

MIAMI-DADE SCHOLAR-ATHLETES

BOYS' FINALISTS



Miami Herald

Coral Reef High School's Ryan Sarafoglu, who overcame a benign tumor in his left femur last year, will try for a state championship in Jacksonville this weekend in the 1,600 meters.

Coral Reef's Ryan Sarafoglu is the Herald's Miami-Dade Boys' Scholar-Athlete of the Year

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At this time a year ago, the only way Coral Reef senior Ryan Sarafoglu could see the track at the state championships was on his laptop watching the live-stream of the event.

Sarafoglu, an accomplished cross-country and distance runner, had been forced to shut it down a couple of months earlier due to a tumor that developed in his left femur.

While luckily the tumor was benign, the setback gave Sarafoglu perspective and only reinforced something he knew already.

Sarafoglu is much more than

just a runner.

While focusing even more on his academics and community service projects, Sarafoglu would soon make it back on the course while earning a scholarship to attend Georgetown University.

Sarafoglu, a former first-team All-Dade runner, will compete for a state championship this weekend in Jacksonville in the 1,600 meters. He earned that chance while maintaining a 5.464 weighted GPA and scoring a 1470 on the SAT.

That academic and athletic balance is why Sarafoglu is this year's Miami Herald Boys' Scholar-Athlete of the Year for Miami-Dade County.

Sarafoglu, who ranks in the

top 2 percent of his senior class of over 800 at Coral Reef, hopes his running career will continue well beyond this weekend's meet; he plans to walk on and eventually earn a spot on Georgetown's prestigious cross-country and track teams.

Sarafoglu needed about four months of recovery time before he returned to running last fall.

But once he did, he still didn't feel the same.

"Slowly over the summer I was able to build back up and I bounced back pretty quickly, but I wasn't able to run to the standard I wanted to so that was disappointing," Sarafoglu said. "In track season, I feel like I got my mojo back and I feel like I'm racing even better than I was

before and I'm just extremely grateful for that."

Sarafoglu enters this weekend's Class 4A state meet with the fourth-fastest time in the 1600 meters and is hoping to at least earn a medal for a top 3 finish.

But regardless of what happens, his college future is set thanks to an accomplished resume off the track.

Besides his strong grades, Sarafoglu started a non-profit organization called Athletes for Access in January of 2021, which raises awareness for inclusion of athletes with intellectual disabilities in high school sports. This includes organizing a 5k run/walk that raised several thousand dollars for students

and a track meet with adaptive heats.

Both Sarafoglu's father, Alex, who has coached him the past two seasons at Coral Reef, and his older sister attended Georgetown so he has already followed one family tradition.

Sarafoglu, who plans to study government, said he could also end up trying to become an attorney like his father, and mother, Heather.

"You never know when your running career is over," Alex Sarafoglu said. "For him to be honored this way, I'd put that right up there with any of his other accomplishments."

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ERIC FERNANDEZ

Riviera Prep

Sports: Baseball, basketball, swimming.

Class rank: School does not rank.

College: Miami.

Athletic honors: Three-time first team All-Dade baseball.

Scholastic honors: 3.9/4.5 GPA, 1430 SAT; Full Bright Futures Scholarship.

Class schedule: AP Government, Calculus AP, Environmental Science AP, Macroeconomics AP.



MAX FONSECA

Columbus

Sport: Golf.

Class rank: 2nd of 450.

College: Pennsylvania.

Athletic honors: First team All-Dade golfer.

Scholastic honors: 3.98/5.5 GPA, 1520 SAT; Salutatorian, College Board AP Capstone Diploma, College Board AP Scholar with distinction, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Award, school's Academic Excellence Award all four years (top 10 GPA each year), National Honor Society, Math Honor Society, Science Honor Society, Mas Scholar.

Class schedule: AP Calculus BC, AP Computer Science Principles, AP Macroeconomics, AP English Literature, AP Physics C, Hon Social Justice, Hon World Religions (S), Hon Computer Applic (S), Team Sports 1, AP Microeconomics, AP U.S. Government, Hon Personal and Family Finance



MATTHEW HANDEL

Westminster Christian

Sports: Lacrosse, football.

Class rank: School does not rank.

College: West Point (United States Military Academy).

Athletic honors: Three-time first team All-Dade lacrosse, Academic All-American, All-Dade football honorable mention.

