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BEAR COUNTRY

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BYU



One BYU student found her place on the formula E team

Photos and text by Annabelle Jones

“One, two, three — lift!”

Five men heave as they pick up an electric racecar outside the Engineering Building. Crouching beside them is a woman with bubble braids trailing down her back.

Never fear, Brie Barzee is here!

Donning her BYU Racing sweatshirt and an electric tangerine safety vest, Barzee has come to save the day with a toolkit and a smile. She switched out the car’s battery before its final test run. She giggled as she worked beside the chassis, her hands moving with swift precision.

“It’s more stressful when someone’s watching you,” Barzee said after the fact. “It’s not even like, that’s the most stressful part of the car, but I was

laughing a lot because I was a little nervous.”

Before she came to college, Barzee had no plans of working on cars. She thought she’d be knee deep in concertos, not voltage converters.

“I was actually thinking about for a long time doing cello performance,” she said. “I had my application and everything made for that.”

Until she took a 180-degree turn. Something was holding her back from pursuing music; life just wasn’t adding up.

“This is gonna sound nerdy, but I couldn’t imagine a life without math,” Barzee said.

Like thousands of other students at BYU, Barzee found herself at a crossroads. What kind of GPS gets the best signal while you’re navigating the decade of decisions? Barzee had found her answer. Through small leaps of faith, hard work, and trust in God, she found her place at BYU.

Barzee’s journey to the pit crew started back when she was just a kid.

“When I was little, my mom would set me down in front of puzzles and just go, so I like being able to solve problems,” Barzee said.

That love for problem solving inspired her to try electrical engineering.

“It was kind of a spur-of-the-moment thing,” Barzee said about her decision.

She joined BYU’s racing team last fall and has been busy ever since.

“This past Saturday, I was there for 16 hours,” Barzee said, referring to the day I visited the track.

When the team first arrived that cloudy Saturday morning, things were going well. The car breezed through its first few laps and crew members were blasting music beneath a blue pop-up tent.

But not moments later, the vehicle’s Hoosier tires crept to an alarming halt in the middle of the makeshift track.

The team swarmed the car with computers in hand. It wasn’t hard to spot Barzee in the mix. She had her orange vest on and was one of the few closest to the car.

It was like watching well-seasoned generals make battle plans. What had stopped their battery-powered warship dead in its tracks?

By reading real-time data collected by sensors on the car, Barzee and her team pinpointed the issue.

“We pushed [the battery] harder than it could go,” Barzee said afterwards.

They quickly restarted the system and before long, they were back to tearing up the track. Sometimes all it takes is a small push to get the ball rolling.

Barzee has learned this personally.

“If there’s something you’re waiting to do until you’re ready or prepared for it to an extent, of course, just do it. Just jump right in,” Barzee encouraged fellow BYU students.

When she first joined the team, Barzee felt in over her head. She and a teammate needed to work with code written by prior engineers. They had a lot of gaps in their collective knowledge. No matter! With a little help from the internet and a lot of time conducting outside research, Barzee came to master the Controller Area Network (CAN) line, which acts as a communication line throughout the car.

It’s that kind of pull-up-your-bootstraps attitude that gets her through periods of doubt.

“I feel like I have imposter syndrome a lot.”

Barzee declared unabashedly. “But I’m able to remind myself, no, you’re supposed to be here and you know all of these things. You just have to be confident in yourself,” she said.

She’s not alone in that confidence. Barzee is part of a loving team who acts as a second, auto-fanatic family.

“They’re super supportive, super engaging and excited,” Barzee said. “Everyone is just happy that other people are there, you know?”

And what’s more, she has faith in a God who she says cares about her deeply.

“He really really does care about what you care

about,” Barzee

said. “There have been so many times this past year where something isn’t working right and I’m just like, come on, I really need this to work and then magically it works.”

Sometimes they figure out the reason, but sometimes, they don’t. Those latter experiences help her feel the love of the Savior.

“I know that’s the hand of Christ in our lives,” she said.

Barzee has come a long way from where she started less than a year ago. Since that time, she has built a functioning electric racecar, found a sense of community, and built a confidence strong enough to face the great unknown.

“Now I feel more confident in saying ‘I don’t know’ when I need to answer somebody and also saying, ‘okay, how can we figure this out? How can I learn this?’” Barzee said.

With that kind of confidence, who knows where Barzee’s wheels will take her? One thing’s for sure, she’s ready to put the pedal to the metal.



Barzee meets with a team welder. She is a dual member of the Chassis and Controls and Systems teams. She recently created a 3D model of a tool cart and says this semester she’s been focusing on refining her welding skills.



Barzee works on a repair between laps. The car drove for more than five minutes during its final endurance lap. The team hopes to get their time up to at least 13 minutes before their debut race in Michigan.

From sketch to legacy

HOW STUDIO C SHAPED A GENERATION

By Rachel Ravsten

On a random afternoon, someone inevitably yells, “I don’t do my own stunts!” across a room. Someone else responds with a perfectly timed dodge from an invisible soccer ball in homage to Scott Sterling. A third chimes in with a quote from the skin-colored crayon.

No explanation needed. Laughs are guaranteed. A decade later, the jokes still land.

What began as a scrappy student experiment at Brigham Young University quietly became one of the most recognizable forces in clean comedy, an unlikely cultural touchstone that continues to echo through classrooms, living rooms and group chats.

Built from nothing

Before the viral videos and YouTube comedy clips from the iconic 2012 Studio C cast, there was Divine Comedy, a group of ragtag BYU students writing for an improv troupe, spending nights rehearsing sketches and persuading people to attend shows.

For cast member Natalie Madsen, the early days were defined by effort and excitement, not expectation.

“We worked really hard, and I knew we were good,” she said. “But in the beginning we were kind of told, ‘Don’t quit your day job.’”

The group pitched a sketch show multiple times to BYUtv, facing rejection before finally landing a pilot. Even then, nothing felt secure. Cast members rehearsed at night, learned television production on the fly and operated with limited resources.

“We didn’t think we were going to make it on,” recalled Whitney Call. “This probably isn’t going to happen, but we’re having fun.”

For the first several seasons, renewal was never guaranteed. “Every season we were told, ‘We might not bring you back,’” Madsen said. The uncertainty became part of the process.

They weren’t industry insiders; they were, as Call described, “the black sheep,” experimenting in a space that didn’t fully understand them. “We were just doing stupid sketches over and over,” she said.

“It was defi-

nately an uphill battle.”

Clean comedy, reimagined

What set Studio C apart wasn’t just its origins, it was really a new approach to comedy as a whole. At a time when sketch comedy often relied on shock value, Studio C committed to something different: humor without profanity or explicit content.

“Clean” comedy became an opportunity to make humor an adventure, exploring different people and crazy scenarios.

“We never dumbed them down,” Call said. “We wrote everything for us. We wrote what we thought would be funny.”

That creative philosophy became the show’s defining strength. Instead of tailoring jokes to a perceived audience, the cast trusted their instincts, leaning into absurd premises, physical comedy and sharply drawn characters.

Broadcast on BYUtv, the show quickly found an audience within Latter-day Saint households. But its reach extended far beyond that. The absence of explicit content didn’t limit the humor at all, it expanded it.

The viral turning point

The shift from niche success in LDS households to widespread recognition happened with a single sketch: Scott Sterling.

“When the Scott Sterling sketch exploded, that’s when it was like, ‘whoa... this is a big deal,’” Call said.

Uploaded to YouTube, the video amassed millions of views, introducing Studio C to audiences with no connection to BYU or its culture.

For Madsen, the timing mattered. “I was so grateful no one found us until we had a lot of sketches for people to watch. We had built up all this content for people to find once they clicked on that first video,” she said.

The internet amplified what the network had started, turning Studio C into both a family favorite and a viral phenomenon. Classrooms quoted it. Families rewatched it. Friend groups built inside jokes around it.

