

Maroon & White presents

# The Raider Reporter

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Photo by Todd Sliss

The Scarsdale varsity cheerleaders competed at the Westchester County Center prior to heading to nationals next week.

## Nationals qualifiers make noise at county cheerleading invitational

**TODD SLISS**  
*Cheerleading*

The biggest moments of the school year came for the Scarsdale cheerleading program when the varsity traditional, varsity gameday and junior varsity squads all qualified for UCA Nationals, with traditional even taking second place at regionals in November. Fast forward to a week and a half before nationals and the Raiders found themselves on the biggest stage yet, cheering at the Westchester County Center in the 74th Annual Westchester County Cheerleading Invitational.

On Jan. 30 and 31, the event, which highlights traditional routines and featured 33 schools, returned the county center for the

first time since the COVID-19 pandemic.

“County Center is definitely fun because it’s just full of cheerleaders and it’s a really big arena,” senior captain Audrey Ryan said. “All of my stunts hit, so that felt good. I think we performed pretty well. We didn’t practice yesterday, so we were a little rusty, but we went out on the mat and gave 100%.”

The cheerleaders were judged on jumps, tumbling, partner stunts, pyramids/basket tosses, choreography, timing, projection and the difficulty of their routines. Though Scarsdale, which has only four upperclassmen on the traditional team — seniors Helen He, Ryan and Emily Smith and junior captain Marin Shan-

dlar — didn’t place in Class A, won by John Jay, it was a good way to prepare for the magnitude of nationals in Florida later next week as a majority of the young team has never been.

Scarsdale made the UCA Nationals semifinals for the first time in 2008. Though they didn’t make it back to semis again until 2018, they advanced that far every year since, with the exception of COVID-19 when the team couldn’t travel.

The Raiders will put the streak of five straight semifinals appearances on the line next week, though even qualifying for nationals was big for the young team.

“I was feeling a little bit eh, but I did feel confident we could hit

the skills,” Ryan said of heading into regionals. “The skills we went out on the mat with I knew we were going to hit them. With cheer, execution is such a big thing. Execution is such a giant section of the points. We had to focus on the execution and we got second, which was awesome.”

Even though she’s a senior, Ryan has had a major adjustment to the team, much like Scott Baio’s character from “Charles in Charge” did when the Powells replaced the Pembrokes while he was away. Ryan was injured last year and unable to compete and in the meantime all the seniors graduated, all the freshmen came up and there was a brand new coaching staff for varsity. Oh,

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### MORE ACTION INSIDE





# Young skiers make quick mark for SHS

**TODD SLISS**  
*Boys' & Girls' Skiing*

Four races into the season and the Scarsdale boys' and girls' ski teams have had impressive results, including two Section 1 Championships autoqualifiers, a girls' win over North Salem/John Jay/Somers and budding young talent rising to the top.

The Raiders opened the season with an autoqualifier race at Mohawk on Jan. 18. Senior captain Elliott Zhang, a state qualifier last year, placed third for the boys, while sophomore Stella Van Arsdale won the girls' race.

"I knew Elliot probably would qualify," coach Pat Liu said. "He was already skiing well. We did have a practice before then and he looked great from the first time on snow. I'm so psyched for him. I hope he goes all the way and makes states again. He has one under his belt from last year, so he'll have more confidence to do what I think he can do, which is really compete up there."

Liu called Van Arsdale's victory "the surprise." She races for Bromley Mountain and although she wasn't able to race for the high school last year, she joined the team

and made her presence known right away this winter.

"She came out of nowhere and won her first race," Liu said. "I was pleasantly, pleasantly surprised. I saw her ski when we went to Big Snow indoors, just free skiing and drills, and I could tell from her form she was an excellent skier."

Seeing her with gates on the mountain solidified that point of view.

"I pretty much knew she was going to be our No. 1," Liu said. "I just didn't know how good she was against the field. For her to step up right away and keep getting faster and faster is amazing for a sophomore."

After taking second to NS/JJ/S 160.35-164.32 on Jan. 24, beating the powerhouse 161.96-165.90 in the next race on Jan. 29 was a milestone victory for Scarsdale.

"I couldn't believe it," Liu said. "The top five count towards the team score, so Stella, Jaden [Hernandez], Sidonie [Deharveng], Addie [Lazarus] and Etel [Malka] had their runs count towards the score. Not only was it a big win, but it was a big victory by four seconds."

"They are such a great team, they have great coaches and they've been a force and unbeaten for years, so

to be able to compete at such a high level team was great."

Van Arsdale and fellow newcomer Jaden Hernandez, a freshman, being the top two in that race bodes well for the future.

"Jaden was also a surprise to us," Liu said. "I saw her during pre-season and early in the season and I thought she was going to be pretty good."

Captains Sidonie Deharveng and Kay Fitzgerald, who was a captain last year as well, have progressed and Etel Malka is another key senior. Junior Addie Lazarus, sophomore Caterina DeCataldo and sophomore Remy Weinberg also provide depth to the lineup.

"Sidonie in particular for some reason is really clicking," Liu said. "We're teaching the girls how to clear the gates with their pole guards and it takes a long time to get it. I definitely see with Sidonie she is getting it, but they are all clearing and improving, which gives you a faster line. Most of the girls are clearing, which is a real testament to their improvement, especially the ones who don't race for a mountain team."

The "big surprise" on the boys' side is sophomore Ben Cheikin.

"He's just fearless and he's never

raced before," Liu said. "He picked up clearing gates and was skiing a straighter line almost the first or second time he tried. He's finishing in the top three of our team."

Freshmen Hunter Frank, Andrew Jeremiah and Liam Mancini are also key additions.

Veterans like senior Cameron Roberts, junior Ellis Crane and sophomore Ollie Kaiden are forces in the lineup. Crane is coming back from injury despite concern he might not be ready, though senior captain Luke Williams wasn't so lucky and might be out for the season. Junior Will Cavalier and his injured thumb are getting back into the groove slowly.

Despite having trouble getting course time and competitions for the junior varsity and developmental teams in recent years, Liu said, "The team has developed nicely, especially coming out of the pandemic and we've got some new blood as well."

The three league races have had a "festive atmosphere," according to Liu. Assistant coach Steve Kaiden plays music and brings cowbells to get the skiers hyped up and supporting each other at Thunder Ridge.

Captains Zhang, Cavalier, Williams, Fitzgerald, Deharveng and

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## RAIDER OF THE WEEK



Ski Team sophomore Stella Van Arsdale won the A League Slalom Auto Qualifier at Mohawk Mountain out of a field of 35, followed by second place in an A League race out of a field of 44 at Thunder Ridge and another win a few days later at Thunder Ridge out of a field of 50.

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## RAIDER OF THE WEEK



Indoor Track sophomore Leia Patel recently won the county championship and broke the school record in the 1000 meters

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# Raider Reporter Roundup

## BOYS' SWIM & DIVE (8-1)

At the Section 1 Conference 1 Championships Jan. 25 (diving) and Jan. 27, Scarsdale (287) held off Ardsley/Hastings/Edgemont/Irvington (273.5) to take the runner-up spot to Horace Greeley (431). Ten teams competed in the meet.

In diving, freshman Noam Tiomkin was first out of nine divers at 261.70 points, with only Horace Greeley sophomore Jonas Balcetic close at 251.20. Sophomore Victory Dyakin was fifth at 160.50. Senior Harley Koch was unable to compete.

In swimming, the top three teams in the 200 medley relay hit the state cut time, Greeley in 1:35.08, Clarkstown 1:36.39, Scarsdale in 1:38.20. Kieran Lee, Kevin Jiang, Avi Stahl and Bryan Manheimer, all returning state qualifier, hit the cut time.

Scarsdale's B relay of Christian Camaj, Jayden Tang, Vasilije Dragovic and Alexander Rizk finished in 1:58.27.

Stahl was third in the 200 freestyle in a state cut time of 1:44.48. Manheimer placed 10th in 1:51.62, Aaron He 15th in 1:58.67, Bryan Chung 35th in 3:18.73.

In the 200 individual medley, Lee took sixth in 2:00.90, just above the state cut of 2:00.63, Ethan Isak 11th in 2:06.04, Derrick Kuo 12th in 2:06.24, Dylan Tuchman 14th in 2:10.78.

