

HARVARD-RADCLIFFE FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN'S ATHLETICS PRIZE



MAYA MIKLOS

FRANCIS H. BURR '09 SCHOLARSHIP

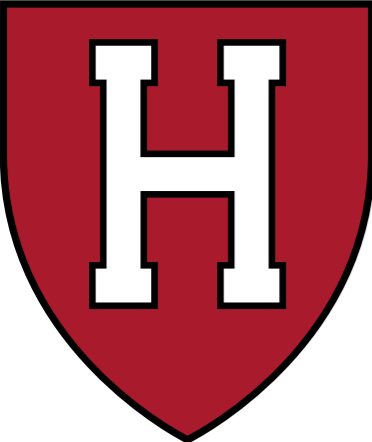


ZOE HUGHES

WILLIAM J. BINGHAM '16 AWARD



KIERAN TUNTIVATE



OUT OF THE BLOCKS

The Official Newsletter for the Friends of Harvard Track

OUT OF THE BLOCKS

The Official Newsletter for the Friends of Harvard Track | June 2020

Dear Friends of Harvard Track,

The 2019-20 academic year was unlike any year we have ever experienced. With our graduating seniors missing their spring season, we made the decision to dedicate this Newsletter to them so their voices could be heard and their stories could be shared. Many of them took us up on our offer to have a Senior Perspective they wrote published here in our final newsletter for this academic year. I'm incredibly proud of all that this senior class accomplished and achieved.

The women's class will go down as one of the best in Harvard's Track & Field/XC history. With three Heps Championships, never finishing lower than second at a track and field Heps, and consistently having national qualifiers, they produced outstanding results both athletically and academically.

The men's class will be remembered for returning Harvard's Track & Field/XC to contention for Heps Championships across all three seasons, creating a consistent national presence in cross country and achieving a #1 team GPA national ranking. Individually, the men's and women's programs also racked up awards and recognition including winning three awards at the recent [Senior Letterwinners' Dinner](#) hosted by the Harvard Varsity Club.

Over the past few weeks, I've been busier than ever. I fought vigorously to help restore the men's Track and Field/XC team at Brown and was relieved when they announced the reversal of the earlier decision and restored the program. And I've also been spending a lot of time supporting many of our student-athletes who are angry, upset, frustrated, and fed up with the inequality that exists in this country. Our entire coaching staff has been working hard to be there for our student-athletes, despite being apart. It has been quite a few weeks!

Before we get to their Senior Perspectives, I wanted to take a moment to thank the 130+ donors who have already given to our program for this fiscal year, which ends on June 30. For those who have yet to give, I understand there are many worthy charities and organizations to support. I'm hoping you will also add the Friends of Harvard Track to your list before our books close at the end of this month. The situation at Brown served as a reminder to me that I should never take anything for granted.

Thank you for your continued interest and support of our program.

Stay safe and Go Crimson,

Jason Saretsky
The William W. "Bill" McCurdy Director of Track and Field/Cross Country
Harvard University

FOLLOW THE TEAM!



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WILL BATTERSHILL '20

Hometown: Devon, UK

High School: Ivybridge Community College

Concentration: Economics

Event: Distance

I took many memorable classes throughout my four years at Harvard, but Harvard Track and Field taught me the most about myself as an athlete and person and was the most enjoyable aspect of my Harvard experience.

The key athletic lesson came in my junior outdoor season. Coming into the season I was doing the best training of my life with consistent 70+ mile weeks and believed that this would guarantee improvement. Purely ticking off the training log was, in my mind, the way to a breakthrough in the steeple and some fast 5000s. I was the fittest I'd ever been, yet two attempts at a fast 5000m ended in spectacular last km fades.

Soon after, an IT band flare up left me almost unable to run at training pace. The problem went from days to weeks and I fell short of my goal of becoming Heps champion two weeks later, finishing 6th in the steeplechase. It was at this point in the season that I began to doubt myself. The consistency of my training had evaporated and I felt far from my end of season goals. I had a meeting with Coach Gibby where one of the possibilities discussed was ending the season, but we decided on a radically altered training plan of a combination of fast track sessions and cross training.

From then on, while unsure if it would work, I just relaxed about being so far removed from the original training plan. With no training numbers to go off, I went into Regionals with no expectations. Rather than being a negative thing, this meant I had no mental boundaries. I qualified to nationals with fourth in my heat and a personal best. At Nationals I missed the final but placed 17th.

The nonlinearity of that season gave me an opportunity to run the final races with an open mind, unrestricted by the mental projections derived from training splits. It taught me that, often, if you focus on what you think you can do, you limit yourself by implicitly establishing what you believe is beyond reach.

This lesson helped me in what were to be my final two seasons at Harvard. During cross country in the Autumn I was able to get the most out of myself in every race with the ability to work off a 'plan B'. During indoors this year I approached races with a totally open mind and trusted my body to do what it could do unhindered by mental limitations. At the Heps indoor meet I finished second in the 3000 and DMR. I am honoured to have contributed to what were historic seasons for the men's cross country and track teams. I felt that personally everything came together nicely in these final two seasons and I had the most fun that I've ever had in this sport.

The global pandemic prematurely ended the seniors' time at Harvard. I remember little of the madness of those few weeks, but I will always remember the final track team meeting we had. It was a highly emotional time, with everyone sad to say goodbye and to have an enjoyable summer of training and racing taken away. What I remember most from the meeting, though, is a feeling of immense gratitude. The ideal ending had been snatched from us, but all I could think of were the countless moments, good and bad, which could never be taken away. I'm grateful to have had nearly four years with Harvard Track and Field, it was a laugh. The lessons about the sport, the memories and the friends I made are all things that I hope to keep forever.



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



CHARLIE DAVIS '20

Hometown: Manchester, MA

High School: Manchester

Concentration: Government

Event: Cross Country

Without my experience as a Harvard student-athlete, I would not be the person I am today. My time on the cross country and track teams at Harvard has given me dozens of lifelong friends, helped me to become a better leader, taught me how to best contribute to and build a team, and to work hard and stay positive even when things don't go as planned.