Scholastic honors: 3.96/5.15 GPA, 1370 SAT; Emerald Scholar at

Westminster Christian, National Honor Society, Science Honor Society, Math Honor Society, History Honor Society, English Honor Society.

Class schedule: AP Calculus BC, AP Capstone Research, AP English Lit & Comp 4, AP US Government, AP Macroeconomics, Honors Forensic Science, Physics.



LEO ISOM

Gulliver Prep

Sports: Swimming and water polo.

Class rank: School does not rank.

College: Florida.

Athletic honors: First team All-Dade goalie, district qualifier in swimming.

Scholastic honors: 3.87/5.37 GPA, 1510 SAT; AP Scholar with Distinction, Gulliver Merit Scholar,

Mu Alpha Theta Honors Society, Chinese Honors Society, Japanese Honors Society, Zeta Omicron Honors Society, Rho Kappa Honors Society, NHS, NSLI-Y Language learning grant recipient.

Class schedule: AP Literature and Composition, AP Physics C: Mechanics, AP Macroeconomics, AP Microeconomics, AP Chinese Language and Culture, AP Japanese Language and Culture, AP Calculus AB.



ROBERTO LEON

Belen Jesuit

Sports: Cross-country, track and field.

Class rank: Top 10.

College: Cornell.

Athletic honors: Member of state-qualifying 3,200-meter relay team, state cross country championship team.

Scholastic honors: 4.138 GPA, 1470/35 SAT/ACT; Honor Society.

Class schedule: Honors World history, Honors Philosophy, AP Calculus, AP Physics and mechanics, Honors Latin American History, AP Psychology, and Theology 12.



RYAN SARAFOGLU

Coral Reef

Sports: Cross-country, track and field.

Class rank: Top 2 percent of 800.

College: Undecided.

Athletic honors: All-Dade first team cross-country, state qualifier in track in the 1600, 3200 and 3200 relay.

Scholastic honors: 3.964/5.464 GPA, 1470 SAT; National Merit

Commended Scholar, AP Scholar with Distinction, IB Diploma candidate, Top 2 percent of class, Miami Herald Silver Knight Nominee in Athletics.

Class schedule: IB English, IB Theory of Knowledge, IB French, AP Government, AP Macroeconomics, IB Contemporary History, IB Biology.

OTHER NOMINEES

Archbishop Carroll: Giovanni Reyes (football).

Braddock: Cesareo Beruvides (football, wrestling, track and field).

Colonial Christian: Emmanuel Marin (soccer, volleyball, bowling, cross-country).

Coral Park: Ricardo Uzcategui (basketball, volleyball, cross-country).

Cutler Bay: Sebastian Varela (cross-country, track and field).

Goleman: William Sebastian Gil (volleyball).

Hialeah Gardens: Ryan Antho-

ny Cimino (football, golf, soccer, track and field, badminton).

Hialeah-Miami Lakes: Curtis Everett (football, track and field, tennis, wrestling, baseball).

Killian: Alexandro Forte (baseball).

Krop: Douglas Katz (baseball).

La Salle: Alexander Toledo (basketball, track and field).

MAST: Francesco Cascone (cross-country).

Miami Beach: Caleb Beriman (swimming, water polo, bowling).

Miami Country Day: Dylan Smiley (swimming).

Miami High: Armando Ruano (track and field, football, water polo, golf, tennis, bowling).

Miami Springs: Jordan Perez (baseball).

Monsignor Pace: Matthew Arrieta (football, soccer, tennis, track and field).

Mourning: Lorenzo Fedele (cross-country, soccer, track and field, volleyball).

North Miami Beach: Xavier Walker (football, track and field).

North Miami: Shawn Pierre (wrestling).

Palmer Trinity: Giancarlo

Vidal (soccer, track and field).

Ransom Everglades: Gabe Menendez de Alencar (football, basketball, volleyball).

South Dade: D'Marion Ivey (basketball, football, track and field).

South Miami: Johender Suarez (soccer, bowling).

Southwest: Lester Martinez (wrestling).

Sunset: Daniel Perruc (baseball).

TERRA: Joshua Lucas Burke (tennis, hockey).

Varela: Sebastian Gonzalez

(baseball).

Credits: The Miami Herald's Miami-Dade Boys' Scholar Athletes were selected by a panel of Executive Sports Editor John Devine, Deputy Sports Editor Andre Fernandez and sportswriter Jordan McPherson based on nominations from school athletic directors. Photos provided by the schools of each finalist/winner.

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