Jiang won the 50 freestyle in a state cut time of 21.58, edging Greeley's Connor McHugh (21.70). Maximus Gao was 16th in 24.21, Theodore Qiao 22nd in 24.74, Dragovic 29th in 25.51.

Isak took ninth in the 100 butterfly in 56.82, Tuchman 18th in 59.35, Aaron Lichtenstein 28th in 1:13.01, Ari Maibrunn 30th in 1:14.03.

Manheimer placed third in the 100 freestyle in 48.28, a state cut time, Gao 15th in 53.55, Rizk 22nd in 56.64, Qiao 24th in 57.01.

Stahl hit the state cut in the 500 freestyle in 4:39.20, placing third. He was 16th in 5:35.42, Matthew Mialkowski 26th in 6:41.98.

The 200 freestyle relay team of Gao, Qiao, Kuo and Tuchman took seventh in 1:38.64. The B relay of Camaj, Tang, Rizk and Dragovic touched in 1:39.96.

Raphael Sutiono finished 17th in the 100 backstroke in 1:03.57. Adrian Wang was 21st in 1:08.82, Orion Kreonidis 26th in 1:10.25.

Jiang was the 100 breaststroke runner-up to Greeley's Erik Nadecki, 57.92-58.21. Both qualified for states. Lee and Kuo took fourth and fifth with respective times of 1:00.81 and 1:04.02, with Lee



Photo by Rokaya Hassaballa

**The gymnastics team set at least a 21st century record for most post-season qualifiers, nine, including Harmony Bowes, above.**

qualifying for states. Tang placed 19th in 1:11.36.

Manheimer, Stahl, Lee and Jiang were second to Greeley in the 400 freestyle relay, 3:07.90-3:11.64, with both teams hitting the state cut.

Scarsdale's B relay of Dragovic, Wang, Tang and Rizk finished in 3:50.27.

Tiomkin and Dyakin competed in their first 11-dive meet of the season at Westchester Community College on Jan. 30. Suffern's Luke Leale won with 507.40, hitting the state cut score of 450.0. Tiomkin was the runner-up at 426.05, Dyakin ninth with 257.60.

**Up next:** The Section 1 Diving Championships will be held Feb. 8 at Purchase College at 5 p.m. The swimming preliminaries will be Feb. 12, the finals Feb. 13 at Felix Festa Middle School at 5 p.m.

## TRACK & FIELD

After having a small vacation crew for the league championships, the Raiders were back with a more robust lineup, especially on the girls' side, for the Westchester County Championships at the Armory on Jan. 27.

New Rochelle won the girls' county title with 98 points. Scarsdale was fourth with 41 points, also behind Ursuline (63) and Somers

1,500-meter in 5:14.16.

The 4x800-meter relay team of Cami Culang, Morgan Greco, Sydney Geringer and Rakower placed eighth in 10:40.36. Sofie Mirafzali, Gibney, Alice Nicassio and Maria Roberts were 13th in the 4x200-meter relay in 2:01.05.

Nicassio was 24th in the 55-meter dash in 7.85 and 15th in the 300-meter in 44.37. Greco placed 17th in the 600-meter in 1:48.81. In the 1,000-meter, Geringer was 14th in 3:19.52, Culang 20th in 3:26.14.

For the boys, Darius Toosi placed 19th in the 55-meter dash in 6.92 seconds. Toosi was 12th in the 300-meter in 37.19, Brandon Cascade 23rd in 39.05. In the 1,000-meter, Julian Zlomislic finished 21st in 2:54.29.

Jack Sheridan took 16th in the 3,200-meter in 10:46.94. Jake Saxon was 12th in the 55-meter hurdles in 8.83. Parker Lyn placed 19th in the long jump at 17-11, Matthew Wong 13th in triple jump at 37-4.25.

Lyn, Etai Pollack, Cascade and Toosi placed 11th in the 4x200-meter relay in 1:37.67. In the 4x400-meter relay, Connor Meschewski, Labrowne Brown, Brandon Lin and Arjun Benderson took 13th in 4:06.91.

**Up next:** With championship season in full swing, the Raiders are busy with regular and post-season meets. The big ones coming up are the Class A Championships on Feb. 7, Millrose Games Feb. 11, and the State Qualifier on Feb. 18, all at the Armory.

## GYMNASTICS (2-5)

Though the scores were back in the 140s, the Scarsdale gymnastics team continues showing plenty of resilience despite being short-handed in a couple of events that cost them key points in the final two regular season meets. In addition, the team has set a record that spans at least the last 25 years by qualifying 9 of 12 competitors for post-season.

The Raiders lost 171.30-145.85 to Mahopac on Jan. 25. Having only four vaulters likely cost the team another score over 150.

Emma Greenberg led Scarsdale on vault with 8.30, followed by Laila El Moselhy 8.0 and Sophia Cha and Harmony Bowes each with 7.85.

Bowes led on bars with 8.20. El Moselhy scored 8.05, Talia Simowitz 6.70, Ava Goldberg 5.20, Emma Greenberg 5.0, Lily Greenberg 3.70.

El Moselhy had an elite 9.05 on beam. Bowes scored 8.30, Emma Greenberg 7.85, Rachel Coplan 7.75, Goldberg 7.70, Av-

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# Raider Reporter Roundup

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ery Dickstein 6.80.

Coplan led on floor with 8.75, followed by Bowes 8.15, El Moselhy 8.10, Simnowitz 7.55, Cha 7.50, Emma Greenberg 7.25.

Moselhy tied for first overall on beam with Mahopac's Kaitlyn Palange, while Emma Greenberg was second on vault behind Lexie Castrataro (9.00). Bowes and El Moselhy were top four on bars.

Moselhy scored 33.2 as an all-around, Bowes 32.5, Emma Greenberg 28.1.

The team lost to Somers 183.35-141.65 on Jan. 30. Bowes scored 31.85 as an all-around, El Moselhy 30.85, Emma Greenberg 29.4.

Bowes scored 7.8 on bars, El Moselhy 7.2, Emma Greenberg 6.6, Goldberg 6.1, Lily Greenberg 5.1.

On vault, El Moselhy scored 8.05, Bowes and Emma Greenberg 8.0, Cha 7.0.

Goldberg led with 8.05 on beam. Coplan scored 7.8, Emma Greenberg 7.6, Bowes 7.55, El Moselhy 7.5, Ella Trager 7.05. As exhibitions, Melanie Aman scored 6.45, Ana Maria Lyra 6.0.

Coplan scored 8.7 on floor, Bowes 8.5, El Moselhy 8.1, Emma Greenberg 7.2, Simnowitz 6.8.

**Up next:** A 21st century record nine gymnasts will compete at the Division 2 Championships at Eclipse in Mahopac on Feb. 6 at 7 p.m. Emma Greenberg, Bowes and Moselhy qualified as all-arounds. Coplan will compete on floor, Cha vault and Coplan, Dickstein, Trager, Aman and Goldberg on beam. The Section 1 Championships will be held Feb. 8 at Eclipse. States are March 2 at Clarence High School.

## BOYS' ICE HOCKEY (8-6)

With three straight wins and five in the last six games, the Scarsdale boys' ice hockey team is heating up for the stretch run, improving from 3-5 to 8-6.

The Raiders topped Mount Pleasant on Jan. 24 by a 5-1 score, led by five goals from Jack Greco and 32 saves from Max Siegel, plus another 11 by Buddy Meiselman.

Manu Trelles had a goal and an assist. Lucas Kowalski had two assists, Santi Trelles, Lev Mizukovski, Daniel Chu, Joe Sharpe, Alex Horner and Siegel one each.

On Jan. 27, the Raiders won a tight 4-2 game against Rye. Greco and Zhu scored two goals each, while Horner and Kowalski had one assist each. Siegel made 30 saves.

**Up next:** Following a game against Mamaroneck on Jan. 31, the Raiders host Clarkstown on Feb. 2. The team rounds out the



Photo by Rokaya Hassaballa

**Sophia Cha and eight of her teammates will compete in postseason.**

regular season against Pelham, Horace Greeley, Suffern and Rye Town/Harrison.

## BOYS' BASKETBALL (5-10)

The Raiders won back-to-back games for the second time this season — having won their opening tournament in December — with a Jan. 25 67-49 win over John Jay-East Fishkill. They had previously beaten New Rochelle.

Jake Sussberg had a big day with 23 points and 14 rebounds. Carlos Rodriguez scored 20 points, 18 in the first half, and had six assists and five rebounds. Brandon Gibbons was back in action and had 11 points and four assists.