After I graduated high school, I knew I wanted to run for Harvard, but I also knew that it would be a long shot even to walk on. My first few weeks I was nervous that my training over the summer would not have been enough. I am grateful to Coach Saretsky for recognizing my potential and giving me a spot. Going into my sophomore year, I was excited to make a big jump after a year of consistent training and progress. Unfortunately, my sacrum, a bone on the bottom of the spine that I had barely heard of, had different plans. Over the summer, all of the miles ran resulted in a painful stress fracture that ended my cross country season before it began. The only thing more devastating than that injury was the fact this became a puzzling pattern: I fractured my right femur before junior cross country, and my left femur just as my senior season was getting off the ground. Any dedicated athlete knows the pain of being sidelined, and it ripped me apart every time I didn't get to toe the start line with my team.

However, I knew that I would only be more upset if I didn't do everything I could to help the program and my teammates even though I couldn't run. I cross trained before practice so I could help Coach Gibby at workouts, and I absorbed as much wisdom about training and team building as I could. I did my best to be there for all of my teammates in any way possible. Once we had come up with clear, collective goals, I tried to do everything in my power to help us focus on and achieve them. This is the attitude that I let guide my actions over the next three years—I made supporting the team and my teammates my priority no matter how my season may have been going. And, in this role, I developed into the person I am today.

Reflecting on my collegiate running career certainly brings up feelings

of disappointment about my personal running performances and trajectory, but this is overwhelmed by the all of the memories I made with my teammates and the intense feelings of pride after we saw our hard work pay off. I will never forget all of the the banter, team dinners, van rides, long runs, and amazing teammates I've had over four years.

I will be forever proud and honored that I was elected to be captain of the cross country team by my best friends as a junior and a senior, and even more proud of the fact that we turned a team that was dead last in the Ivy league when I was a freshman into one that became the Northeast Regional champions and the 15th best team in the entire NCAA when I was a senior. This transformation was not easy, and was the result of years of focus, dedication, and plain old hard work and thousands of miles run on the 1200 loop, the Charles River, and Minuteman.

The story of our team and of how we became who we are today is too long to describe, but I will never forget all of the blood, sweat, and tears laid down by me and my teammates—past and present—to get the Harvard cross country team to where it is today. I will always look back with pride and remember the extreme happiness and joy that came from striving towards and achieving common goals with my teammates. I know that I will live my life by the lessons I learned as a Harvard student-athlete, and I can't wait to watch future cross country teams build upon the legacy that the class of 2020 is leaving behind. Thank you to all the coaches, trainers, and teammates who made my experience unforgettable.