Why it worked

At the heart of Studio C’s

success was its ensemble.

The natural chemistry between Matt Meese, Mallory Everton, Natalie Madsen, Whitney Call, Adam Berg, Stephen Meek, Stacey Harkey, James Perry, Jeremy Warner and Jason Gray was enough to build a show where, in each skit, they largely played versions of themselves.

Recurring characters, familiar dynamics and a clear sense of trust gave the show a unique rhythm. Audiences got to know the performers personally rather than watching a character flash by one sketch, they became attached.

Many cast members even used their real names on screen, blurring the line between character and creator. “Most interactions are, ‘Hey, are you Natalie from Studio C?’” Madsen said.

The humor endured because it wasn’t built on fleeting trends. It was rooted in character, timing and relatability while also providing uplifting content that even church leaders could approve of.

“I remember hearing Elder Ballard, sitting on the board for BYUtv, looking over the material one year and saying something like, ‘Well, if this angel-on-the-shoulder thing is getting people to watch, let’s do more of that,’” Madsen said.

A generation raised on sketches

For many viewers, Studio C became more than a show. It became a family activity, a friend group’s inside jokes and quotes exchanged across an entire generation.

“We didn’t even know our show was going to be fun for families,” Call said. “When we had six or seven-year-olds watching, it was this interesting shift.”

That shift defined its legacy. In a media landscape often fragmented by age and taste, Studio C created a rare shared space. Parents and kids laughed at the same jokes. Families developed their own references and traditions.

“We met kids going through hard things, and their parents would say the only thing that could get them to settle down was putting on Studio C,” Madsen said. “It made them feel good, and that’s what it’s all about.”

Now, those same kids are adults. “It is quite wild to see these

29-year-olds say, ‘I grew up watching you,’” she added.

Nostalgia, it turns out, is one of the show’s most powerful currencies.

Then versus now

“At BYUtv, we were sort of the guinea pigs for a lot of things,” Call said. “The sketches were really fun to make, but at a certain point it hit like, we had been doing a two-minute bit for 10 years.”

The original cast ultimately chose to leave together, forming JK! Studios and pursuing new creative projects, including longer-form content like Freelancers. The decision reflected a desire to grow beyond sketch comedy and build something more sustainable.

More than a show

Studio C didn’t end with the original cast. The show continues on BYUtv with a new ensemble, evolving in tone and style while maintaining its core premise.

That evolution has sparked mixed reactions. Some fans remain loyal to the original cast, while others embrace the new direction. This tension raises a broader question: What defines Studio C, the brand or the people who built it?

What remains clear is that the cast who built Studio C, once just a student group writing sketches in 2012, made an impact far beyond the screen. It proved that clean comedy could succeed not just within a niche audience, but on a global scale.

“It’s been really sweet to see a ripple,” Call said. “To see that this was bigger than us.”

It inspired a generation of creators, particularly at BYU, to see comedy as both a space where they could belong and an opportunity to create something that is as meaningful as it is funny.

Perhaps most importantly, it redefined what “family-friendly” entertainment could be, not watered down, but authentic enough to resonate across ages.

“It lives on through kids quoting it today,” Madsen said.

And as long as someone, somewhere, is still dodging an imaginary soccer ball to the face, it probably always will.



Deep Listening

By Aubrey Smith

AUBREY SMITH PHOTOS

The room asks something of you before you sit down. No shoes. No food or drink. Phones away. No talking while the record plays. When you step inside B-Side Hi-Fi — Provo's new vinyl listening lounge — you've already agreed to something that has become increasingly uncommon... your full attention.

Plush velvet and leather seating clusters around the room's focal point: a gorgeous, custom-restored vintage Thorens turntable. Music posters line the walls. An assortment of vintage lights hang from the ceiling. Kerr describes it simply. "It's kind of like the movies, but for music. You know, you buy a ticket to go sit and deliberately just watch a movie. And that's kind of what we do."

The idea found him a few years ago in a Seattle bar, in a listening room tucked in the back. A record dropped on a hi-fi system, and something shifted. "I was immediately enamored," he recalled. "I think we went back three times that week."

What he'd stumbled into was a jazz kissa — a Japanese listening cafe that flourished in the 1960s and '70s. The concept was simple: gather people around a high-end audio system, put on vinyl, and just listen. No distractions. Coffee, maybe whiskey. But music as the centerpiece.

Six months later, Kerr spent two weeks in Japan, moving city to city through listening cafes. He visited spots still running on their original '70s energy — including one where an elderly woman in her 80s still put on the records herself and hand-crafted every drink. "It took her like 20 minutes to make a simple whiskey drink," Eli said, laughing softly. "But it was amazing. Absolutely amazing."

He came home convinced. He was going to build one in Utah.

The American hi-fi scene had already begun bubbling up — Salt Lake City had recently seen one open its doors. But Eli had reservations about what was being lost in translation. Many of the American versions, he felt, had borrowed the aesthetic without honoring the spirit. "Some of them are just really cool systems," he said. "But music's not really the center of it. Sometimes they might switch to streaming because it's convenient. They've lost a little bit of the ritual."

Ritual is a word Eli returns to often.

"I think one reason why it's so amazing is because with physical media, there's a ritual to it. It causes you to be very present. You don't just skip a song because you don't like it. All of a sudden you're lifting a tone arm, you're dropping a tone arm, you're flipping the record, you're turning a volume. It's very, very much a ritual."

The room itself reinforces the intention. Soft lighting, treated for sound, stripped of distraction. It is, as Eli

describes it, one giant ritual from the moment guests remove their shoes to the moment the needle lifts.

It's been called the art of deep listening— a meditative, focused approach to music that involves fully immersing oneself in sound.

"It changes your relationship with that music, with that musician, with those songs," he said. "You're encompassed by the music. All those feelings, wherever this music takes you — past experiences, things you've associated with it — all of that comes up. It can be a hard thing for some people, I'm sure. But very beautiful."

He paused— "Music is a small, almost kind of simple thing. But when you're sitting with people who love the same artists, the same songs, the same album, you realize — we're not so different."

And those connections, Eli shared, was one of the main goals behind this project.

"I want to build an actual culture and community," he said simply.

"I think the technology we have access to — we think it connects us, but in so many ways, it creates greater distance," he said. "I believe we need more physical places so we can come together in person and be around each other. This place becomes a form of resistance."

Eli had originally planned on opening B-Side in Salt Lake City. It seemed like the safer bet, more foot traffic, lower risk. But when a space became available in downtown Provo— right above a record store— he knew it was the place.

"The whole time I was thinking about this concept, I was like, I'm gonna do it in Salt Lake because that's where the people are," he admitted. "But the reality is, I live in Utah County most of my time, and we don't have any place I want to hang out."

The name B-Side is its own kind of philosophy. On a vinyl single, the A-side was always the hit song. The B-side was the filler, almost an afterthought.

"It's kind of like that hidden gem," Eli noted, "And sometimes, the B-side has the song that everyone loves. There's another side to it. So flipping it over, checking it out, being curious — it may lead to something very cool."

