



Sixth Form Mercury

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A 'sticking plaster' for the Gaza conflict

Scenes of the Israeli bombardment along the Gaza strip have sent shockwaves across the entire world. The Israeli offensive against Gaza, instigated on 14 November 2012, is the latest eruption in a volatile conflict against opposing Palestinian militants which has raged between the two sides for years. But how did this conflict begin?

After the Arab-Israeli war, which ended in 1949, an armistice was signed which readjusted the shape of the Gaza strip. Although Egypt controlled the strip between 1948 and 1967, Israel captured it during the Six Day War and thus assumed authority over Gaza.

However, after Israel withdrew their troops in 2005, Israel considered this the end of their occupation. Israel still has most of Gaza's land borders, territorial waters and airspace under their jurisdiction, whilst Egypt controls Gaza's southern border.

This military presence in Gaza has been counter-intuitive in terms of the economy. For instance, 80% of the population depends on international assistance, and Israel's blockade of the strip has been assessed by the United Nations as "the impoverishment and de-development of a highly skilled and well educated society". The naval blockade has been cited by militants in Gaza as their justification for their contin-



ued attacks on Israel since the withdrawal in 2005.

Most alarmingly of all, there is a huge contrast in living standards between Israel and Palestine. This, according to the World Bank, is similar to the difference in living standards between the First and the Third World. In estimates for 2006, per capital GDP, for Israel, was \$18,580 - a figure comparable to many Western European countries. Amongst residents of the Gaza Strip, however, the figure was just \$1,230 - similar to developing nations such as Sri Lanka.

When comparing the likelihood of Israelis and Palestinians saying that they are satisfied with their standard of life, according to a Gallup poll, 72% of Israelis claim they are satisfied compared with just 47% of their Palestinian counterparts. Taking Palestinians living in Gaza as an extreme example, 62% claim that their standard of living is deteriorating exponentially. This, mainly, is because of the severe unemployment in Gaza - a crisis inflicted due to local industry being cut off from materials outside the region.

When Israel began their offensive on Gaza with an air strike which killed the commander of Hamas's military wing, Ahmed Jabari, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) announced Operation Pillar of Defence - which, according to the Israeli government, was orchestrated to protect the citizens of Israel and "cripple the terrorist infrastructure in Gaza".

However, the assassination of Jabari enraged Hamas and consequently Palestinian militant groups, including Hamas's Qassam Brigades, have fired hundreds of rockets into Southern Israel, which has greatly escalated tensions in the Middle East.

By 18 November, Israel's Prime Minister announced that the IDF had attacked more than 1,000 terrorist targets, and had decimated weapons which were designed to be employed against Israeli civilians. According to Israeli military sources, most of the Iranian Fajr-5 and M75 medium range missiles were demolished within the first few hours of Operation Pillar of Defence.

On the 21 November, however, a ceasefire came into effect. Within a week's fighting, at least 157 people had died. The conflict in Gaza has, for the time being, stopped. But this ceasefire is just a sticking plaster, which will fail to resolve the volatile problems which have built up over a fifty year period.

By Ben Flook



Greetings,

So the January exams are over - thank goodness. And now we wait for the next batch of exams, and beyond that for the potential freedom of the summer holidays.

But for the moment, we're still here and all together. So here to brighten this interim period we have politics, poetry, pop music and p... sport.

Enjoy!
Kane and Nikhil

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Modern poetry: T S Eliot Prize 2013

How many current poets can you name?

Before I travelled to central London for the T S Eliot Poetry Prize readings I struggled to name but a few. Nevertheless, I was interested to hear modern poets reading modern poems that might address current topics, as well anticipating the poets themselves giving personal analyses of their creations.

Each year, the T S Eliot prize gives a £15,000 prize to one poet who has produced an outstanding collection of work. Ten poets were shortlisted but only one could take the top prize. My ignorance of modern poetry shows the importance of the prize; without events like this, the best poets would just be forgotten.

Each audience member had their favourites and their bets on who would win - though it was tough to pick: they were all worthy.

The Poetry Book Society, which runs the event, believes that awarding current talent will highlight the cultural role poetry has to play and inspire further generations.



Sharon Olds, winner of the T S Eliot Poetry Prize for her collection *Stag's Leap*

I was curious and excited as I arrived at the Royal Festival Hall, on London's South Bank, to see a beautiful art form, which, in modern times, has suffered a somewhat negative image of impenetrable pretension.

It proved to be a night that truly opened my eyes to the fact that poetry is a living, breathing art form and not trapped in literature's history and York Notes.

Of course, as this was a competition, there were weaker and stronger competitors. But to see 2,000 people in a vast space, fully engaged, hanging on the every word of a solitary reader, was fascinating and enthralling.

Before going, I had read poems by the shortlisted Gillian Clarke and Sharon Olds, and these two definitely stood out as firm favourites.

However, the poet that really stood out was a softly spoken, relatively unknown contender - about whom eyebrows were raised when he stood up to speak. But Jacob Polley's delivery of 'Langely Lane' was so intimate and personal that by the last line his masterpiece was receiving spontaneous and rapturous applause.

The decision of the judges was not based on reading alone, though and in the end, the judges favoured Sharon Olds and her collection entitled *Stag's Leap*. It was a worthy winner, detailing the saddening breakdown of her marriage but full of 'grace and chivalry', and fantastic imagery that made us all go home thoughtfully.