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



SIMI FAJEMISIN '20

Hometown: Oxford, UK

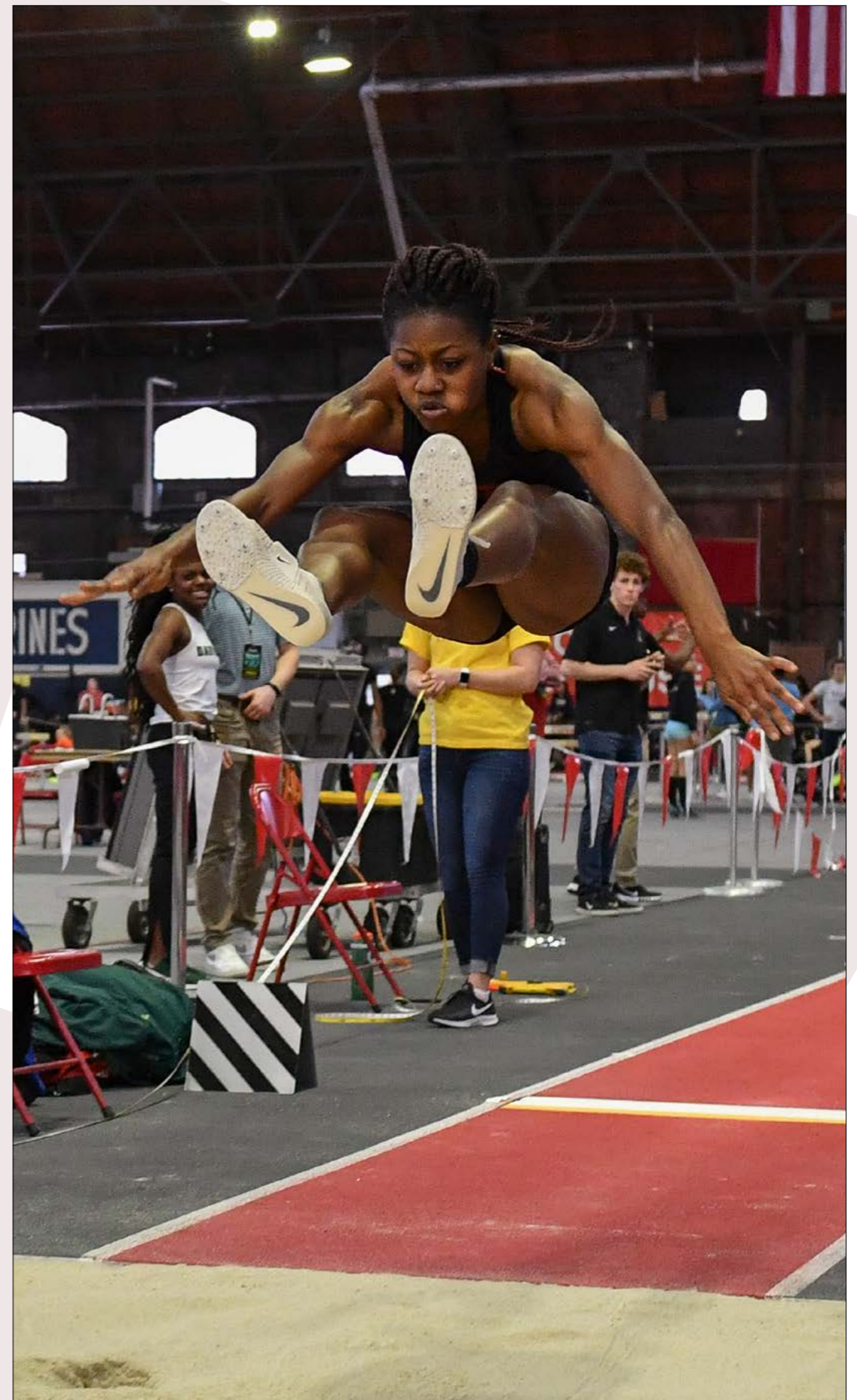
High School: Headington School

Concentration: History and Literature

Event: Jumps

At the start of my freshman year, I had very specific ideas about who I was and what I wanted to achieve. As an international student-athlete I had never been part of a cohesive track and field team and had no idea what that might entail. I saw myself as a long jumper, and I had specific distances in mind that I wanted to hit and competitions that I wanted to place at. These were how I anticipated measuring the success of my time on the women's track & field team. I can safely say that now, four years later, nothing has gone exactly according to that plan and for this I couldn't be more grateful. I took up a completely new event, grew to enjoy the process of improving, and learned that being part of a team means having the opportunity to learn from the skills, advice, and work ethic of the people around me.

But now with the perspective I have gained I keep imagining what I might have said to the Simi fresh out of high school, who was preparing to join this team four years ago. I would ask her to savor every moment, even those that seem insignificant: every hard work out, every early morning flight with people who will come to feel like family, and every meet whether or not you think it meets the narrow standards she has set herself of success. Make goals, but don't hold on to them too tightly. I don't think I know anyone whose college career has gone exactly the way they anticipated. Sometimes you'll do everything you can and still not make the goals you set yourself; sometimes it just takes time to realize that, instead, you have met different goals—goals that you couldn't even have imagined, let alone set, four years ago. Finally, know that measurable performances are only a small aspect of what will make your time on the team transformative. At the end of your time here, you won't measure success just by the times and distances that you hit, or the meets you have qualified and competed at. Instead, you'll measure it by the experience of training and competing alongside some of the most inspiring and talented individuals, and friends, that you have ever met; friends who will help you discover just how much you are capable of.



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



LIVIA GAUNTLETT '20

Hometown: Bath, UK

High School: Kingswood School

Concentration: Philosophy

Event: Hurdles

When I reflect upon my four years as a student-athlete at Harvard, the main theme that springs to mind is community; be it the Harvard, the athletics, or the Track and Field community. From the moment I first stepped onto campus during my official visit, this sense of community was overwhelming and has only become stronger over the past four years. I am extremely grateful to have been accepted into this community, and there is no doubt that my time at Harvard would not have been as memorable or as special without being a member of the athletics department.

The Harvard athletics community has provided me with the opportunity to make life-long friendships. It is no word of a lie that it is the people who make your Harvard experience what it is. I want to thank my teammates, the coaches, the training staff, the athletics administration, and, in particular, the members of Kebba Krew. It is something special when a group of people spends upwards of five hours a day for at least five days a week together and endures the physical and mental tests that sport entails. We experienced the highs and lows together. We picked each other up when we were down, and we held each other up when we celebrated. This comradery and community are a rare experience that I will cherish for years to come. The Track and Field teams are going from strength to strength, and I cannot wait to see them continue to make their mark on the national scene.

Track and Field has provided me with the chance to travel to many states and countries. One of my fondest memories is the Harvard-Yale-Oxford-Cambridge trip in the Summer of 2019. This unique opportunity brought two rivals together as one team to continue the legacy of the oldest transcontinental international track and field meet in the world. For me, it was a trip of many firsts, which came as a surprise to me as an English native. I was excited to show the team my home country, but this trip was so much more than a tour of where I grew up and a chance to compete at track meets. I got to see the cities and sites, which I had previously taken for granted, in a whole new light and race on a team with athletes I am usually running against. I explored the historical cities of Limerick, Oxford,



and Cambridge, which, when on your doorstep, it is easy to say, "I'll go there one day." And when you are surrounded by a team, for whom this was their first time in England, you realise all there is to offer only a short drive away. A definite highlight of the trip was the HYOC meet day, marking the 125th Anniversary of the rivalry. The sun was blazing, and the champagne and strawberries were flowing in true English style. I have never been, nor will I ever be again, involved in such an incredible sporting experience. This day was more than just a track meet, it was a chance to be a part of a long-standing tradition that upholds the true meaning of sportsmanship and companionship. And I loved sharing and comparing my experience of University in America with new English friends on the opposing team. This trip taught me the importance of exploring what is right in front of you and to continue to experience firsts. To tour your home country in a new light with a team of your closest friends is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and one I will never forget. For me, Harvard Track and Field means friendship, inclusion, and balancing hard work with fun, and HYOC was the epitome of this.

Being a member of the Track and Field team has taught me invaluable skills. It's true that some life lessons learnt on the sports field can't be taught elsewhere. Sport teaches you the importance of sacrifice, hard work, commitment, and the importance of failure in your pursuit of success. As my collegiate sporting career ends, my professional career begins. I am thankful for the lessons learned, the friendships made, and the place in this special community that I have gained. I'm not sure the next time I will experience the feelings felt as I stood on the start line, but I walk away from collegiate Track with the fondest memories and amazing friendships.



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



ZOE HUGHES '20

Hometown: Hornchurch, UK
High School: King's College School
Concentration: Neuroscience
Event: Multi-Events

A Thank You to My Team

My first HEPs my freshman year, I PR'ed in four out of five of my pentathlon events, breaking the pentathlon championship record and earning my spot at Indoor Nationals with a National top-16 ranking. I excitedly laid out my four-year plan from there. If I could get myself to Indoor Nationals during my first semester, Indoor Nationals being more selective than Outdoor, then I was on my way to eight All-American titles, following the lead of my former All-American teammates Autumnne Franklin, Jade Miller and Gabrielle Thomas.

That dream fell apart season by season, setback by setback. I could write a whole other piece about all of the injuries I've experienced in my collegiate career, but I want to use this time to express neither sorrow nor strength, but gratitude. Last weekend, competing in my beloved event the pentathlon for the first time in two years at the Ivy League Championships, I finished runner-up. I owe this personal victory, and all the feelings of triumph it brought me, to many.

