneficial connections and sources of donation that keep these universities such coveted and prestigious institutions. It is important not to forget that current students are future alumni. If students are routinely denied the option to buy tickets to what is supposed to be a unifying, exciting event for the entire undergraduate class in favour of wealthy alumni and corporate platform ticket sellers, Yale and Harvard could be shooting themselves in the foot. I would be willing to bet that The Game memories alumni look back on most fondly aren't of when they last bought general admission tickets to reminisce, but of those original experiences of first attending with all their friends, or their last hurrah rushing the field in senior year. If we undermine the opportunity for current students to make these memories, The Game ceases to be special for them today and as alumni in the future.

> STUDENT ACCESS TO THE GAME SHOULD BE A STARTING POINT, NOT AN AFTERTHOUGHT.

Harvard and Yale should begin with a different question in mind: how can we make room for as many students as possible? That means reconsidering student allocation when the venue changes, explaining genuine constraints and treating student participation as a priority rather than accepting the existing cap by default. And if Harvard's concern is the prospect of losing for a fifth consecutive year in front of an even larger crowd of Yalies, that's a problem for its football team — not its ticketing policy.

GEORGE BEEVERS *is a sophomore in Pierson College studying History. His column, "The Learning Curve," examines how students and institutions navigate the evolving standards, pressures and possibilities that define the pursuit of knowledge today. He can be reached at george.beevers@yale.edu.*

STAFF COLUMNIST

TOM DAWBER

Public sector unions are the problem? Start with the police.

Last month, Aaron Withe, CEO of the Freedom Foundation, defended the resolution Ban Public Sector Unions at the Yale Political Union. Discrediting the fiction that conservative Yalies are some oppressed minority with no place to call their own, the measure passed.

I'm a pro-union son of a sailor-turned-carpenter and a teacher. But I acknowledge that in a few rare cases, unions wield too much power and act in ways that are antithetical to the public good. One need look no farther for a union like this than the New Haven Police Department.

In July, the New Haven Independent reported that, based on guidance from the police union, at least one police officer has refused to cooperate with a Civilian Review Board investigation. The CRB was established in 2019 by a city ordinance, after the public voted during the 2013 charter revision to authorize its creation.

It's difficult for localities to legislate police oversight into existence. The union rightly points to their federal Garrity rights — if a public employee is forced to answer questions under threat of losing their job, then no evidence that results from that investigation can be used to prosecute the employee.

They call these protections "federal law," but this fig leaf stems wholly from a 1967 Supreme Court decision, Garrity v. New Jersey, which was decided 5-4, and decided wrongly. Justice Harlan had the right of it when he wrote in his dissent, "it is surely plain that New Jersey may, in particular, require its employees to assist in the prevention and detection of unlawful activities by officers of the state government. The urgency of these requirements is the more obvious here, where the conduct in question is that of officials directly entrusted with the administration of justice."

There is good reason for the people of New Haven to demand this kind of oversight of NHPD. The department has a long history of violating the public trust.

From the illegal wiretapping scandal of the 1960's and 70's that resulted in a $1.75 million settlement, to the concealment of evidence and manipulation of witnesses that led to two wrongful murder convictions in 1999 and resulted in a $30.5 million settlement, to the 2022 paralysis of Randy Cox that led to a $45 million settlement, to Chief Karl Jacobson's alleged embezzlement of over $85,000 uncovered just this year, generations of irresponsibility and corruption in NHPD have cost New Haven taxpayers tens of millions of dollars.

> NHPD HAS NO RIGHT TO THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT.

NHPD has no right to the benefit of the doubt. The CRB was created by the representatives of the people of New Haven to check a department in desperate need of oversight. The police union is now thumbing its nose at the will of the people.

Police unions haven't always enjoyed the level of power they do today. Sociologist Stuart Schrader writes that "The police union movement emerged in reaction to a lot of the pushes for change in American society in the 1960s." As the civil rights movement was winning its most important victories, "Police union militants took the language and, in some cases, the political repertoires of protest from some of the movements active at the time, even when in their day-to-day work they were on the other side of the barricade."

