

Athlete Spotlight: Kenzie Gardner

Throughout her career at AHS, senior Kenzie Gardner has participated in both varsity field hockey in the fall and varsity lacrosse in the spring.

In her senior year, she was awarded an athletic scholarship to Eastern Mennonite University to play lacrosse.

She does indeed plan to be a part of the team and remain successful in the sport of Lacrosse.

“[Playing in college] was definitely not on my radar, but the stars aligned with a little bit of help from the DC LAX club team. As you can imagine, I am really excited to play on the first-ever Women’s Lacrosse team and looking forward to a great college LAX career,” Gardner said.

Q: What do you like about playing Lacrosse?

A: “At first, I never thought Lacrosse would be my sport during my high school career nor have I ever thought I will be playing at the college level next year.

What I like about playing Lacrosse is that it is a lot of fun, it’s something special and being part of a team, laughing and crying on the field with my teammates, is no greater feeling. Lacrosse to me is very satisfying to watch and play.”

Q: How did you discover your interest in lacrosse?

A: “I have played Field Hockey in the fall for the past three years and managed for my fourth year here at AHS. Field Hockey and Lacrosse are very similar. I wanted to do a spring sport but didn’t know what sport, so I chose Lacrosse. The coach had mentioned about the two sports being very similar during my freshman year. Lacrosse looked very easy. Little did I know, to catch a ball in a stick was a challenge for me. Along the way, I started to love the sport.”

Q: What are your strengths as a player?

A: "I consider myself as a natural leader, a motivator and helper. Another strength I would say is being a mid-fielder (going back and forth for offense and defense)with the speed I have."

Q: How long have you been preparing for this season?

A: "To prepare for this upcoming season, I have started to go to the gym to get in shape up until now. I started going to the gym just after Field Hockey was over. I also put in some stick work by doing wall ball and passing with a couple of my friends. Earlier, I have joined DC Lax to keep up with my stick skills."

Q: How long have you been playing?

A: "I have been playing Lacrosse since Freshman year of high school. I managed Lacrosse as a sophomore because of other priorities."

Q: Do you plan to keep playing in college?

A: "I do plan to pursue playing Lacrosse on the first ever Women's lacrosse team at Eastern Mennonite University for the four years! Lacrosse is my #1 sport."

Q: What are your goals for the season?

A: "My main goal for the season is to push harder than ever. Other goals for the season, are to keep up with the communication on the field, fight for those groundballs and to never give up no matter what. I hope for this season to go farther than we have in the past."

Q: What was your favorite memory of playing for AHS?

A: "My favorite memory playing for AHS was the bonds I have made with my teammates. Team bonding. Every laugh, every tear, and every consequence has made us become more confident, better players. I couldn't thank them enough."

Track prepares for a new season

After advancing to the VHSL State Indoor Track and Field Championships and placing 34th as a team, AHS track heads into a new outdoor season.

At the state meet, highlights for the team include a fifth place finish by senior Dazon Harrison in the 300 meter dash.

Harrison's past times in the 200 meter dash this season qualified him for the New Balance National Indoor Championship. That meet took place from March 8 to March 10 in New York.

Additionally, the 4×200 meter relay placed 15th with a time of 1:34.52 and sophomore Andy Zepada placed 11th overall in the boys shot put event.

At the meet, he placed 38th out of 69 total competitors in the 200 meter dash prelims with a time of 22.68.

Following their undoubtedly successful indoor season featuring many accomplishments such as advancing a runner to nationals, the team looks to seek even more success during the outdoor season.

The Atoms will now look to find this success success early on, hopefully during their first meet of the season just one month after the conclusion of indoor track postseason.

"For the upcoming outdoor season, we are looking to build on our endurance abilities, specifically early in the season," coach Harris said.

The first meet of the outdoor season will take place at West Potomac High School on March 27. It will be against West Potomac, Mount Vernon, Hayfield, and T.C. Williams.

“In order to prepare for these upcoming meets, we will be increasing the amount of tempo intense workouts,” Harris said.

The Carolyn Legard Relays at Woodson High School will follow the West Potomac just three days later on March 30.