Thank you to Nic Benitez in the training room for being an advocate early on in my college career and working with me as we continue to figure my body out. I struggle to keep you in the loop at times when I have so much going on at the track, in life and in my head. Sometimes I come to Dillon and I'm brusque about what contraption I want to use or where I want an ice bag tied. I thank you for sticking with me and for remaining high energy through the rollercoaster that my college career has been. It has been an honour having my knee taped, joints iced, and my questions answered by you. Thank you for holding my teammates together too as we chase after PRs and championship titles.

Thank you to my teammates, former and current, for being there to pick me up after all the low's of my career, for being there to celebrate the high's with and for always supporting me in my pursuit of higher

high's because more highs are coming. You are the best teammates I could have wished for. Your victories have brought me joy these past four years and will continue to. While I have been missing from the battle more times than I would have liked, fighting for championship titles by your sides has been a sincere pleasure.

The final thank you is dedicated to my Coach, Kebba Tolbert, for being by my side these last four years. Our relationship hasn't been without its trials—we've had some heated moments, but I mean it when I say I could not have imagined having anyone else coach me these last four years. Thank you for investing so much into me. I'm grateful for every cold Sunday evening when you've joined me on the runway, every late night spent at the track trying to direct children away from running into the path of my javelin, every rep watched, every jump studied, every throw analysed. For the multiple times we've had to pick up from where a setback left me and rebuild momentum, for sticking with me through the personal decisions I've made as an athlete. It's been a privilege being a member of your Krew.

Finishing second in the pentathlon last weekend, I found new meaning in the words of my All-American, former teammate Autumnne Franklin. *"We are an individualised sport, but my team makes all the difference."*



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



KARINA JOINER '20

Hometown: Woodbury, MN

High School: East Ridge

Concentration: Sociology

Event: Hurdles

As a member of Harvard Track and Field I learned a lot over the past four years. Although my time on the team did not end the way we wanted it to, there were a lot of things that I am thankful for being a part of the team. The number one greatest thing I have gained from being a part of Harvard T&F was the friendships I made from my teammates. I have truly made lifelong best friends from being on the team. These girls have seen me at my very best and at my lowest points and they helped me through every pivotal moment in my life for the past four years. It meant everything to me to be able to grow with these girls and see us grow into the matured team that we became my senior year. I am a very strong-willed person and that created a lot of clashing with the coaches in my time at Harvard, although this can be troublesome at the time, Coach Tolbert still helped me to become an elite athlete and was always willing to help me reach my goals. Being a Harvard student athlete is a very unique experience and I am sure it is unlike any other university program. Having to balance school and athletics was something that was much different from other universities and helped me to realize how important that balance is as well as time management and organization. The student athletes I had the pleasure of befriending in my time here were the epitome of excellence as they truly cared deeply about both being a student as well as being committed to being an elite athlete. However, I believe that the university could do a better job at breeding the desire to be at a national level because I feel that this drive mainly comes from the athletes themselves rather than from the program. This is undoubtedly a result of being at one of the most elite academic universities in the world and therefore understandable.

The support athletes have from each other and the level of commitment they show to support each other's competitions is something very special and personal and an aspect of being a Harvard athlete that I will truly miss. One of my favorite moments of being a part of Harvard T&F was when we had the conference championship at home and athletes from different sports came out to support our team. Having a full crowd at home and hearing your friends and family cheering for

you on the home straight away is an experience I will always value and look back on. Overall however, I will look back at my time as a student athlete at Harvard as one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Not only did I learn the importance of dedication and commitment, I also gained friends that I will carry with me through the next steps in my life. I have felt an immense amount of support from the athletics department and my teammates as we continue to stay positive and stay a family throughout these tough times. I cannot wait to be a part of the alumni organizations within the athletic department and be able to come back and support my friends, teammates, and family for life in sports across the board at Harvard.



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98

MARTHA KEBEH '20

Hometown: Worcester, MA

High School: Worcester Academy

Concentration: Molecular and Cellular Biology

Event: Throws

Many people, even if unable to name more than three of its events, would say that track and field is not a team sport. To some degree, they're right; it certainly doesn't have to be one. Unless you're running in a relay, the only person who can achieve whatever goal you've set up for yourself on the day you step into the ring, up to the starting line, or onto the runway is yourself. The beat of silence after the official calls your name, prompting you to step forward, is a lonely moment, indeed. But it's not a long one, not when you're part of a program that combines the virtues of what can be an individual sport with the support and resources that come with being part of a team. Through my time with Harvard Track and Field, I've experienced countless instances of that moment of silence being shattered: as I apply chalk to my implement during a competition, or when I, myself, start cheering as I watch a teammate lean back in preparation for another approach. In these moments, with teammates and coaches calling upon you, trying their utmost to speak your success into existence, it's hard to think of track and field as an individual sport, and on days like HEPS (the Ivy League's track and field championship meet), it's nearly impossible.

It's funny to think how little consideration I gave to team dynamics when I decided to walk on to the team during my first semester at Harvard. Maybe my limited experiences with my high school's track and field team had left me unaware of what a critical role my teammates would play in how I experienced being a part of the program, or maybe I just wasn't worried about how my relationships with teammates would form, so I didn't think about it. I was just excited for a chance to extend my athletic career and improve my performances. Three years later, I realize that I found much more than I had been looking for.

This sport is unique because of the individual nature of its competitions; this much is true. I have teammates who probably still have no idea how I train, and vice versa, and teammates whom I've never competed alongside. But we've shared a space that, to us, represents one thing that we consistently look to achieve, regardless of event group, year, or injury status: progress. In the time it takes to get from point A to

point B, we watch one another travel in many directions, some of them counterintuitive.

