

# OUT OF THE BLOCKS

The Official Newsletter for the Friends of Harvard Track

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## A NOTE FROM JASON SARETSKY

Dear Friends of Harvard Track & Field,

With the conclusion of the NCAA Championships in Eugene, I've gotten to look back on another season of noteworthy performances. Our student-athletes work hard all year to prepare for the championship season; this is a special time when their efforts come to fruition, and many have been recognized for their outstanding accomplishments.

**Gabrielle Thomas '19** (Florence, MA) was named USTFCCCA Northeast Women's Track Athlete of the Year, thanks to a dazzling season that included Heps victories in five events, not to mention winning the indoor NCAA 200m in a national-record time of 22.38, and finishing as the NCAA runner-up outdoors. Thomas was selected for the Bowerman Award Watch List in May, placing her in contention for the highest accolade in American collegiate track and field. Her event group coach, **Kebba Tolbert**, was honored as the USTFCCCA Northeast Women's Assistant Coach of the Year. This year, his athletes set Harvard all-time bests in the 100m, 200m, triple jump, and 100m hurdles, and scored 101 of the women's team's 114 points at Outdoor Heps.

Thomas, a returning captain, was among the six rising seniors elected to lead the team for the 2018-2019 school year, along with **Malia Ellington '19** (Davidson, NC), **Ngozi Musa '19** (Seattle, WA), **Ian West '19** (Wilson, NC), **Myles Marshall '19** (Kingwood, TX), and **Taylor Brunskole '19** (Fayetteville, GA). Their acceptance speeches at the end-of-season banquet followed the remarks by outgoing captain **Jay Hebert '18** (Ticonderoga, NY). Hebert spoke on behalf of the entire senior class about the growth and opportunities they had seen together and the gratitude he had for the program that made those experiences possible. The 16 seniors in the class of 2018 were celebrated and welcomed into the ranks of the Friends of Harvard Track. Captain **Marlee Sabatino '18** (Hillsborough, NJ) was not able



*Marlee Sabatino '18 was presented with the Arthur L. Boland Award at the 2018 Senior Letterwinners' Dinner (courtesy Brian Panoff '98).*

to attend the banquet that day as she was doing research in Colombia as part of her Med School program (she'll begin full-time at Rutgers this Fall); luckily, she was present at the annual Senior Letterwinners' Dinner on May 24 to accept the **Arthur L. Boland Award**, presented each year to an outstanding senior athlete who will pursue a career in medicine.

The very same weekend saw 13 Harvard student-athletes competing at the NCAA East Preliminary meet in Tampa, Florida. Thomas finished second in the 100m (10.99, wind-aided) and first in the 200m (22.42) to qualify for the NCAA Championships in Eugene, Oregon; she

was joined by her teammate **Simi Fajemisin '20** (Oxford, UK), whose mark of 42'4" in the triple jump qualified her for her first trip to Hayward Field.

The determination of our student-athletes is only rivaled by the generosity of our alums and Friends. The support of the Friends group enables us to travel to out-of-region meets, funds the Houston spring break trip (a much-needed respite from the Boston snow), and generally makes it possible to provide the best student-athlete experience in the country. This year alone, we have taken large groups to competitions at Texas Tech (20 student-athletes), Wake Forest (60), Texas Relays (40), Raleigh Relays (10), and Kansas Relays (80), along with the 65 who traveled to Houston for our annual spring break trip.

Nowhere else does a university provide such outstanding academic possibilities alongside national-level athletics. I offer my sincerest thanks to the Friends for supporting that mission and encourage you to continue giving your time and resources as you are able. If you have yet to make a gift during this fiscal year, there is still time! We are hoping to meet this year's fundraising goal by the June 30 deadline and are especially hoping for our alumnae to make donations that will count towards the Harvard-Radcliffe Foundation for Women's Athletics matching challenge.

With your support and the right vision, we are making sure our storied program provides an even better experience for future generations. As those who follow us on social media may be aware, Gordon Track is being resurfaced this summer, and we are looking forward to its completion next fall. The 2018-2019 season will be highlighted by Indoor Heps on February 23-24, 2019, which we will host in our new facility. I look forward to sharing with all of you the triumphs that will take place on our brand-new track next year, and in all the years to come.

Go Crimson!