In their first meeting of the season, having last seen each other at the Westchester County Center last winter in the Section 1 semifinals — a game won by the Raiders — Mount Vernon bested Scarsdale 61-52 on Jan. 29. Sussberg kept up his big play with 25 points and 13 rebounds. Rodriguez added 11 points and five assists.

The next day, the Raiders lost a heartbreaker to Harrison, 47-46 as Gabriel Enaye put up a “game-winning offensive rebound putback three-point play,” according to the Scarsdale hoops X feed.

**Up next:** The Raiders had a rematch at Mount Vernon on Feb. 2 and then take on Xaverian Feb. 3 at 1 p.m. at the Westchester County Center in the public-Catholic showcase. The team finishes up with Mamaroneck at home on Feb. 6, Tappan Zee on the road Feb. 8 and the Kari Pizzitola day of basketball against Clarkstown South on Feb. 10.

## GIRLS' BASKETBALL (9-7)

Scarsdale split its last two games, falling to Panas 58-38 on Jan. 24 and beating Mount Vernon

52-38 on Jan. 29.

Against Panas, Chloe Paquin scored 15, Ivy Boockvar 10, Zephyr Connolly five, Lilly Tessler four, Leah Brown and Claudia Rosenberg two each. In the league victory against Mount Vernon, Boockvar and Tessler each scored 13, Paquin 11, Rosenberg 10, Connolly five.

**Up next:** The Raiders took on Harrison and Maria Regina Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, and have two regular season games remaining. They are facing North Rockland at Ossining on Feb. 3 at 10:30 a.m. in the Pauline Ricci Memorial Classic (Ursuline vs. Tuckahoe, Tappan Zee vs. Harrison and Ossining vs. Irvington to follow) and have the Pizzitola game against Ursuline on Feb. 10.

## GIRLS' ICE HOCKEY (5-6-1)

The East Wave merger girls' ice hockey team, featuring Scarsdale freshman Ali Greco, lost in overtime to the North Avalanche in the regular season finale on Jan. 29.

**Up next:** The Section 1 semifinals between East Wave and Rockland Rockies will be held Feb. 5 at Hommocks at 4 p.m. The winner will face North Avalanche in the finals Feb. 8 at Brewster Ice Arena at 5:10 p.m.

## SQUASH (3-3)

The Scarsdale squash team's most competitive match yet came against CitySquash MACS Boys/Mixed on Jan. 25, winning 4-3.

Zane Kohn and Aryan Dutta Baruah won at first and second singles. Kohn swept Gabriel Garcia 11-0, 11-2, 11-1. Dutta Baruah had a clutch 3-2 win over Colby Galarza, 6-11, 11-4, 6-11, 11-7, 12-10.

CitySquash MACS Boys/Mixed won third, fourth and fifth: Daniyal Naeem lost 3-1 (11-5, 11-4, 9-11, 11-6), Peter Lin 3-1 (11-5, 11-5, 8-11, 11-5), Leo Fried 3-2 (8-11,

3-11, 11-4, 11-4, 12-10).

Noah Zoland and Arav Dundon won at sixth and seventh. Zoland topped Ashley Amaro 3-1 with scores of 11-2, 8-11, 11-7, 12-10, while Dundon bested Michael Vasquez 3-0 with 11-5, 11-3, 11-3.

**Up next:** The team has three matches scheduled in February against Rye, Westport and Bronxville.

## WRESTLING

Ethan Finger was the lone Scarsdale male to compete at the 41st Annual Edgemont Wrestling Tournament on Jan. 20. Competing at 131 pounds, Finger placed sixth.

Finger won his first match 11-4 over Putnam Valley's Lando Leon-Aguilar. He was knocked out of the main draw in the quarterfinals by Ryan Chung of White Plains, who won 7-3. In the backdraw, Finger advanced by medical forfeit before winning a 9-8 decision over Devon Pipkin of FDR Hyde Park. In the fifth place match, Finger was pinned in 39 seconds by Edgemont's Marco DeMaio.

The Raiders closed out the regular season with a 60-18 win over Harrison on Jan. 24. Luke Iasiello pinned Robert Barretto in 47 seconds at 101 pounds. Gracie Liebman won by forfeit at 108. Daisy Bennett pinned Ande Valasquez in :49 at 116. Tyler Pierro kept things rolling with a pin in 4:26 against Caimin Frawley at 124.

Asher Millman was pinned in 2:35 by Alejandro Gutierrez at 131. Henry Sperling got the Raiders back on track by pinning Tony Silverman in 2:36 at 138. Jack Harrison pinned Justin Ofori-Amanfo in 1:30 at 145. Andre Duval pinned Ron Etemi in 1:30 at 152.

At 160, Matthew Rothenberg pinned Alvin Wong in 5:03. Benjamin Xiao pinned Lorenzo Gunzer in 1:09 at 170. Matt Hill pinned George Veintimilla in 39 seconds at 190.

Max Florin was pinned in 5:35 at 215 by Mark Anthony Giordano. Henry Koevary was pinned in 5:47 by Carter Erbeling at 285.

**Up next:** The Section 1 Division 1 Division D Championships will be held at Tappan Zee on Saturday, Feb. 3, at 9 a.m. The top four in each weight class advance to the Section 1 Division 1 Championships to be held Feb. 10-11 at the Westchester County Center at 8:45 a.m.

Scarsdale's postseason entries are: Luke Iasiello 101 pounds, Pierro 124, Millman and Finger 131, Harrison and Sperling 138, Tommy Iasiello 145, Duval 152, Max Meizlik and Rothenberg 160, Xiao 170, Hill and Florin 190, Arbri Gjyriqi 215.

— TODD SLISS



# Liebman, Bennett make history as starters

TODD SLISS  
Girls' Wrestling

Prior to last winter, only three girls had wrestled for Scarsdale High School. Between last winter and this winter alone there have been eight different girls suit up in a singlet for the Raiders.

This winter, two of them, sophomore Gracie Liebman at 108 pounds and freshman Daisy Bennett at 116, were in the starting lineup for dual meets and some dual meet tournaments, in addition to competing in girls'-only events. And both had wins over both boys and girls this season.

"It's tough," coach Jeremy Szerlip said. "It's tough for them. Wrestling guys is tough. They're very, very tough girls. They're going out and they're mainly losing a lot. But they have that will to go out and fight each time and try to not lose."

If it ever becomes apparent they are overmatched the goal becomes not getting pinned so they only give up three, four or five points in a loss, not six.

"They know it's for the team, to not have us forfeit and automatically give up six for the team," Szerlip said. "It helps our team a tremendous amount and they're getting experience by being out there. I'm hoping that experience pays off as they keep growing in the sport."

The coaches keep an eye out for overly aggressive opponents just to make sure their wrestlers aren't put in an unsafe situation, but the girls have said without hesitation that they want to be out on the mat every opportunity they can.

In the opening tournament at White Plains the first weekend of December there was one incident where Szerlip didn't like what he was seeing from Liebman's opponent and he wasn't afraid to get voice his concern. Despite what Scarsdale saw as illegal moves, Liebman insisted on getting back on the mat to continue the match.

"Regardless, I continued fighting because I didn't want to give up, although I was in a lot pain, and to be honest, very scared," she said. "Overall the fact that my coaches and my teammates rallied behind me solidified in my mind the fact that I'm part of the team and we are all one supportive family, regardless of gender."

Liebman called being in the starting lineup both "intimidating" and "rewarding." Compared to last year when the girls didn't really compete until the very end of the season at Edgemont, Liebman had to step up her "intensity, progress, and time commitment" in order to wrestle as much as she did this winter.

"I wrestle because I love wrestling and I enjoy the challenge," she said. "Even if I see my opponent is



## Grappling Girls

1999-2000:

Shoshana Rudnick

2007-09:

Malka Windheim

2021-22:

Felicity Bennett (9)

2022-23:

Felicity Bennett (10)

Jackie Goldberg (9)

Mackenzie Kiley (12)

Gracie Liebman (9)

Emma Steggall (9)

2023-24:

Daisy Bennett (9)

Felicity Bennett (11)

Jackie Goldberg (10)

Caitlin Higgins (12)

Gracie Liebman (10)

Gabby Lopez (12)

Emma Steggall (10)

much stronger and bigger, I always step onto the mat knowing I'm going to try my hardest and put up a fight."