So far, the team only has three total scheduled invitationals between March 27 and the District Finals on May 14 and May 16.

The other two besides Carolyn Legard Relays are Lake Braddock Hall of Fame Invitational on April 12 and Cassel’s XBC Track Experience on April 27.

However, there are a plentiful amount of in-district meets against every other team in the Gunston District which will greatly assist AHS in their preparation to outperform standards and possibly win the district at the end of the season.

Last year, though, the team had a mediocre finish in the district of third place for boys and fourth place for girls track and field, but the team indeed moved onto regionals.

“This year, one of the team’s main strengths going into the season is the 100 and 200 meter sprints on both the boys and girls side,” Harris said.

No matter the result of last year’s meets, AHS has shown a great deal of improvement during indoor track and will have a lot to look forward to as the season unfolds.

Lax wins its first game



Junior Patrick Lee prepares to defend a shot on goal during the scrimmage against C.D. Hylton on March 2. This was the Atoms' first scrimmage of the season.

As a new season begins, many people can agree that lacrosse is one of the most popular spring sports. With that popularity, the sport can garner much more interest in how it performs this season.

This season does not look like it will disappoint fans as the boys varsity lacrosse team has faced a variety of schools during both the preseason and early regular season.

So far, the team has had a great deal of success. For one,

they had a perfect preseason due to their wins against C.D. Hylton and Woodbridge, whose season was ended by AHS in the regional tournament last year.

During their first game of the season against Washington-Lee, they played a dominant game offensively and won 16-8. The top scorer for the Atoms was Alex Bellem with five goals.

Despite the team having to face some notoriously challenging teams like West Potomac on March 18 and T.C. Williams on March 20, many people are confident that lacrosse is on a positive path to success later in the season.

Unfortunately, the results of the game against West Potomac on March 18 were not available by the publication date of this article, as the game had not yet been played.

As for any sport the coach needed to get both their players and rosters ready for the new season to be as successful as possible.

Additionally, the way coach Bill Maglisceau prepares the lacrosse team is no different.

"We practiced for six weeks starting from Feb. 18th until our first game," coach Maglisceau said.

As for any team, both players and the coach determine the future success of the team in the district, regional, or even state tournament.

As a result, each and every team has their respective strengths and weaknesses.

"We have decent goalie and face off situations and our top scorers on the team are back and stronger," coach Maglisceau said.

One of the most important things for a team throughout their season is improvement in performance to be strong during

postseason.

Every team wants to constantly play better each game leading up to important postseason games even if they come off of a loss.

In coach Maglisceau's eyes his teams always improve before the conclusion of the season.

"We hope to perform better than last years with more wins this season, but it is too early to tell what this season holds for AHS," Maglisceau said.

But, something to keep in mind is that even though varsity lacrosse is constantly improving and training to get better, the exact same thing is happening in other schools.

In fact, other teams can improve at greater rates, improving success during postseason.

So it is safe to say that not all their games will be easy wins especially important ones against T.C. Williams or West Potomac, one of whom AHS will have to beat to have a shot at winning the district.

To coach Maglisceau, there are specific games that serve as greater obstacles to lacrosse's success.

"T.C. Williams and West Potomac are some good teams in our district that will be tough teams to beat, but we cant sleep on Mount Vernon or Hayfield," coach Maglisceau said.

Another factor that will contribute to the team's hopeful success this season is the amount of returning players to the varsity squad.

Overall, most of the team, both offense and defense, is composed of returning seniors who are experienced in the game and have prepared during the offseason.

So, as shown in their first few games of the season, there will be a lot to be excited about for the future of AHS lacrosse this season.

Boys condition with new coach

The boys soccer season is well on its way.

Players came out to many Green Days practices to meet the new head coach and showed off their skills and abilities in the game.

This year the team will be directed by head coach Tejas Patel. Coach Patel is new to AHS and has been coaching for 19 years.

Before coming to AHS, Patel was an assistant coach at South Lakes. The year before that, Patel was the head coach at Herndon.

About 22 people showed up to the green day, which has been the maximum amount of players to show up to a boys soccer Green Day this season.