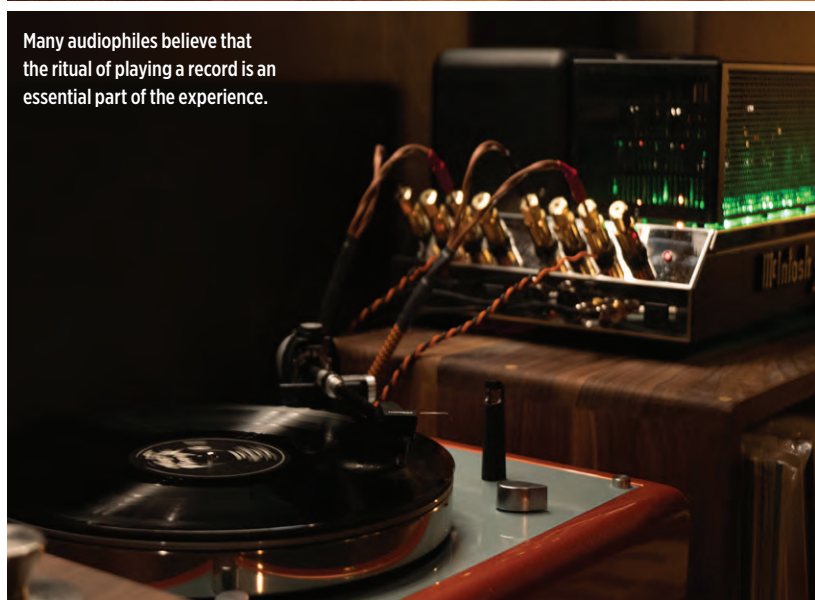
Looking ahead, he's exploring live jazz nights, potentially weekly, with door proceeds going directly to the musicians. He wants B-Side to be a place where jazz players — who have few dedicated venues in Utah — can find their people, and grow something lasting.

As for how B-Side fits the culture of Provo, he sat for a beat. "You know, to answer your question directly, I don't think it fits in," he said. "And at the same time, I think it fits in beautifully."

Eli Kerr is the owner of B-Side Hi-Fi, a vinyl listening lounge nestled in the heart of downtown Provo.



Many audiophiles believe that the ritual of playing a record is an essential part of the experience.



THE BEAR WITHIN



BYU PHOTO/JAREN WILKEY



BYU PHOTO/ELLIE ALDER

From left: Bear Bachmeier interacts with media at Big 12 Media Days in Frisco, Texas on July 7, 2026; Bear Bachmeier prepares to throw a pass against TCU on Nov. 15, 2025; Bear Bachmeier runs through defenders against Portland State on Aug. 30, 2025.



BYU PHOTO/AARON CORNIA

professionally, has been Bear's example of handling the pressure that comes with being a talented quarterback.

Lessons from Hank

Hank Bachmeier started his college football career as a quarterback at Boise State. During his freshman year, he started eight games but threw for more than 1,000 yards. However, he suffered a hip and shoulder injury that ended his season early.

In 2021, Hank had his breakout campaign. The sophomore threw for over 3,000 yards, 20 touchdowns and eight interceptions, ending the season with a 62.2% completion rate.

Later, he transferred to Louisiana Tech where he saw success. After one year there, Hank spent his final college season at Wake Forest.

Hank spent time in the UFL playing for the Orlando Storm but has taken his talents overseas, now playing for a professional team in Switzerland.

Despite his success at Boise State and elsewhere, Hank experienced the cost of not meeting high expectations.

"His (Hank's) experience was very rough," Ella said. "He received death threats, which was really, really crazy. And it's hard to hear that when it's your own sibling."

Bear saw what his older brother's success could bring, but he also saw what it could cost. Hank's experience helped prepare Bear for all the ups and downs of being a college quarterback.

"Bear's always worked really hard for what he has," she said. "He's also really humble and knows that at any moment, this could be stripped away from him."

Unfazed by fame

After his phenomenal freshman year, when he led BYU to a 12-2 record and a conference championship game appearance, one would think that Bear Bachmeier would strut around Provo, boasting his newfound fame.

And in the close-knit BYU community, that would be easy to do. Around Provo, it's hard to walk into a grocery store without seeing a fellow BYU fan all decked out in their gear. And if Bear

happens to be on his grocery run, everyone in the building is going to know about it.

But Bear doesn't walk around and bask in college-town glory at the grocery store. Instead, he is there for much simpler reasons.

"He's probably getting cereal," Ella laughed. "He loves cereal."

Even in the face of national reporters, broadcasters and radio hosts at Big 12 Media Days, Bear maintained his authenticity.

Where most players would shrug off yet another reporter asking him questions, Bear took the time to interview with BYU's student publication and already knew it by name, something many campus celebrities wouldn't know.

"Oh yeah," he said. "The Daily Universe."

He even expressed gratitude for being featured on the front cover of the publication's magazine. Smiling, he said, "Oh awesome, thank you!"

"He's just everything that you think he is," said Sitake. "It's real, it's legitimate and genuine."

Staying grounded

For Bear, staying grounded has never been about avoiding the spotlight but staying true to who he is underneath it.

After taking down Utah, thousands of fans rushed the field at LaVell Edwards Stadium, all of them aimed at celebrating with their new hometown hero. Instead of hurrying off the field surrounded by staff, Bear stayed to celebrate.

However, he still battled the tide of royal blue, slowly making his way toward his family. After finally beating the torrent, Bear climbed up into the first row of the stands and immediately grabbed his nephew, Hank's son.

Turning toward the crowd, he lifted his nephew in the air like Simba from "The Lion King." The crowd roared with cheers and laughter. Gently, Uncle Bear handed his newly crowned nephew back to his brother.

Bear is not only an uncle but an older brother as well. Buck, as the family calls him, is one of the reasons Bear tries to be the best that he can every single day.

"I have a younger brother who I just want to be the best role model I can for him," Bear said, "and just being that role model and being a good person for him to look up to."

'The brother that I know'

As Ella told stories about Bear, her eyes filled with tears.

"The guy you see walking around campus is the brother that I know," said Ella.

After all of his interviews had finished and reporters had left, Bear wandered around The Star looking for his biggest supporter.

When he found her, he snuck up behind her and hugged her tightly. Surprised, Ella turned and looked up into the face of her brother who she had watched grow from a boy into a man.

Instinctually, he held Ella's arms down with one arm and rubbed his fist into her hair with the other, a good old-fashioned noogie.

"She's all right, I guess," he said with a smile.

Ella rolled her eyes and laughed as she turned and tried to escape his hug. Letting her free, the two said their goodbyes to those nearby, turned and walked away, talking as they went.

"He's one of the most caring people on this earth. He cares so much about the people that are in his life and even if he doesn't even know you, he has the best intentions for you," Ella said.

Where the world sees a rising star quarterback entering his second year at the helm, his family sees the same guitar-strumming, joke-cracking and ever-smiling kid they have always known.

The Bear within.

By Nate Church

Bear Bachmeier was followed all day by reporters from media outlets across the country during Big 12 Media Days at The Star in Frisco, Texas, in July. Anywhere he went, there was a swarm of reporters elbowing for a chance to talk to BYU's breakout star quarterback. During breaks, Bachmeier and his teammates made the most of their freedom. Often, the small group of BYU players would break into fits of laughter or jostle each other. More often than not, Bachmeier was at the center, grinning and laughing along with his teammates, his friends.

However, the majority of Bachmeier's day was spent feeding the swarm, which asked relentlessly about expectations.

Will he be even better than last year? How will he lead his team to a conference title? Will he be the piece that makes or breaks the entire season?

Perhaps it was the small jokes and laughs that kept the creeping doubt and weight of expectations from showing on the 19-year-old's face.

During a lull in between interviews, Bachmeier started looking for entertainment. Soon enough, he and his teammates had lined up in an unusual formation. Instead of lining up at quarterback, Bachmeier moved to left guard. With his hair over his face and his chin thrust out, he looked ready to take down anyone or anything in his way.

With his 6-foot-2, 230-pound frame, Bachmeier doesn't look out of place at left guard in any conventional formation. However, there is nothing conventional about the quarterback who wears No. 47.

Last August, Bachmeier became the first true freshman quarterback to start a season opener in BYU football history. He led the Cougars to a 12-2 season and an appearance in the Big 12 championship game. Throwing for more than 3,000 yards, rushing for over 500 and having fewer than 10 turnovers put Bachmeier in a unique category, one of only 19 Power 4 quarterbacks to do so in the last 20 years.

He also holds the single-season record for rushing touchdowns with 11, surpassing BYU legends Steve Young and Taysom Hill.