We now live in a climate where politicians are terrified of police unions. The New York Times cites retribution by police unions in Minneapolis, St. Louis and New York, where the sergeants union released personal information about the daughter of then-Mayor Bill DeBlasio. The Times names more unions nationwide who have vocally and proudly opposed attempts at reform.

So what is to be done in the Elm City? NHPD's contract is up for negotiation in 2028. City Hall must be prepared. Mayor Elicker should assemble a crack team of negotiators — lawyers and others who will fight like hell to protect the interests of all New Haveners. I'd like to see him reach out to Yale Law School professors and local alumni who have experience in high stakes negotiations. Furthermore, the city needs to anticipate the union holding the city hostage by walking off the job.

There will be many issues on the table in 2028, but full cooperation with CRB investigations must be a hard line. The people have the right to demand more of those placed in positions of public trust. The people should be able to hold accountable those entrusted to enforce the law. Garrity represents a major impediment to this goal, and New Haven should stand up to the NHPD union and be the case that will allow Garrity to be overturned.

TOM DAWBER *is an Eli Whitney student and a junior in Pierson College studying history. His column looks critically at city policies, as well as state and federal policies when they directly impact the lives of Yalies and New Haveners. He can be reached at tom.dawber@yale.edu.*

STAFF COLUMNISTS

HRISHITA SHAH

On hometowns and bios

During my first few days at Yale, I feared I was doomed to spend the rest of my first year providing the holy trinity of introductory information: my name, major and where I am from. Hrishita. Economics and Computer Science. Mumbai.

Camp Yale offered an escape through the hometown, a delivery of a summary of my life to the seven strangers in my orientation program. With all the stories of FOOT groups that were forever bonded by the experience, I was convinced at the time that they would go on to become my best friends. Spoiler alert: they didn't.

But I realize now that it was never the point. Yale's hometowns are valuable, they say, not because they make strangers intimate, but because they give strangers permission to begin becoming intimate. But that permission matters only if we, the listeners, recognize that the hometown is only the beginning of a process toward building relationships.

Hometowns definitely have their benefits. For starters, they are a much-needed break from freshman small talk. They push us to take a leap of faith and be vulnerable with neurotic, highly accomplished people. Although it is, to a certain extent, manufactured vulnerability, it remains an important push in the right direction: a push toward the understanding that deeper bonds or connections in college require familiarity with another persons' lived experience.

Looking back on my first year, however, I wonder whether the structured and fleeting nature of hometowns ultimately limited their potential to foster the deeper connections they promised.

Being vulnerable is not enough: you should want to be vulnerable and you should get to choose how you are vulnerable. During my hometown, I didn't feel like I had much to say — I ended up talking about my favorite books in relation to different parts of my childhood. After hearing everyone else's stories, I tried to fit mine into the typical chronological structure. Now, this structural problem — falling into the patterns of the people who go before you — is an easy one to solve.

> HOMETOWNS INVERT THE PROCEDURE OF RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING IN AN UNNATURAL WAY.

What bothered me the most about my experience with hometowns was that it did not produce the sort of connection with my group that the hometown was intended to foster. I knew, of course, that a single conversation couldn't turn seven strangers into lifelong friends. But some part of me had expected it to, and the presentation of hometowns as an exercise suggested this would be the case, too. After all, between us, we'd exchanged stories that ordinarily take months or years to come out.

Hometowns invert the procedure of relationship-building in an unnatural way. Usually, we start with small talk, develop trust and then share personal stories, but with hometowns we have strangers diving into personal stories and then hoping trust may develop.

But hometowns are finite, ephemeral. We quickly move on to the next activity as soon as a hometown is done, and they never come up again. Perhaps, more than for the storyteller, hometowns create an important responsibility for listeners: to ensure the person's hometown persists.

I think the problem lies in confusing disclosure with intimacy. Knowing personal details about someone is not the same as building intimacy. The sort of intimacy that characterizes genuine relationships develops not simply through the exchange of information, but through its persistence: we feel close to our friends when, among other cases, they remember details about our lives later on. This dedication to someone else's life story shows that they matter to you, and this is the aspect of information sharing that actually counts.

As I look toward my senior year and the society bio, I am grateful for the opportunity to choose how I present myself. More than anything I hope that the telling isn't the end. I hope those listening will ask me about the things I leave out and try to continue discovering the person I become afterward.

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