While we don't usually share a path from start to finish, we may, here and there, travel some distance together, and retain the privilege of witnessing one another's growth and recovery from the inevitable setbacks we endure, the narrow losses, and missed opportunities. Even, and maybe especially when, you don't fully understand the process of another's journey, being in its presence is a humbling and invaluable experience that I credit with serving as the foundation of the relationship between my teammates and me. And at a place like Harvard, where stumbles and losses are so quickly glossed over or concealed, not having the option to do so is actually quite freeing. On the track, there's no hiding. Instead, I've had to embrace and learn from both failures and successes with the support of my teammates and coaches and I've become a better person for it. Thank you, Harvard Track and Field and Harvard Athletics, for what you've brought to my Harvard journey.



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



KAEO KRUSE '20

Hometown: Kalaheo, HI

High School: KS Kapalama

Concentration: Human Evolutionary Biology

Event: Distance

When looking back on my time with the Harvard XC/Track & Field team, I can't help but smile when recalling all the amazing memories I've had the privilege to make. Some of these memories include the achievements you usually hear about in newsletters such as when our men's and women's Cross-Country teams both won the Northeast regional in a dominant fashion or this past weekend when our men's Track & Field team scored the most points we ever have at a HEPS since 1985. However, as rewarding as these experiences were, what I will cherish most from my time in Cambridge are the experiences that made up the time between these highlights as well as the lessons that I learned along the way.

Success in our sport is largely defined by our performances at meets and, thus, our careers as athletes are lived through these relatively small moments in time. However, in reality, what makes Cross-Country and Track & Field so special are the moments that lead to these performances in the first place. Most people don't get to see the countless miles put in along the Charles River or the post-workout cross-training sessions. They won't see the heartbreak of getting injured and the courage it takes to come back even stronger, the satisfaction of working with your teammates to pursue something bigger than yourself, and the laughter and joy that comes with doing so. However, these are the moments that have undoubtedly helped me to become not only a better athlete, but a better person.

When I first arrived at Harvard, I, along with most incoming first-year students, thought that I had everything figured out. I knew that things were not going to come easy, but, with hard work, I believed that things were going to fall into place the way that I expected. Given my fairly linear progression in high school, I thought that if I just continued with a solid work ethic then I would eventually reach my goal of becoming a multiple-time All-American by the time I graduated. Little did I know, there was a crazy ride that laid ahead of me. Over the next 3.5 years, I battled with multiple injuries for the first time in my sporting career, struggled with competing against a vastly more competitive field of

athletes, and had to learn how to manage not living up to my own lofty expectations.

Although there were definitely some considerably rough times—it is difficult to put into words the feeling you get when you sit on a stationary bike while watching your teammates leave to warm up for a workout without you—I learned many valuable lessons about myself along the way that I would not have encountered otherwise. I learned that progression does not have a timeline or a set course. I learned to truly focus on the process and appreciate every opportunity for what it is worth. I learned that I run to push my limits and become the best version of myself. However, most of all, I learned that I would not have been able to learn any these things without the help of my teammates.

My teammates have been with me through all the highs and lows and I would not have wanted it any other way. From team game nights to teasing each other on maintenance runs to late dinners in Dunster to suffering with each other in workouts, these are the moments I will most fondly remember many years after I receive my diploma. Although I'm unsure about how my athletic career will turn out in the end, I can be sure that my best friends will be there with me every step of the way.



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



JACOB MCLENNAN '20

Hometown: Toronto, Ontario, Canada

High School: Bishop Allen

Concentration: Neuroscience

Event: Sprints/Hurdles

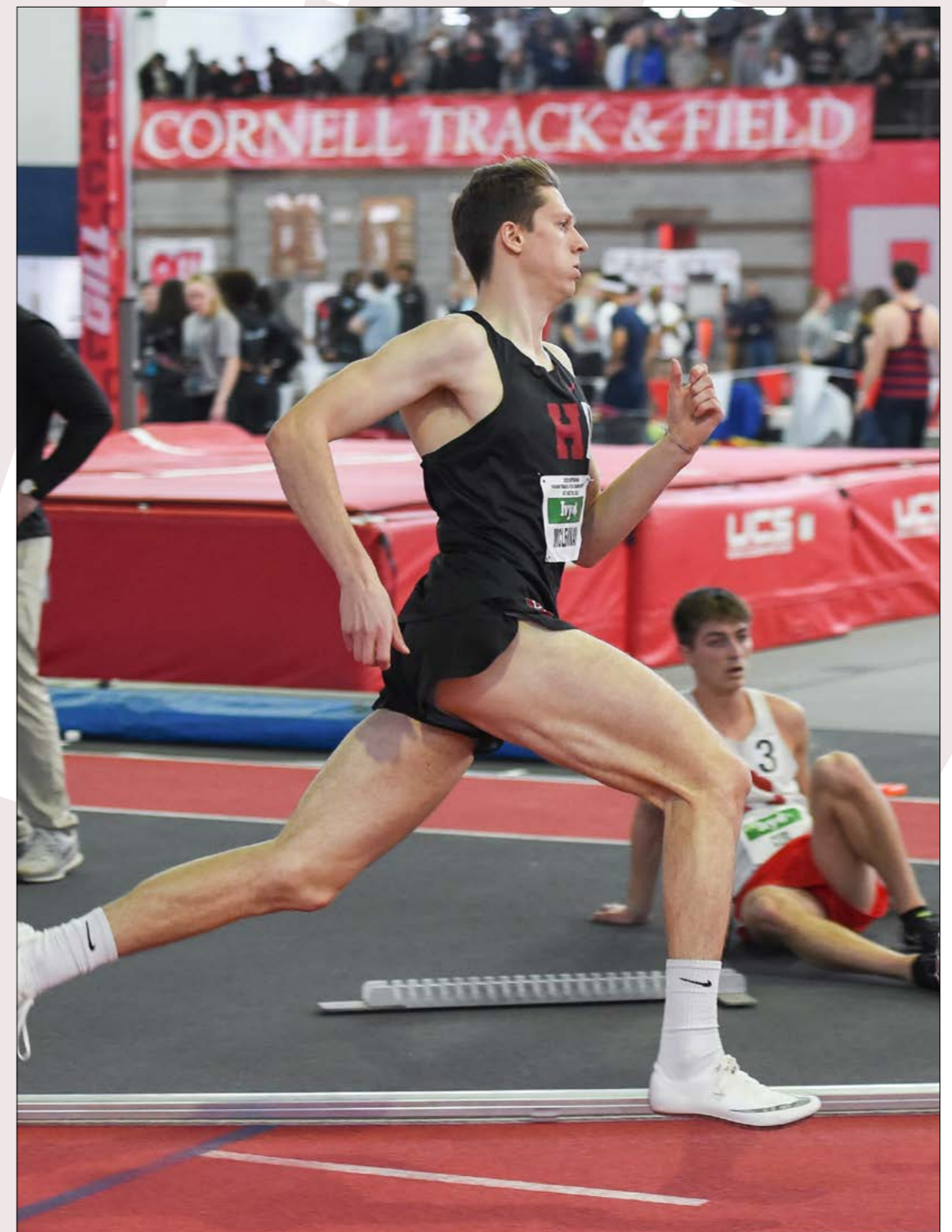
When I was first asked to write a senior perspective, I wasn't sure what to say. With only two full collegiate seasons under my belt, my track career at Harvard felt incomplete. Not only was I forced to miss out on my final outdoor season due to COVID-19 like so many others, but a series of injuries kept me out of competition my sophomore year, as well. On the surface, these setbacks felt unfair—like I had been cheated from an opportunity that I had worked so many years to earn. But, looking beneath those initial emotions, I now realize that the hurdles in my track career (no pun intended) are what truly facilitated my personal and athletic growth during my four years at Harvard.