In BYU's 24-21 win over archrival Utah, Bachmeier cemented himself in BYU lore. He scored the game-winning touchdown, hurdling one defender and dragging another into the end zone with him, a performance that invoked Jason Bennetti's famous line:

"There's a bear on the loose in Provo!"

This season, Bachmeier has the weight of BYU football's success on his shoulders. On top of that, the college football world has its eyes on the

now-sophomore, waiting to see if he will rise to the Herculean challenge ahead of him—leading his team to the College Football Playoff for the first time.

Amid high expectations, Bachmeier's head coach, Kalani Sitake, is hoping to help him continue to develop.

"I just want to keep that bottled up," said Sitake. "He doesn't need to change for anybody, he just needs to keep being himself."

Bachmeier's dedication to staying true to himself started in childhood. Growing up, he was shaped by the influences of his older siblings, something that has guided him on the path to becoming one of BYU's most unconventional and authentic quarterbacks.

"I have three older siblings that mean the world to me and all I want to do is be like them," Bachmeier said. "I blindly copied their work ethic and their confidence and their leadership."

Building an unbreakable bond

Bachmeier's childhood was typical for a young kid growing up in Southern California. He played football, basketball and baseball. In high school, he lettered in all three sports and finished his football career ranked among ESPN's Top 15 high school quarterbacks.

Between sports, school and everyday life, he needed someone to turn to. Someone who he could tell anything and everything. That someone was his older sister Ella.

"We didn't have very much of a 'talk about your feelings' type of household," said his sister Ella Bachmeier. "So sometimes he and I [would have] those deep conversations where you start talking about, like, aliens and stuff like that," she said with a laugh.



CAMERON CLARK

Bear Bachmeier and teammates line up in formation at Big 12 Media Days in Frisco, Texas on July 7.

THE 2026 COUGAR FOOTBALL FILE



All-time single-season rushing TD record: 11, Bear Bachmeier, 2025.

#47

Bachmeier's father picked his jersey number when he was young. He played running back and middle linebacker up until eighth grade. Bear decided to keep the number when he transitioned to QB.



120

average decibel level on the field at LES. Third downs and touchdowns bring the most noise.

TOP 10 BYU QBs based on total passing yards

- 1 Ty Detmer, '88-'91... 15,031
- 2 Max Hall, '07-'09... 11,365
- 3 John Beck, '03-'06... 11,021
- 4 Jim McMahon, '77-'78, '80-'81... 9,536
- 5 Robbie Bosco, '83-'85... 8,400
- 6 John Walsh, '91-'94... 8,390
- 7 Kevin Feterik, '96-'99... 8,065
- 8 Steve Young, '80-'83... 7,733
- 9 Zach Wilson, '18-'20... 7,652
- 10 Marc Wilson, '75-'79... 7,637

5'10" height of Jonathan Kabeya, the shortest person on this season's roster.

"There's a **Bear** on the loose in Provo!"

Jason Benetti, Fox Sports, Oct. 18, 2025

Rise and shout The fight song, also known as "The Cougar Song" was written in 1932 by BYU student Clyde D. Sandgren. The song was not copyrighted by the university until 1947.

BYU football first signed with **NIKE** in the late 1970s. BYU was one of the first programs to sign with the company.

Records to watch

- **All-time rushing yards** record: LJ Martin needs 1,347 yards to overtake Jamaal Williams (3,901) and currently ranks ninth all-time ahead of Luke Staley.
- **Season total attendance** (home & away): 809,579 in 2025 over 14 games.
- **All-time in season interception avoidance percentage:** Bear Bachmeier is currently fifth at 1.81%.

Bear became one of six true freshmen quarterbacks in college football history to throw for more than 3,000 yards and rush for more than 500 yards in a season.



NOTRE DAME Notre Dame last played at LaVell Edwards Stadium in 2004; BYU won 20-17. The Fighting Irish won the last meeting 28-20 in 2022 in Las Vegas. Notre Dame leads the series 5-2. The natural **Kentucky bluegrass** at LaVell Edwards Stadium is mowed three times a week during the season and cut to one inch.

Linebackers

- **#54 Siale Esera**, junior 2025: 23 solo tackles, 25 assists, 3.5 TFL
- **#16 Isaiah Glasker**, senior 2025: 36 solo blocks, 3 sacks, 2 interceptions
- **#4 Cade Uluave**, senior 2025 (at Cal.): 42 solo tackles, 55 assists, 12 TFL, 3 sacks

10 Jack Kelly had the team high **sacks** during the 2025 season.



66,247 record attendance for a BYU football game at LaVell Edwards Stadium – set in 1993 vs. Notre Dame.

The world is our stadium The Cougars played internationally in Japan against a Japanese All-Star football team in 1977 at the Silk Bowl. BYU played UNLV at the Yokohama Bowl in 1978 in its regular-season finale where it won 28-24. BYU also played a game in 1987 against Colorado State in Melbourne, Australia where it won 30-26.

season for head coach **Kalani Sitake** with the BYU Cougars. He is the 15th head coach of BYU all-time and just the third head coach to coach for 10 or more seasons in BYU history.

Game day T-shirts started in 2007 and cost \$5. This year is the 20th edition of the shirts and one will set you back \$14.99.

- New players to watch**
- 1 Legend Glasker wide receiver
 - 3 Kyler Kasper wide receiver
 - 7 Walker Lyons tight end
 - 2 Roger Saleapaga Jr tight end
 - 4 Cade Uluave linebacker
- "Obviously, when you're doing what's right on and off the field, I think the Lord steps in and plays a part in it. Magic happens."
- Austin Collie, wide receiver, '04, '07, '08



11th

63 years of playing in LaVell Edwards Stadium. BYU will play seven home games this year, the most since 2020. The Cougars went undefeated at home in 2025, BYU went undefeated at home in 2020.

Bear Bachmeier joined **Zach Wilson** as the only other true **freshman** to throw **three TDs** in his first career start at BYU.

The BYU record for tackles in a game is **124** versus Utah in 1982.



Cleo & Tarbo were the names of the original, live cougar mascots. Cosmo didn't make his campus debut until 1953 at a pep rally before a game against Utah State Agricultural College.



"Where there's a **Will** there's a way."

Greg Wrubell, BYU football play-by-play broadcaster

ARIZONA has lost to BYU in its last five meetings and is 12-14 all-time. The Wildcats last won in Provo in 1975.

COUGAR CANYON opens three-and-a-half hours before kickoff at every home game. It features live bands, food trucks, DJs, face painting, giveaways, a live BYUtv Sports Nation Game Day show and an LED video board streaming other college football games.

Cosmo was inducted into the Mascot Hall of Fame's 2026 class, joining the New York Mets' Mrs. Met and Miles from the Denver Broncos.

WE HIT TURBULENCE The **ROC** (Roar of Cougars) is the student section that was formed in 2013.

FIRE DANCING The tradition started in 2022 with Martin Tevaga, Arthur Tupola, Eldon Scanlan and Lasi Reed as the original team.

83 The longest punt, in yards, in BYU history, punted by Ryan Rehkow, during a game against Arizona State at LES in 2021.



1,242 calories in one CougarTail.

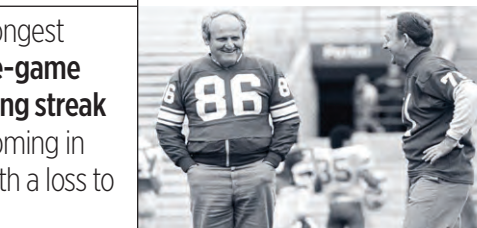
70,143 CougarTails sold during 2025 season.

9 The longest winning streak for both BYU (1979 -87) and Utah (2010-19) in their Holy War rivalry.

Holy War Utah fell to BYU in the last game in SLC, 22-21 in 2024. BYU has 16 all-time wins at Rice-Eccles Stadium. This will be the 97th meeting between the two teams since 1922 when the series officially started. BYU is on a three-game winning streak.