Jason Saretsky

William W. "Bill" McCurdy Director of Track and Field/Cross Country



*Harvard track & field Class of 2018 at the Senior Letterwinners' Dinner (courtesy Brian Panoff '98).*

## A NOTE FROM OUR FRIENDS CHAIRS

Greetings from the Friends of Harvard Track (FoHT) Executive Committee!

On the heels of our last newsletter from only a month ago, we elected to treat our faithful readers to one more newsletter before the end of the fiscal year!

We are very close to reaching our FY18 fundraising goal of \$375,000, and thanks in part to TWO matching gift challenges offered by generous donors in late May (one for \$15,000 and another for \$50,000), we believe we can surpass the goal. We would have not been able to do it without the large number of generous alumni and parents who donated in support of the men's and women's programs this year.

The FoHT social calendar finished up the year with two special events. On May 26, the FoHT hosted a Spring mini-reunion for those alumni who were in Cambridge for their own class reunions. On June 13, the Sabharwal Family hosted Coach Jason Saretsky and several local alumni at their home in Washington, D.C., for an enjoyable evening gathering. For the upcoming year, we welcome any alumni or parents who may want to organize or host FoHT social events in their areas of the country. If you are interested, please let us know!

Looking ahead to 2019, planning is already underway for a FoHT social event on the weekend of February 23-24 when Harvard hosts the indoor Heps. New volunteers are always welcome to join us in organizing the event! Stay tuned for additional details to be announced next Fall. In addition, just under a year from now, a select group of student-athletes and the coaching staff will travel to England for the 47th meeting of Harvard-Yale vs. Oxford-Cambridge, continuing the historic transatlantic series that will turn 125 years old.

We thank you for your continued generosity and support of the FoHT. Best wishes for a happy and healthy summer to all!

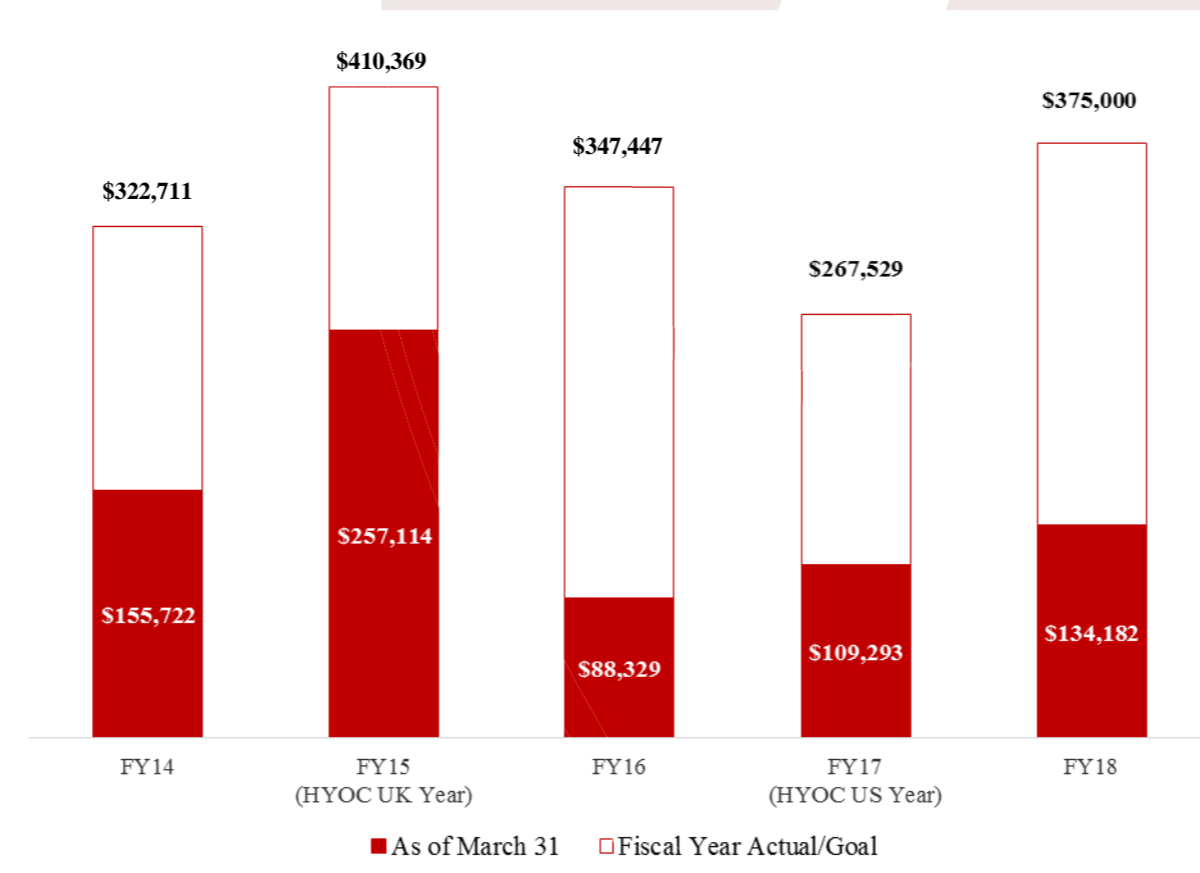
Joe Ciollo '99 and Evan Favermann Eisert '09

