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Winning the college game

School brings a lot of stress, but there are ways to deal with the pressure

If you were me, what would you write about? Not sure? It's probably because your brain is so filled with syllabi and exam dates that you've gone into overdrive.

We've already sped down the highway with loads of essentials, hurried to set them up and hustled to the bookstore to beat the crowds. Now we're flying into class just in time to watch our notes pile up too fast to comprehend.

OPINION



Jonas Allen

Needless to say, getting back into the swing of things can be pretty stressful.

This week, we heard how important each professor's class is and how vital it is to memorize our textbooks. (We also heard we were all going to hell, but

don't get stressed over that.) Oddly enough, with all the enlightening information, we failed to learn the most basic, but important, lesson of University life — college is a game.

It is a game with four basic rounds: notes, papers, tests and weekends. In this game, we play long enough to get the pigskin (in this game, the synthetic sheepskin), then we're off to the real world. The final score is determined by how we handle the stress of those rounds. And how we survived is all the real world cares about.

Right now, it seems as though the University started the game a few points ahead, but if we stay focused and don't get overwhelmed, we are virtually guaranteed a win.

The key to winning this game is stability. The bad news for University students is that our stability is often found in the form of questions.

Questions such as "Where do we park on campus?" and "Will printing prices skyrocket or fizzle?" are some of the more pressing issues. Others, such as whether to boycott Gardenburgers, are not exactly problems but will nonetheless resurface.

At least we know what to expect.

Luckily, we can also find stability in our friends. Talking with friends can be therapeutic because they are playing the same game we are. That means, however, that we're all stressed in one form or another.

Sure, some people claim they work better under stress. Maybe they do. But performance under stress and health problems because of stress are two completely different issues.

According to the American College of Health Association, large amounts of stress can play major roles in half of all illnesses, from the common cold to heart disease.

Stress can also lead to smoking, drinking and doing drugs, all of which can be problems on campus to begin with.

Ahh, how I missed college life this summer.

Actually, I did. I simply forgot about the stress of being a student.

I forgot about the small costs that add up so quickly.

I forgot about all the late nights of studying.

I forgot that the only time we get to relax is when we're eating, but even

then we're pressured to think about what we're putting into our mouths.

Basically, I forgot about the little things. That's why college is like a game. Once you're on the field, it all comes back to you. Of course, the details come back too, and they are perhaps more stressful than the rules of any other game you'll play.

We're not playing to make a million-dollar contract, we're playing to make it to the rest of our lives.