1984 was a perfect 13-0 season, coached by LaVell Edwards. The team won the national championship.

17 The longest home-game winning streak began against Wyoming in 1979 and ended with a loss to UNLV in 1982.



225 members of the Cougar Marching Band

The Cougarettes are celebrating their **80th anniversary**. They have won 27 national championships.



Backup quarterbacks

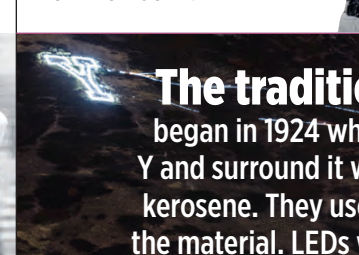
- **#10 Treyson Bourget**, senior, 6'2", 210 lbs., Arizona. Previous school: Western Michigan.
- **#16 Owen Geilman**: Freshman, 6'4", 220 lbs., Utah. Previous school: Bountiful High School.
- **#15 John Sanders**: Sophomore, 6'0", 190 lbs., California. Previous school: Antelope Valley College.
- **#17 Enoch Watson**, Freshman, 6'3", 215 lbs., Arizona. Previous school: American Leadership Academy.

BYU has more passing yards than any other school in college football history with

204,936 yards.

Winningest BYU coaches

1. **LaVell Edwards** 1972-2000 257-101 71.6%
2. **Bronco Mendenhall** 2005-2015 99-43 69.7%
3. **Kalani Sitake** 2016-present 84-45 65.1%



"I'd rather lose and live in Provo than win and live in Laramie."

LaVell Edwards

The tradition of lighting the Y began in 1924 when students would hike to the Y and surround it with mattress scraps soaked in kerosene. They used homemade torches to light the material. LEDs were installed by BYU in 2016.





Letting AI decide?

Discretion



The authority granted to an individual to make decisions on behalf of another, often requiring judgment in situations.

Duty of loyalty



The obligation of a fiduciary to avoid conflicts of interest and to prioritize the interests of the person they serve above personal gain.

Trust



A structure in which one party holds and manages assets for the benefit of another, governed by fiduciary obligations.

His journey began in the 1990s, when he was a new law professor. He saw how loosely fiduciary relationships were defined in his profession, so he set out to learn more.

As the “venture capitalist guy,” he noticed few were writing in the area, so when the topic of fiduciary relationships within venture capitalism arose, he honed his background in corporate law and recruited a student to help him with his research.

But upon writing, they encountered a road block. “We’re trying to figure out whether this relationship that we’re writing about is a fiduciary relationship,” he recalled telling the student, “but nobody even knows what a fiduciary relationship is.”

It wasn’t until he read an economic theory article explaining why companies and firms exist — rather than relying entirely on market transactions — when a light bulb went off. “I thought, they’re talking about fiduciary relationships,” he said.

So why do firms exist? The answer, Smith learned, was because it saves money.

To illustrate, Smith offered an example of hiring someone to clean his office. “I have to go online and find some service and contract with them to come vacuum my office,” he said, “That’s just kind of painful.”

But if the law school employed someone to clean his office as part of a broader set of responsibilities, “it’s cost-effective,” Smith explained.

The idea was that employment relationships don’t require negotiating a separate deal for every task, rather, they have someone they trust to do it all.

Beyond the practical solution of saving money, Smith added that for many people, the loyalties behind fiduciary relationships are intuitive.

“It feels different to be an employee than it does to just go into Walmart and buy some products,” Smith explained.

Certain societal relationships share an unspoken expectation. A patient that fol-

lows a physician’s recommended treatment plan. A spouse who manages finances while the other is ill. An employee makes a company decision on behalf of the employer. These scenarios are everyday occurrences, and they all fit the criteria of fiduciary relationships.

These relationships reveal a deeper layer of how society functions. Many support the duty of loyalty that an employee doesn’t betray their employer, or that a physician will act in a patient’s best interest. At the core of each situation lies the same principle that one person rises above their self-interest in favor of another’s well-being.

Whether this sense of duty comes from the law or from something more innate, it reveals an important overlap between legal rules and a shared cultural understanding of loyalty, Smith said.

As for AI, the question of if it can exercise discretion is still murky, but Smith has already considered what it would take for AI to take on the role as a fiduciary. It might require programming AI to prioritize a person’s interests in its decisions, or testing it by giving the same scenario to multiple systems and seeing whether they reach similar conclusions, he said.

For Smith, the next frontier of fiduciary law is whether it will evolve to accommodate AI, or whether AI can be a trustworthy advisor at all.

Curious about what the source of the question itself would say, I asked ChatGPT: “What do you think? Can you act as a fiduciary?”

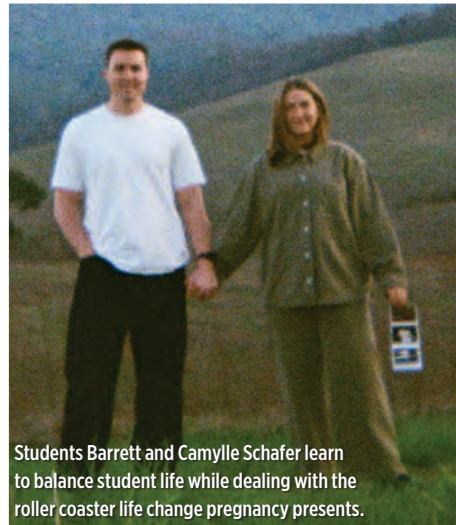
It considered its capabilities and its limits, noting that while it can explain options clearly and offer tailored advice. However, with no legal duties, no real accountability and no true loyalty, it remains constrained.

The answer it gave me was that it couldn’t. AI can simulate the advice of a fiduciary. But it cannot yet be one.

Whether the law will one day decide otherwise is the question still waiting for an answer.

DEGREES & DIAPERS

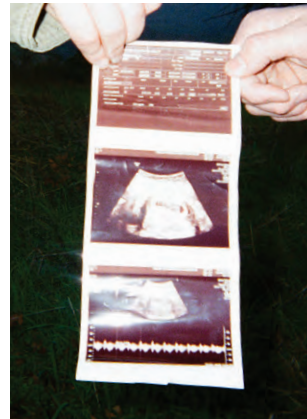
A BALANCING ACT



Students Barrett and Camylle Schafer learn to balance student life while dealing with the roller coaster life change pregnancy presents.



Amy and her first born son Taylor learn their new normal and support her husband through college.



As a freshman in Deseret Towers Amy Callahan moves away from home for the first time excited for what her college experience will bring.



Eranelle has changed their world, and baby number 2 will soon too.

By Camylle Schafer

They say there’s never a right time to start having kids. That you’ll never know whether or not you’re actually ready. Having kids is something I’ve always wanted and dreamed of, but honestly, I was naive as to how much pregnancy would rule my life.

When my husband asked my dad for permission to marry me, one of the only things my dad said was that I needed to finish college.

At the time, it felt like simple advice, something practical, or even expected. But it carried more weight than I realized.

Now that I’m sitting in classrooms struggling through my senior year of college, shifting uncomfortably in my seat as I try to focus through waves of nausea and quiet kicks, his words feel less like advice and more like a challenge.

Because the reality is, I didn’t wait until everything was perfectly aligned, I knew it never would be. Being a mom and finishing my degree are two big dreams of mine that now overlap.

I’m here balancing assignments and doctor’s appointments, deadlines and due dates trying to finish my degree while simultaneously preparing to step into the role of a mother.

Around me, other students type notes, scroll through slides, and worry about upcoming exams. Their stress is real, but different. Mine sits somewhere between finishing my degree and finishing a baby registry and the stress that comes with not knowing what life looks like after graduation and knowing nothing much about motherhood either. Two life-changing responsibilities happening at the same time.