In fact, one Green Day featured less than 10 players, the season minimum in participation for green days.

Overall, each of the Green Days so far consisted of various activities: running, core drills, game of possession and full field games. All of these will serve to be useful in preparing the team both physically and mentally for the tough season that they will have ahead.

The players also have the option to show up to a yellow day practice, which consists purely of conditioning and less technical activities.

Yellow day practices are geared to help players become fit for both tryouts and the season.

However, approximately 10 players showed up to the first Yellow Day.

The soccer season is beginning soon, the first tryout was on Feb. 19.

Players, specifically those on the JV team and incoming freshmen, have been training for the tryouts since the fall to insure they have their spot on the varsity team.

“Out of school, I have prepared many different ways. I play for a team outside of school, and they gave me the opportunity to play out in Spain,” junior Andy Hernandez said. “I have also trained a lot myself to get better, so I could compete.”

Coach Patel is looking forward to seeing Atoms fans come out to soccer games.

“I am looking forward to seeing Atoms supporters filling our stands during games,” Patel said. “I want to see our stands covered in red.”

Girls soccer ready for tryouts

The spring sports have yet to begin, but AHS soccer has already began preparing for its season.

Soccer coach, Lindsey Ottavio, already knows what she is looking for in girls that try out.

“There’s no guarantee for any player. Every year we look at everyone trying out and we take the top 20 girls and they make the varsity roster,” coach Ottavio said. “We look at a couple of things: their physical ability, which includes things such as fitness testing, their technical ability, which includes ball skills, and lastly their tactical ability, which is more in terms of a game scenario.”

Before tryouts, Ottavio holds yellow and green days, where the girls complete activities that will prepare them for the official tryouts.

The first tryouts for the girls soccer team will be on Tuesday, February 19th at Ossian park. All girls are welcomed.

“Within tryouts, we give specific explanations or examples so that they know what’s required of them,” Ottavio said. “I also send out workouts and other things for them to do to prepare for the actual tryouts.”

Ottavio compares preparation for the season to a “wirlwind.”

“We pick the team and create chemistry. We have to figure out what the personality of the team is this year. After that we go straight into scrimmages which gives us a better look at the individual player,” Ottavio said.

Players also shared how the soccer coach prepares the girls before the season starts.

“Our coach, Ms. Ottavio, starts preparing us by conditioning us to green and yellow,” Joya said. “She does this so that we get used to the schedule and work we will have when the actual season starts.”

Joya played on the varsity soccer team last year and has been playing soccer for 12 years.

“It’s my passion and my love” she said “My dad plays soccer, and I want to go somewhere with it too.”

Joya was injured earlier this month by playing futsal, which is a type of soccer. However, the injury has not stopped her from working hard to recover in time to play for this season.

“I want to first and foremost recover from my injury,” Joya said. “I then plan on working out by running some miles and doing some agility ball work on my own, as well as my travel practices.”

Joya also shared her goals for this season.

“My goals for this season is to be better than last year,” Joya said. “It all depends on how I heal during my therapy, but I think I’ll be back before the season starts.”

Lalia Lopez also shared her goals for this season. Lalia played varsity last year.

“My goals for the season is to win more games than last year, to have better chemistry throughout the whole team,” Lopez said.

Basketball outplayed

The varsity basketball teams finished their seasons with decent records, which prove to be improving each year. The boys ended with a respectable record of 11-13, and the Lady Atoms ended the season with a record of 8-13.

Both teams concluded their seasons in the semi-finals of the district tournament, where they defeated Mount Vernon in the first round. The boys won (75-65), and the girls won (58-46.)

The boys then lost to West Potomac (57-63), and the girls lost to T.C. Williams (50-68) to eliminate them from the district

tournament.

Highlights of the boys game against Mount Vernon include a solid performance from the Atoms on offense.

The girls put their heads in the game and defeated Mt. Vernon.

On Feb. 12, in their defeat to West Potomac, the boys played a great game on both sides of the court, but fell short by a mere 6 points, after not being able to catch the Majors in the final minutes of the fourth quarter.

