

# Boys track continues winning streak

In their most recent competition at the Friends of Indoor Track Invitational, the boys team was able to pull out another win while the girls lost with a close score and a strong performance, making the boys 4-0 and the girls 3-1 overall.

“The relays did well and the mid distance and field event teams also did well and I think it gave us a good start to the season,” said senior long and triple jump participant Desmond Lee.

Looking towards the rest of the season athletes and coaches are positive in their hopes for improvement and desire to win another district championship.

“The team needs to keep working hard and turning in good performances in the upcoming meets at Fork Union and at Virginia Tech, with the ultimate goal being to win the district team championship,” said coach Sean Miller.

The girls are mainly looking to improve all their times as well as working on the fundamentals of each specific event. “The last meet I didn’t do as well as I would have liked to, so hopefully I’ll significantly drop my time, but the girls team is strong in mid distance and sprints but we still need to work on the distance group,” said senior mile runner and 4×8 team member Meriem Oweis.

In the last meet, key female performances included Elizabeth Flint who placed in both the triple and long jump events. “We are working on strength and fitness and we are a young team on the girls side with a lot of potential and hope to finish in the top four at districts,” said coach Dave O’Hara.

Although the boys are 4-0 overall there are still improvements

to be made. "The boys' team need to find more scoring in the sprints and jumps, the girls' team has good individuals but lacks overall depth," said Miller.

Key male performances in the last meet included Daniel Blasser in the 500m and Michael Ejigu in the 3200m run. Jack Griffin, Alhaji Bah and JP Jenkins all placing in the 55m hurdles.

The upcoming varsity meet at Virginia Tech is motivation for some of the team members to work hard in practice and continue to improve in order to have a strong performance in the competition on Jan. 29-30.

"I am excited for the Tech meet because it will be really fun but we have to keep improving if we want to be the best we can be in the meet," said senior Maggie Bermingham.

The Atoms next meet will be Jan. 30 at Episcopal High School against South County, Lake Braddock and Lee.

---

## **Dive team remains undefeated**

When looking at the score of one of the most recent swim and dive meets, it is easy to overlook one half of the team's performance. The final result says West Springfield won the meet 182-132, but that does not tell the whole story. The AHS dive team was able to notch their fifth win of the season and remain unbeaten on the year by beating the Spartans 19-10 in the dive portion of the meet.

"It's not surprising that our dive team is undefeated," said sophomore Patrick McCann. "The amount of talent that we have on the team this year is incomparable to other teams."

Led by senior captains Sean McKinney and Chris Fuller, McCann,

and juniors Jordan Aman and Andrew Pack, the team looks to complete their second straight undefeated season with a win over West Potomac HS on Friday, Jan. 22 at Lee District RecCenter.

“We’ve got a really good chance at winning our last meet because West Potomac isn’t that good and we’re quite talented,” said Aman.

The team’s most impressive win this season had to be Dec. 18 against Woodson. The Cavaliers, a new addition to the Patriot District this year, was also undefeated and had not lost a boys dive meet in eight years. The Atoms were happy to hand them that loss, 18-11.

“Everyone came out, did their best and that’s why we came out victorious,” said McKinney. “We made the other coach practically cry, so that was good.”

“Eight years is a long time so it was good to prove that we were better than them,” said McCann.

McKinney, who has placed second in the state for the past three years, has already qualified for the regional meet by scoring 200 points in a single meet. The Atoms could potentially have two other regional qualifiers in McCann and Aman, pending the result of Friday’s meet against Lee, which was completed too late for this issue.

“I think we’ll definitely have three studs from the dive team in the regional meet by the end of the year,” said McCann.

Although the AHS swim and dive team probably will not make regionals as a full team, the divers will be sure to represent the Atoms well and complete their second straight undefeated season.

UPDATE: The Atoms dive team remained undefeated by defeating Lee on Jan. 15. In the meet, sophomore Patrick McCann and

junior Jordan Aman qualified for the Regional Tournament.

