

SUMUS LEONES

March 2022

Challenges of Spring Sports

By: Ry Shapiro, seventh grade, and Lydia Park, freshman

With the cold winter weather retreating, many Latin students are diving into the sports that this spring season has to offer. This year Latin is offering outdoor track, lacrosse, ultimate frisbee, baseball, and softball, as well as some other non-competitive sports in both the Middle and Upper school. While many students and coaches have been eager for this, there have also been many challenges already.

Upper School baseball coach, Mr. Baum, mentioned one of the issues that has been unique to the spring season so far. "The biggest challenge has been field space...The other day, when there was a lacrosse game happening, a lot of the field was taken up. We needed space to throw baseballs without hitting anyone, so we jogged over to Takoma Rec Center, near Coolidge, and played there. Even still, we were sharing field space with the ultimate team!" Mr. Baum and the baseball team have found other solutions to the limited space, including working with the softball team to avoid clashing on the field and in the batting cage.

Mr. Staten, softball and baseball coach, agreed and added, "With middle school baseball, varsity softball, and now varsity baseball, it can get crowded. So spacing out practice and communication is key."

In addition to complications with the field space, deciding who will be on the team was difficult for coaches.

Mr. Staten commented on how, "We had 40 people try out [for baseball]. For the first time, we had to cut players for the baseball program. I don't like cutting, I've never had to and we always had a place for everyone who wanted to play."

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With the challenges of deciding who will be on the team, there has also been difficulty with team chemistry because of the delay with sports due to the pandemic.

Upper School lacrosse coach, Ms. Allison explained, "With COVID, the team hadn't had a full season in a couple years. Our seniors have provided great leadership, however, in rallying the team to focus and build back quickly."

Coaches have also had a challenging time figuring out how to train their athletes. The middle school track coach, Mr. Fisher said, "Learning how to get the most out of students and also not pushing them too hard. I just learned about all my students by just talking with them and seeing how they perform during practice."

From a student's perspective, Cate Shepherd, freshman on the lacrosse team, added, "I think something that's been challenging is the adjustment to actually doing sports because I didn't do any in the fall or winter seasons. So really, just athletically it was challenging. Other than that, I've really been enjoying lacrosse!"

Freshman baseball player Ben Blier added on to the list of challenges for student athletes. Along with figuring out how to push yourself as an athlete, figuring out student life has been difficult. He said, "I've noticed among myself and my teammates that after 7 hours of school, then an hour+ of tutorial, and then having a 2 hour practice, it becomes easy to lose focus and get tired."

June Walsh, a sixth grader on the track team, stated that her goal was to run longer distances and to run faster. June also explained that a few of her challenges during this season were some small injuries and she said she has had to fight through them. She says that if they still hurt when she gets home that she will ice them. She also mentioned that they have not had many weather challenges because they have only experienced drizzling and they still run and then do exercises in the gym and in that case have not missed practices.

Tori Starace, a fifth grader on Girls on the Run, explained that her goal for the season was to place 1st, 2nd or 3rd in the 5k race. She explains her challenges including stopping but also wanting to support her friends and how she dealt with them. "When I'm running, I'm stopping more than I'd like to, helping my friends solve their problems and making sure they feel comfortable with what's going on in their life." She says that how she has dealt with them is setting goals like running the long sidewalks and jogging the short ones, while also making sure my friend has time to express their feelings and make sure they know they have people who they can trust and rely on. Tori expresses.

Despite all of the challenges from the season so far, the spring sports season has had its positive sides. Cate shared, "The season has been going pretty well! I'm on the training team, so I don't play in games, but this Wednesday the training team was allowed to play against E.L. Haynes and it was so fun, and we won 7-2 I think. I've also really enjoyed playing with other girls in different grades because I used to barely know any sophomores or juniors...but now I know a few and they're all super nice and funny, and I'm so glad I know them."

Max Aaron, freshman ultimate frisbee player, added, "Games have gone well, there are definitely more experienced players on the team who play more often but I think we all play a good role on the team."

Along with benefits for the individual players, Latin's sports teams have excelled this season. The middle school frisbee team beat Deal; upper school lacrosse beat EL Haynes; upper school frisbee beat Maret; the tennis team competed in the PCSAA championship and played well, but were unfortunately in three different matches; the varsity girls softball team received the PCSAA title; and the varsity boys baseball captured the PCSAA title and then won the State Championship defeating Dunbar 10-6.

