4-3-2013

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Recommended Citation

Marijuana decriminalized in Rhode Island, remains illegal to possess

BY HENSLY CARRASCO
Editor-in-Chief

After Governor Lincoln Chafee signed it into law last June, the decriminalization of marijuana became official this past Monday.

This does not, however, mean that it isn’t still illegal to possess.

As of April 1, possession of an ounce or less of marijuana will now be treated as a civil violation rather than a crime in the state of Rhode Island.

Instead of being criminally charged, those found with small amounts will instead receive a $150 fine. However, the Providence Journal writes “three such violations within 18 months would be a misde­meanor with larger fines and/or prison.” Of the fines collected for the violations, half will go to drug-awareness and-treatment programs for youths.

“As far as the police go, if we encounter someone with marijuana and determine that it’s an ounce or less, those people, at the discretion of the police officer, can receive what amounts to a traffic ticket to appear in court to answer the charge,” University of Rhode Island police Maj. Stephen N. Baker said.

For those [older than] 18, it’s punishable by a fine of up to $150. For those under 18, the penalties are different. The penalties include [drug education classes], but they will also be sent to the same court.

Baker said that if students are found in possession and given a violation, they will be sent to the Wakefield Traffic Court. “Basically that’s the only change on our end,” Baker said.

Whenever a student is charged with a violation, a report will be forwarded to the Office of Student Life.

Regardless of the location of the violations - on or off campus - students are still reported to the university, according to Katrina Dorsey, coordinator of off-campus living.

“Anything that happens off campus, whether it’s the South Kingstown Police, the Narragansett Police - if it happens with someone who is a [URI] student, we get those reports no matter what happens,” she said.

Dorsey said students shouldn’t misunderstand what decriminalization means.

“It only means they don’t go to jail,” Dorsey said. “It doesn’t mean they won’t be held accountable for their actions. They will be held accountable accordingly.

Another important fact with student drug use on campus, which Dorsey mentioned, was the eligibility for a student report will still be forwarded to the Office of Student Life.

According to Cotter, the first step in covering a crime such as the murder/suicide in Connecticut where the perpetrator is deceased is not in fact to rely on officials for information. “It is not the police’s job to build the narrative,” Cotter said.

In order to create a complete picture for readers from the few hazy facts that were known about the incident, Cotter and the reporters began to develop a timeline, or as he called it, a “tick-tock.”

“Building this narrative-it’s hard to imagine that these things can happen,” Cotter said.

Cotter explained that he sent a reporter to the daycare from which the children’s grandmother picked them up shortly before the murder. He then sent reporters to houses

Softball splits two against St. Bonaventure University

BY JACOB MARROCCO
Sports Staff Reporter

The University of Rhode Island softball team grabbed its first Atlantic-10 Conference victory in their home-opening doubleheader against St. Bonaventure University on Friday afternoon.

The Rams dropped the first game, 11-6, despite having an early lead but claimed a win in the second half of the series stifling the Bonnies, 6-2. Rhode Island’s record sits at 6-16 overall with a 1-2 posting in A-10 play.

“The first game was a little bit tough but coming back and winning the second game was a big win for the conference record,” Rhode Island assistant coach Denise Marchese said. “I think bouncing back from that loss was the most impressive thing and how they rallied to get that done.”

Rhode Island charged out in front in the top half of the doubleheader after junior first baseman Jocelyn Mattison singled in senior centerfielder Kelly Coker, and a double from freshman catcher Taylor Archer drove in Mattison in the bottom of the first.

After a solo shot from sophomore centerfielder Ashley Snider in the top of the third, the Bonnies exploded for eight runs in the fourth inning to jump out to a seven-run advantage. Freshman shortstop Emily McDonough and senior designated player Jessenia Andujar each had two RBI in the inning, and two Rhode Island errors aided the offensive outburst.

The Rams tried to bring themselves back into the game in the later innings after Mattison slammed a solo home run in the bottom of the
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fourth, and Coker blasted a three-run shot in the bottom of the fifth, but freshman relief pitcher Alexs Sloat prevented any further damage. Senior pitcher Erika Szymanski suffered her fifth loss of the season after surrendering nine runs on eight hits. Only two of the runs were earned.

