

The ARMENIAN WEEKLY



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2023 - AYF OLYMPICS SPECIAL ISSUE

DETROIT DOMINATION



The winning Detroit "Kopernik Tandourjian" Team (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)

By Bob Tutunjian

LANDOVER, MD—The Detroit AYF "Kopernik Tandourjian" (K-T) Chapter won its first Olympics Cup in almost a decade, racking up a total of 151 points during the Sunday track and field meet—more than the next two teams combined. It accumulated a clean total of 200 points, becoming the first team to hit the double century mark since Providence in 2015. It was the 16th time that Detroit's Team K-T won an Olympic Cup, second only to Providence's 41.

Detroit entered 42 members and scored 49 points during the Friday events, trailing defending three-time champ Greater Boston by 15 points. By the end of the Sunday morning events, the Greater Boston Nejdehs had expanded their lead to 101-79. Yet after the Detroit ladies finished first, second and third in the 100 meter dash, they grabbed the lead and never looked back. Detroit was led by veteran high scorers Knar Topouzian and Melanie Sarafian, as well as Sasoun Tcholakian, who won the pentathlon for the third straight year. This trio was helped by Sasoun's twin brother Mher and rookie swimmer Natalya Katcherian, who each scored 13 points. Overall, Detroit copped 19 golds and 15 silvers, with six of those firsts coming in relay events. In fact, they won all five relays during the track meet for the second straight year.

Greater Boston scored 156.5 points, which was only 9.5 less than last year's championship effort. They entered 38 members, which was 10 fewer than last year. Once again, they were led

by Anoush Krafian, who won the pentathlon in record fashion and is now undefeated for eight consecutive years, the longest such streak in AYF history. She was helped by Nareg Minassian's three swimming golds, as well as sister Knar Krafian (13 points) with Alex Avakian and newcomer Nora Vartanian, each of whom scored 10 points. The Nejdehs brought home 13 golds and 14 silvers, with four of those golds in swimming relays.

Philadelphia accumulated 72.5 points to place third and brought 35 athletes to Washington. The Sebouhs featured high scorer Alex Dardarian, who swept the distance events. They edged out Providence, who finished fourth with 64 points. Team Green had high scorer Natalia Oganessian in the pool, along with thrower Zach Semerjian, who won 13 points.

New Jersey had the most entrants of any chapter with 46. Their 49 points earned them fifth place, with over half of those points scored on Friday. Their neighbors in New York scored 30 points for sixth place. They had triple sprint winner Avo Sarkissian and veteran Lilit Kevorkian, who won 10 points. Meline and Armen Almasian together scored 18 of North Andover's 19 points, which was one more than Chicago in eighth place.

For the first time in Olympics history, a member at large scored, as Arman Edilyan from Ohio had 11 points in the pool. Granite City took 10th place with 8 points, while the host Washington chapter had 3 points. Racine and Middlesex County West scored 2 and 1 points respectively to complete the chapter scoring list. There were seven

other chapters that entered events but did not score, including Sydney, Australia. A total of 326 members entered events, which eclipsed the recent high of 311.

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Six high scorer trophies were awarded this year to three men and three women. All the women and one of the men were high scorers in 2021, and the other two men were runners under the age of 20.

The first triple gold winner of the weekend was swimmer Natalia Oganessian from Providence. She won the 100 yard freestyle and 50 yard breaststroke, and she completed her day with a record in the 50 yard butterfly. Oganessian is a junior at the University of Rhode Island (URI) majoring in chemical engineering. She was a member of the swim team at East Greenwich High School and now competes for the URI club team. She lost access to her practice pool in August and was concerned about doing well at Olympics—but her worries were clearly unfounded. Her favorite part of the weekend is meeting so many people from all over and making great memories every year. She also thanks her Varantian teammates for their support and kindness.

Greater Boston's Nareg Minassian also won three swimming events, as he did in 2021. He started with the 50 yard and 100 yard freestyles and finished with the 50 butterfly. Minassian is a sophomore at Yale University majoring in molecular, cellular and developmental biology pursuing a pre-med track. His best events at Yale were the 50 and 100 yard freestyles (best times, 20.13 and 44.47) as well as the

100 yard breaststroke and 200 IM (best times, 55.29 and 1:50.07). His team captain gave him permission to miss two pre-season practices to come to Washington. Minassian says that every day and night of Olympics weekend is so much fun. He and his friends have already booked their rooms for Olympics weekend in Detroit.