Co-Chairs, Friends of Harvard Track



*Coach Jason Saretsky and family with Bobby Clayton '73, Izabella Sabharwal '21, and Gabrielle Sabharwal P'21 at the DC FoHT event hosted by the Sabharwals.*

### Friends of Harvard Track Annual Contributions (As of 3/31/18)



## STUDENT-ATHLETE PROFILE

### ANNIKA GOMPERS '18

Hometown: Newton, MA

High School: Gann Academy

Event: Distance

Concentration: Integrative Biology

I came into Harvard with a lot of expectations for my collegiate running career. Coming from a high school without a track team, I was so excited to join a group of women that would make my running more enjoyable and more successful. Neither of these happened immediately. I struggled with a series of injuries that kept me out for months at a time, and prevented me from racing the entirety of my sophomore and junior years. The challenge of reconciling the diverse approaches to running existent within our team and coaches also became evident. But I didn't give up, and neither did my teammates. My senior year at Harvard has been vastly more successful; I've fulfilled several goals I have had since starting college, such as running in a relay for the first time and competing at the Ivy League Heptagonal Championships. I've also accomplished things with this team that were not outright goals—at least not anticipated ones—such as coming together as a team and making lifelong friends and memories.

Many teammates and coaches have lauded me for my perseverance over the past four years, in the face of persistent physical and emotional struggles. But the truth is that this tenacity is as much a quality that I have brought to my collegiate running experience as it is a quality cultivated by this experience itself. Every grueling bike workout and every tough conversation with teammates has both required and built tenacity. This year, things have finally come together, and it has been an incredibly validating and rewarding experience. I am grateful to my coaches for working with me to find creative approaches to training that allow me to stay

healthy, and I'm grateful to my teammates for committing ourselves to creating a team culture that is positive for everyone. What I think is important is that these successes have validated not blind perseverance, but a commitment to relentless creativity. I've learned to not just complacently persevere (paradoxical as that may seem), but persist in creative, optimistic yet critical thinking, which I've discovered is the only effective solution to persistent challenges. This year, I have finally felt a part of the sort of team that my high school self imagined; I love working out on the track with my teammates, full of laughs and words of encouragement and grit, and I love seeing this work translate to races. I am all the more grateful knowing how much work has gone in to getting to this place, and there's not a day that I run with a teammate by my side that I take for granted. Though my experience running at Harvard has not been what I had anticipated, I am so thankful for the friends, memories, and lessons that it has been a privilege to gain.



**STAY CONNECTED,  
FOLLOW THE TEAM!**



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



## STUDENT-ATHLETE PROFILE

### JONAS ARANDA '18

Hometown: Perth, Western Australia

High School: Aquinas College

Event: Middle Distance

Concentration: Applied Mathematics

As I sat in Annenberg with a stack of 8 pancakes drenched in syrup, I remember vividly the look of shock on my teammate's face when he realized that coach was standing right behind me. Pancakes were not the only thing that I had to have less of during my four years as a member of the Harvard Track and Field team. There were less nights out, as well as 3-4 less hours that I could put towards my studies. However, none of this swayed my decision to be any less committed to the program because this was my passion. For a sport like track, there has to be an internal drive to better one's self and to compete for not only yourself, but for your fellow teammates.