Mr. Eleby-El, head of the athletic department, commented, "Congratulations to our league (PCSAA) champions, as both the varsity boys baseball and the varsity girls softball teams captured the PCSAA titles on Friday.. Track and field at the middle school and upper school level compete in the PCSAA league championship on Saturday at PG Sports & Learning complex. Lastly, thank you to all our coaches, support staff and teachers for your continued support. "



Lacrosse team seniors after beating EL Haynes 7-1.



The Upper School baseball (above) and softball (below) team photos.



Back to Masks

By: Sadie Greenhalgh, seventh grade, and Alice Pittard, freshman

As COVID cases rose, Latin's masking policy changed from optional to recommended and then to mandatory, on May 5. Most people agree that this was necessary, as Latin had nearly 50 cases. However, it was also frustrating to many, since masks can be annoying, and they had just gotten used to the freedom of not having to wear one.

When asked her opinion on the new policy, Pilar Gomez, a freshman, stated, "I think it might be the smartest decision because a lot of kids caught COVID within the three weeks that the masks were off, myself included. I don't really like masks and they're kind of annoying but the school year is almost over and then it won't matter anyways."

Mr. Torrence, an upper school science teacher, echoed Pilar by saying, "I agree with and understand the sentiment. It shows the members of the community who are actually respecting the practice that we are placing the health needs of the collective over the comfort of the individual."

There are mixed opinions, though, on whether everyone is actually following this rule.

Lucia Claire, a freshman, reported, "I'd say most people are following the rules. I think everyone just wants to get through this. Even people who wouldn't normally be very cautious about [COVID] are taking this seriously for reasons like being able to go to prom, not having to miss a week of school and friends, or even just hoping that by wearing their mask we may go back to being mask optional again sooner."

However, Pilar, when asked if all students were properly masking, commented, "I don't think so. A lot of the kids in my physics class have it pulled down and I see kids around the hallways without it on."

Mr. Birkenhead is a theater teacher who had COVID recently. When asked for his opinion on if the school was handling COVID well, he said, "The short answer is yes. The long answer is also yes, but with the added caveat that the country at large is NOT dealing with COVID well, and that lack of national focus and urgency has seeped into every institution, especially schools."

Mr. Birkenhead also added, "MASK UP. I did not enjoy isolating from my family and being out of school. MASK UP."

Overall, many Latin students agree that masks should now be required, but not all are following the new policy as they should.

Editorial: Saving Seats? Seat Yourself

By: Oluwamayowa Akinsanya, Ruby Churches, Ibby Lee, and Willa McCartney, eighth grade

Seating changes are active amongst the Latin classrooms. Whether the changes are to just mix up the class for a new perspective, or they are made for the purpose of separating disruptions to the class, seating changes are unwanted yet frequent changes in the Latin community.

We wonder how much effectiveness seat changes have in splitting chaos. If the goal of seat changes is to separate those who talk too much, moving them apart could just cause more noise across the room versus just in one part of the room?

Take it from Mr. Birkenhead, seventh and eighth grade theater teacher, “I think overall, [assigned seating] works more often than it doesn't, but it is something that teachers have to be careful about and sensitive to.”

Ms. Lambert, an upper school French teacher, commented on the benefits of seat changes, saying too much familiarity has downsides. “It’s good for students to get to know one another, being a language teacher it’s good to hear other people talk. It’s also good to mix things up, you get a different perspective.”

Eliza Lowenfish, eighth grader, spoke from a student’s perspective on French class, commenting familiarity is more efficient. “I prefer choice seating honestly because, for one thing, people sit with the people that they're sitting with not only because they're their friends, but also because they might work better with them. I like working with [Willa] in French because I know how [she speaks], and I think choice seating is helpful for that.”

Mr. Birkenhead points out some of the cons and dilemmas with changing seats, “Sometimes, teachers don't know what is going on in the social life of students, and you can inadvertently put a student next to someone who they really shouldn't be paired with either because there is trouble between those students or because there is a history that you don't know about, and so you have to be careful about that and sensitive to those social dynamics.”

Another eighth grader Josephine Le Mon talked about the downsides to changing seats too. “Often it [changing seats] makes class less fun if you can't sit near your friends. Sometimes it can feel like you're isolated or in an uncomfortable position if you aren't near people you know.” She said, proving that Mr. Birkenhead’s earlier comment is correct. “I prefer choice seating because for me personally, sitting near my friends really helps me with speaking up more and contributing because I tend to be less shy around people who I know.”