“As a whole, I believe we played really well and did a pretty good job of limiting their offensive rebounding despite their size,” senior Abbey Yared said. “We missed too many free throws, which would’ve changed the course of the game.”

As expressed by Yared, the boys believed that they started to fall short of earning the win in the fourth quarter.

“In the 4th quarter, we should have done a better job of closing out the game and staying focused on key possessions,” Yared said.

On the other hand, the Lady Atoms felt as if they did not play hard enough to have a chance at beating the top seeded T.C. Williams.

“I feel like we got tired, and we made bad passes because of it,” senior Jayla Irvin said. “They simply started to run up the score based on our errors.”

The girls believed that they started losing control of the game between the end of the third quarter and the beginning of fourth.

“[Looking back at the game,] there was not any specific quarter, but probably the end of third and the beginning of fourth is where we could have played more efficiently,” Irvin

said.

Although the teams were knocked out in the semi-finals of the District Tournament, they still made great memories and proved to be formidable opponents.

Additionally, senior night was a big night as both the boys and the girls varsity teams won their games.

Following those games, players stated what their favorite part about the entire season was.

Senior Alejandro Casquino said his season memory was made that night by beating Mt. Vernon on senior night.

Irvin said her favorite part about the whole season was the time she spent with her team out of basketball, and before games where they would hang out and have fun with each other.

Despite some ups and downs throughout the season, both times will miss the season, as will the seniors from each team.

Senior players also shared what they will miss about playing high school basketball.

“I’m going to miss going out and playing my heart and putting on a Annandale jersey to play.” Casquino said.

Boys lax looks to change the narrative

Following a successful finish to their season last year, where they advanced out of the district and eventually fell in the regional quarterfinal against West Potomac, the lacrosse team is preparing for its upcoming season.

Currently, the team is in their first week of training before tryouts are complete and Head Coach Bill Maglisceau finalizes any adjustments for lineups and rosters.

This week, the focus in practice will be improving physically as well as playing better as a team.

Tryouts will take place on Feb. 18 and will feature several technical related drills and a scrimmage.

“Even though tryouts officially started on Feb. 18, they initially start by making an impression with coaches during the offseason,” senior goalie Sam Phan said.

Last year, the game that led to the regional quarterfinal against West Potomac featured a clutch 8-7 win in the first round of the regional tournament against Woodbridge.

In that game, senior Alex Bellem scored four goals along with seniors Matt Dinh and Cameron Foti who each scored two.

Overall, the team did well turning around the unfortunate season that they were starting to have. Of their first ten games, the Atoms only won once.

Then, leading up to postseason, they turned their season around and won three of their last five.

Now, the boys head into a new season which means new opportunity. The team will look to have a dynamic relative to that of those last five games (three of which they won) last season to hopefully advance past the regional quarterfinal this year.

“This season, our goals are to get more wins and hopefully win the District Tournament and advance further in the regional bracket,” Bellem said.

“[In order to be successful this season] our main focus [in practices] will be to perfect our game plans and plays that we

worked on last year," Bellem said.

The first scrimmage of the season will take place on March 2 at home against C.D. Hylton.

Then, they will face Woodbridge again, which they beat in the Regional Tournament, for their second scrimmage on March 7.

These two games will play an important role in gauging how well the experienced team will do with perfecting their plays.

The regular season will kick off a week later on March 14 against Washington-Lee, a team that had a record identical to AHS last season going 4-11.

"Going into the season, AHS lacrosse has many strengths under its belt such as great leadership, coaching, and athleticism," Bellem said. "We have very strong expectations, especially with most of our starting lineup on offense."

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the team has a shot at success this season which may feature a district win or advancing further in the regional tournament.

"Our overall goal this season is to make it to the conference championship and pass the first round of the playoffs," Bellem said.

Lady Atoms guard joins the 1,000 point club

After picking up a narrow three point home win (53-50) against West Potomac on Senior Night, the Lady Atoms' season hit yet another milestone in their action packed season on Feb. 5.

The Atoms picked up another crucial win against a Gunston District team that would impact their seeding in the District Tournament.