Even within her weight class, Liebman can be outweighed and outmuscled by as much as 8 pounds.

"Some losses have been tough, but I understand that in reality I shouldn't expect to win against guys who are stronger and bigger than I am," she said. "Being a girl wrestler does have a biological disadvantage, but I've done my best to persevere and overcome the barriers I've faced."

Liebman has had more success against other girls, winning matches at both the Peekskill and Edgemont girls' tournaments.

"Overall, I've really seen my



Photos by Andy Hill

Gracie Liebman, above, and Daisy Bennett, top, wrestled against both boys and girls this season.

wrestling improve this year and I'm so excited to return next year," she said. "I feel like my technique has really improved this year thanks to my coaches. This team is really important to me and putting in the work has been challenging, but rewarding."

Daisy Bennett, whose sister Felicity is a junior third-year wrestler, called being a starter an "amazing experience" with "many ups and downs" that have served as a learning and growing experience. It was a far cry, however, from modified wrestling for seventh and eighth graders. Here she's potentially facing senior boys.

"The majority of my matches were with boys, many of whom were significantly stronger than me," Daisy Bennett said. "Every time I stepped onto the mat I felt intimidated by my opponent. Still, I tried my best to get as far as I could, even if I knew winning might be impossible. The times I did win, though, my teammates were kind and showed endless support."

Bennett is learning on and off the mat and has improved greatly because of all the dedication of her

coaches and teammates.

"My coaches have taught me new techniques and the importance of mental toughness, which have in turn made me love the sport even more," she said. "I am excited to train in the off season and come back stronger in the 2024 season."

Four girls returned to the team this year, junior Felicity Bennett for the third year and sophomores Jackie Goldberg, Liebman and Emma Steggall for the second year. Newcomers were seniors Caitlin Higgins and Gabby Lopez and Daisy Bennett.

Joining as a senior has pros and cons, with the pros typically being maturity and leadership, like Mackenzie Kiley last year, the con really being only having one season to experience the sport at the high school level. Higgins saw a sign for an interest meeting and wanted to try something new. She had an additional meeting with Szerlip, whom she called "an amazing teacher and coach," to be "extremely inspiring and motivating." So she "begged" Lopez to join her.

"Coming in as a senior with no

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# Fencing team finally gets chance to compete

TODD SLISS

Boys' & Girls' Fencing

And in the third year they competed.

After forming as a pilot program for the winter of 2021-22, the Scarsdale fencing team nearly joined a league and competed last winter, but didn't, and finally got on the strip in a competitive league match on Jan. 13, the first of many Super Saturday matches to come for the Raiders.

After missing the first Super Saturday due to Scarsdale's two-week winter break, the Raiders attended the Jan. 13 and 27 events, and for many of the members of the team it was their first time in actual matches in foil and épée using United State Fencing Association rules, getting a feel for what the local competition is like.

The New York State-sanctioned sport has a Section 1 North-West League featuring Arlington, Clarkstown, Nyack and Tappan Zee and a South League with Ardsley, Irvington, Mamaroneck, Scarsdale and Woodlands.

Fencing Academy of Westchester's Anton Kuska, a saber specialist, is the team's lead coach. He's won gold medals at the European Championship and the Junior World Championships. Prior to coming to Hawthorne-based FAW in 2013 he was head coach of the saber junior and cadet teams for Ukraine.

Kuska was familiar with many of the students who had tried to get a team started before COVID and some of the current team members have been training at FAW for many years. Largely, however, it's a team of newcomers and novices.

"With most of the people joining who have never fenced before it's harder because when you take them as little kids it's getting them the coordination physically early," Kuska said. "Some of the kids have never done sports. We know the tricks how to in one year, one season make the kids have some results. It's fun to work with the kids. I've worked with kids for 20 years. Every time you get new people and they come together as a team it's a great feeling. When you go to a competition and they're helping each other and supporting each other it's a great feeling."

The boys' team this year is made up of seniors Matthew Knudsen and Leon Rode, juniors Max Morgulas, Matteo Sohn and Cole Witham, sophomores Cary Haftel, Drew Kaplan and Jack Levin and freshmen Dillon Beyers, Gil Reindel and Michael Rvachev. For the girls, seniors Ashley Allamby, Katherine Sanchez and Antia Sannicandro, juniors Stephanie Liu, Varvara Mankova, Magnolia Min and Elizabeth Sanchez, sophomore Sophie Lammer and freshman Tara Bamji.

Teams are based on weapon and gender, so Scarsdale technically has four squads.

"So far it's the not the best results, but it's the best we can do," Kuska said. "But we are winning 40 or 50% of the matches. So maybe next season we can try to win the league, but at least this year we are getting some medals. Most of the people have never fenced before, total beginners, but they still show good results. We have 10-15 people and they come for classes and lessons and they're trying to improve."

For captains and standouts Rode and Knudsen, it was a long build, but they finally get to compete as a team and represent their school, not just fence independently.

Rode, who has been fencing at FAW for seven years, has been with the high school program since the beginning as the it built momentum and interest within the school population and the



Photo by Todd Sliss

**The fencing team is made up mostly of boys and girls who picked up the sport in high school since the formation of the team, which is in its third season, first year competing. Front row: Drew Kaplan, Gil Reindel, Magnolia Min, Dillon Beyers, Ash Allamby. Back row: Leon Rode, Jack Levin, Matteo Sohn, Cole Witham, Lizzie Sanchez, Kate Sanchez, Antia Sannicandro, Matthew Knudsen.**

administration.

"A lot of students had no idea what fencing was," Rode said. The administration was new to the idea of fencing. They had to get accustomed to the facilities and other schools and how developed their fencing programs are. Certainly over time they became accustomed to it, getting us to a point where we could have practices and then competitions. That was a big goal."

Rode switched from soccer to the individual sport. "I liked the idea that if you win it's purely because of your own merit and skill and if you lose it's your own mistakes and it's something you can learn from by yourself," he said. "It's not really up to luck — if you put the work in you can get the results you want. That was attractive as a contrast to soccer. It's a unique sport."

Having a school team adds that extra sense of having a group to rely on. Rode takes on a lot of responsibility with the team, serving as an extra coach and leading warm-ups, physical conditioning and footwork drills before everyone suits up for practice.

Getting as much individual attention from a coach is the most important thing, which is why the more successful fencers take lessons year-round.

"A lot of the sport is technical, so you need individual mentorship and adjusting to the specific technique, which happens over years," Rode said. "The challenge is to get the consistent practice in, having the motivation to come to practice every time and just really listen to individual specific feedback."

The two meets were challenging for the first-timers, but the performances did improve from the first meet to the next.

"It was their first time having an official ref next to the strip and the etiquette and the dynamics of the match itself makes you nervous because now it's competitive," Rode said. "At the second meet we had a lot more success. There's a lot more passion, a lot more motivation and we saw those better results."

Knudsen has been fencing for a decade since

doing fencing as an elective at camp. He liked that it was more of a niche sport where he can accomplish a lot — he has qualified for Junior Olympics and nationals and won tournaments — and get to know his competitors.

"It's a great way to meet people," Knudsen said. "When you fence someone you get to know them and the way they fence, the strategies they use. And that's all a reflection of their personality."

Knudsen enjoys the school team camaraderie.

"The independent aspect is nice, but sometimes it's nice to support other people and help other people," he said. "With me and Leon being among the more experienced people here we have to help other people and that's rewarding. I'll be honest sometimes it's a bit frustrating because there's a bit of a learning curve at first with things you don't get with other sports. Skills don't always cross-over from other sports."

Rode, Knudsen, Levin and Min are the team's top fencers and they set the tone for the rest of the group as far as how to act when you win, when you lose, how to use proper technique.

"It's definitely a sport that takes years of practice, so we welcome people with any experience, but there's an expectation that the learning curve is long," Rode said. "If you get started, at the end of four years you will be a good fencer if you practice and are committed. It's so rewarding to win a match and know it's based on your ability. Winning and losing matches grows your mental fortitude as well. You see the commitment you need to excel."

Witham joined the team as a freshman, having seen some fencing and being inspired by Star Wars, which he called the "initial gateway."

"I like to play tennis, so I like to be active," Witham said. "It's a really good sport to do during the winter. The only other one is the ski team, but that goes really late. For this you don't have to be super competitive to enjoy it."