As a first-year, I was eager to succeed and earn my spot as a member of the Harvard Track and Field program. I arrived with an agenda of individual accolades that I was motivated to achieve, including Ivy League champion and NCAA qualifier. I was determined and ready to do whatever it took to reach my goals. I was the stereotypical "hardo." Unfortunately, this first year at Harvard did not turn out how I had anticipated: I did not win an Ivy League championship, I did not qualify for NCAAs, and I had a stress fracture going into the summer. In focusing all of my time on these measurable goals, I felt that I had failed.

At that point, with no way to salvage my first season, I only worried about one thing: coming back even stronger next year. However, injury after injury sophomore year ultimately ended my season. I was frustrated, but this time for a different reason. Instead of concerning myself with my personal agenda, I now worried that with only two years left in college, I had not been cherishing my time as a Harvard athlete. As a result, during my junior year, I spent more time simply enjoying practices with my teammates and coaches. For the first time, I was just happy to be at the track. That season, I was not an Ivy League champion and I did not qualify for NCAAs, but I finished the school year grateful that I was even able to compete.

Although my final season was cut short, I will forever appreciate the

opportunity to have been a member of the Harvard Track and Field program. I am grateful for my teammates, who always knew how to make me laugh even when the 200m repeat workout was about to get the best of me. I am thankful for my coaches who always went above and beyond to check in on me and demonstrate their care for my well-being outside of the track. I am proud that I can leave Harvard as a member of this supportive community, and I look forward to cheering on HUTF in the years to come.



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



GILLIAN MEEKS '20

Hometown: Palo Alto, CA

High School: Gunn

Concentration: Human Evolutionary Biology

Event: Distance

Counting Up

When people are faced with difficult tasks they tend to fixate on how far they have left to go instead of how far they have come—only two more hours left in the work day, only three more pages of the essay left to write, only two more weeks left of the semester...rarely do people approach difficult tasks by “counting up” as they go. My experience competing in collegiate distance running has shown me the importance of learning to count up—not just in a race, but, as cliché as it may sound, also in life.

My coach of the past three years, Coach Gibby, told me before my daunting first track 10k to count up the laps in my head as I completed them, and not to look at the lap counter showing how many laps I had left to run. At first, I found this tactic counterintuitive to everything I knew. I always approached hard tasks by fixating on the finish, thinking about each moment, each “lap”, in terms of proximity to the real or metaphorical “finish line.” It felt strange at first to mentally reward myself for each lap, then each mile, completed in the 25-lap race, but I soon realized that if you approach a 25-lap race by looking at how far you have to go you’ll easily get discouraged and never run your best. The only way to maximize your performance in such a long race is by focusing on the lap you are currently running and rewarding yourself with a mental “pat on the back” for every lap you run on goal pace. If you hit a lap off pace, focus on getting back on pace just for the next lap instead of thinking about how many more laps you have left to run at a pace that feels increasingly difficult. By no means have I become an expert in this “counting up” strategy, but, as I learned to use this strategy, my race performances greatly improved, and hard workouts that once seemed impossible to complete became possible. I actually even began approaching my whole sport and my whole life by “counting up,” rewarding myself for each step of progress accomplished—not just waiting until I reached the finish line.

During my first year at Harvard, there was a culture on the team of never celebrating the small improvements for fear of dreaded

complacency. A small personal best time wasn’t good enough. A good tactical race shouldn’t be celebrated if the time was not national caliber. Celebration and even an inner sense of pride were to be quashed until you accomplished each and every one of your goals in the sport. I now realize that instead of fearing complacency, extremely motivated student-athletes, like the teammates I have had these past four years, should instead fear crossing their final finish line with the realization they never let themselves be happy along the way. There is always a lot of talk in competitive sports’ spheres about “enjoying the process.” Normally, athletes understand that to mean enjoying the hard, grueling training days that far outnumber the competition opportunities. While I do think that’s true, I believe “enjoying the process” also has to mean rewarding yourself for small steps forward—giving yourself a “pat on the back” for one more lap run on goal pace. I remember Coach Gibby reading my training log about a year ago and chuckling at how relentlessly positive my log comments were after all my races. I realize now that learning to count up my laps in a 10k race switched my perspective on my sport. I learned to find something good about each race and each workout, no matter how objectively bad they were. I learned not to focus on how far I was from reaching my goals, but instead to just focus on the next step right in front of me.