However, more importantly, senior point guard Sarah Shamdeen passed the momentous 1,000 career point mark.

She scored 24 points that game, one of her best performances this season.

Additionally, Shamdeen is only one of fewer than ten Atoms to achieve the accomplishment, either on the boys or girls side.

“The last person do to so [score 1,000]points for AHS] was Dontae Johnson during my freshman year,” Shamdeen said.

Over the past four years that she has played for AHS, Shamdeen has remained consistent in scoring in order to reach this goal, which is extremely difficult to do.

Each season she played, Shamdeen has scored more than 100 points.

Her highest scoring season was her Sophomore year with 365 total, which is an average of more than 17 points per game.

“To me, it is very cool that I achieved this feat because I was doubtful that I would reach the 1,000 point mark this year,” Shamdeen said.

After reaching this astonishing goal, the team went on to the District Tournament just one week later to cruise past Mount Vernon by a score of 58-46, where Shamdeen scored a whopping 23 points.

“As a player this season, I have improved a lot [not just physically and technically, but] mentally as I no longer beat myself up after making mistakes during our games this season,” Shamdeen said.

Nevertheless, the team, and Shamdeen especially, had an accomplished season.

Following the win against West Potomac, Shamdeen surpassed 300 points on the season and had 1,022 career points.

Shamdeen also expressed that scoring 1,000 points is not the only accomplishment that came out of playing for the Lady Atoms for four years.

“The best part about playing basketball for my school is the bond that we have formed as a team throughout the years,” Shamdeen said.

The Lady Atoms then went on after senior night and cruising past Mount Vernon to fall in the district semifinal to the top seeded T.C. Williams by a score of 50-68.

The girls will head to their first regional tournament match on March 9.

In the future, Shamdeen plans to move on to play more basketball in college.

“I plan on playing in college and hopefully it works out,” Shamdeen said.



Sarah Shamdeen (second from left to right)

celebrates both Senior Night and passing the 1,000 career point mark on the same day with fellow seniors on the team.

Q & A with Coach Lindsey Ottavio

Q: How long have you been coaching soccer?

A: I have been coaching soccer for four years. This will be my second year as Annandale's varsity coach.

Q: Did you play soccer before coaching it?

A: I actually started playing soccer when I was four years old. Then I played all throughout my high school career. I played in college and in England for two years.

Q: How did you discover your interest in soccer?

A: I was so young that I think I just tried soccer because of my parents. I loved it the moment I started and I didn't want to play any other sport. I didn't have any other interests. I just really wanted to train and play soccer.

Q: What made you want to coach soccer?

A: Coaching is the natural extension of playing. After I stopped playing, I still wanted to be involved with the game, and to pass down the knowledge I gained to girls specifically.

Q: Do you do anything with soccer in the off season?

A: Yes, I actually coach travel soccer as well. So I am busy coaching soccer year round.

Q: How do you prepare for a new soccer season?

A: Preparing for the new soccer season sort of starts

immediately after the last season ends. We do a complete reflection and as the new season gets closer it is more about building on the foundation we had last season

Q: What is one thing you love about coaching?

A: I love the relationships I create with my players. Seeing them thrive and genuinely improve is such a great feeling as a coach.

Q: What is your favorite memory from coaching?

A: My favorite memory was when we won our first game last season. I was taking over the program and it was new for me. We were trying to develop our own personality for the program. But that moment when we achieved our first victory was the sweetest feeling.

Bleachers postponed until summer

The new home bleachers at the football stadium are yet to be completed and are not expected to be fully finished until the summer of 2019.

John Ellenberger, the Director of Student Activities, was displeased when he heard about the delay from Fairfax County. However, He is working hard to make the best of this situation.

“A gentleman from Fairfax County Public Schools said they were having a hard time getting the permits pushed through Fairfax County Government,” Ellenberger said. “We went through the whole football and field hockey season [without replacing the bleachers].”

Despite the bleachers being a major necessity for football,

the construction of the new bleachers began shortly after the fall season ended.

“At first, the gentleman from Fairfax County Public Schools said that we would have [the bleachers] for the spring season,” Ellenberger said. “That would have been fine, as long as they were installed by March 1.”