Rhode Island was able to take an early lead again in the second game after bringing three players across the plate in the bottom of the first. Junior second baseman Amy Gleason started the scoring after coming home on an error by sophomore third baseman Grace Rooney. Senior outfielder Megan Hendricks and a Mattison later scored on another error during the same play.

"I just think our defense was the most critical in the second game," Marchese said. "I think the defense cleaned up, for the most part, and maybe it took care of those automatic outs and for us that's a critical component. When our pitching and defense are on, we're hitting the ball very well lately."

The Rams tacked on another run in the bottom of the second inning when Archer lined an RBI single up the middle to score freshman leftfielder Emily Hendrick. The Bonnies tried to come back after a solo home run from freshman second baseman Emily Belfield and an RBI single by freshman first baseman Emily Belfield, but could not score any further against junior pitcher Sab Bredore. Bredore pitched a complete game for the Rams, picking up her team-leading fourth win while allowing six hits and striking out four.

Rhode Island sealed their victory in the bottom of the fourth when Klepichk ham mered a two-run double into the gap in right centerfield, scoring Mattison and freshman Olivia Hendrick. The Rams next series is against Fairfield University on Thursday, after which they will host A-10 opponents LaSalle University and then travel to Fordham University over the weekend.

"These games are very key, especially with teams like LaSalle and Fordham, they are very good teams," Marchese said. "I think if we can get a couple of wins this weekend that will push us over the .500 mark in conference and that would really set us up for not having to back into a corner in a must-win situation later."

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to receive financial aid. She said the United States Department of Education requires all students who receive financial aid to sign a no drug use oath in order to receive financial aid. "So that is still in effect no matter what happens," Dorsey said.

The Federal Student Aid website writes that if a student has been convicted for an offense that happened while the student was receiving financial aid, the aid can be affected. Students who have been convicted are required to fill out a worksheet in order to help determine whether or not the conviction affects the eligibility for federal student aid.

If a student's federal aid has been suspended due to a conviction, the student can regain eligibility "early by successfully completing an approved drug rehabilitation program or by passing two unannounced drug tests administered by an approved drug rehabilitation program," according to the site. If a student regains eligibility during the same year they are given an award, they are required to notify their financial aid office so that they can begin to receive the aid they were eligible for.

Students who are convicted of a drug-related offense after submitting their FAFSA can lose eligibility and may be liable for returning any financial aid received during a period of ineligibility.

Rhode Island is one of 14 states that have decriminalized marijuana.

Baker said though it has been decriminalized, it still remains a crime to sell marijuana, even if the amount sold is less than an ounce.

"Whether it's an ounce or less, it's still a felony charge," Baker said. "Most cases it's a misdemeanor arrest for [possession of] up to 2.2 pounds, other than that it's a felony for possession of [more than] a kilo. If there's any evidence of sales, that's a felony. Our department will investigate all possession issues, even if it's a civil violation. We're going to try to determine where the marijuana is coming from because it's still a violation to have it on campus."

Marijuana remains a controlled substance on campus. "Students need to be mindful of the use of marijuana...they could lose their financial aid," Dorsey said. "Students need to pay attention, because records are filed through the court system and those records, if searched, can be found. With their names linking them to possession or consumption of marijuana with a ticket, citation or violation."

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of the parents, the paternal grandmother, and the neighbors. "People are very leery of the media today more than ever," Cotter said. "They think we're just trying to sell papers."

With this knowledge, Cotter advised students to be "respectful and polite, but forceful" in their reporting, stressing the line between what is journalistically acceptable versus what is ethically responsible.

"You need to be able to sleep at night," Cotter said. In addition to reporting on crime, Cotter emphasized to students the importance of undergraduate education.

"Your undergrad is the foundation," Cotter said. "If you've got cracks in the foundation some day your house will fall down."

In terms of the long hours a newspaper reporter can often face, Cotter admitted that journalism can be a labor of love.

"I think you need to love the work to make it worth it," Cotter said. "You don't leave until it's done."