Running track for Harvard has been the greatest decision that I have ever made. In its simplest essence, you are competing to see who can run laps the fastest, but I have learnt that track extends way outside the confines of the lane you run in. Track was my metaphor for life; it taught me how to be a competitor and have confidence in what I do, it taught me how to manage my time and above all, it taught me what it means to be a part of a team and to be a good teammate. For me, the defining moment that showed me why this team meant so much to me was when I felt a greater joy becoming Ivy League Champion in the 4x800m with three of my training partners than any individual victory that I have had in my running career. We shared in each other's successes, and we felt each other's pain through losses.

Saying you are a varsity athlete from Harvard no doubt goes a long way, because it is known how difficult the balance between sport and a rigorous academic load is. What makes this experience so special is that you get the best of both worlds;

you get to obtain one of the best educations in the world while simultaneously competing for a top NCAA program. The meaningful relationships you form with your teammates and your coach are undeniably stronger than any chemical bond you learn about in chemistry class. Ultimately, you see them every day, travel with them to meets, and in some cases even live with them. The support network available is a testament to the men's track program. I remember when I first made the move to Harvard from Australia, the team was the reason that I was able to adjust so well to campus life. For me personally, what has allowed me to get through four years of such a mentally and physically intense sport was not only my enjoyment of it, but also the people around me.

Harvard Track and Field has given me the incredible opportunity to travel around America and internationally as well. I will be forever grateful for an experience that very few get to be a part of, and I hope that one day I will be able to give back to a program that gave so much to me.



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Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



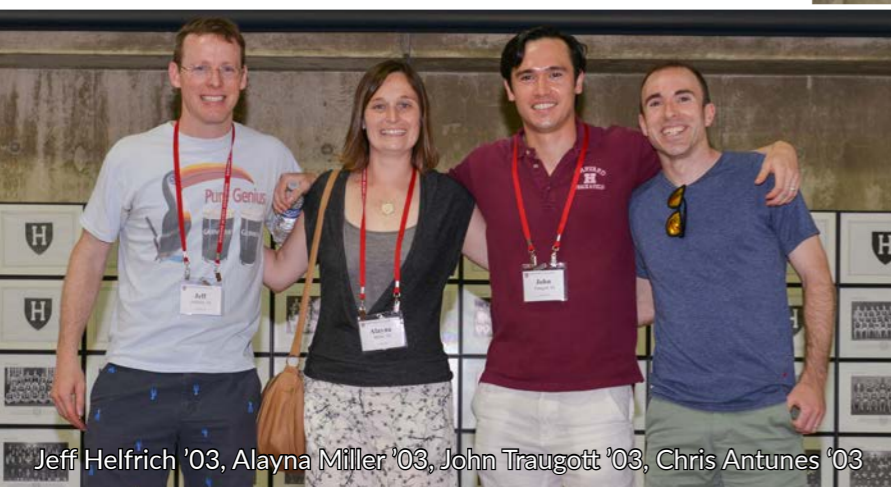
Stewart Richardson '13, Sean Pohorence '13,  
Jakob Lindaas '13, Jeff Homer '13



Bev Antunes, Chris Antunes '03, Claire Traugott, John Traugott '03,  
Ashley Furst '03, Jeff Helfrich '03, Alayna Miller '03



Alysha Johnson '14, Chelsea Gilbert '13,  
Shepherd Tate, Lauren Walker Tate '08



Jeff Helfrich '03, Alayna Miller '03, John Traugott '03, Chris Antunes '03



From center: Al Quintero '83, Karen Gray Beaudry '83



Jill Sylvester '08, Alysha Johnson '14, Jack Brady '10, Molly  
Boyle Brady '08, Evan Favermann Eisert '09, Chelsea Gilbert '13,  
Edward Brucker '13, Matt Polega '13, Coach Darcy Wilson

# HARVARD TRACK AND FIELD MINI-REUNION

MAY 26, 2018 | ALBERT H. GORDON '23 TRACK

*Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98*



Nico Weiler '12-13, Mary Hirst '13



Jonathan Wofsy '08, Lauren Walker Tate '08, Erika Geihe Stanzl '08,  
Eliza Gardiner Stensland '08, Alana Van Loenen '08, Danielle Mirabal '08,  
Chris Green '08, Clara Blattler '08, Molly Boyle Brady '08, Jill Sylvester '08



Ellenor Brown '08, Alana Van Loenen '08,  
Evan Favermann Eisert '09, Nicky Grant '02