

EYE ON THE TARGET

McCallum hosts largest
archery tournament ever
in Austin, plans to keep
growing sport

STORY BY CAMILLA
VANDEGRIFT

sophomore
Brooke "lo"
Zarnikau

senior
Sadie
Swinney

junior
Melea
Carman

senior
Diego
Custard

Coach
Nick
Kalakanis

senior
Jada
Gonzales

senior
Maya
Julien

Graphic by Nate Williams.

ARCHERY TEAM RUNS, WINS

The archery team hosted the biggest tournament ever held in Austin in the large gym Dec. 14-15, with schools from all educational levels, public and private, participating in the competition. In addition to this record, the Mac team also shot its highest score ever, 3309 points. Senior Theo Northcutt placed first in the male high school division with an individual score of 285, and sophomore Carley Lardizabal placed first for high school females, scoring 283.

Northcutt finished his first-place effort with a final round of 49 from 15 meters, meaning he shot four bullseyes and a nine with his five arrows. It is much harder to shoot that well from 15 meters than from 10. Each archer shoots 30 arrows in a competition, three sets of five from 10 meters and three sets of five from 15 meters, for a total of 300 possible points. Several archers at the tournament achieved perfect rounds of 50 from 10 meters. Both Northcutt and Lardizabal posted one 50-point round from 10 meters. Three other Mac archers also posted perfect 50 rounds: Althea Bradbury-Flores, Wren Griffiths and Henry Peacock.

Shooting on her 16th birthday and filming a documentary about archery in her downtime, Lardizabal followed her first-place score with a victory in the one-arrow shootoff,

in which archers pair up and shoot one arrow. The closest to the center of the target advances to the next round until only one archer remains, which in flight 12—the flight filled mostly with McCallum archers—was Lardizabal. She shot her first-ever perfect 50 at a distance of 10 meters away from the target and achieved a personal best score. The shoot-off is meant to be fun and not competitive, but Lardizabal did win a Bullseye Bakery cookie and a one-of-a-kind pen made from a broken arrow by head coach Nick Kalakanis.

When she was in elementary school, Lardizabal heard that she could take archery as a PE credit at Lamar Middle School, but her plans to start archery in sixth grade were delayed by the COVID quarantine.

“I joined archery in seventh grade, and I still had to do PE, but whatever,” Lardizabal said. “I joined, and I actually really enjoyed the community. Everyone is really nice.”

Following her time on the Lamar team,

Lardizabal continued archery when she got to high school, now in her second year on the Mac squad.

“This year we have a lot more freshmen,” Lardizabal said. “A lot of people came from Lamar, and they’re all really good because they’ve been doing archery since fifth grade, some of them third grade if they came from Highland Park [Elementary].”

The archery pipeline of Austin has historically started at Highland Park for the youngest archers in the area, and those students feed into Lamar and then McCallum, gaining new members along the way. Both Highland Park and Lamar had archers present at the December tournament, with some scoring higher

than the high schoolers.

Lamar archer Sophia Pedregon-Harrington posted the highest individual score overall with a 292, a score that included 15 straight bullseyes from 10 meters (three perfect 50 rounds) and a 49 from 15 meters. Lamar archer Miles Windler had the highest individual score for male archers with a 286.

“
[Coach Nick] understands teenagers, so he knows how to make practices fun and keep people engaged.”

—senior captain
Maya Julien

According to senior Diego Custard, the scale of the tournament and the involvement of other schools including Lamar caused some extra stress and preparation on the McCallum side of operations.

“I think the size of it set it apart from previous tournaments,” Custard said. “And made it harder to do everything from inputting scores to managing and watching everyone during the times when

there were archers there.”

Setup in the gym for the record-breaking tournament was extensive, lasting from the end of the school day until around 9:30 p.m. on Friday.

“We had to be extra careful when we were moving equipment, marking shooting lines and taking the tournament down afterwards,” Custard said.

Senior captain Sadie Swinney recorded scores for the large number of archers competing in the tournament. After she competed in the eighth flight of the tournament, Swinney received a Nobility Award for work outside of the range and being involved with the team.

“It was really a group effort,” Swinney said. “We spent four hours setting up the curtains, quivers, decorations, prepping all the scorecards and equipment for scoring, so it was a lot of work, but I think it looked really good.”

Swinney was not the only archer to receive a Nobility Award for her work behind the scenes to make the tournament happen. Kalakanis also gave Nobility Awards to senior captain Maya Julien and junior captain Melea Carman. Kalakanis got emotional in discussing Julien’s strength of character in sticking with archery and her leadership role despite battling a tendinitis injury that made it hard for her to compete.