By Peter Chappell

Battle of the Bands

By Jack Robertson

A Battle of the Bands concert finally made its way to Wilson's. On Friday 1 February, nine bands, ranging from Year 8 to the Upper Sixth, rocked the school hall in front of an eagerly awaiting crowd.

Not only did we hear great classics such as 'Love Rears its Ugly Head' from Music Sound Blues of Year 9, for instance, we also heard a jazzed up 'Valarie' from Sugar is a Hexagon, of Year 10.

You wouldn't expect a night like this from Wilson's, especially with the traditional nature of most musical events. However, what made this so special was the chance for the school's musicians to really show off their skills in other genres – whether it be in rock or in jazz.

Would you expect an accomplished classical clarinettist to be shredding to Muse on an electric bass? Definitely not - but at Battle of the Bands, that's exactly what you got the chance to hear.

The audience was treated to an array of different musical styles, giving everyone an evening to remember. We even had an acoustic mash-up of 'Fast Car' and 'Paradise' from myself and Satchit, and a cover of Blur's 'Parklife' from the Upper Sixth house band.

And the night was truly perfected by master of ceremonies Archie MacGillivray, whose witty and pun-laden introductions made him the perfect host. Archie provided an extremely funny and entertaining evening, and we hope to see him again at the next Battle of the Bands.

A special mention must go to the teachers involved, as they followed the bands from the very beginning. Along with various Sixth Form mentors, they have given support and expertise to each of the bands performing, and this had a huge positive influence on the final performances. Without the help of Mr Johnstone, Mr Rogers, Mr Ormonde and Mr Kimber, the night could not have been as successful as it was.

In fact, the performances by the bands were so impressive that the audience was on its feet for the final song.

Battle of the Bands really has provided an ambitious leap towards a new type of musical performance at the school, to paraphrase Mr Rogers, and we hope this type of showcase event will continue to take place long into the future.





Lorenzo's Top 5 Sporting Moments of 2012

Our sports correspondent counts down his five favourite sporting moments of 2012

It is the year that had it all. From the London Olympics to the Lacrosse Association, from Wembley to Walsall FC, 2012 provided us with a staggering twelve months of sport. As a result, I've left myself with an abominable task - but, being true a Wilsonian, I thought I'd try it anyway. Despite it being open to debate, I'd like to think that my five choices define what sport is all about: the profound emotions, the wonderful unpredictability, and that unbridled feeling of unity among a people.

5. Europe's Ryder Cup comeback

One which I know will receive raised eyebrows, given that golf isn't the most popular of sports. However, the events which unfolded on the final day at Medinah Country Club were nothing short of sensational. Europe, trailing the US 10-6 and seemingly down and out, produced one of the greatest comebacks of sporting history to snatch victory from under the Yanks's noses. Young Europeans McIlroy, Donald, Poulter and Rose played a large part, but the memory I'll take from it is captain José Olazábal dedicating the Cup to his late friend Seve Ballesteros.

4. Murray's Grand Slam success

There aren't many sportsmen that had a better year than this guy. Love him or hate him, Andy Murray's abilities are unquestionable. Having endured four Grand Slam final defeats on the bounce, the Scotsman's victory against Novak Djokovic in the US Open final is all the more impressive. And to top it all off,

Andy won gold and silver in the men's singles and mixed doubles at the Olympics, confirming his rightful place as one of Britain's greatest tennis players. A sportsman who continues to do old Blighty proud, one frown at a time.

3. The man with the sideburns

He has been dubbed the forgotten third Gallagher brother and Britain's answer to ambitious facial hair (though not at Wilson's, of course). Indeed, I am referring to Sports Personality of the Year winner Bradley Wiggins. The 32-year-old is the worthy holder of such a prestigious award, having won the Tour de France, which, incredibly, no Brit had won since its inception in 1903. What I particularly love about road cycling is that it takes a hell of a lot of teamwork, with dozens of riders pushing their bodies to extraordinary lengths for the benefit of teammates. Admittedly, it is a sport with a repulsive past, but one we can also learn from.

2. "AGÜEROOO!!!"

Being a devout football fan, where do I begin? How about with Sky commentator Martin Tyler's words following that remarkable goal: "I swear you'll never see a moment like this ever again, so watch it, drink it in...". One moment, Manchester City were losing 2-1 to trapdoor dwellers QPR, and the next they were celebrating a 3-2 win and the Premier League title ... all in front of their local rivals Manchester United who had already brought out the party crackers.

It's moments like these which sports enthusiasts simply can't prepare themselves for, and it's this 'entering into the unknown' which makes sport so thrilling.

1. Super Saturday

Naturally, I had to end with a moment from our Olympic games ... well, technically not a moment, for this lasted for 46 minutes. In the time it takes for me to get out of bed on a Saturday morning, Team GB won three gold medals in a packed Olympic Stadium. The first came from the nation's sweetheart Jessica Ennis, who dominated the woman's heptathlon to bring home the medal. Next came Greg Rutherford, who defied all odds to leap further than all his competitors in the long jump. The last athletics gold of the night came from Mo Farah in the 10,000m, a race I shall never forget for the perseverance shown by all the competitors to run such a gruelling distance.

The events of the 4 August 2012 represent arguably the greatest night for British sport, and I am eternally grateful to have witnessed it all on that clever TV of mine.

By Lorenzo Wong