Everything seemed to be heading in the right direction until about two weeks ago when Ellenberger received a call from the county.

“They stated that they were behind on another job in the county, and because of that, we are not going to have the new bleachers for the spring season,” Ellenberger said.

There are many problems that must be solved so that the games can go on.

“The biggest issue was the question of sound because they already demolished the press box, where all the sound was amplified,” Ellenberger said. “I need to make sure we have sound for announcements, music, senior nights, and anthems.”

Ellenburger is very persistent and wants to have the 2019 spring season be just as enjoyable as any other.

Despite this setback, he was able to solve the issue readily.

“Mr. Witkowski let me borrow an extremely loud speaker that is used for band practice,” Ellenberger said. “I’m really thankful that Mr. Witkowski and the band department are hooking me up for the sound.”

Although disappointed, Ellenberger still found innovative ways to recreate the ideal stadium.

Ellenberger reached out to the county and they told him that they would do everything in their power to make sure that the scoreboard works.

“We also had

He also has a backup plan in case the county cannot provide him with a functioning scoreboard.

“My plan B is to use an older scoreboard, which is about four feet by six feet, and put it on wheels just in case,” Ellenberger said.

Many seniors are disappointed that these problems will affect

sports games. However, they are attempting to ignore the issues and still have fun celebrating their last year at AHS.

"I feel annoyed because it is my senior year and it is going to be weird playing lacrosse with no home bleachers and press box," senior Faris Vadakoot said.

"[The bleachers] are going to be a little bit smaller, because of the handicapped requirements under the ADA."

Ellenberger stressed the importance of being compliant with the requirements outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA. Everyone deserves specific accommodations in order to ensure and promote equality and inclusion.

"As a senior, I am glad that the repairs happened after the football season. The bleachers hold a memory of going to football games for four years. It's also a bit upsetting that I will not get to see the final product," Vadakoot said.

Regardless of the lack of home bleachers and other setbacks, the field will be the sight for many games during the spring season, such as for lacrosse and soccer. During the games, both AHS supporters and any supporters of the opposing team will be sharing the visitor's bleacher.

Senior Andrew Izquierdo has been playing for the boys soccer team for the past three years. He feels that this spring season will be different without them.

"It's always been a tradition to have our home fans and hype squad on the home side," Izquierdo said. "I just don't think it is fair to have this happen in my senior year."

Even though we may not have the bleachers completed, the necessary arrangements have been made in order to ensure the best possible season.

The Lady Atoms win their senior night game

The Lady Atoms win their senior night basketball game against the West Potomac Wolverines. It was a close game- coming down to the last few seconds, ending with a score of 53-50.

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Boys look to finish strong

The boys varsity basketball team's first games of January, the team had strong performances against Mt. Vernon and Woodbridge Senior. However, when facing Hayfield and West Potomac, the games resulted in losses for the team. Against the Hayfield Hawks, the Atoms lost by a slim two-point margin. In addition, the Atoms were defeated by the West Potomac Wolverines in a home game.

In terms of the West Potomac game, the Atoms did not have a good start to the game because as the Wolverines were fast to score, putting up the first points of the game.

Despite the set back, the boys continued to give it their all and kept the margin close until they reached the third quarter. By then, the Wolverines had opened up a large lead. "What went wrong was that we stopped rebounding the ball," head coach Diedrich Gilreath said.

The players also reflected on their performances that night.

"I think what went wrong is that we came out a little too slow in the third quarter," senior Alejandro Casquino said.

Even though the game did not go as planned, the players found various strengths as well.

"I wouldn't change much," Casquino said. "Just that we have to play hard all four quarters and not have any mental lapses." The team has had a decent season so far. With only three more regular season games remaining, it is the team's goal to finish the season strong and then, start preparing for districts.

Gilreath does not expect to change much for districts because he believes that the team has already completed enough preparation during the regular season.

"We will not do anything different for districts," Gilreath said. "Everything we've done so far should prepare us for districts."

The boys have played three other games since then against Centreville, T.C. Williams and Hayfield and have won one and lost the other two.