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Film
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released, one with a story that many are familiar with due to its prevalence in literature: "The Great Gatsby." This film is adapted from F. Scott Fitzgerald's original novel, which has become a staple in high school curricula all around the country. This New York story tells of money, love and desire during the roaring 20s in America, and is told from the point-of-view of scholar and war veteran Nick Carraway.

Carraway tells of the gloriously lavish, yet somehow flawed, lifestyle of his neighbor Jay Gatsby and those who surround him. The film, directed by Baz Luhrmann ("Moulin Rouge" and "Romeo and Juliet"), will feature many well-known actors. Leonardo DiCaprio will be featured in a titular role opposite Carey Mulligan, and the role of Nick will be played by "Spider Man" star Toby Maguire. Fitzgerald's book has become a classic part of American popular culture through the years with a familiar story and characters that many know very much about. This new film will be released on May 10th and has high standards to live up to. Viewers will fill theaters in hopes that the movie lives up to their expectations that the novel has set before it.

Rhody pic
University of Rhode Island's Chi Phi fraternity raised money for Habitat for Humanity on the Quadrangle.

Lauren Trask | Cigar

**Hit all the right keys.**
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**Write for entertainment.**
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By Melissa Lichtman  
Contributing Entertainment Writer

This past winter brought many award-winning films to the screen that are now remembered as some of our favorite movies. As we wait the release of those DVDs, new movies make their way to theaters, and viewers hope that these films live up to the high standards set before them.

The axe-inspiring story of baseball player and civil rights leader Jackie Robinson will soon be portrayed in the film “42.” Audiences have been exposed to a preview of this film through a compelling trailer that features the song “Brooklyn We Go Hard” by music mogul Jay-Z. The trailer reveals inspiring moments from the film and is edited in a quick fashion to build tension and suspense that gave me goose bumps. In the film, written and directed by Brian Helgeland (“L.A. Confidential”), emerging actor Chadwick Boseman plays Jackie Robinson alongside Harrison Ford and many other talented actors. It is anticipated that many movie fans will make their way to theaters to see this inspiring film when it is released next week, on April 12.

There certainly hasn’t been a shortage of post-apocalyptic or dystopian science fiction movies in the last decade or so, but the Tom Cruise starring “Oblivion” is looking to give the genre another go. Directed by Joseph Kosinski (“Tron Legacy”) with a script by William Monahan (“The Departed”) and Michael Arndt (“Toy Story 3”), the movie is based on Kosinski’s own graphic novel of the same name. Cruise plays a marine helping to clean up Earth after it has been attacked by an alien race, and with a supporting cast that includes Morgan Freeman and Nikolaj Coster-Waldau (a.k.a. Jamie Lannister from “Game of Thrones”), “Oblivion” could be a surprise hit come April 19.

Taking a short break from the giant robot spectacle, director Michael Bay scales things back with the Mark Wahlberg/Dwayne Johnson action comedy “Pain and Gain.” Based on a true story (as the trailers rather proudly exclaim in bold) about bodybuilders who hatch an extortion scheme on a spoiled businessman, the sense of humor is akin to Bay’s “Bad Boys” movies. His love of gratuitous excess appears to be on full display here, which could work to the movie’s advantage given the plot full of money, mayhem, and dark laughter.

On May 3, Robert Downey Jr. will return to his role as Iron Man when ‘Iron Man 3’ hits theaters. Downey Jr., who has portrayed the superhero in 2012’s ‘The Avengers’, will be alongside actress Gwyneth Paltrow who plays the female lead of Pepper Potts. Downey Jr. has been featured in four films through two different series, and the stakes look like they are higher than ever for Tony Stark.

As our semester comes to an end, a new movie will be

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‘Game of Thrones’ season premiere offers little action, remains compelling

By Conor Fagan  
Contributing Entertainment Writer

Someone once told me that the night is dark and full of terrors...and, as the season premiere of “Game of Thrones” would have me believe, it is also brimming with expository dialogue. The third season of the HBO series, based on “A Storm of Swords” from the novel series, was one of the most extraordinarily hyped-up television events in recent memory. It all came complete with advertisements sporting the frost-covered close-ups of favorite characters Robb Stark (Richard Madden) and Tyrion Lannister (Peter Dinklage) along with the menacing shadows of a tiny dragon in mid flight, the latter of which has become the show’s unofficial logo.