Witham got started with athleticism and began learning the ins and outs of the sport. "There were a lot of good people here to teach me and

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# Boys' bowling falls just short of sectionals

TODD SLISS

Boys' & Girls' Bowling

A 7-0 sweep of Harrison would have been the perfect way for the Scarsdale boys' bowling team to end the regular season. That's the result the Raiders needed to make sectionals for the first time in quite some time.

By winning the first game 873-803 en route to a 5-2 win on Jan. 31, Harrison secured first place in the Bowlerland Large Schools league over Scarsdale in what started out as a playoff atmosphere.

For the Raiders to be in that spot this year after placing third in the league last year was a big improvement for the senior-heavy team.

"I'm excited for the boys going into this because what more could you hope for than to be playing the last game of the season with the playoffs on the line where you have your fate in your own hands," coach Adam Singer said prior to the match. "The boys were playing all season just to have that opportunity to go to sectionals."

Despite falling short, the Raiders were doing their best bowling in January individually and as a team. They split with multiple teams, which made a big difference in the standings.

"I think they've all become more consistent and you can just tell as they bowl more they get better," Singer said. "They've improved greatly since the start of the season because they don't bowl much in the offseason. They're athletic and you can see them take it seriously and improve. They have become competitive with it and they see they're right in the running."

The team had 10 seniors, Tyler DesChamps, Noah Friedel, Jared Hoffman, Dawoud Kahan, Charlie Kapner, Luke Kermanshahchi, Gabe Levy, Jesse Magidson, Cole Sperling and Wes Ulrich.

"It's been awesome," Ulrich said. "It's a lot of different groups on the team and we've all come together. Forty-minute bus rides will do that. We all like each other and we all had a good time bowling. We had a really good season. We've greatly improved."

Ulrich is a third-year team member, having been lured into action by former baseball teammate Ryan Cahaly, a strong bowler who made sectionals as a senior in 2022. Ulrich had "zero experience coming in," but followed in his father's footsteps as he had bowled in high school.

"Luke and I bowled together and we were both terrible at the beginning," Ulrich said. "We came every day to the alley and just bowled together, just the two of us, and got a lot of reps in. It was probably halfway through our sophomore year we started to improve. Then our junior year we both were starters."

One of the highlights for the team was seeing Magidson struggled earlier in the year as a new bowler — he earlier posted a 63 — and in the second to last match of the season he rolled a 147.

"All the seniors came in to play for each other," Hoffman said. "We're going to leave a legacy behind, but after that it's up to the younger kids to get people into it."

With only three bowlers returning next winter, sophomore Aaron Gans and freshmen Tim DesChamps and Jacob Grossman, the team has a major rebuild ahead.

"With tennis sometimes we ask ourselves where the next crop of kids is coming from," Singer said. "And then some freshmen show up. [Tennis coach] Jen [Roane] will tell you better than anyone that this amazing talent shows up.



Photo by Todd Sliss

**The bowling seniors, led by captains Wes Ulrich, Tyler DesChamps and Vanessa Thurman in the front row, were strong models for the younger bowlers and showed great improvement over the years. Back row: seniors Cole Sperling, Charlie Kapner, Jesse Magidson, Luke Kermanshahchi, Jared Hoffman, Noah Friedel and Gabe Levy.**

I'm hoping something happens like that, but I want to do any legwork to garner interest however I can."

The seniors have plenty of advice.

"I just hope they enjoy it," Ulrich said. "You come here after a 40-minute bus ride you might as well enjoy the time and the 40-minute ride home. A lot of sports get really competitive and emotions come out. Here it's just about having fun and being competitive. That's what I want to see going forward."

He added, "As long as you practice you're going to get good and I hope that's what the younger kids learn."

Noted Hoffman, "It's nice to be able to look at your score and say, 'I'm doing better.'"

As assistant coach to Greg Leong last year and boys' head coach this year, Singer has witnessed the team's progress, especially from his main starting crew of Tyler DesChamps, Hoffman, Friedel, Kermanshahchi and Ulrich.

"They've had a good mix of humor and then when it's time to get serious they get serious," Singer said. "They've been together for two or three years going back to Greg. This is kind of his last crew."

After winning two league titles, the girls' team began a rebuild of its own this winter. With senior Alexia Kemmerich injured, Vanessa Thurman was the lone senior bowler on the team. She was head and shoulders above the rest in terms of ability, putting up big numbers throughout the season. She also made an impact as a leader.

"She really rallies the team, both boys and girls," coach Jennifer Cheung said. "The other day she put in the text thread the White Plains Hospital is doing a bowling fundraiser. She said they should all do this. She really makes the effort to get the team together."

The rest of the team will return next year, juniors Eloise Schiamberg and Mirelle Schiamberg and sophomores Samara Feuerstein, Samantha Goldstein and Rebecca Shalmi. Feuerstein was the only other returning bowler this year.

"I've seen nice growth," Cheung said. "A lot of the girls really pulled it together. Their scores have improved — they're breaking 100. It's huge.

Definitely huge."

The girls' team is looking for numbers on and off the lanes between scores and participation. There were some matches they had only four bowlers, which proved costly in the standings.

"Now that they have this under their belt I'm hoping they bring their friends next year and understand we're here to have fun," Cheung said. "It's not always about winning. They enjoy each other and their company. I wish the girls would mingle more with the other teams. The girls' teams don't talk as much as the boys do."

Like many others before her, Mirelle Schiamberg joined because of friends. She also wanted a gym exemption and felt bowling was something she could properly commit to and enjoy.

"I want to show I can be on a team," she said. "Coming every day was so fun. At first I was thinking I didn't want to do it and then I wanted to. I also wanted to make new friends, and that's what I did. It's so good and it's so fun. There's always a smile on my face."

In the final week of the season, Schiamberg had a personal achievement when she rolled two strikes in a row for the first time.

"I had never done that before," she said. "It's that commitment thing. Coming back each day I can show that I've grown. I knew at the beginning I wasn't as good as I am now."

Goldstein's brother, Brett, managed the team when he was in high school, her family is friends with the Thurmans — Vanessa's sister Lisa bowled for Scarsdale — and Goldstein is friends with Feuerstein, so it was a no-brainer to join the team despite not having any experience.

"I definitely asked for help a few times just to see if there was any coaching I could use," Goldstein said about starting out. "I feel like, and not that it came naturally, but I found how I like to bowl. I bowl with different fingers because I found that worked."

Having Vanessa Thurman as a role model also helped. "I really learned a lot from her just watching her bowl," Goldstein said. "She also gave me some tips."

Goldstein believes the best is yet to come for

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# Ski team

From page 2

Lazarus are setting the tone for the team.

“One in particular really needs to be spotlighted and that’s Elliott Zhang,” Liu said. “He has created a USSA style start list roster that he puts out to the team. He was in charge of all the merch for the kids. And it was on time and I don’t think that’s ever happened. He’s also been generous with his family hosting events.”

One of the biggest changes this year is that this winter is as close to pre-COVID as Scarsdale has seen in quite some time.

“To me it’s been really just a wonderful year for them to almost feel normal again after the pandemic,” Liu said. “This group is the first group I feel that have really bonded together as a team because it’s been more like normal. It’s interesting because some of the kids who are seniors we had multiple buses, kids were separated by cohorts and 6 feet when they started. The lodge was closed. There were masks. It’s just been a great experience so far

just because they seem to really get along, they like each other, they’re having fun and at the same time when it’s time to ski, practice or race, they focus and learn and figure out what they’re doing. It’s already been a great season.”

The pre-time trials pizza party was always a big deal for the ski team to get everyone to relax and have fun before the stress of skiing for position began. “We hadn’t done that,” Liu said. “This team had never experienced that because of the pandemic. This has just been great. It reminds you how fun ski team is.”

## BOYS’ & GIRLS’ SKIING

The Raiders had their second league race on Jan. 24 at Thunder Ridge. NS/JJ/S took first for the girls at 160.35. Scarsdale was second at 164.32, Hen Hud third at 167.18, Sleepy Hollow fourth at 185.02, Briarcliff/Byram Hills fifth at 221.69. Fox Lane did not have enough finishers and Yorktown did not have enough skiers to score as a team. Lakeland also had one skier.

Van Arsdale won the race in 27.11 ahead of Brynn Anthony of

Fox Lane (28.54) and Mia Bourla of NS/JJ/S (29.32).