---

## **AHS Football '09**

---

### **Atoms swim falls to Spartans**

With only one meet left before the AHS swim and dive team's district meets, participants prepare for the final stretch more than ever. A group of freshmen swimmers intensely shout "We are going to unleash the fury!"

This has become a well known phrase to AHS swimmers to get them hyped up before meets. The team's previous meets against W.T. Woodson and West Springfield High School broke the boy's team's winning streak this season, losing to West Springfield by a small margin.

"One of the things we need to improve on before Districts is really focusing on our goals," said junior Katie Panther. "We need to forget about the meets we've lost and concentrate on the upcoming ones."

The girls also lost both meets with about a hundred points difference. Panther's goal is for the girl's to come back and place at least fourth in districts, and hopefully improve their standing.

For most sports teams, hearing that you have a home game is welcoming and exciting news. However, this is not the case for AHS swimmers and divers.

Many members of the team feel that home team advantage has a negative impact on their performance.

The dislike of competing in the same pool they practice in is the same reason field players look forward to home games. This mentality by team members could have negatively factored into the West Springfield loss at their home pool.

However, it is time for the Atoms to put all losses behind them and move forward. Districts are approaching quickly, and swimmers and divers are in full preparation.

Head coach Neal Jarvis is looking for improvement during Districts. "A lot of people are looking to beat their personal records; the boy's have a very good shot at winning and the girls have the chance to be very competitive," said Jarvis.

The team is also feeling pretty optimistic for the future meets. "I believe districts will go very well, because we are the top team aside from Woodson and West Springfield," said senior Kayvon Naghdi.

A key fact in coming back strong in districts and is realizing mistakes in past meets and learning from them in order to improve.

"I think we need to be more competitive and really fight to get to the wall first," said freshman swimmer Betsy Kruse. The Atoms will be competing against tough opponents, who will only increase in skill should AHS progress past districts. It will be a fight to the finish for AHS Swim and Dive Team, for both boys and girls.

"We have been working very hard during our intense workouts and have been practicing our dives repetitively," said sophomore Paige Blennerhassett.

---

# Wrestling takes second place

“Well, we seem to like to come in second a lot.”

Head wrestling coach Keith Sholders said this while reflecting on his team’s most recent meet at Northern High School Jan. 8-9. The Atoms finished second out of twenty teams and had four wrestlers place second in their individual weight classes.

“The team wrestled really well over the weekend,” said junior Jon Le, who was the runner-up in the 119 lb. weight class. “We’ve been working hard because districts is around the corner and this weekend was another step to take us closer to our goal of being Patriot District champs.”

It was not all second though, as sophomore Dane Harlowe and senior Ricky Adams each placed first in their weight classes. Other second place finishers included sophomore Andy Weber and seniors Jack Velazquez and Stacey Anderson.

The next meet for the Atoms is tomorrow night, Jan. 20, at home against Lake Braddock on the annual “Pack the Pit” night. The wrestling starts at 7 pm and the fans are asked to wear white to create a “white-out” in the stands.

“[Pack the Pit] is the main event that the kids look forward to in the year,” said Sholders.

“Pack the Pit is when we get to show the school how strong our team is,” said junior Yari Mizouri. “We work hard at every practice and we will make sure we’re ready to compete.”

The team has this meet and four after it to prepare for the Patriot District tournament. The Atoms record currently stands

at 9-3.

“We need to have the kids wrestle past their potential and to keep working hard in order to fulfill our goal of Patriot District champions,” said Sholders.

---

## **Basketball smashes the Spartans**

Basketball practice does not usually focus on running laps. Maybe it should after the Atoms seemingly ran circles around the West Springfield Spartans in their 77-44 win on Friday.

“We ran a lot [in the game],” said senior guard Chris Sheehy, who scored five points in the game. “Their defense was pretty bad and pretty small so that made it easier for us.”

After a relatively slow start, the Atoms exploded for 25 first quarter points. The team kept the intensity up through the second quarter and were able to extend their lead to 25 by the half, 48-23.