And I’m not the only one.

For many women, college and pregnancy don’t just overlap, they collide.

The reality

Pregnancy during college presents a unique and often overlooked challenge. For students working toward a degree, the demands of coursework, internships, and financial responsibilities are already overwhelming. Adding pregnancy and eventually motherhood introduces a new layer of physical, emotional, and logistical complexities.

There’s tension between higher education and starting a family. Whenever asked what you want to be when you grow up, never once did I say “I want to be a business owner” I always knew I wanted to be a mom. It’s a reality faced by more women than often acknowledged. Many women today pick and choose between education or kids depending on what they prioritize at this stage in life but not many talk about tackling both ventures at the same time.

So what does it truly mean to balance degrees and diapers and the sacrifices, resilience, and determination required to do so.

My story

When I found out I was pregnant, I was in the beginning of my senior year.

Becoming a mom is something I always dreamed of and took longer than I anticipated. The joy of finally reading a test that said “yes” lasted a short time after being hit with the symptoms of pregnancy and the realities of working and being in school.

There have been many days I felt completely capable, like I could handle everything on my plate between morning sickness, full time school, and working. And then there were days when even opening my laptop felt overwhelming, just looking at a screen made me sick.

Academically, I feel pressure to keep up. This is my final stretch, the culmination of years of work that I’ve wanted to finish so bad. I didn’t want pregnancy to slow me down or define my ability to succeed. But at the same time, it feels impossible to ignore what my body needs.

I often think to myself, “if I’m not planning on using my degree right away, is it even worth finishing?” Whenever someone asks me what my plans are for graduation I feel like saying “being a mom” isn’t a good enough answer. Even though it’s my biggest dream.

I remember sitting in the doctor’s office for our first appointment praying we’d hear a heartbeat, doing homework in the waiting room because I wouldn’t have the time to finish it later.

This wasn’t just about finishing school anymore. It was about accomplishing two major goals at the same time.

Amy’s story

My dad never went to college and my mom finished one year at BYU before getting pregnant and having to step back from her education. When my husband asked my dad for my hand finishing school was a nonnegotiable, like any parent he wants what’s best for me and wants me to have what he wasn’t privileged enough to have.

As a freshman at BYU, my mom was elated. Going to all the activities, finding her footing in the dating scene, living on her own for the first time. College was always something she dreamed about.

Soon after she started school she got married and fell pregnant. She tried to balance pregnancy, working and school, but quickly realized something had to give. She needed to prioritize herself and her growing baby. Her job provided insurance, so she couldn’t stop working, but had to put her education aside.

“It was impossible. Unfortunately there was

no way I could work full time and go to school full time. It’s a sacrifice I look back on with regret, but I had no choice but to provide for my new growing family.”

Thirty years later she has five kids, 10 grandkids and 1 on the way, and a successful career in real estate. When she reflects on her life there are of course highs and lows, but from the outside it looks like she’s accomplished all she ever set out to do and then some, but silently she thinks about college, and lives through her kids for that college experience.

“I’ve had three kids go to BYU, watching them meet best friends and spouses, go to football games, and teach me about what they learn in their classes has been a way for me to relive the short time I did have in college.”

She dreams of going back to school one day, to pick up where she left off and complete what she started out to do.

“One day I do want to finish. I’m not sure when that day will come but I don’t want the sacrifice I made when I was 20 to define me. When I set out to do something I do it, and this is no exception.”

The reality is that motherhood requires sacrifice. The sacrifice of your body, your time, your energy, and in this case your education.

Brooks’ story

Brooks’ day begins long before most students arrive on campus. With a toddler at home and a new pregnancy, she carefully maps out her mornings: wake up, eat something to keep nausea at bay, prepare for student teaching, and somehow fit in a few minutes for herself. “I’m a lot more tired,” she admitted. “I give myself less time to get ready in the morning, and sometimes I have to eat twice if the first thing makes me throw up,” she says, “It doesn’t do a whole ton on my day-to-day, it’s more the exhaustion that hits after a full day.”

Exhaustion is Brooks’ most persistent challenge. After hours in elementary classrooms, she comes home and wants nothing more than a nap but her toddler’s needs don’t pause, and schoolwork still demands attention. “Sometimes it’s hard to find the motivation or the energy to do homework because you’re just always tired, and always needed.” she said.

Managing pregnancy symptoms while teaching adds another layer of complexity. Nausea, headaches, and doctor appointments are all factored into her tightly organized schedule. “I just keep going,” she said. “If I used my symptoms as an excuse, I probably wouldn’t be graduating in April.” With careful planning, Brooks also manages to include her daughter in her school life when appropriate. During a music class for elementary education, her little girl attended alongside her, learning and playing while Brooks completed her teaching requirements.

Her motivation is simple and practical: finish school without unnecessary delays. “Being pregnant is kind of the easy part in school,” she said. “Once you have a kid in school, that’s when you really have to juggle schedules. I want school to be over. I don’t want to drag it out.”

Brooks’ experience has shaped her perspective on both education and parenthood. She acknowledges the occasional feelings of guilt, whether about schoolwork or spending time with her child. “Sometimes having a student in school makes you feel like a failure on all fronts,” she said. But she balances that with the realization that her efforts are enough. “It’s not necessarily going to be an A every time, and that’s OK. My child is not going to be traumatized because I went to school. We’ll be OK.”

Reflecting on her journey, Brooks offered a final thought that resonates with many student-parents: “There’s no right way to do it. Just be kind to yourself. It’s a learning curve, but it’s manageable.”

Sacrifice

Across every story, the same themes appear: exhaustion, sacrifice, and determination.

Balancing pregnancy and education requires constant adjustment. It means pushing through physical discomfort while meeting deadlines. It means prioritizing carefully, knowing that something always has to give.

But it also reveals resilience.

Some women continue their education despite the challenges. Others step away, with hopes of returning later. Neither path is easy, and neither is without sacrifice.

Because while the importance of family is clear, the reality of balancing it with education is anything but simple.

These women are not choosing one over the other, they are trying to make space for both. An impossible balancing act.

Finals are approaching, assignments are piling up, and my calendar is filled with both academic deadlines and doctor’s appointments. Each day counts down graduation, and to due dates even more daunting.

I walk across campus, my pace slower than it used to be, my hand instinctively resting on my growing stomach.

Graduation is within reach and so is motherhood.

There’s still uncertainty about how everything will come together, about what life will look like in just a few short months. But there’s also clarity.

Because this journey isn’t just about earning a degree anymore. It’s about building a future for both of us.

A COMMUNITY MOSAIC OF FAITH

By Taylin Galloway

"You guys are always welcome, and if you need any kind of help from Jerusalem, just come. We love to see you. We love to deal with you."

That's the message that Omar Amro, owner of Ali Baba Souvenir Shop and Omar Mosaics in Jerusalem, wanted to spread to all visitors, especially from the BYU Jerusalem Center.

Omar's father, Shaban Amro, opened the shop in 1988 specifically with students in mind. Soon after in 1989, then President Howard W. Hunter dedicated the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies as "a home base for study in the Holy Land."

In the almost 40 years since the Amros' shop was founded and the Center received its first batch of students, a cork board on the shop walls is now filled with pictures of students that Omar and his father consider family, not customers.

"If you ask me how many students I met through my life, working for my dad, I would just estimate," Omar said. "It's going to be three semesters a year, 90 students every semester. You just do the math."

Omar has been working for his dad for 15 years. In that time, near the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, he decided to start to add mosaics to their wide collection of souvenirs.

His mosaics have become widely loved and sought out by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Even before Omar opened his mosaic shop, the Amros' business depended about 30% on church members.

Omar says it's the word of mouth among church members that has supported their shops since Truman and Ann Madsen, well-known scholars in the church, made his father a promise.

