

Student Reporter



Aspen Lee
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Santa Fe Christian School

Santa Fe Christian Football Team Wins Div. II CIF Title



The Santa Fe Christian Football Team playing under the Friday Night Lights in the Division II CIF Championship Game. [Source: Author, Aspen Lee]

Reaching the championships doesn't happen overnight. It takes endless mornings and evenings to get to, and the Santa Fe Christian (SFC) Varsity Football team proved that discipline, engagement, and teamwork can turn an average season into an unforgettable one that goes beyond just making it to the championships. Making history as the smallest school to win the San Diego Division II CIF (California Interscholastic Federation)

Playoffs, SFC had an undefeated regular season—with a record of 10-0—and maintained it into the playoffs with their championship win.

Earning the title of CIF Champs doesn't come lightly, as months of preparation and training from the coaching staff, cheer team, athletic trainers, and, of course, the team itself result in such a reward. With lifts beginning in the Spring and practices over the summer, the

devotion and discipline for the sport were seen in every player on the roster and demonstrated on the field when the season started in August.

To say the championship game was exciting is an understatement. Halfway through the first quarter, Santa Fe Christian scored a touchdown, immediately followed by an 80-yard pass completed for a touchdown by the opposing team, Steele Canyon. By the end of the first quarter, the score was 13 to 14, with Steele Canyon in the lead by a single point. Easing the Santa Fe Christian fans, the second quarter ended with a score of 30-14 after two touchdowns and a successful field goal attempt. Following the first half, the Steele Canyon Cougars put up a tough fight for SFC, coming back 30 to 20 and keeping fans on the edge of their seat to end the game with a close score of 44 to 41.

Called "The Nest," the SFC Student Section has not been known for being the loudest or most crowded student section in San Diego; however, this game had an overwhelming amount of students, parents, and families that resulted in a completely packed football stadium. Under the lights of Southwestern Col-

lege, over a thousand fans were lively and influenced the energy on the field itself. After the game, players mentioned that the music between plays and the constant cheer lifted their spirits and increased their sense of adrenaline.

Besides just winning the Championship game, head coach Jon Wallace had his 100th career win during the regular season, making this another part of his monumental season. Additionally, since most of the 22 seniors chose not to pursue football at the collegiate level, celebrating alongside their teammates and coaches of over four years after their hard work truly hit their heart, and they couldn't have felt more pride and joy.

In Santa Fe Christian's history, the Football Division 2 CIF Playoffs had never been won, even more so in an undefeated season. Heading into the California State Championship games, every member of the SFC community—including younger siblings, Nest leaders, football captains, and teachers—feels a sense of unity, gratification, and gratitude for the payoff of the team's hard work and the unwavering support from the school as a whole.

Student Reporter



Andrew Jun
Grade 11
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Paper Straws and Their Illusion Of Sustainability

It's 2025, and paper straws are ubiquitous. From Starbucks cafes to Michelin-starred restaurants, these straws have become the face of our environmental awakening. As liquids come into contact with straws, they rapidly distort, forcing consumers to hastily consume their drink. However, the tolerance for this inconvenience represents an even more important principle: the belief that small changes, such as using paper straws, can help solve big problems. This belief that small changes, such as swapping plastic for paper straws, can significantly reduce environmental pollution overestimates the impact of minor solutions.

The paper straw revolution was sparked when a viral video revealed a sea turtle with a plastic straw stuck inside its nose being removed excruciatingly. Suddenly, everyone decided to go 'green' and change their artificial plastic straws to paper straws that 'save' the sea turtles. This global surge in enthusiasm conceals the minimal impact that



A bamboo straw in water stays stronger much longer than paper straws, and can be used many times. [Source: Author, Andrew Jun]

paper straws have on environmental degradation, revealing how emotional spectacles mask the urgency of real solutions. Paper straws reduce the number of plastic straws that end up in the ocean and in sea creatures' bodies; they biodegrade more quickly than plastic straws, and they do

not release microplastics. Simply, paper straws do help, but only by a minuscule amount of what is really needed to help slow down the planet's deterioration of habitat. The effort that it applied to the movement of sustainability is admirable, but paper straws are far from the paragon of environmental sustainability. The manufacturing of paper straws requires three times the amount of energy as plastic straws due to the process of transforming trees into paper. Compared to other massive sources of pollution (e.g., fossil fuel extraction), the straw industry is barely making a difference in the current amount of pollution. In fact, plastic straws combined account for only 0.2% of all pollution. However, society has spent many years and money on environmental campaigns debating whether we should be sipping our drinks through paper, metal, bamboo, or any other material imaginable.