I was in the best shape of my life headed into this spring’s outdoor track season. If I had not enjoyed all the small steps forward that I had taken throughout my Harvard career, if I had with-held celebration until I accomplished my ultimate goals, the abrupt end of my Harvard running career at the end of March would have been absolutely crushing. Instead, I get to remember how undeniably proud I felt after scoring in my last races as a Harvard athlete this past indoor Heps. I am so glad I learned to let myself celebrate the little victories along the way and not just wait until I ran the perfect race.



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



ELIZA REGO '20

Hometown: Warren, RI
High School: La Salle Academy
Concentration: Psychology
Event: Middle Distance

One of the best memories that I have from being on this team for the past four years is the 2019 Cross Country North East Regional Championships. This was the first meet ever that both Harvard's Women's and Men's team qualified for the Cross-Country National Championships. It was a truly unforgettable day filled with emotion and excitement, yet I didn't race.

The night before the race two teammates and I decided to embark on the seven-hour journey from Harvard to Buffalo, NY, to cheer on our fellow teammates. We stopped around the halfway mark, slept at a Super 8, then woke up at the crack of dawn to finish the drive. We wanted to ensure that we were at the course well before the gun went off.

Though I wasn't on the line with my teammates, I couldn't help but feel an immense rush of emotions throughout the morning. The nerves sitting in your gut before the race; the excited rush during the race while still trying to remain calm, cool and collected; and the pure elation once everyone had finished, running arguably their best races of the season. Both teams won the race and qualified for nationals, but the best part of the day was knowing that even though everyone on the team was not in Buffalo, NY, we all felt the exact same emotions. On this team we do practically everything together—we train together, we eat together, and we celebrate each other's accomplishments together.

This team and the relationships I have formed has been an integral part of my time at Harvard. Throughout my four years, teammates became best friends, became roommates, became I seriously don't know how I would function without them. My teammates have helped me through some of the toughest points of my life and have celebrated some of the highest achievements in my life. I will miss this team and all that comes with it; the daily banter, the team dinners, even the weekly paced runs. Thank you, teammates, coaches, and trainers, for all of the support over the past four years. I have gained a new family and for this I am forever grateful for Harvard's Cross Country and Track teams.



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



BROOKE STARN '20

Hometown: Danville, CA

High School: Monte Vista

Concentration: Human Evolutionary Biology

Event: Distance

Anybody have a map?

Aside from a question I've probably asked every time we run at the Fells, the title of the opening number to my favorite, hit Broadway musical is emblematic of a critical life lesson Harvard Track and Field taught me.

I arrived on campus my first year with a clear path in mind. I'd completed my detailed, step by step plan on how to have a successful high school track/cross country career, with no box left unchecked. I assumed college would progress the same way, but I was quick to discover I was lost. I went from a top tier recruit to an almost last place finish at Ivy League Heps Cross Country Championships my first year. My sophomore year I was determined to turn things around, to get back on the path I had envisioned when I arrived at Harvard. Modest improvements followed, but I had still achieved roughly zero of my performance goals.

The following summer, I was in Denmark with Harvard Study Abroad Scandinavia. I spent a lot of time just running along the beautiful trails bordering the Kattegat Sea. Back on campus the following fall, all I wanted out of running was to enjoy the opportunity to do what I love every day with my best friends and to try to take small steps forward in the process. Little did I know, this was me finally embracing what my coaches had been telling me for years.

I was present. Being present is a necessary skill for a distance runner, as responding to a pace change in the middle of a 3k, knowing you still have a lot of hard running left to do, requires almost an ignorance of the future. Yet I was never really a go-with-the-flow type person, I was always much more of a go-with-the-plan person, and by plan I meant plan A. But being present allowed me to accept plan B and to "ride the wave," as Coach Kathy told us before 2019 NCAA XC Regionals. This newfound presence was put to the ultimate test in that exact regionals race. Despite having practiced in the wet grass and snow

the week before in an attempt to replicate the well-known treachery of the regional XC meet in Buffalo, under 48 hours before the meet, the race was moved to the roads. Road racing is very different than cross country racing. Instead of being thrown off by the change of plans, my teammates and I rolled with the changes and were rewarded with Harvard's first Northeast XC Championship.

Aside from leading to good races and workouts, being present allowed me to stop looking for the map and start appreciating small, everyday moments. I will miss the post long-run trips to the bakery, the card games in the airport or hotel lobby, the guessing game of trying to predict what the day's workout will be, and the moment of anticipation before we hear if we guessed correctly. I will miss the sing-a-longs in the van, hearing everyone's latest podcast or Netflix obsession on runs, and pushing myself to run faster than I thought I could with my favorite people by my side. I will miss the lingo of HUTF and all that comes with the goss, the girlies, the pace(d) runs, and the #mpa. I couldn't enjoy these everyday moments when I was obsessively focused on the destination. I learned to trust that it will be worth it as long as you keep taking, and enjoying, the steps. Even on the toughest of days, there was always a reason to smile and laugh at the track.

With the 2020 outdoor track season being cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, I had no idea that the 2020 Indoor Ivy League Heptagonal Championships would be my last race for Harvard. In some ways, I'm glad I didn't know. It helped me to be even more present. Instead of remembering a bittersweet end that is inevitable with "lasts," that weekend was all smiles and laughs. My best friends and I laughed at our extra cold ice bath and our morning walk on the treadmill and smiled as we reflected on a great weekend while running lap after lap on Cornell's, flat track to cool down.

I can't thank my teammates and coaches enough for creating an environment that fosters personal growth through sports. Thank you for reminding me to be present, not to take myself too seriously, and to enjoy the process, even though I didn't embrace these messages the first hundred times. Thank you for your support through the ups and the downs and always giving me a reason to smile at the track.