"They gave him a promise that whenever someone visits [them] at BYU Jerusalem, [they'll] be sending them [his] way. And so, they kept their promise," Omar said. "This is how my dad became more known with the BYU and LDS community."

Students know that if anything were to happen, the Amros' shop is a safe place to turn. Paige Hamilton, a student who studied at BYU Jerusalem in summer of 2025, says Omar always greeted students with juice and a smile. It's a unique experience compared to other, more aggressive shopkeepers.

"Everybody recommends being friends with him because he's genuinely caring," Hamilton said. "He's just different because he takes that time and effort to care about us."

Hamilton and her friends would visit Ali Baba Souvenir Shop every time they were in the Old City sector of Jerusalem visiting historical sites and biblical scenery. Their time in Jerusalem was peppered with new relationships with people like Omar, escapades to Greece, and testimony-building moments.

To Hamilton, even though coming to BYU Jerusalem was never a lifelong dream, taking a Hebrew class at BYU Provo and taking a shot at applying to the Center ended up being the inspiration that led her to be "exactly where she was supposed to be at the end."

"Israel is a magical place. It's complicated, the politics are complicated, the feelings are complicated, but it is also magical getting to meet and connect with people in Israel," Hamilton said. "It was just really cool to build actual connections with people and to see people take so much care and attention towards things that matter to me."

She was experiencing what some have called "holy envy," or the admiration of the way another practices their faith. Some scholars have associated this feeling with "Jerusalem syndrome," a compelling feeling that some who visit the Holy City may leave with.

This syndrome might be experienced on a spectrum of intensities according to a review article published in the Journal of Clinical & Diagnostic Research titled "A Narrative Review



From the first groups to visit the shop (top) to married alumni grabbing a decorative souvenir (bottom left), to some of Omar's newest friends like Hamilton (bottom right), these photos unite people on the shop wall continually.

on Jerusalem Syndrome: Exploring Diagnosis, Treatment and Cultural Impacts." The study describes the most discrete of symptoms as "religious excitement brought on by being close to Jerusalem's sacred sites" and the most extreme symptoms as developing psychosis and intense religious impulses.

Omar describes it in a simpler way.

"Jerusalem is not an only one time visit. If you come here once, you get hooked to it. You will come back."

Halle Burton, a student who studied at BYU Jerusalem when the Gaza conflict started, had been trying to get to Jerusalem since she fell in love with the Old Testament after reading it through her teen years. Her experience in Jerusalem was one of personal discovery.

"You feel this whole rush of faith from all these people who are trying to reach the deity of this earth, of this life," Burton said. "It just combines with you, and it's so powerful that you want to worship God in the same way."

Jerusalem has been built and rebuilt, causing paths, walls, and buildings to not fall not exactly where Christ would have walked among them. For many, the pilgrimage to a city so tied to Christ is about personal confirmation of the spiritual validity of the city.

For her personal confirmations, Burton clung to one truth that she learned during her mission.

"There's no such thing as un-dedicating

something," Burton said, referring to the previously sanctified land. "You have to confirm for yourself whether the event happened. Not that that's the place, but whether the event happened and how you're going to worship Christ in that one moment."

Hamilton had a similar experience, finding solace and renewal in the protected time to grow spiritually that the BYU Jerusalem Center gave her.

"The most powerful things for me weren't, wow, I went to this real place, but it was this whole dedicated summer of time where I got to think about Christ," Hamilton said.

Through conflicts of politics and violence, through closures due to war and pandemics, the BYU Jerusalem Center still provides these revelatory opportunities. After testifying of the 16 pages of 33 miracles that came to pass to solidify the center's existence, President Jeffery R. Holland shared that its potential is still unrealized and that the people there make it what it is.

"It's not the glass or teakwood or stone I think about most when I think of the Jerusalem Center. It is the people then and now, there and here, who through their faith and good works made it happen."

To students at the BYU Jerusalem Center, Omar and Shaban Amro have become a part of those people. Their love for Jerusalem is shared in a community mosaic of faith.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF OMAR AMARO AND PAIGE HAMILTON

WHO DO THEY SERVE?



Amid rising disconnect, Utah residents raise concerns over whether government still operates as stewards of the people.

By Daegan Beus

"I am a child of God, and he has sent me here," sang student, alumni and members of the local community gathered near Brigham Young University, their voices ringing over traffic along Cougar Boulevard on the corner of Wendy's.

What was a protest sparked by opposition to a Customs and Border Patrol recruiting presence on campus during the Winter 2026 career fair, became to mean something deeper than a stance on immigration policy, but a question between the citizens and the officials meant to represent them.

Political theorists would argue the many ways there are to view this relationship, one of which would be to see it as a fiduciary relationship: elected officials acting as agents, entrusted to serve the interest of the people who make up their neighborhood, district, state, etc. For many who gather to protest in any manner, there is a clear feeling of this relationship being strained.

"I think it's just important to make some noise," said Ben Hansen a BYU music student who chose to bring a guitar instead of a protest sign. "Make sure people hear you, especially our representatives."

Hansen, along with his guitar, led the protesters that day not just by chant, but through hymns that represented what brought them out there that day, "I Am a Child of God, a crowning hymn for all mem-

ber of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It's a hymn that emphasizes the number one identity for those in the faith, that everyone is a child of God and that they all have a purpose to follow the footsteps of the savior, Jesus Christ.

When speaking to Hansen between hymns, he explained that he hadn't yet been very politically active but felt that he's had enough. He further explained that he doesn't have the loudest voice and decided that he would use his musical ability to contribute to the protest.

Hansen's perspective echoed a broader concern that has appeared across Utah, and in the United States. According to the Utah Foundation, four in five Americans do not believe elected officials care what they think. With the increasing rate of protesting, and people mobilizing in support of causes they care deeply about, this is not just a theoretical idea, but a lived, felt and increasingly realized motivation to voice genuine concern in public spaces.

Sophie Jalowski, another student protesting that day, described the sense of belonging as a mutual exchange of respect between the people and officials, and as something she hopes to become more actively upheld in institutions.

This mutual exchange is what drew her to feel safe to protest in the first place. "You feel safe enough to express your opinions,"

she said. "And you know that people here respect you and you respect them."

That sense of reciprocity is one of the core principles of fiduciary duty. Scholars outlined several key obligations for public officials:

- Care
- Loyalty
- Impartiality
- Accountability
- Preservation of public trust

What spurred these students to protest was the sense of one or more of these obligations being violated. Protesters at the gathering argued that inviting Customs and Border Patrol to campus, put the obligation of care at risk for vulnerable immigrant populations on BYU campus. One local community member protesting, Laurie Preece, framed it as a contradiction of American identity itself.

"America has always been a place where people have come from other places to seek refuge," she said. "I don't believe that any single person has the right to reverse history."

Another student protester Faith Murri, the daughter of immigrants, voiced her own personal concern that legal status may no longer guarantee her loved one's safety, highlighting a growing fear that US institutions meant to protect may be acting out of this fiduciary duty and marginalizing the people it is obligated to care for.

This fear coincides with data

gathered by the Utah Foundation, finding widespread dissatisfaction across the state. As of 2024, 62% of Utah voters believed the state was on the "wrong track," with sharp divides between political parties. Even where ideological alignment exists between voters and party delegates, priorities often diverge.

The fiduciary model helps explain this tension. According to obligation, elected officials are to act as stewards of public interest; however, at times, in practice, political systems can incentivize self-interest or detachment from the public.

While this is quickly a cynical topic to view the modern-day political system through, protests are not, themselves, purely critical, but can even be aspirational.

Back on this street corner right off of campus right by Wendy's, the singing persisted. Students of a faith-based higher education institution were all united under a shared identity they believed extended to everyone, that of being God's children.

As the many, they were loud and steady, but not aggressive. They were in harmony, all to rally to a public cause of caring for each member of their community. This is harmony that may still be achieved but will require negotiation between genuine public interest and an accountability to those with the obligation to act as stewards over the public.