“We started off slow for the first few minutes,” said head coach Anthony Harper. “We were kind of playing down to their level but then when we picked up our defensive pressure, everything else picked up with it.”

The Atoms continued their strong play in the second half, seemingly scoring everytime down the court. The team outscored the Spartans by eight in the second half, bringing the game to its final margin of 33 points. The Atoms scoring was very well-balanced, with 12 different players contributing points for the team. Junior Melvin Robinson led the team with 14

points and 11 rebounds, and junior Karl Ziegler and senior Jon Williams added 12 and 9 points, respectively. Even with the dominant performance, there is still room to improve.

“We need to work on our defensive pressure in the half court set because once [the opponent] breaks our press, we’re letting them get comfortable,” said Harper. “We can also be more patient and work the ball around more on offense.”

With the victory over the Spartans, the Atoms overall record currently stands at 6-4, with a 3-3 record in the Patriot District.

“We want to play the way we played against Woodson and West Springfield, the rest of the season and finish strong,” said Harper.

The Atoms played rival W.T. Woodson on Monday, Jan. 11 and easily won the game, 67-43. Ziegler led the Atoms with 17 points, while Robinson and fellow junior D’Angelo Boyce added 12 points apiece.

The team’s next game is tonight at 7:30 when they host the Lake Braddock Bruins.

---

## **Spartans top Atoms**

The AHS girls basketball team fell again Thursday in a hard-fought game against the West Springfield Spartans with a score of 40-57. This was the team’s second loss in the district, and their record now stands at 4-2 within the Patriot District. In Thursday’s game the scoring was not limited to just a couple of players, with points from almost every player on the team.

"It's hard at first but we get over the loss. Losing just makes us better, we learn from our mistakes and work harder for the win next time," said senior Aby Diop, who lead the team with 16 points and also had five rebounds.

Coach Pat Hughes took much of the blame, "I think that I can prepare them a little more for the next game," said Hughes.

The Atoms' next game is away against Lake Braddock Secondary School on Jan. 14. The Lady Atoms are confident and plan to do well against their district rival, Lake Braddock.

"I think we will come out much stronger," said junior Kelly Hughes who had 11 points and three 3 pts. "We will come out with much more determination to crush Lake Braddock and get our confidence back."

Players' resilience and positive attitude, after losses help the team to hold such a strong record within the district. It is a key role in the girls' success this year. "I feel great about the girls. We played one of the top teams in the region if not the state and the girls fought tooth and nail the entire time," Coach Hughes said.

In the Patriot District standing, AHS is in second place trailing only behind West Springfield. This success is a great sign for a team that has been struggling for the last few years. This year was the first year in recent memory that a girls basketball team has defeated the T.C. Williams Titans.

If the team continues with the strong performances, they will likely compete for the district championship as long as they keep working hard and continue to improve from their mistakes game to game.

"We're going to keep working hard, it's a long season, but I think we'll end up going far in the district tournament," said senior Stephanie Burns.

With many talented but young and inexperienced players, the future is extremely bright, not only for this season but for the seasons to come. Once the newer players are comfortable with playing at the high school level, it is likely that the Atoms will be a strong competitor in the district with the potential to win the district title.

“I really like our chances for the rest of this season,” said senior Nikki Clarke. “We have a lot of talent, but sometimes we just can’t get a win, but I still think we can do well in districts.”

---

## Addition by subtraction

To the myopic [Wizards](#) fan, having your star player “suspended indefinitely,” following league Commissioner David Stern’s proclamation “that he is not currently fit to take the court in an NBA game,” would probably elicit feelings of hopelessness about the team’s future prospects. Indeed, to put it modestly, the Wizards will not be competing for a championship this season: an obvious conclusion following the loss of their leading scorer, the face of the franchise, someone whose past play earned him an [\\$111 million contract](#).