Melanie Sarafian from Detroit dominated the three sprint events on the track. She increased her career total to 76 points in her six years of participation and is third on the active scoring list. Sarafian is a recent graduate of the University of Michigan and plans to apply to dental school. She said that the chapter practices this summer were important for her success and thanks the dedicated coaches for their organization and motivation. Sarafian was very excited to win the Cup for the first time in her six years of competing. While the chapter members enjoy spending time together at Olympics, winning made it a little sweeter.

Detroit's Knar Topouzian was the fourth high scorer, winning golds in the field events to remain the top active scorer now with 121 points. This year, it was the discus throw, combined with the high and triple jumps. She is in her third and final year of law school and plans to work at a midsize insurance company after passing the bar. Topouzian said that she knew the team was behind going into Sunday's events, but she credits their wins in both of the early 4x100 relays for getting the ball rolling. Next year will be her final year of Olympics competition. While she does not want this era of her life to end, Topouzian is

looking forward to hopefully raising the Cup one more time at home in Detroit.

The final two triple gold medalists won all six of the men's running events, a feat last accomplished in 2004. Avo Sarkissian from New York won the sprint events in relatively easy fashion. He said that due to the extreme heat, he tried to run the times needed to secure enough points for his chapter to win. In the future, he would like to go after the record times in those events. Sarkissian studies computer engineering at Northeastern University and runs for their club track team. While on the track team at Cornwall Central High School, he had a PR of 51.18 in the 400, and his indoor 4x400 relay team placed fifth at the New Balance national championships, earning All-American status. He enjoyed supporting his fellow Hyortik members on Sunday and had a great time at the dances.

Alex Dardarian swept the three distance events for Philadelphia. Like Sarkissian, he tried to conserve his energy while running in the sweltering heat. Dardarian is a junior at Haverford High School and competes for their track and cross country teams. He placed eighth in the 1600 at the PAISAA Championships in May with a time of 4:38.33, his personal best. Dardarian has attended Camp Hagiastan since the age of seven and joined the AYF Juniors when he was 10. While he has been going to Olympics with his family for many years and competed last year, he said it was a surreal experience to do a chapter dance with his Philly

CONTINUED ON PAGE A8



This page was sponsored by:
Elizabeth Chouldjian



Thank you for an unforgettable weekend, both for the closeness of community and for the solidarity with Artsakh.

The Washington, D.C. “Ani” Chapter would like to thank everyone for making the 89th Annual AYF-YOARF Olympics a truly unforgettable experience. We wanted to put on an amazing show for the Armenian community, and we were simply astounded by the results. We were humbled with hundreds of positive messages from awe-inspired attendees of the monumental weekend.

All of this began in a small room almost two years ago on Nov. 1, 2021. A dedicated group of ten people had the first Steering Committee meeting with one goal in mind: put on the best AYF Olympics we can. 672 days later, more than 2,000 attendees checked out of their hotel rooms with their hearts filled with camaraderie and joy. We are grateful to all of our athletes, attendees, volunteers, alumni and community members for making the weekend possible and for your continuous support of the AYF-YOARF.

We can’t wait to see you next year in Detroit!



The Washington, D.C. AYF Olympics Steering Committee. Pictured top row (l to r) Aram Balian, Nayiri Shahnazarian, Hratch Najarian, Shirag Ohannesian, Mari Tikoyan, Elizabeth Chouldjian and Chris Hekimian; bottom row (l to r) John Altounian, Ara Abrahamian and Manoug Habibian

The ARMENIAN WEEKLY



AYF members carrying the Artsakh flag during Opening Ceremonies wearing their “End the Blockade” t-shirts (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



AYF members lead the march for Artsakh (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



The stands at AYF Olympics (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



Protesters hold letters outside of the White House reading “120,000 Reasons” (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)

WATERTOWN, Mass.—AYF Olympics in Washington, D.C. saw hundreds of dedicated athletes, alumni and supporters descend on the nation’s capital, excited for the 89th annual games and laden with heavy hearts for the brave people of Artsakh. The mix of emotions was palpable, from the joyful reunions in the hotel’s lobby and on the athletic fields to the determined and forceful march and protest at the White House.

