

Recap of the 2021-2022 Boy's Indoor Track Season

Now that the season has come to an end, it's only proper to put a very unusual and very successful season into perspective.

Our Season

A usual Indoor Season consists of 6 PVIAC League meets and a PVIAC Championship meet held at Smith College. This season, due to Covid, Smith College declined to host any PVIAC meets but PVIAC was able to hold two meets at Wheaton College in the Eastern part of the state where the school refused to allow athletes to compete in spikes on their 200m flat track. Even though PVIAC held two competitions at Wheaton, no Springfield schools were able to go to the second meet because all winter sports in the city were temporarily halted for 3 weeks due to Covid concerns. No other school district in Western Mass. similarly suspended their sports programs - only Springfield.

For many PVIAC track teams, their season came to and end very quickly, especially if none of their athletes qualified for MIAA Divisionals at the 2 Wheaton meets. They either didn't know about or didn't want to or couldn't go to an assortment of invitational track meets run by the Massachusetts States Track Coaches Association (MSTCA) at the Reggie Lewis Track in Boston. So although our team missed the 2nd meet at Wheaton, and also missed the MSTCA Speed Classic at "The Reggie" in December, with the permission and assistance from SPS AD Dwayne Early, Commerce was able to travel to Boston to compete in 3 additional MSTCA meets. This allowed our team to have a semblance of a full season and to provide additional opportunities to qualify individuals and relays for the Divisional Championships.

It should be noted that by the time the team was able to start again after the December SPS high school sports stoppage our small team lost 6 members, dropping our numbers from 16 to 10. Injuries during December and January reduced our team down to 7 athletes.

Our Facilities

As has always been the case, the track team practices on the 2nd floor of the Commerce B-Building. Our school is probably the oldest building still in use in Western Mass. - over 100 years old. The hallways are short and narrow. Fast sprinting can't be any longer than 30 meters and no more than 2 runners abreast. Our 200m circuit around the 2nd floor has four 90 degree turns on a slippery stone floor. The constant traffic of teachers and students leaving classrooms or wandering the hallways poses a ever-present danger of collision. If not for the willingness of a teacher on the 2nd floor to allow us to store equipment in her room such as the roll-out mats, hurdles and starting blocks, we'd have no ability to utilize those (and other) important pieces of equipment. Because we have no outdoor track at our school, we can't go outside when conditions permit, thus we have no ability to practice long jump or high jump. The only field event we can practice inside is shot put.

Our MIAA Division

By the time our regular season was coming close to ending and we were trying to qualify as many individuals and relays for the State Divisional Championship, we had 6 sprinters in contention. The MIAA classifies schools by size of total student enrollment into one of five divisions with Division 1 representing the largest schools and Division 5 representing the smallest schools.

For the first time our school was assigned to the proper division. When we started Indoor Track in 2015, Commerce was assigned to Division 3. We held our own against most of those schools. But a few years later when we were moved to Division 2 we were in over our head and found the competition and the qualifying standards extremely challenging. I hoped the MIAA would re-classify us (to at least) Division 3. But when we were properly classified as a Division 4 school, we were able to fairly compete against those schools and more likely meet or exceed many of the qualifying standards.

Our School Performances

This Indoor Season we had 3 sprinters on the Commerce All-Time Indoor 55m Top 10 List. Alijah Daniels missed tying Dejour Dennis' first place by 1/100 of a second. Right behind him were Dwayne Brown and Craig Anderson tying Deje Carpenter for shared third place. Alijah also secured a 5th place position on the 300 meters list. Our 4x200 Relay posted the 3rd fastest time in Indoor Track school history and would have run faster and probably qualified for All-States had our third man, Tajai Hillman not been tripped up by a runner from another school. When looking at every split from every 4x200 Relay Commerce has ever run indoors, Kareem Prawl posted the fastest split ever with Alijah posting the 3rd fastest and Dwayne posting the 6th fastest split ever. They didn't start out that fast but they put in the work to finish fast, despite two of them having after-school jobs that often interfered with practice time.

Our Divisional Performance

The Pioneer Valley League is composed of 30 schools from the 4 Western counties. Based on which of the boy's teams from those schools that qualified for and scored at any of the Divisional Championships, the Commerce Boy's Team was 9th best. See the chart below:

<i>School</i>	<i>Team Size</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Division</i>
West Springfield	52	36	2
Amherst Reg.	28	24	3
Longmeadow	26	23	3
Minnechaug Reg.	32	18	3
South Hadley*	11	18	5
Northampton	34	16	4
Chicopee Comp.	29	11	2
Hampshire Reg.	19	8	5
Commerce	7	5	4
Southwick	4	2	5
Mohawk Reg.	5	2	5
Westfield	29	1	3

* South Hadley is an outlier due to having fastest high school short sprinter in the nation

Average team size of teams with more points is 29

It should be noted that *no other school from Springfield (public, charter or parochial) scored any points!* **In summation, the Commerce Boy's Track Team continues a long, proud history of outstanding commitment, effort and performance.**