While still a productive player, coming off a pair of serious knee surgeries Gilbert Arenas is no longer worth the \$147,208 he collects per game. There are numerous highly-paid players around the NBA who are regarded as albatrosses: players whose guaranteed contracts necessitate some unfortunate team to commit a huge portion of their salary to a player who is no longer worth his salary. In the NFL, such players could simply be cut from a roster and that would be the end of it. Thanks to an influential players’ union, and much to the anguish of

team owners, all NBA player contracts are guaranteed.

Simply put, Arenas was going to collect the \$80 million remaining on his contract whether or not his level of play truly warranted it.

Fortunately for everyone not named Gilbert Arenas, by bringing guns into an NBA arena, he violated a paramount stipulation NBA's collective bargaining agreement. Breaching this agreement that governs the terms of employment for all NBA players, Arenas' transgression could result in the voiding of his bloated contract, freeing the Wizards from their contractual obligations. As it is currently constituted, this team has proven its ceiling to be the second round of the playoffs, ridding itself of Arenas would enable it to get a fresh start.

If this were to happen, the Wizards would have a vast sum of money to spend on a superstar free agent this offseason. LeBron James is a free agent, so is Dwyane Wade; both would be unlikely to come to Washington. A more likely possibility is signing [Kevin Durant](#), the absurdly-talented 21-year old forward for the Oklahoma City Thunder, who is likely looking to escape the small market of Oklahoma City.

More importantly, Durant is originally from the Washington area, elucidating the main reason why he would like to play for the Wizards. With Durant the Wizards would have one of the league's best scorers to build a championship caliber team around and the ability to free themselves from the quagmire of mediocrity they have been entangled in for nearly two decades. The thanks should go to Arenas for setting in motion the events that would ultimately allow it to happen.

---

# Students hit the slopes

It is a chilly Saturday morning and you have no homework for the first time since school started. Rather than sitting and watching pointless reruns on television, you and a few friends elect to venture out into the cold.

After a small drive north, you have arrived to your destination: a mountain freshly covered in powder, perfect for your skiing and snowboarding expedition.

Skiing and snowboarding are two commonly overlooked winter activities, both of which are more difficult to find locations to participate in the Annandale community. However, many students are avid fans and participants in the sports.

“I go skiing in Michigan, and it’s a fun way to pass time over winter break or a long weekend,” said junior Georgia Garney. “It’s a good way to get outside and play around during the winter to get a chance to go out and exercise.”

Although there are not many locations for prolonged periods of skiing and snowboarding, people make due with what they can find.

Some people choose to go on local sledding hills, while others find preference in steep driveways and school fields in their neighborhoods.

“Over the winter break, Eric Reynolds and I went to Pinecrest Golf Course to snowboarded,” said sophomore Willie Labarca. “We made several jumps and created our own terrain park.”

Others take trips to local resorts, such as [Wintergreen](#), Seven Springs, Whitetail, and Wisp. Although the mountains are not rocky mountain range-sized, they provide substantial improvement from backyard sledding.

“I have been snowboarding for four years,” said Labarca. “I go

to [Whitetail](#) and Liberty.”

Students even get opportunities to travel west to resorts that are five times the size as eastern mountains, such as Vail, Park City, Winter Park and Breckenridge.

Colorado and Utah are destinations that people fly from around the world to ski on, with legendary snow, slopes, and great service.

“Last year, my family went to Telluride Ski Resort in Colorado,” said junior Megan Loman. “It is better out west because the mountains are bigger and the trails are wider. Plus, the trails aren’t manmade and icy, because the all the snow is fresh. Everything is all-around better.”

There are two major divisions in snow sports, skiing and snowboarding. The majority of clientele begin with skiing, either being taught by parents or by participating in “ski school,” a program where instructors teach the basics of staying on two feet. After progressing through multiple levels, many children decide they want to go to what has become the decidedly “cooler” of the two: snowboarding.

“I didn’t like skiing, and I heard snowboarding was fun,” said Loman. “So I tried snowboarding and liked it way better.”