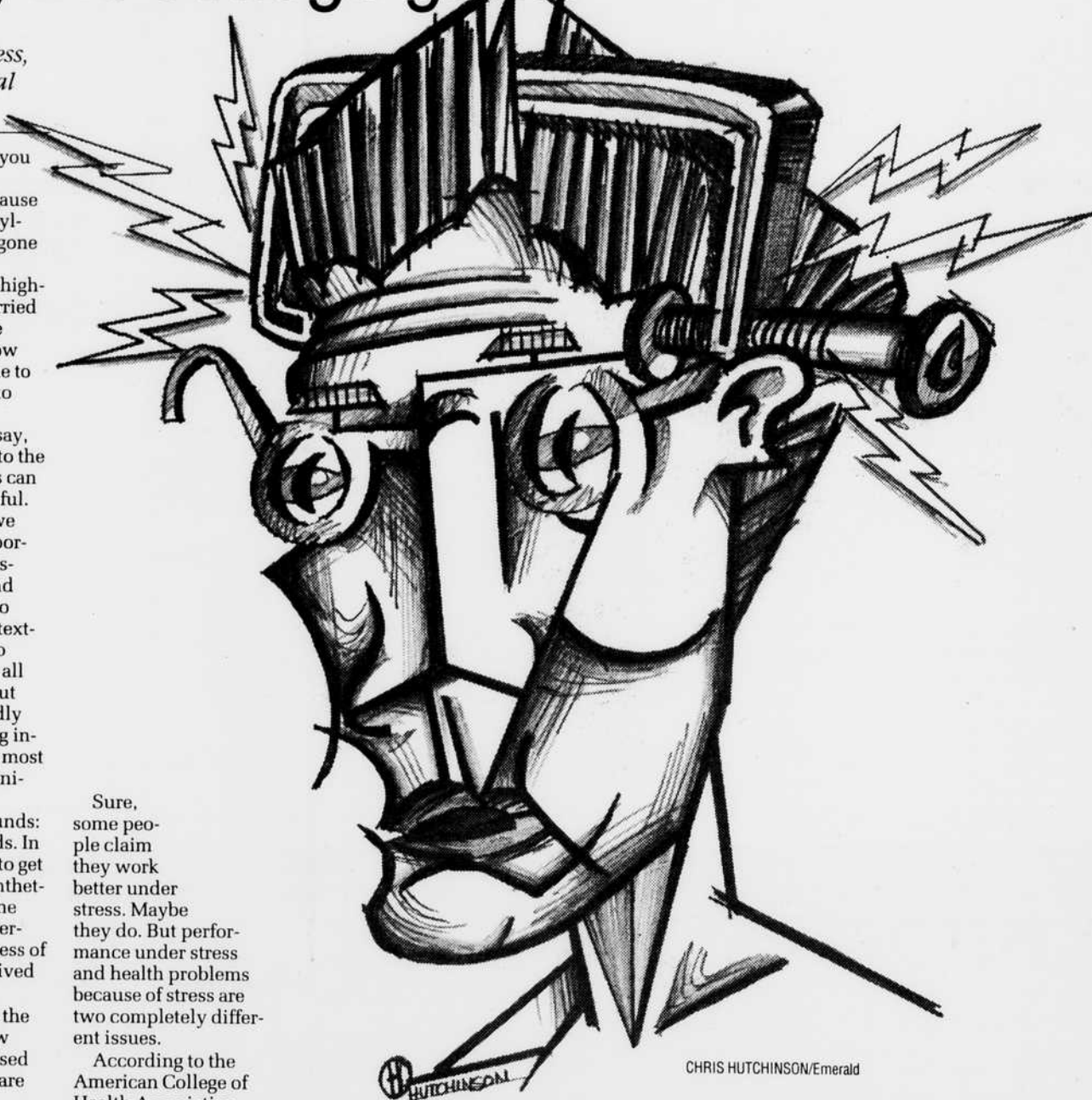
So whatever curves the year throws at us, we have to stay in the game. We can't get caught up in the halftime show; we just have to do what it takes to win. That obviously

means studying, but it also means relaxing and not worrying about things that don't really matter.

Today is the last day of "warm-up" week, and it's time to get down to business. We're going to ace the term or drop some classes, do well on papers or bomb a couple of tests. It doesn't matter.

As long as we remember today's lesson, all the others will fall into place.

Jonas Allen is a columnist for the Emerald. His columns appear alternate Fridays. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

Thumbs



TO FOREST FIRES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA
Massive fires are burning a large swath of Indonesian rain forest, unchecked since they roared out of control in July. The haze from the fires has been linked to at least four deaths from respiratory illnesses, and the thick smoke probably contributed to a plane crash that killed 234 people. All this because of bad forest management and corporate greed. Rain forests in the area, especially on the island of Borneo, have been suffering from extensive logging for some time. One practice of the loggers has been to set fire to logged areas to help clear the land for farming. A recent ban on this practice is about to go into effect, and companies eager to increase their last-minute profits appear to have increased their burning in the final days before they are required to stop. For the sake of a profit, corporations that already made money by destroying the planet are now destroying people's lives and health as well.

TO PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION
We would never tell people what to do in their own homes, but what they do on the EMU East Lawn is another matter. There are some things we don't want to see, and a hormonally driven couple exploring their sexuality in the wet grass is definitely one of those things. If you can't keep your hands off one another for half an hour, cut class and get a room.

DRAWING BOARD