The obsession with straws reveals the preference for simple, visible solutions. Rather than

challenging larger issues such as global oil dependence, the conversation shifts toward the simpler act of banning plastic straws. It's the easiest way to feel proud of ourselves for "doing our part" rather than making a difference by petitioning for systemic change from harmful industries. The tendency to favor simple narratives explains why using paper straws is perceived as a meaningful environmental action, despite their limited impact. This oversimplification allows the world to continue with the perception that there is change when, in fact, there isn't. Such changes should be stepping stones, not the perceived 'whole' solution. Inconvenience is often synonymous with proper change, but the perception represents a symbolic awareness that leads to apathy in the future. Paper straws appear as the emblem of green progress, but their true significance is in whether they inspire large shifts in our consumption and waste habits; otherwise, they're just a soggy gesture.

Student Reporter



Yejoon Choi
Grade 11
Northwood High School

The Importance of Radio Communications

Radio operation has been a keystone in society since its inception and popularization, particularly in the 20th century. Although its popularity and use have declined with the rise of the internet, radio communication remains relevant.

From tactical communication to broadcasting music, radio has been the primary means of telecommunications before the internet. It continues to see military and amateur use because many radio techniques require minimal setup and training, unlike the internet, which is more costly.

In many wars throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, radio communication and the ability to intercept encoded messages transmitted over variable frequencies dictated the flow of battle and the coherence of armies.

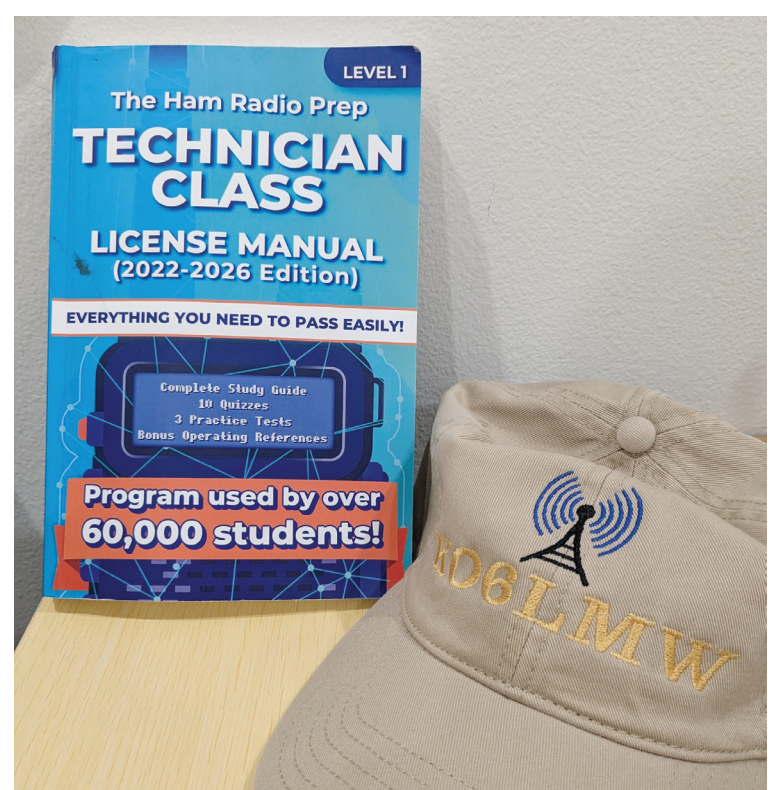
As for civilian use, radio broadcasts were a source of widespread entertainment before television was prominent, and in emergencies, radio can be effective when internet connections are unreliable. As a tool that has been present and relevant for over a century, a radio would be crucial for elevating one's telecommunication skills.

The radio is a device that uses electromagnetic waves, specifically radio waves, to send information over long distances. Al-

though encrypted languages, such as Morse code, are a means of transmitting information, we can convert sound into radio waves using transmitters and then back to audible sound using a receiver, which is typically integrated with a transmitter in radios. Message transmission and reception are among the many functions of the radio, and numerous additional pieces of equipment enhance its performance and signal strength.