Scarsdale also featured Deharveng in 33.37, Hernandez 34.20, Lazarus 34.42, DeCataldo 35.22, Malka 36.79, Weinberg 38.28, Audrey Kaplan 42.28. Natalie Beldner and Fitzgerald were unable to score.

NS/JJ/S won the boys’ race with 178.08. Yorktown took second at 181.55, Fox Lane third at 187.71, Scarsdale fourth at 188.20, Briarcliff/Byram Hills fifth at 229.08, Sleepy Hollow sixth at 260.65

John Hamilton of Fox Lane won in 30.81, followed by James Bysshe (32.49) and Porter Bysshe (33.44) of NS/JJ/S. Zhang led Scarsdale in 33.85 and was followed by Cheikin in 37.26, Roberts 38.53, Frank 39.26, Cavalier 39.30, Crane 40.40, Jeremiah 41.82 and Kaiden 42.11.

In the next race at Thunder Ridge on Jan. 29, Scarsdale’s girls placed first at 161.96, NS/JJ/S second at 165.90, Hen Hud third at 171.06, Sleepy Hollow fourth at 175.30, Fox Lane fifth at 193.15, Briarcliff/Byram Hills sixth at 226.39. Croton and Yorktown did not have enough skiers to score.

Van Arsdale won the race in 26.83, followed by Anthony in

28.17, Hen Hud’s Fotinin Chattman in 28.78, Hen Hud’s Yorgia Schattman 28.80, Bourla in 29.78 and Hen Hud’s Eleni Schattman in 30.19.

Hernandez was second for Scarsdale in 31.86, Deharveng next at 33.16, then Lazarus 34.92, Malka 35.19, Weinberg 35.65, DeCataldo 35.85, Fitzgerald 35.92 and Beldner 42.26.

In the boys’ race, NS/JJ/S was first at 178.74, Yorktown second at 183.59, Scarsdale third at 188.44, Fox Lane fourth 196.48, Briarcliff/Byram Hills fifth 237.13, Sleepy Hollow sixth 254.17. Croton had one skier.

Zhang was the runner-up to Hamilton 31.87-33.10, but topped the Bysshe brothers (33.59 and 33.61). Cheikin finished in 36.58, Hunter 38.53, Roberts 39.39, Kaiden 40.84, Crane 41.26, Cavalier 43.80, Jeremiah 47.54, Liam Mancini 48.12, Aaron Esterman 53.43.

**Up next:** The Raiders have an aut qualifier scheduled at Catamount for Feb. 5 and are hoping to make up their Jan. 16 race on Feb. 8. The Section 1 Championships will be held at Hunter Mountain at 9 a.m. on Feb. 13. States will be Feb. 26-27 at Whiteface Mountain.

# Bowlers

From page 7

the girls over the next couple of years.

“I feel like we didn’t win too many games, so next year we’ll have to get more people,” she said. “With Vanessa leaving we need more girls and I’m hoping we can improve points-wise.”

## BOYS’ BOWLING (79-26)

The Raiders swept Port Chester 7-0 on Jan. 22, 784-503, 820-455, 774-520, 2,378-1,478. Hoffman rolled 165-188-171, Tyler DeSChamps 157-171-168, Friedel

143-155-167, Levy 155-148-134, Kermanshahchi 164-158-134.

Two days later the team swept Pelham 7-0, 841-576, 770-546, 757-618, 2,368-1,740. Friedel shot 180-175-208, Hoffman 198-141-152, DesChamps 155-155-149, Kermanshahchi 171-141, Sperling 158-117, Levy 137, Ulrich 131.

On Jan. 29, Scarsdale won 5-2 over Yonkers, 786-628, 819-694, 659-712, 2,256-2,034. Friedel, Kermanshahchi and Hoffman rolled all three games. Friedel shot 181-190-172, Kermanshahchi 159-192-142, Hoffman 165-167-130. DesChamps and Ulrich rolled 146 and 135, respectively, in the first game. In the second, Jesse Magidson shot 147, Levy 147. In the third, Sperling

rolled 118, Kapner 89.

In the season finale 5-2 loss to Harrison, the scores were 873-803, 881-782, 686-709, 2,440-2,294. DeSChamps rolled a 150 and a 158 in his first and second game, but went out with a bang in his final game, posting a 237. Hoffman shot 175-146-175, Friedel 186-161, Ulrich 159-144, Kermanshahchi 133-123. In the third game Magidson shot 108, Levy 104, Sperling 85.

## GIRLS’ BOWLING (25-80)

The girls had only four bowlers on Jan. 22 and lost 7-0 to Port Chester, 444-424, 470-377, 495-434, 1,409-1,235. Goldstein shot 132-97-

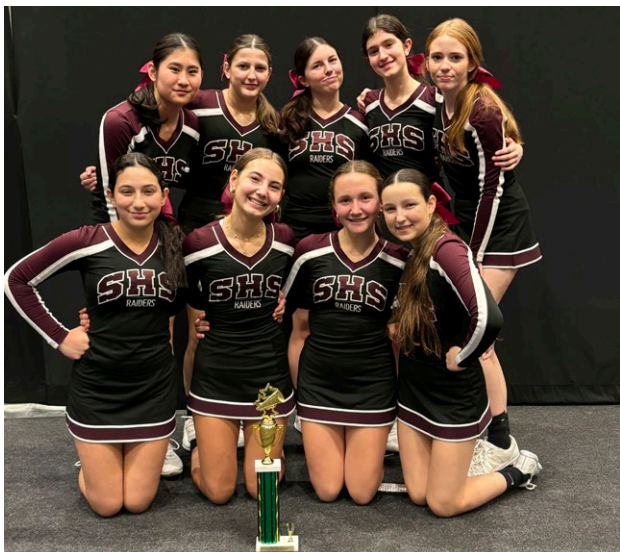
159, Thurman 111-96-117, Mirelle Schiamberg 89-72-107, Eloise Schiamberg 92-112-51.

The team lost 7-0 on Jan. 24 when they didn’t field any bowlers.

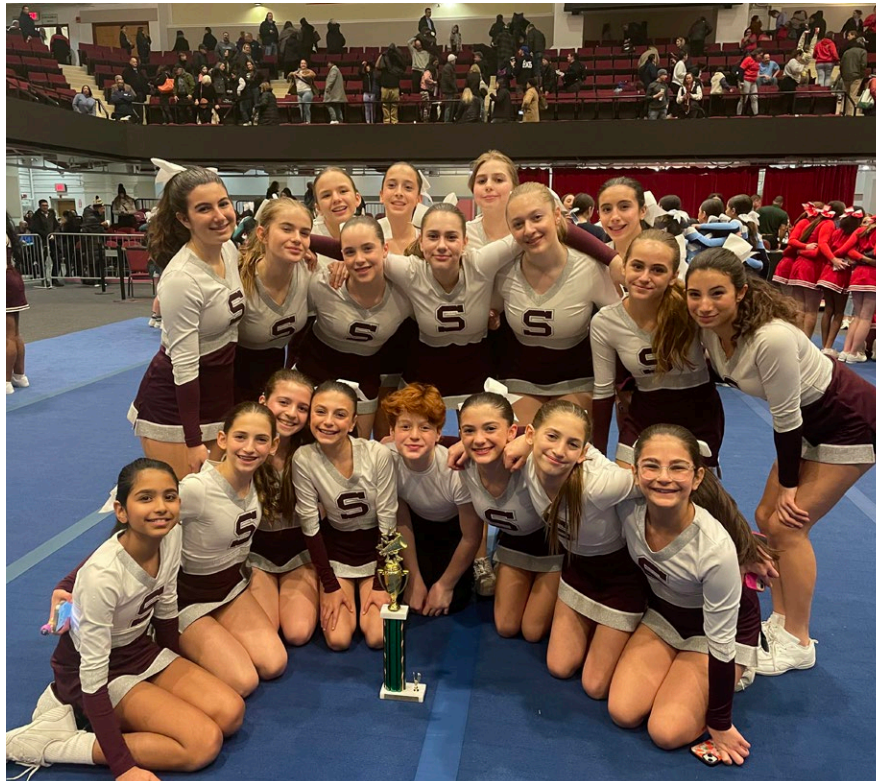
On Jan. 29, the team lost 7-0 to Yonkers, 502-473, 612-448, 577-487, 1,691-1,408. Thurman led with 148-135-130. Goldstein shot 91-82-112, Mirelle Schiamberg 91-61-114, Eloise Schiamberg 75-85-69, Feuerstein 68-85-62.