However, like any faithful adaptation of a seven part high fantasy series, there is a lot of talking at the beginning. Like, a lot of talking. So much that it is easy to imagine a new viewer getting instantly turned off by the deceptively lackluster kick-off. I can almost hear the hypothetical neophyte whining in my ear, asking, “Why is that midget talking to the Queen? And who’s Tywin? Wait, why is Jon Snow talking to the eskimos? Is he a bad guy? I thought he was a watchman, or whatever. And what happened to Sean Bean’s character? I thought he was, like, supposed to be the main guy in all of this. Where are all the swordfights?” Such protests would not be entirely unwarranted.

Even next to Jerome Flynn’s hilarious and believable interpretation of the upjumped s-word Bronn and Daenerys Targaryen’s newfangled slave army, screenwriters David Benioff and D.B. Weiss are the true stars of this week’s episode. The pair of producers have honed their skill of fabricating succinct, coherent scenes to a deadly point. They have an undeniably talent for culling the juiciest fragments of author George R. R. Martin’s lengthy and detailed point-of-view chapters from the “A Song of Ice and Fire” book series and quoting them near verbatim. This is all while conjuring up entirely new scenes in which to jam the rest of the information necessary to appreciate the bloody pay-off once all the talking’s through.

Scenes featuring star characters that don’t necessarily fight and take names in the traditional sense of the phrase, like the dainty Sansa Stark and the devious Petyr Baelish, have only gotten better and better as the show has progressed. I find myself anticipating Tyrion’s trademark back-and-forth dialogue with far more excitement than the spate of gore battles and weddings that will undoubtedly break out over the course of “Game of Thrones” third season. What is dead may never die, but give the show an episode or two before it rises again, harder and stronger.

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Somewhere down the line since 2004, many Boston Red Sox fans became a group of bandwagon fans, which remain uninterested for the new season.

When 50 University of Rhode Island students were asked, only 19 said they were interested in this baseball season and fans. Although both groups considered themselves Red Sox fans and 10 of them considered themselves New York Yankee fans. Everybody Loves LeBron James

The Miami Heat will play just like they did last year. Other than that, the NBA climate is markedly different. For one, the NBA was just opening up shop after an extended standoff between players and owners, resulting in the first seven weeks of the season getting sent down the drain.

The Christmas Day contests were actually the first games of the season and fans rejoiced that the league was back in business.

But then there's this second, very conspicuous difference from last year: the energy around the Heat has changed significantly. It's night and day from where it was last year. The Heat are no longer derided for their style, head coach Erik Spoelstra is no longer second guessed for everything he does and of course, LeBron James is no longer public enemy number one.

The vitriol, that was on bubbling cauldron levels, is gone now. Replaced by a "well-considered" bear hug from the fans and the media. After winning last year's MVP award in both the regular season and the Finals, James topped it off by leading Team USA to gold in the Olympics. People were forced to change. It was embarrassing to keep hating on the dude. It was only last year that much of the free world was against him. Things went from people hating LeBron to wondering why people hate LeBron to really wondering why people hate LeBron. We all remember - it went beyond normal fan disdain and pro athlete jealousy. Cavs owner Dan Gilbert's crazy letter set it off and the flames spread. It became a national event. It dominated sports news cycles like nothing any of us had ever seen. People, who didn't know anything about basketball, knew enough not to like LeBron. Even as recent as last February he was rated No. 6 on a list of most hated athletes compiled by the Nielsen's ratings people. It was uninteresting and, to boot, had an absurd shelf life. The dislike for him crossed over and went mainstream. It was the Gangnam Style of '10, '11 and half of '12.

It wasn't just that he left Cleveland, but how he left that angered people. He went to another team to try and win a ring. People went on and on with "back in the day stories" about how things were done a certain way in years past. It was hard to start. The water supply was tainted with whatever was making people sick in "Contagion." One minute you are a full-functioning, level-headed human, the next, you're afflicted with a sickness that causes you to criticize someone you don't know, and that person's decision to