To operate this telecommunication tool, I would first have to apply and become a HAM radio amateur operator under the Federal Communications Commission's rules. Hence, I started my journey in operating the radio by studying for the HAM Radio technician's license. To become a radio operator, I had to study for and pass a test for a permit and "call sign," essentially a car's license plate, but for radio. The contents focus on the radio's compartments and method of operation, along with the FCC regulations and laws that oversee all amateur radio operators and issue licenses.

Beyond educating myself about the FCC, studying how a radio works was a highly valuable educational experience. I examined the inner workings of circuitry and how electromagnetic waves propagate to understand radio



Radio technology remains a remarkable invention. By studying to become an FCC amateur radio operator, you can not only get access to such a vital tool but also learn about the intricacies of circuitry and electromagnetic waves. [Source: Author, Yejoon Choi]

better. Studying for the technician licensing exam was a worthwhile experience for me, as I explored a previously unfamiliar concept and learned physics along the way.

Radio operation remains a highly relevant skill in our society, and the journey of learning to operate such technology has been unforgettable.

Student Reporter

Feel Good Finals: Finding Joy as Finals Season Nears



Linda Li
Grade 11
Crean Lutheran High School



My mom took a screenshot of me crashing out the weekend before finals week while I was calling her: remember, although it's finals time, it doesn't mean you can enjoy yourself. [Source: Author, Linda Li]

Growing up, December has always been my favorite month, and that affection only grew after I moved to the States. Earlier this week, as I was wandering around the streets, my eyes were glued to the dazzling Christmas decorations—ribbons hanging across the streets in the classic crimson and green combination, a gigantic Christmas tree adorned with shimmering ornaments, and a golden glow filling the area. Si-

multaneously, an immediate thought popped into my mind: December has always held a special place in my heart because it is the only month dedicated entirely to Christmas.

On my way back home, the traffic jam and my realization of how overstimulated I had become brought me back to reality. At this time of the year, I always get overly sensitive—partly because of the holiday season, but deep

down, I know it is mainly due to the approach of finals week. The sentence that has stressed me out over the past few weeks, cited by my math teacher, has been echoing: "Let us finish this year strong!" Fortunately, I have found ways to seek stability amid the chaos. With a few strategies, it is completely possible to succeed academically while anticipating the arrival of Christmas and the New Year.

One key to staying productive and organized is effective time management. Over the course of the year, I have used planners—digital or on paper—to list out the tasks I aim to complete each day. For me, getting a visual sense of what I want to achieve at the end of the day motivates me to focus on schoolwork, as my brain repeatedly reminds me that I can relax once I finish my tasks.

Another study habit I have found helpful is constructing mind maps. This is especially helpful for subjects requiring a lot of memorization, including World and US History. My routine is as follows: after reviewing the material and making sure I understand everything, I take out a blank sheet of paper, close the textbook, and fill in the mind map with all the knowledge I can recall. Then, I would try to link related informa-

tion together, which solidifies my memory and deepens my understanding. Finally, I would open my textbook, check for the concepts that I missed, and add them to my mindmap.

Last but not least, I have also always been a firm believer in practice tests. Once I feel prepared, I test my knowledge, which helps me identify areas that need more effort. However, it is also worth mentioning that giving your body some time to unwind and relax is equally important. At my school, we have a tradition called "Feel Good Finals," when the student body gathers to enjoy hot cocoa and play around with special therapists, namely adorable puppies.

Overall, balancing finals and holiday excitement is all about harmony. While you strive to get an A on every final, small celebrations like making hot cocoa or cafe hopping with friends can heal your stressed minds and energize you to push through finals week. After all that happens in December, I hope that you will be soon rewarded for your best efforts, and I would like to remind you that the best memories often come from moments when you can feel accomplished and happy at the same time.

Student Reporter

A Weekend on the Coast: from Tijuana to Ensenada



Kristine Park
Grade 11
Del Norte High School

My most recent trip to Ensenada was a phenomenal experience due to the great food, vivid scenery, and overall exciting venture, along with the goods the city had to offer. Before the road trip, my family and I stopped at Tijuana Beach to appreciate the amazing views and photo spots, which were perfect for taking family pictures. Besides the vast shoreline, the area is full of unique backdrops like the Tijuana-U.S. border murals, the colorful Playas de Tijuana sign, and the look-out points along the Malecón. The waves crashing against the sand and the vendors selling snacks along the walkway are definitely must-sees.