Experts usually head to the terrain parks, where the bold and the daring put their skills to the test. Toyboxes, rails, jumps, and halfpipes are all created by metal and snow for tricks to be performed on. Sometimes even old vehicles, such as school buses and broken cars are placed for the pure entertainment of those who venture into the parks.

While skiing and snowboarding are great activities to participate in, there are many risks of possible injury.

Losing control of your equipment, gaining too much speed and even running into trees are very common ways that participants

find themselves being escorted down the mountain on a stretcher.

“One time, I tried snowboarding when I was younger, I decided to try snowboarding, which was a bad decision,” said Garney. “When me and my cousin were going down a slope, I started wobbling a bit. Next thing I knew I had an arm that was really tender. It turned out I broke my arm.”

Ways to reduce risk include wearing a helmet, renting appropriately-fitting equipment and avoiding terrain parks. For more information on skiing and snowboarding safety, lodging and destinations, visit <http://skicentral.com>.

---

## **Students experience ACL injuries**

When junior Kristen Hennessey planted her leg to kick a soccer ball in the first day of tryouts last spring, she heard a noise she compared to “a piece of paper ripping.” As she felt her knee pop to the outside, she knew from past experience what just happened: a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), one of the most dreaded injuries for any athlete.

One of the four major knee ligaments, the ACL [functions](#) by providing stability for the knee. The ligament attaches the knee to the femur, or thigh bone, and passes down the knee joint to the front of the upper tibia (shin bone). It is critical for stability, so many who suffer ACL injuries complain of the knee “giving out.”

Symptoms of an [ACL tear](#) include swelling of the knee joint and a feeling of instability which can occur with cutting and

pivoting movements or even simply everyday walking. Many who suffer injury also hear a loud “pop,” which can sometimes even be heard by bystanders. Athletes who play sports that include high amounts of running and jumping, such as basketball, football, lacrosse, and soccer, are at the greatest risk for ACL injuries.

Females are also at a [higher risk](#) for injury, with recent studies showing girls eight times more likely to tear their ACL than men. This is due mostly to the fact that there is an increased angle formed by a woman’s hips and knees, putting the knee ligaments under more constant pressure.

Junior Gabby Hankinson was competing in a cheerleading competition last September when she came down on her knee during a jump and felt it pop out. It was a sharp pain at first, but then it went numb,” said Hankinson.

After rehabbing the injury for five days a week over nine months, she returned to cheer, only to suffer another tough injury this fall. I tore my meniscus and part of my ACL when we were practicing a new stunt for our routine. When I came out of the air to go back up, my knee snapped. It pretty much felt the same as last time, but it was like something was loose.”

Hennessey experienced the pain of an ACL tear twice, the first during a basketball game her freshman year and the second in the previously mentioned soccer tryout. “For both injuries, I was able to run four months after surgery. But the second time, I waited longer before returning to field hockey in the fall, it ended up being about a month longer. At four months, when I could run, it felt like I could do everything but my leg was still very weak.”

ACL injuries require strenuous rehab, generally after reconstructive surgery where the injured ligament is repaired and replaced with either a patellar tendon graft, hamstring

graft, or allograft (from a cadaver).

“[The rehabilitation] strengthens the quadriceps and hamstring. [The length] depends on the surgeon and the patient but it can be anywhere from five months to a year,” said athletic trainer Kathy Ayers.

“For my first surgery, I had the hamstring graft but for the second they used a cadaver. I noticed that my leg was sorer from the first one because they had to take part of my hamstring,” said Hennessey.

Following surgery and successful rehabilitation, precautions are taken in order to attempt to prevent a second injury and to ensure that the injury is properly healed. “I have to wear a brace when I ever I do any lateral activity. The worst part was only being able to participate in some drills at field hockey practice and not being able to play in games for a month,” said Hennessey.

Any injury to the ACL is serious and requires proper evaluation and rehabilitation to return to prior level of play, and special care should be taken to ensheep prevent a second injury. “Even though my knee is better, it’s still always in the back of my mind whenever I do little things day to day involving jumping or pivoting,” said Hennessey.