Eliza Lowenfish commented on COVID case tracing related to seating charts, saying it is a benefit, but she thinks “for contact tracing overall it might not help that much because it's not like two students are going to be sitting together for the whole day, so that would be a lot of classes for people to trace.”

The Heebie-Jeebies for Finals

By: Aitana Camponovo, freshman

With finals coming up in only a few weeks, students are feeling jittery. But before freaking out, really just how important are these exams?

Students who were there to experience Mr. Staten's sixth grade final exam in middle school knew what it was like trying to prepare for such an intimidating test at such an early age. The test consisted of a summary of what students learned over the year in American history. For most, this test was one of the first final exams middle schoolers had ever experienced.

However, according to his records, over ninety percent of students each year pass his tests with flying colors. Why?

The answer boils down to how Mr. Staten prepares his students.

"I deliberately gave them a practice test and told them it was harder than the actual exam," he reveals.

Adding on, he says "It's sort of like in sports when you practice with weights on, you're able to move faster and easier during an actual game. By giving students a practice test that is designed to be harder than the actual exam, it psychologically makes the actual exam easier."

If a twelve year old can easily pass a final, why shouldn't you?

"It's a dramatic grade, [but] less so here than other places," says Ms. Austin, who joined Washington Latin last year to teach Honors ninth grade and AP English Literature.

"In other [schools] the final exam was fifty percent of your full grade for the year; here it's twenty... It should be significant, [but] I think this school has done a good job of balancing its weight."

A final is what Mr. Liu, the Chinese teacher at Latin, calls a "summative assessment," where teachers "want to capture everything," and for language finals especially, they "want to make sure the students can speak, read, listen, and write. Our assessments will have to get on all four of those skills."

Adding on, Mr. Liu says, "We are not going to give them a format that they have never seen before, and we obviously are not going to give them new material; the idea is that we give the students a sense of accomplishment and that they know what to expect. We are not trying to surprise [them]."

The majority of the teachers at Washington Latin's immediate responses when asked about finals is to reassure students to not worry themselves too much about them.

Mr. Baum, one of the ninth grade English teachers at Latin, says, "I don't like to treat final exams as this is the be-all end-all; [it is] only a way of measuring what you've learned."

Finals are written by one's very own teacher, and all of the information included in them is nothing new.

"I think finals are wrong when they [have] questions [which purposely] try to confuse a student; it should be a fair assessment of what was learned this year," says Ms. Austin.

"They tell you it's twenty percent which is a really big proportion, but there's no way you're going to get a zero, and it doesn't hurt your grade as much as you think," says Lily Smeltzer, a senior at Washington Latin.

Senior Connor McAloon adds that it is important to "Talk to teachers... go through material... and ask as many comprehensive questions as you can."

"Prepare as much as possible, and [do] not wait until the last minute. Take the review period, and if [students] have any questions, talk to the teachers," Mr. Liu affirms.

Communication seems to be a pattern here when it comes to studying.

Finally... Mr. Baum says to "Flex your muscles and show what you can do."

Summer Plans 2022

By: Madelyn Zeller and Zoe Wood, seventh grade

Summer is coming up, and many students and teachers are finding it hard to wait! For a lot of people, summer plans were stifled during the past two years of the pandemic. However, a number of students and faculty are bringing back their plans this year, with varying levels of COVID precautions.

Some families decided to be more flexible with their trips in order to stay safe from COVID-19.

“Due to covid, we are obviously taking precautions to make sure we are safe,” seventh grader Elsie Murray explained. “We will be masked indoors, for example, usually KN95's,”

Some people chose not to take as many precautions.

When asked how her summer plans were being changed by COVID this year, art teacher Ms. Malchionno replied, “Not very different, but we may add a trip to Minnesota since the cases are down and we’ve seen my husband’s relatives so little due to the pandemic.”

Others decided that they were comfortable not wearing a mask in uncrowded places.

“Well now that masks are optional, I'm more comfortable not wearing a mask, but I'm probably going to wear one in public/crowded spaces,” seventh grader Selah Brown replied when asked whether or not she planned to wear a mask this summer.