In the finale against Harrison, the Raiders got swept 7-0 on Jan. 31, 550-478, 542-488, 554-512, 1,646-1,378. Thurman shot 109-128-142, Eloise Schiamberg 121-88-66, Goldstein 89-95-132, Mirelle Schiamberg 80-85-100, Feuerstein 79-92-72.

## CHEERLEADING COUNTY CHAMPIONS!



The Scarsdale High School junior varsity cheerleading team placed first in Class A at the Westchester County Cheerleading Invitational on Jan. 30. Front row: Camille Savignano, Abigail Florin, Emma Steinberg, Zoe Kofman. Back row: Toko Ishizuka, Emma Reis, Laela Bellew, Eleanor Orad, Vivienne Ryan.



Photos Courtesy of Scarsdale Cheerleading

The Scarsdale Middle School modified cheerleading team placed first in the co-ed division at the Westchester County Cheerleading Invitational on Jan. 30. Front row: Raiya Mian, Brooke Kessner, Lois Levy, Nicole Sensel, Cooper Broff, Natalie Goldstein, Amanda Kessner, Abigail Finger. Middle row: Ivy Fischer, Sabrina Bunnnett, Ashley Crowley, Finley Weston, Emery Kirwan, Abigail Stockton, Nicolette Savignano. Back row: Trinity Lulgjuraj, Isabella Lins, Alice Anosova, Sally Steinberg. Not pictured: Rachel Craig.



# Girls' tournaments spotlight growing sport

From page 5

prior experience, the beginning was very challenging both physically and mentally," Higgins said. "Yet my teammates and three coaches were very supportive and helped me learn everything with a smile. I immediately felt close with all of my teammates and I've never felt a bond this strong from an athletic team. I fell in love with the sport and the values it teaches. Despite the difficult practices, every day I walked in looking forward to what I would learn next and I left feeling proud of my progress."

As a rookie, Higgins didn't look at the big picture of wins and losses, instead focusing on smaller goals like working a move or fighting through a situation.

"Overall, I am so happy I chose to join this sport and the friendships I made with the other girls, the life lessons and the conditioning we did will stay with me forever," Higgins said. "I hope to pursue some form of wrestling in my college career. I love 'Ders wrestling."

Lopez said she made a "spur of the moment" decision to join, egged on by Higgins. Lopez saw it as a way to stay active and have a new experience as a senior. She called the season "one-of-a-kind."

"I have made friends with these girls in a way I have never really done in any of the sports I played," Lopez said. "The team as a whole has also been super supportive and welcoming to me when I first joined. I never felt out of place, even if I was a beginner learning moves some of my teammates know by heart.

"I did, however, find it challenging to push myself physically and mentally in a way I never did before. A big part of wrestling is conditioning yourself to become the best version of a wrestler, teammate and person you can be. While this was a challenge, it was also my greatest reward. I now know I can push myself to do bigger and better things in life and that no matter how many falls I take I just need to get back up."

Felicity Bennett got started much earlier than most others, by putting her Brazilian jiu-jitsu background to the test as a seventh-grader on the wrestling mat. Going from the only one to a group of five and then seven, plus whatever number comes her way senior year, has been the most rewarding.

"It was quite tough being the only girl at the start, but because I enjoyed it I didn't want to give it up," Bennett said. "Wrestling is such a fun and different sport, so the fact that more and more girls have been interested has allowed us to create our own kind of community within the team. I hope that the team continues to grow even once I graduate



From top, Jackie Goldberg, Felicity Bennett and Gabby Lopez.

and I'm so glad that I've been able to play a major part in the growth of girls' wrestling at Scarsdale."

Goldberg and Steggall are both halfway through their varsity careers and have high hopes for their junior and senior seasons. For the November 2022 preseason, Steggall didn't actually think she would make it to

through to the actual season, but she is "grateful" she stuck it out because of everything she has learned.

"I have learned the importance of building relationships within the team and the importance of not giving up," Steggall said. She added, "Next year I am looking to push myself to improve more and work a

lot harder than I did this year. Even though wrestling is an individual sport I have learned that teamwork and support from teammates is one of the most important parts of this sport.

Steggall came in with a judo background. She had picked that up to learn self-defense, continued with it and figured wrestling could be a fun challenge.

"I have grown to love the girls' tournaments," she said. "It's a great time for team bonding. Having the girls' tournaments on back-to-back weekends I felt was beneficial because we had more of an idea of the people we were going against and what we needed to improve on for the next weekend. The Edgemont Tournament was the last tournament of the season so I believe a lot of people on the team, including me, felt more pressure to do our best."

Goldberg was a competitive gymnast for years — talk about being strong and tough! — but a back injury sidelined her. She was looking for another sport where strength and athleticism would come into play and also found judo as an eighth grader. She was interested in wrestling, but "didn't want to be the only girl."

"Looking back I should have just joined and not have been concerned if girls were doing it or not," Goldberg said.

Goldberg recruited Liebman and Steggall and the rest is history.

Ending the season with two straight tournaments was a great reward, though Goldberg would like to see more girls' events offered not only for the wrestling aspect, but the team bonding. Goldberg said Peekskill's draws were more balanced, while the Edgemont tourney was "a more competitive and stressful environment."

"In both tournaments the girls are extremely nice and friendly no matter your skill or if you won or lost," she said.

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# Raiders pumped for future of girls' wrestling

From page 9

The girls' tournaments can be eye-opening, according to Szerlip.

"When they finally get to wrestle girls they find out they're better than they think they are," he said. "They realize they can stay with them, but they also realize women's wrestling is pretty good. Some of them are just so good. So they see they can elevate their game and go wrestle with the boys.

"There are a lot of girls in our section like Adriana Palumbo [of Pleasantville], who is ranked fourth in the nation and has over a .500 record against boys in the section. The girls can look to that as women's wrestling is growing. It's more popular, not just with them at Scarsdale. It's everywhere and it's good for them to see that."

## GIRLS' WRESTLING

In addition to the two starters seeing action against the boys all season, there were two girls' tournaments to end the season. The first was the girls'-only event at Peekskill on Jan. 20, the second the girls' brackets of the Edgemont Tournament, which began including girls in 2020 under then-head coach Pete Jacobson.

At Peekskill, 53 wrestlers competed in 12 brackets, the largest being 107 and 114 pounds with nine wrestlers each. Higgins was in a weight class of her own and was the default winner.

At 107 pounds, Liebman was pinned in 49 seconds, won in 1:00 and won 2-0, taking second place in



Caitlin Higgins, above, and Emma Steggall, right.

Pool A. Liebman lost the third place match. Steggall was in Pool B. She was pinned in :43, pinned in 1:00 and lost 4-2.

At 114, Goldberg was in Pool A, Daisy Bennett and Lopez in Pool B. Goldberg lost in :35, won in 1:18, lost and then won in :25. Bennett beat Lopez 2-0, lost in :23 and won in :23. She lost the third place match to Edgemont's Daisy Gilmore. After the loss to Bennett, Lopez won 9-3 and lost in :56.

Felicity Bennett's bracket at 126 had two other wrestlers. She was pinned in 1:05 and 3:02.

The Edgemont Tournament featured four weight division round robins.

three points, including the clincher, and Min scored two. Scarsdale beat Ardsley 5-4: Min scored three points, Mankova two, including the winner. Scarsdale beat Woodlands 6-3: Min scored three, Mankova two, Kate Sanchez one. Nyack topped Scarsdale 6-3: Min scored all three points.

Boys' foil: Tappan Zee won 6-3: Levin won two points, Beyers one. Ardsley won 8-1: Levin scored Scarsdale's lone point. Woodlands won 7-2: Levin scored both points. Nyack won 5-4: Levin scored three points, Beyers one.

Girls' foil: Ardsley swept Scarsdale 9-0. Scarsdale won 5-4 over Tappan Zee: Allamby scored three, including the winner, Bamji two. Woodlands won 5-4: Allamby and Bamji each scored twice. Scarsdale won 6-3: Bamji score three, Sannicandro two, Allamby one.

On Jan. 27 the Raiders came back with a full day of fencing and two more weeks of practice under their belts.

Boys' épée: Mamaroneck won 7-2: Reindel and Witham each

In the lightest division, Liebman pinned Genesis Garcia of White Plains in 1:03. Liebman lost by medical forfeit in the next match and was unable to wrestle her final match.

