



## Recap of the 2022 Outdoor Season

Many aspects of Outdoor Track were changed this season including the MIAA using a state-wide divisional system for post-season competition. Just like the Indoor Season we were assigned to Division 4, which is the smallest of the four "large school" divisions. We were properly assigned as a D4 school and we can hold our own against Central and Eastern Mass. teams from the same division. In the Pioneer Valley League (PVIAC) we are a Division 1 "large" school but still hold our own in many events against much larger Western Mass track teams. Using these divisional assignments I will try to quantify the success of our boy's track & field program.

But before I do that I have to say that this season our team was plagued with far more injuries than I have ever experienced before. Injuries, primarily leg, knee, ankle and foot injuries are a common problem with any track program (high school, college and professional). I try to balance practices between improving technical skills, increasing speed and preventing injury. But when practice time is reduced to 3 days a week at the Central track and on those days when practice time is reduced to anywhere from 15 to 45 minutes due to constant late bus pickup (if the bus shows up at all), being forced to end practice at 3:30 or 4pm due to a track meet at Central or having to leave the facility due to Lacrosse use of the field, injuries simply overwhelmed us. We couldn't properly warm-up, properly practice any of the 17 different T&F events or properly cool down. And keep in mind that even on practice days when we arrived on time and weren't chased off early, we were sharing the track and the throwing and jumping areas with 3 other boys & girls track teams!

So even though the MIAA divisional system leveled the competitive "playing field," the Commerce track athletes were at a distinct and decisive disadvantage compared to just about every other high school track program in the state and even compared to Central, Putnam and Sci-Tech track programs which are in easy walking distance of the only track facility in Springfield - the state's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city!

All that being said, our PVIAC league dual meet record was 3 wins and 2 losses - and one of those losses was by a single point. It was, none-the-less, a winning record!

Despite injuries that never had an opportunity to properly heal, our sprinters were constantly sweeping dual meet 100 and 200 meter events and making the finals at numerous invitational meets. Our 4x100 relay was always in the fastest heats at the invitational meets, up to and including the post-season MIAA Division 4 Championships. Chris was the city's best Javelin thrower and made it to the D4 Championships.

The Divisionals are like weight divisions in boxing or wrestling. One cannot expect a middleweight fighter to go up against a heavyweight. So the divisional results show the relative strength and success for all Springfield track teams:

**Commerce Boys - 16 points - 14<sup>th</sup> place** (among all scoring boy's teams)  
Central Boys - 10 points - 18<sup>th</sup> place  
Central Girls - 05 points - 23<sup>rd</sup> place  
Putnam Girls - 03 points - place unknown  
Commerce Girls, Putnam Boys - no points  
Sci-Tech Boys & Girls, Duggan Boys and Girls - no Divisional entries



And we achieved our goal of making it to the **MIAA All-State Meet of Champions!**

For us, the honor is to be there - among the *Champions*. Like those who represent their countries at the Olympics, whether they win a medal or not, they will always be Olympians! Teams from Western Mass don't match up well against the Central and Eastern Mass. powerhouse teams at All-States. Of the 80 scoring boy's teams at All-States only 4 were Western Mass. teams. But...

***Tajai Hillman, Alijah Daniels, Kareem Prawl and Dwayne Brown will always be CHAMPIONS!***

## Our Team Captains

The Commerce Track & Field program is composed of athletes not just from the High School of Commerce. Athletes from the *Springfield Honors Academy*, the *Springfield Conservatory of The Arts* and *Rise Academy* can also join our team. This year HALF of our boy's team were from the SHA and our three captains (all seniors) were SHA scholars. Of the nearly 50 young men that served as track team captains over the past 18 years, I have to say that these three young men were among the best to hold the title of captain: Chris Mazanec, Alijah Daniels and Sebastian Aracena.



In addition, the Springfield Honors Academy awarded Alijah Daniels and Christopher Mazanec with their **Griffin Award** "to honor the student or student(s) who not only took hold of our Pillars here at Springfield Honors Academy but demonstrated them on a daily basis. They were humble all the while and their character allowed our culture to take root.

*They were a witness to their peers, spanning all grade levels, and consistently upheld the purpose of a true SHA student."*

I will truly miss them. Thank you all for a great season. - Coach Larry