“I am more comfortable not wearing a mask but I still do whenever I'm in a store or someplace,” seventh grader Ian Steinberg stated. When asked about how he would handle COVID precautions in a crowded space, Ian answered, “I would wear a mask and try to stay away from too many people at a time.”

As for travels, many students and faculty are even traveling out of the country, and some trips are finally happening after years of waiting due to the pandemic.

“I'm going to [South Africa and Zimbabwe] but besides that not much. I would have gone to Africa 3 years ago,” seventh grader Ian Steinberg said.

“I am going to a couple places in Europe this summer, on a kind of road trip,” Elsie Murray explained. “I'm going to Portugal, Spain, France, and England.”

“My family and I will visit Ocean City,” Ms. Malchionno stated. “We usually stay in a tiny home near the beach, drive to Ocean City, and spend the day.”

Some students have also decided to go to a summer camp.

“This summer I’m going to horseback riding camp and sleepaway camp with my mom,” Selah Brown explained.

COVID-19 placed a barrier on travel for the past two years, and it still does. However, many people are bringing back their plans this summer, and long-awaited trips are finally coming.



Eighth graders enjoying the lovely weather.

Editorial: Is a Slap Just a Slap?

By: Nick Kempf, freshman

During the Oscars in March this year, comedian and actor Chris Rock made a joke concerning Jada Smith, the wife of Will Smith, and her alopecia. Will Smith proceeded to mount the stage and slap Chris Rock. The Oscars responded by banning Will Smith from attending the Academy awards for ten years. While he stood up for his wife the use of violence was condemned by many.

Freshman Oscar Murray described his actions as immature and showing a lack of self-control.

“Will Smith reacted disproportionately. I'm sure in hindsight he wouldn't have retaliated the way he did, considering the stage in which he did it on, all the world was watching, and I think lots of them changed their view on Will Smith's character after watching him commit a literal act of violence on stage,” Oscar said.

Theater teachers Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Birkenhead agree that the way he acted was narcissistic.

“I feel Will Smith's behavior looked like that of a classic narcissist: his feelings were ‘more important than any other thing at the time and the world must understand that,’” says Mr. Baldwin

Mr. Birkenhead finds the slap chilling, saying: “he chose violence, took another several moments to walk very deliberately toward Rock and hit him. It was chilling. And as chilling as it was, I found his speech afterwards — again, after quite enough time to make a different choice — to be even more disturbing, in its grandiosity, self-pitying narcissism, and lack of apology to Chris Rock. So, I was appalled by the whole thing.”

Ninth grade world history teacher Ms. Barroso doesn't judge him for it though. Connecting it to a chivalry unit she taught earlier this year, she believes it was with good intent but felt there was a way to better handle the situation without violence. “It is important to look at the context when someone does something like that. Was he feeling pressured to stand up for his wife? Does he have insecurities about standing up for women in his life? What does it mean for the safety of performers? I don't think it was good that he did it. There are lots of misunderstandings about masculinity in this society. Some people think it is noble for a man to defend a woman with force.”

While his actions were rash and violent, the ban does not need to last as many as ten years.

Mean Girls: Fetch or Flop?

By: Ella Hankins, sophomore

In keeping up with the trend of transforming beloved works into other forms of media, the musical *Mean Girls*, based on the Paramount movie of the same name, hit the stage at the Kennedy Center last month from April 5th-24th.

The musical follows the life of Cady Heron, a new transfer student, as she battles with the complexities of friendship and popularity in her first year at North Shore High School in Chicago.

Danielle Wade, a member of the original Broadway cast, played Cady, the awkward and innocent turned power hungry girl, well. However it was the supporting actors, who were given more comedic lines and opportunities to enliven their roles, that the audience seemed to enjoy more.

Although the plot and characters from the movie remain the same, the musical is not simply a copy and pasted version with some more songs. Firstly, as audience members will notice upon entering the theater, the story has been modernized to take place in the age of social media. The set utilizes large screens to create backdrops and social platforms help drive the parts of the plot throughout the performance. I thought the staging was a creative and effective choice as the musical involves many settings. Along with all props being placed on wheels, it allowed for quick changes between scenes.