From stage to shop

Guitar builder works to reconnect artists with live music

By Kaleb Davies

On stages across Utah and beyond, bands like The Strike are playing guitars built not in factories, but in a local workshop where craftsmanship meets a mission to bring live music back to the forefront.

For Nate Baldwin, founder of Baldwin Guitars, that moment came unexpectedly.

"I built a guitar to try and stay connected to the music scene, and I had a buddy who was in a band called The Strike at the time," Baldwin said. "He played it on stage at one of the festivals at UVU, and it was like, 'Oh, that's not bad.' So I just kept doing it."

More than a decade later, Baldwin has built nearly 70 guitars, many of which are now in the hands of touring artists across the country, with his work beginning to reach international players, including one recent build headed to Australia.

Baldwin's path into guitar building didn't start in a workshop. It started on stage.

"I've been playing guitar since I was 8... I played in bands all through college and stuff. I would do a semester in college and then go on tour for like six months... so it took me until I was 28 to graduate," Baldwin said.

That lifestyle eventually became unsustainable. After getting married, Baldwin faced a choice: continue life on the road or find a way to stay connected to music while building a more stable life.

He stepped away from touring, but not from music.

"I built a guitar to try and stay connected to the music scene," Baldwin said.

What started as a single project became a way to stay connected to the music he loved, even as he stepped away from performing. It soon turned into a long process of trial and error, as Baldwin worked largely on his own without the resources many builders rely on today.

"A lot of it was just guess and check... I had a couple of books that I found online, but it was before YouTube was really available to learn this stuff," he said.

It took nearly a decade before his guitars reached the level he was aiming for.

"It probably took 10 years to get to the point where it was a worthy guitar and not just something totally homemade," Baldwin said.

That learning curve reflects the bigger reality of the guitar industry, where great craftsmanship alone isn't enough to stand out in a crowded and competitive market.

"It's 10 times harder to sell a guitar than it is to build one... A high-quality guitar is a barrier to entry, it's not a differentiating factor," Baldwin said.

Instead, Baldwin has focused on working directly with artists to grow his brand. His guitars are now used by bands like Good Terms and Super Sometimes, with more collaborations in progress.

"Definitely through artists is the biggest way," he said. "We've got a list of about 20 artists that I'm working with right

now... helping those artists grow is a huge thing."

That artist-first approach comes as the broader guitar industry continues to shift. While some major brands have faced layoffs, restructuring or closures, Baldwin sees opportunity rather than decline.

Industry consolidation and vertical integration, where companies control manufacturing, distribution and sales, have made it harder for smaller builders to compete.

"Electric guitars is a \$6 billion a year industry... I see it less as a market slowdown and more of these smaller companies just not being able to compete in that big, big space," he said.

Baldwin believes that shift is creating space for independent builders who focus on musicians rather than mass production.

"I feel like the market's going to see very soon that the guitars being put out are just for profit," he said. "They're not for rock and roll or for music anymore, and then the guys like me will start to pick up."

But building guitars introduced a new challenge.

Despite growing demand, Baldwin's business is still not his full-time job. He currently spends about 15 to 20 hours a week building guitars while working in financial technology.

"The guitar business has been the hardest business I've been in," he said.

Unlike music software or subscription-based industries, guitars are a one-time purchase, making growth slower and more difficult to sustain.

"It's not like recurring revenue," Baldwin said. "It's just a lot harder."

Even so, he continues to invest in the

long-term vision of the brand, focusing on relationships with artists and the broader music community.

"It's very forward looking," he said. "The people finding us now might not become customers for five or ten years."

What began as a way for Baldwin to stay connected to music has grown into something broader. Through building guitars, he is now trying to help others experience that same connection.

That experience has shaped Baldwin's broader goal for the company.

"The real mission of the company is to make rock and roll the preeminent musical art form of the United States again," he said.

Baldwin argues that music has shifted away from collaborative performance toward individual artists, changing how audiences connect with it.

"Music is a human thing," he said. "It's something that brings us all together."

That belief shapes how he designs guitars, often thinking about how musicians move and perform on stage, not just how the instrument sounds.

"It's all about the music's ability to communicate an emotion," Baldwin said.

Live performance, he said, is where that connection matters most.

"If you go see a group play and the group is good, it almost doesn't matter what the genre is," he said. "It's like, 'Dang, they're awesome.'"

As more of his guitars make their way onto stages around the world, Baldwin hopes they can help rebuild the kind of musical connection he once found on tour.

"We need to get back out and be part of the community more," he said.



Nate Baldwin works on a guitar neck in his workshop. Baldwin said it took nearly a decade of trial and error before he felt confident in the quality of his instruments.



Applying glue while installing fret markers on a guitar neck. Each instrument is built by hand in Baldwin's workshop.



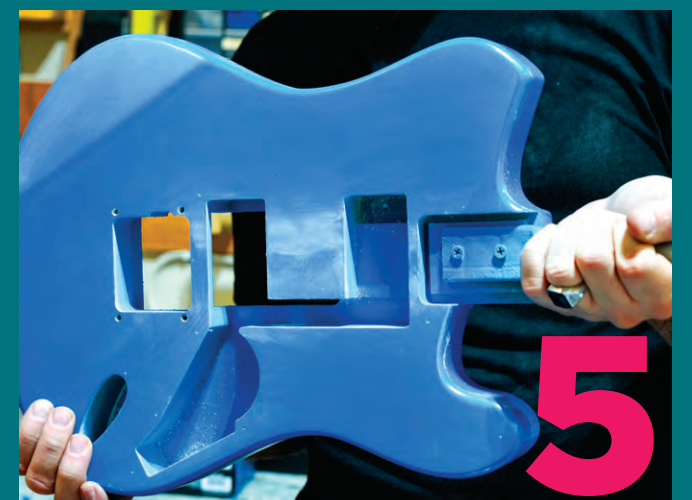
Shaping a guitar headstock using a spindle sander. Much of the process is learned through hands-on work and repetition over time.



Working on a guitar neck. Baldwin said he has built more than 60 guitars, with instruments used by musicians across the country and internationally.



Sanding a guitar neck as part of the building process. Each instrument is shaped and finished by hand.



A partially finished B12 guitar body, Baldwin's own take on a Telecaster-style design. He creates original designs that feel familiar yet offer a unique look and sound.

2026 BYU FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

HOME



Sept. 5, Sat.
vs. Utah Tech Trailblazers
6 P.M.
ESPN+

HOME



Sept. 12, Sat.
vs. Arizona Wildcats
1:30 P.M.
FOX

AWAY



Sept. 19, Sat.
vs. Colorado State Rams
5:30 P.M., Fort Collins, Colorado
CBS

AWAY



Oct. 3, Sat.
vs. TCU Horned Frogs
Time TBA, Fort Worth, Texas
Network TBA

HOME



Oct. 9, Fri.
vs. Iowa State Cyclones
8:15 P.M.
ESPN

HOME



Oct. 17, Sat.
vs. Notre Dame Fighting Irish
Time TBA
Network TBA

AWAY



Oct. 24, Sat.
vs. UCF Golden Knights
Time TBA, Orlando, Florida
Network TBA

HOME



Oct. 31, Sat.
vs. Arizona State Sun Devils
Time TBA
Network TBA

AWAY



Nov. 7, Sat.
vs. Utah Utes
Time TBA, Salt Lake City
Network TBA

HOME



Nov. 14, Sat.
vs. Baylor Bears
Time TBA
Network TBA

AWAY



Nov. 21, Sat.
vs. Kansas Jayhawks
Time TBA, Lawrence, Kansas
Network TBA

HOME



Nov 28, Sat.
vs. Cincinnati Bearcats
Time TBA
Network TBA

Times given are MDT.



BYU PHOTO

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