---

## **Wrestling has solid outing**

Looking to start the season off well, the wrestling team competed in the Northern Region Classic wrestling meet at [Fairfax High School](#) on Saturday, Dec. 12. The team competed well and ended up finishing in fourth place out of 32 teams at the meet.

“We wrestled very well [at the Northern Region Classic],” said head coach Keith Sholders. “We’re working hard but we still need to correct a lot of mistakes.”

Several individuals on the team performed very well at the tournament.

“[Sophomore] Dane [Harlowe] placed first in his weight class and [sophomore] Miguel Escoto did well taking down the second and third seeds to place second overall,” said Sholders.

Seniors Stacey Anderson and Jack Velazquez also did well, placing second and fourth, respectively.

“We did well but there’s always little things we can improve on,” said junior Yari Mizouri.

Sholders agrees saying “confidence and believing in themselves” is an area for the wrestlers to focus on.

On Dec. 5, [AHS](#) and five other area teams competed in a series of matches against each other and fought towards a number of early season victories. The Atoms left on the heels of a three-match win streak and an overall result of 3-2.

“We lost our first two duals against Fairfax [High School] and Loudon Valley [High School] but then we came back and beat the rest of the schools,” said senior Ricky Adams.

These remaining three wins were against Mt. Vernon HS, Stonewall Jackson HS and Thomas Jefferson HS.

“We started slow but were able to build momentum and finish strong [at the North Stafford meet],” said Sholders.

The meet also featured some great individual performances from Adams, sophomore Dane Harlowe, and senior Jack Velazquez, who all went 5-0. Senior Stacey Anderson also won all three of his matches.

The next competition for the wrestling team will be on Dec.

19, when the team competes in the Lions Rotational Duals at Tallwood High School. The team hopes to do well in this match and future matches.

“We just need to show up everyday ready to work and keep battling it out,” said Adams. “We’ll be fighting for a district championship in February.”

Sholders shared this goal saying, “we expect to win the [district] championship every year we compete.”

Visit [www.annandaleatoms.com](http://www.annandaleatoms.com) for the complete varsity wrestling schedule.

---

## Atoms fall short to Stallions

The Atoms girls basketball team started off strong, dominating in their first two games against Wakefield and JEB Stuart High School. However, their third game against South County Secondary school did not go as well, with a 38-19 loss. The girls hope to come back strong in their upcoming district games against T.C. Williams and Robert E. Lee High School.

Sophomore Hailey Brown is optimistic about the team’s future. “I think we just need to improve on our passing aspect of the game and boxing out so we can get all of the rebounds, and take more shots,” Brown said.

Hard work will be the key element in the girl’s success in future games. “I think staying out of foul trouble will really help because that is an issue we have right now,” said Junior Isabelle Yaroch.

Yaroch feels the team’s biggest competition this season was South County Secondary School, a game that has already been

played by the Atoms. "I'm really looking forward to the district tournament because I think we can go really far in it," Yaroch said. Their goal is not to advance even farther than districts and continue to defeat their competition. The girls all have high hopes for the future of AHS girls basketball.

Brown also has very positive things to say about the head coach Hughes, "We have a good coach that works us hard and that we listen to him so he makes us better players and a better team."

Coach Hughes is working the team hard to prepare them for future games. "We are still learning as the season progresses and we will keep getting better and better and work through any obstacles and issues while we accomplish all of our goals," said Hughes.

The girls junior varsity team has only played one game against JEB Stuart High School with an impressive 72-1 win, clearly showing the strong teamwork and skills of the girls. "We are working on defensive and offensive play, especially getting the rebound," said sophomore and post player Megan Wade.

The success of the girls team so far hints at an extremely bright future for the team and AHS girls' basketball program as a whole. Although the varsity team did not win, the junior varsity's crushing defeat last week is an excellent sign. Hopefully the junior varsity girls will continue their winning streak and the varsity team will learn from the previous game and defeat the T.C. Titans this Friday night.