Senior Sadie Swinney’s two archery coaches Highland Park Elementary and Lamar Middle School archery coach Jim DeLine and McCallum coach Nick Kalakanis flank her for a group photo after she received a Nobility Award for her work running the McCallum Invitational Tournament. The McCallum archery team poses after their invitational tournament ended. Photos by Dave Winter.

INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENT

This year's seniors were freshmen during Kalakanis's first year of coaching Mac archery, so they will be his first class of graduates. Though Kalakanis stepped back from coaching during their sophomore year, seniors such as Julien have grown close to him during his time leading the team.

"We love him so much," Julien said. "He just makes archery fun. He understands teenagers, so he knows how to make practices fun and keep people engaged."

Lardizabal said Kalakanis is very close to the senior class, especially due to his young age and sarcastic humor.

"His voice cracked when he was giving a speech at the tournament about the seniors leaving," Lardizabal said. "He almost cried, which is a big deal."

The seniors have become close with each other over their four years on the team as well as the coach. Though archery has taken them as far as Utah for the national tournament, some of the biggest team bonding happens right in the McCallum gym, according to Julien.

"My favorite part of archery is practice because you just get to hang out with your buddies," Julien said. "The environment is very chill."

Julien said many of the seniors have not only been involved in archery at McCallum but also in middle school or even before then in elementary school.

"So the seniors specifically are really close," she said. "But the rest of the team is, too. There's freshmen and people who I would otherwise never talk to."

Kalakanis said it's heartbreaking for him to see his first round of seniors go.

"We've been through a lot of tournaments and a lot of practices," Kalakanis said. "We are a lot closer than the new people that come in because our archer-coach relationship hasn't really kicked in as much as it has with the graduating seniors, but after four years, it's built up quite a bit."

Kalakanis deserved a Nobility Award for running the tournament, but he was the one giving them out, so his captains recognized him between flights eight and nine with a surprise heartwarming speech and a gift basket of homemade treats and energy drinks.

Custard, who brought the gift basket to Kalakanis after the captains expressed their admiration for their coach, said the tournament demonstrated the progress of the archery program.

"I think it was an awesome way not only for the team to show the school that they are serious, but for McCallum to set an example for other schools around Austin," he said.

Some McCallum archers have been shooting since they were in elementary school, including Swinney, who joined the Highland Park team as a fifth-grader in the program's early years.

"My PE coach actually started it, and it was super tiny," Swinney said. "That year we ended up winning the state tournament, and I decided I wanted to continue shooting for as long as I could stay in a program."

That PE coach was Jim DeLine, who, according to Swinney, started an archery program at Lamar Middle, which then grew to McCallum and expanded to other schools in the Austin area. DeLine brought his teams of younger archers to the tournament and beamed from ear to ear because he could come to this tournament without having to run it himself as he has so often for the last decade. He thanked the McCallum coaches and archers for helping to sustain and grow the archery community in Austin.

Swinney said it is precisely that community which has made her stick with archery for so long.

"I really love shooting, but I also love being a part of such a unique community of people," Swinney said, "and getting to experience things and meet people I never would have otherwise."

"I love the community. Archery really helped me in middle school. It was my safe space."

*—sophomore
Carley Lardizabal*

Positive experiences with archery before high school have not just kept Swinney committed to archery but other team members as well, such as Lardizabal.

"I love the community," Lardizabal said. "It really helped me in middle school. It was my safe space."

Custard first joined an archery team when he was in sixth grade.

"I thought it sounded like an awesome team to be a part of," Custard said. "And me and my grandpa had shot bows in the past, so I wanted to get better at it."

Six years later, Custard is now a senior leader on the team. His role is to help with planning for events, teaching other archers and volunteering at tournaments such as the one from this weekend.

"I have always gone out of my way to volunteer and help the archery team," Custard said. "But now, I can be more of a role model, and I can help implement ideas I have for the team."

After years of being an underclassman, Custard said his experience allows him to help the team in ways he couldn't before.

"It's super cool being an older team member because people look up to you more," Custard said. "And while you have more responsibilities, you also have more say in what happens with the team."

Lardizabal said one thing many people don't know about archery is the discipline required for the sport.

"We're holding weapons," Lardizabal said. "If you turn the other way and hit someone, they're dead. Not everyone can do that."

The archery team is moving forward into the spring season with state and national tournaments coming up. Kalakanis said with these larger-scale competitions, he hopes his archers having life-changing experiences.

"But in a close second is improving our placement and making sure as a team and as individuals we're becoming better archers," Kalakanis said. "That's somewhat my main goal, closely behind making sure we have a close community and people there are welcome, and feeling like they're part of an amazing team."

The McCallum archery head coach Nick Kalakanis speaks at the Invitational Tournament. Photo by Dave Winter.