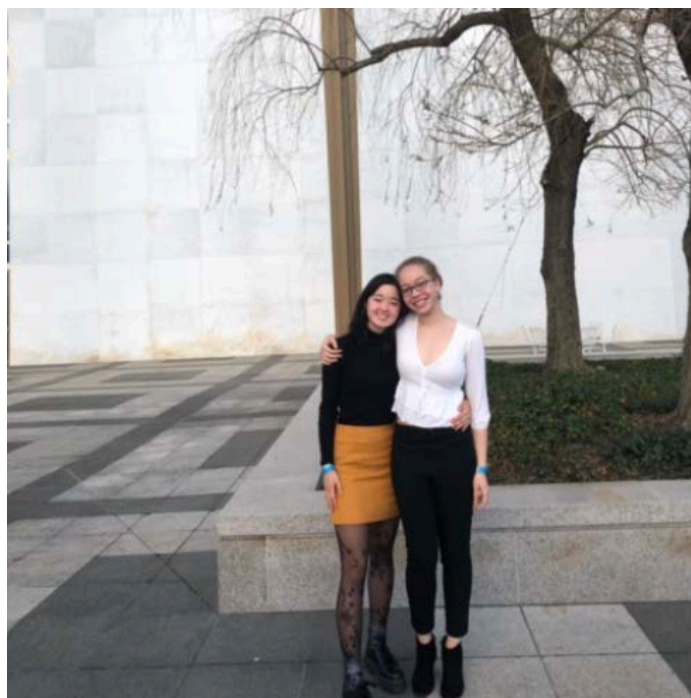
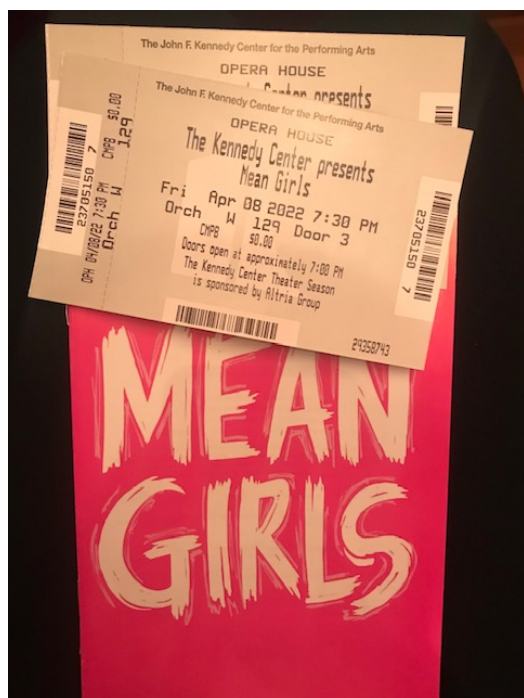
The musical's cast is also significantly more diverse with many leading characters, such as Regina George and Aaron Samuels, being portrayed by people of color; Nadina Hassan and Adante Carter respectively.

The similarity in writing style and humor can be traced to the musical's writer, comedian Tina Fey, being the same creator of the movie's script. In addition to Tina Fey's skill, the musical also makes use of composer Jeff Richmond, lyricist Nell Benjamin, and director Casey Nicholaw, all three of whom have contributed to other successful comedies on and off Broadway.

There are more innuendos than in the movie, so the musical is probably better suited to older teenagers than middle schoolers. Overall, the performance was a fun way to spend a Friday night, especially with a friend.

While the run at the Kennedy Center has ended, the musical will be back in the DMV in late summer; Baltimore from July 12th-17th and Richmond from September 20th-25th.

For tickets, go to: <https://meangirlsonbroadway.com/tour/>



Sumus Leones

This is me

By: Saron Kidane, eighth grade

A Kind and enthusiastic girl with brown eyes and black hair
Years of being teased fading the real me and turning it into a fake
But this is me
And I am going to embrace it
Because I am me
And you are you
This is me
A girl full of joy just waiting to be discovered
This is me
A girl almost no one will accept
This is me
A sweet girl who cares about everyone she meets
This is me
A soft-hearted girl
This is me
A girl who is passionate about studying and making her family proud
A girl who is passionate about letting everyone else understand her more
A girl who loves sports but also beauty
A girl who can sometimes get a little feisty but not a lot
I just discovered who I am and I encourage everyone to be themselves
This is me and now I am going to stay being me
Because not being your true self is harder than being yourself
So be yourself
Because I am me
And now you need to be you
This is me
Sending a message to you
So be yourself
And enjoy your life to the fullest

Photo Gallery





May 20, 2022



Memes