Steggall was pinned in 1:00 by Harper Kelsey of Hackley. Steggall lost in :37 to FDR's Sophia Serino in the second match. In the third round, Izzy Nesser of Mamaroneck pinned Steggall in 1:08.

Scarsdale had Goldberg, Daisy Bennett, Felicity Bennett and Lopez wrestle in the second weight class.

Goldberg opened with a loss to Gilmore in 1:22. Goldberg was pinned by Dover's Lauren Palmer in 1:07. She lost 10-5 to Tabata



Sanchez of Port Chester in the final round.

Felicity Bennett was pinned in 2:30 by Putnam Valley's Maddie Keeler in her opener. She then got pinned by Aca Torres of Suffern in 38 seconds. In her final match, Ashley Aucancela of Chester pinned Bennett in 1:18.

Daisy Bennett won her first match in 39 seconds over Sanchez. Gilmore pinned Bennett in 5:00 in the second match. Bennett was pinned by Lauren Palmer of Dover in 3:55 in her finale.

Lopez lost in :46 to Palmer and then lost her final two matches due to medical forfeit.

Higgins wrestled in the top weight class. She lost in 2:34 to Lauren Garcia of White Plains, in 4:41 to Jordyn Scarlett of Eastchester and 1-0 to Alison McGovern of Chester.

## Fencers find their footing in first year of competition

From page 6

get me up to speed with it," he said. "I wasn't expected to be great, but you just fence as much as possible and you start to get better. Three years later I haven't really taken any lessons yet. I just do it through this in the winter. Tennis is still my main sport, but I'm having a lot of fun going to competitions. I don't win them all, but I'm having a lot of fun."

## BOYS' & GIRLS' FENCING

At Scarsdale's first ever Super Saturday on Jan. 13, the Raiders fielded boys' épée, girls' épée, boys' foil and girls' foil teams.

Boys' épée: Ardsley won 6-3: Rode won two points, Reindel one. Tappan Zee won 6-3: Knudsen, Sohn and Rode each won a point. Woodlands edged Scarsdale 5-4: Witham, Knudsen, Sohn and Rode each won a point. Nyack also won narrowly 5-4: Rode and Sohn each won two points.

Girls' épée: Scarsdale won 5-4 over Tappan Zee: Mankova scored

## Section 1 Fencing Championships, Feb. 10 at Ardsley

All schools qualify for the Sectional Tournament. Seeding in the Sectional Championship is determined by League standing (ties will be broken by indicators.)

Format:

- Foil Sectional Championships: 9 schools promoted to Sectionals to fence in an incomplete direct elimination tableau of 16, with fencing for placement down to 9.
- Épée Sectional Championships: 7 schools promoted to the Sectionals to fence in an incomplete direct elimination tableau of 8, with fencing for placement down to 7.

—Section 1 fencing handbook

scored. Scarsdale bested Irvington 5-4: Rode scored three, including the clincher, Knudsen two. Arlington swept 9-0. Clarkstown won 6-3: Rode, Sohn and Knudsen each scored.

Girls' épée: Scarsdale was unable to field a team.

Boys' foil: Mamaroneck won 6-3: Levin scored twice, Beyers once. Scarsdale won 5-4: Levin scored three times, including the

game-winner, while Beyers and Morgulas each scored one. Scarsdale beat Arlington 5-4. Levin scored three, with another clincher, Mogulas and Beyers one each. Clarkstown won 6-3: Beyers scored two, Levin one.

Girls' foil: Mamaroneck won 5-4: Min scored three points, Allamby one. Scarsdale beat Irvington 7-2: Allamby scored three, Min three, Sannicardo one.

Photos by Andy Hill



# Cheer gets taste of big venue at counties

From page 1

and she was already transitioning from a flyer to a base, having last been a base in middle school.

Despite all of the changes, it was a relatively smooth transition for Ryan.

“There’s definitely a different dynamic because all of the coaches changed, but I know a lot of the people on my team already,” she said. “It just feels very welcoming. I missed the atmosphere of competitions and love my team so much. It felt good coming back. I really missed it.”

Ryan began shifting back to a base during spring clinics, so she just picked up that training in the fall to continue bolstering her skills. She’s enjoyed working with the younger cheerleaders to ensure a strong future for the program.

“In my opinion I think it’s kind of nice knowing it’s my last year but it’s their first year and I get to be a part of that,” Ryan said. “That makes me happy. I know when I come back from college I’m still going to be popping in and saying, ‘Hi.’”

The fact that the team is already doing advanced skills amazes Ryan. They are also building a bond with the new coaches. Whatever happens at nationals and then sectionals is all part of the journey towards having a veteran team next fall and winter.

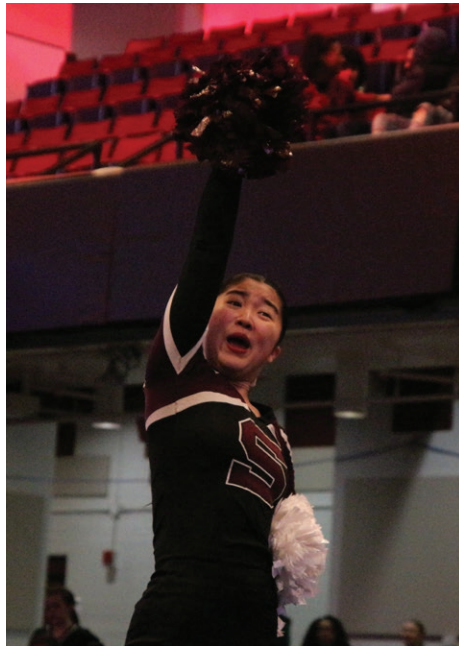
But first postseason. “We just have do full-out after full-out after full-out in practice, just doing our full routine full-out,” Ryan said. “That drills in muscle memory. I’m really excited for my second year at nationals.”

Sophomore flyer Cianna Amicucci is a main contributor back from last year’s senior-heavy team. She said there was some nerves coming into the season, but the team’s progress has erased any doubts.

“We’ve really just been working on executing and advancing our skills so we’re at a higher level,” she said. “We have come a very long way. We started with very basic skills and now we’re at varsity-level skills. They’re catching up to our skill level and I love the team so much. We’re so close.”

The boost of taking second at regionals really stuck with the team. They’re hoping to clean some things up from counties to be at their best at nationals.

Amicucci and the coaches have been giving the team tips in



Photos by Todd Sliss

Scarsdale showed spirit at the Westchester County Center.

advance of going to the biggest meet of their lives.

“We’re extremely excited,” Amicucci said about returning to nationals. “We’ve been telling them to focus on the team and focus on yourself. There’s going to be a lot of cool teams and difficult stunts hitting and really

hard tumbling passes on the mats, but we’ve just got to focus on ourselves.”

Head coach Franny Donahue and assistant Arianna Mafes realize how difficult the year has been, but are already seeing the rewards as their main goal is to instill confidence in their squad.

“I think more than anything we want to see them get more comfortable,” Mafes said. “You can tell that they have natural anxiety and we’re trying to get them to feel comfortable, especially in a bigger arena like this. It’s easier to crack and they have to get comfortable doing whatever skills it is. In practice the skills hit, but it’s very hard whenever they have a competition and they’re anxious.”

Donahue noted that the girls are used to competing in high school gyms, calling the county center “a huge arena.” Experiencing competitions of all sizes is important.

“It gives them more exposure to the sport, especially if they plan to continue in college,” Donahue said. “When they go to college it’s going to be all big arenas like this for a basketball game or a football game. Again, it gives them that confidence.”

The coaches have seen the most improvement in the team’s jumps and overall sharpness of the routines. Stunting is a major priority for the offseason as the team has moved past the basics.

“This year is a stepping stone and next year is going to be much better,” Mafes said. “They got a lot of exposure to what varsity cheer is all about. Modified didn’t go to counties or regionals or any of these big competitions in the past, so they don’t have exposure coming in. It’s exposure and confidence to build off that.”

The coaching staff plans to hold open gyms in the offseason and resume going to team camp in August during preseason again.

“We have a pretty big freshman and sophomore class, so by the time they’re seniors they’ll hopefully be a great team,” Mafes said. “They’ll also be more used to everything next year.”

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*The boost of taking second at regionals really stuck with the team. They’re hoping to clean some things up from the Westchester County Cheerleading Invitational to be at their best at UCA Nationals.*