Once my family and I arrived in Ensenada, our first destination was Puerto Nuevo's Las Brisas, a restaurant that ended up being one of the highlights of the trip. The menu was filled with options (everything from grilled fish to fresh ceviche), and every seafood dish tasted incredibly fresh. The quality of the food alone made the stop worth it, but the atmosphere made it even better. The restaurant is located above lively streets filled with vendors, small eateries, and people walking in every direction. Eating delicious seafood while overlooking the decorated streets was definitely a memorable moment.



Colorful banners can be seen from the balcony of the restaurant Las Brisas, located in Puerto Nuevo, Mexico. [Source: Author, Kristine Park]

After our meal, we headed over to the Puerto Nuevo Gallery. The space was filled with beautiful paintings, and there we got drinks while walking around. What made this place especially

memorable was watching artists hand-stitch textile paintings right in front of visitors. Seeing the paintings was super fascinating, and it was nice to look at the beautiful artwork everywhere in

the gallery.

As evening approached, we stopped near El Campito, where the streets were decorated with Christmas displays. From colorful lights to hanging ornaments and cutout characters, everything looked very festive and cute, perfect for winter photos. With that holiday energy still in the air, my family and I took a night walk along the harbor at Baja Naval. The sunset painted the sky in soft, pastel colors, and vendors selling handmade trinkets lined parts of the walkway, giving the harbor a cozy, local feel. I'd also recommend trying the churros from the vendors. They were delicious and were the perfect snack to have while walking around.

The next day, we made our way to La Bufadora, one of Ensenada's most famous natural attractions. Watching the geyser blast water into the air was thrilling to see in person, and the cliffs surrounding it added to the beauty of La Bufadora.

To wrap up the road trip, we stopped at Monociclo Coffee Roasters for high-quality coffee and grabbed fresh bread from Bastón Horno de Pan. Both were delicious. I would definitely recommend stopping by Ensenada for a trip if you're interested in beautiful photo spots and good food!

Student Reporter

My Boy Scout Eagle Project: Building Storage Boxes



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I am a current member of the Scouting Troop 173. Scouting is a youth development program where boys and girls under the age of 18 can develop character, learn outdoor skills, and leadership through the adventures within their troop. There are several ranks in Scouting, with the highest rank being Eagle. My rank is currently Life, which is just one below Eagle. Today, I have to complete a project, as it is a requirement to reach the rank of Eagle Scout. I planned to build two storage boxes for my project for a church in downtown Los Angeles. With the boxes that my troop and I create, I can support our community by donating free furniture to the church I am gifting it to, and strengthen a bond.

Saturday morning, around 8:00 a.m., my parents and I prepared breakfast for the incoming scouts from my troop, who were helping me with the project. I served them a tasty bagel, and we started to work. The goal was to build two storage boxes. I di-

vided my troop into two groups, one for each box. I guided them through the steps required to build the boxes. I also handed out gloves, masks, and safety goggles to prevent any injuries from occurring. We also set up canopies to prevent the sun from turning us into fried eggs.

To begin, we first built the frames for the floor layers of the storage box. The scouts used screwdrivers to drill in the screws in order to join the wood pieces together. We built three frames for each box and then built the side panels. We inserted another layer of floor in the box for a total of two layers on each. It took a few hours, but we managed to complete the two boxes. Then, to further strengthen the boxes, I instructed the scouts to coat them with varnish to make them more durable and easier to clean. The boxes were then left out in the sun to dry. I also sanded the boxes to remove any excess wood sticking out that may cause harm to a person's hand.



Troop 173's scouts are sanding the completed storage box for a Eagle Project. [Source: Author, Justin Kim]

We had lunch afterward. My parents brought pizza, chicken, and spaghetti for all the hardworking scouts who helped me on my project. We ate and played games together for a bit, then I got wrapped up in my project again.

After the boxes were fully built, we carried the storage box up to the small cabinet room

and placed it by the window. My troop played a bit of football at the Church's parking lot and had a great time. It was very difficult to organize the entire group and motivate them to build the storage boxes, but it was very successful, and it was great to lead others to build something helpful for my community.