KIERAN TUNTIVATE '20

Hometown: Wilmington, DE

High School: Charter School of Wilmington

Concentration: Economics

Event: Distance

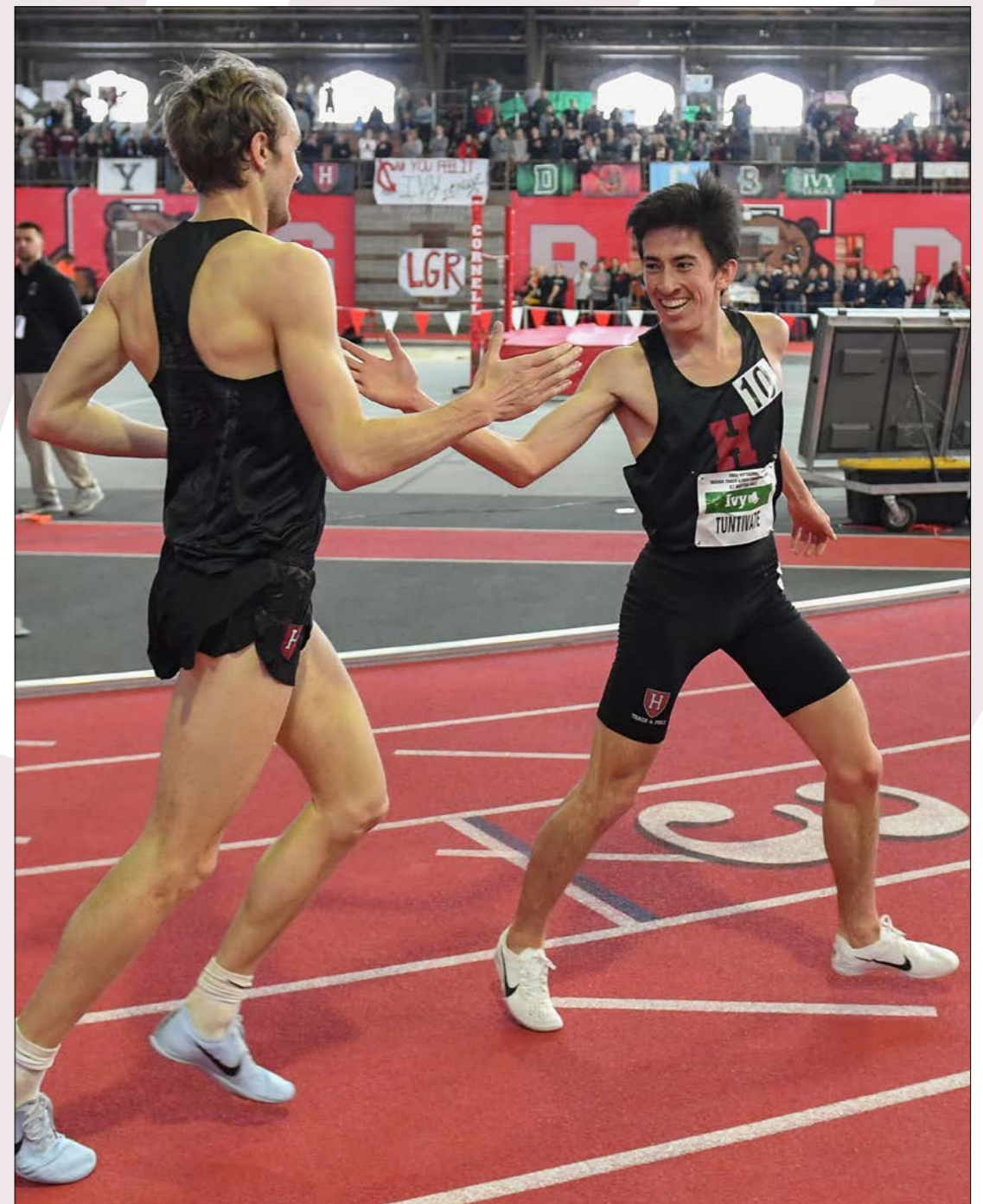
As I write this from the perspective of a student in a worldwide pandemic, I am overwhelmed by the seeming lack of control I have over my own life. I'm not sure what opportunities I will have in the future or even where I'll be next fall. However, I think my time at Harvard and my time participating on the cross country and track teams prepared me for these inevitable hardships in life.

I joined the cross-country team my freshman year, with concrete goals of improvement and growth in mind. However, by the end of my freshman year, the only clarity I had was how difficult it would be to accomplish everything that I wanted. The summer going into my sophomore year I trained harder than I ever had. I wanted to regain control of my goals that felt unattainable. Although I improved greatly, by the end of my sophomore year I felt even more out of control of my athletics. It seemed like I had done everything necessary to achieve my goals, but I wasn't close.

For a variety of personal reasons, I decided to take a leave of absence after my sophomore year. During this year off, I let go of the goals that were so overbearing in previous years. I felt like I finally had time to grow as an athlete without the pressure of wanting to compete well for my team. When I returned to Harvard for my junior year, I was surprised by the progress I had made. By my senior year, I was almost achieving the goals I had fixated on my freshman and sophomore year.

During my senior year I realized that I may not have as much control over my athletic performance as I thought. Extraneous factors such as injuries (like losing my shoe at Indoor Heps and blistering my foot) or when Covid-19 prevented our team from competing at indoor nationals often result in far from perfect scenarios in track and field. Although I could not completely control my athletic performance over the past four years and achieve everything I wanted, I was able to control my commitment.

Throughout the ups and downs of my athletics at Harvard, the two constants were support from my teammates, coaches, training staff, and family and consistent hard work. Looking ahead, these are two constants that I will bring to my life as challenges arise. I will continue to work hard in my training, and I will lean on my teammates, family, and coaches when I need help. I'm certain I would not have made it to graduation without the family that track and field provided me with, and I'm extremely grateful to Coach Saretsky, Coach Gibby, G-man, Nic, the other coaches, and all of the teammates I've had during my time at Harvard.



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



DONAGH MAHON '20

Hometown: Kilkenny, Ireland
High School: St. Kieran's College
Concentration: Visual & Environmental Studies
Event: Jumps



MAYA MIKLOS '20

Hometown: Palo Alto, CA
High School: Gunn
Concentration: Physics, Mathematics
Event: Sprints/Hurdles



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98



MICAH MEEKINS '20

Hometown: Woodstock, MD
High School: Marriottsville Ridge
Concentration: Applied Mathematics
Event: Sprints



MORGAN LAWTON '20

Hometown: Craig, CO
High School: Moffat
Concentration: Anthropology
Event: Throws



Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98