Everywhere we went, attendees expressed happiness to see old friends, to make new ones and to cheer on the athletes, while longing for freedom and justice for the Armenians of Artsakh. That determination led hundreds of participants to join the “SOS Artsakh!” march to the White House where the speakers and crowd demanded that President Joe Biden stop all military aid and sanction Azerbaijan for its genocidal actions.

While making our way to the White House, some people expressed anger and disbelief that, more than 100 years after the 1915 Armenian Genocide, we were still marching for the rights of our people to live on our indigenous lands without fear of persecution and death. Marching...a sadly ironic method of protest as our ancestors were marched to their deaths, and several short weeks later, more than 100,000 Armenians were forced to “march” out of their homeland.

The D.C. Steering Committee and community kept Artsakh at the forefront of the entire weekend’s events. Varadian Spirit Award recipient Yeghisapet Chouldjian accepted the award on behalf of the brave people of Artsakh. During the opening ceremonies, every speaker urged action for Artsakh, and every athlete wore specially designed t-shirts emblazoned with the demand to “End the Blockade.”

The loss of Artsakh led the *Weekly* team to postpone the publication of this year’s Olympics special issue, as the global Armenian community experienced disbelief and grief for our brothers and sisters enduring the catastrophic loss of lives and land. The ongoing humanitarian crisis requires all of us to direct our energies and resources to helping those who were forcibly displaced from their homes.

In these pages, you will read articles by our staunch team of reporters – Harry Derderian, Mark Gavor and Bob Tutunjian – that highlight the commitment of the athletes to persevere and reach new heights, the overwhelming support of the community and the devotion of all to Artsakh. These stories are accentuated by the action-packed and vibrant photography of Sona Gevorkian, Arev Kaligian and Tamar Kanarian.

We are grateful for such a dedicated team in bringing this year’s special issue to life. The members of the Armenian Youth Federation work endlessly for the Armenian people and nation, remaining committed to the Armenian Cause – a free, independent and united Armenia. The AYF Olympics and the always anticipated special issue are time-honored traditions that we seek to uphold, especially during times of adversity and tragedy. With that in mind, and with Artsakh in our hearts, we present the 2023 AYF Olympics Special Issue.

Most improved in our hearts

The AYF-YOARF New York “Hyortik” Chapter had an incredible time at the 89th AYF Senior Olympics in Washington, D.C. this past Labor Day weekend. Our chapter had an amazing alumni, senior and junior member turnout. We are so proud of all the chapter’s athletes and want to highlight the success of three members who received gold medals! For three consecutive years, Alex Kassabian has placed first in men’s golf. On the track, Lil-it Kevorkian won gold in the women’s 800 meter and 1600 meter runs, and Avo Sarkissian secured first place in the men’s 100 meter, 200 meter and 400 meter dashes.

Early Friday morning, two Hyortik members started the weekend off strong on the golf course. “It was great to participate in different sporting events with Armenians near and far. Always a new opportunity to meet other AYFers and develop long-lasting friendships. I cannot be more proud of my brother for retaining his golf title for a third year in a row!” said Armen Kassabian. Our reigning golf champion Alex Kassabian shared, “It is a pleasure to com-

pete and have fun with other Armenians at the AYF Olympics. Always nice to create new friendships and rekindle old ones at an incredible event.” Our Friday victory boosted our chapter’s morale for the weekend going forward.

On Saturday, the NY Hyortiks played a challenging softball game against the west coast. This year, we strengthened efforts to host more softball practices and scrimmages when possible. “It was great to see so many athletes and friends over the weekend,” shared softball coach James Zobian. “Overall, the Hyortiks improved immensely at hitting in softball and will continue to get better.” The chapter currently has several 16-year-old members who will soon become Senior AYF members. Our younger athletes and junior members were extremely excited to participate in softball and cheer on their Senior members. “My first year playing at Senior Olympics was so much fun. I was so excited to finally participate and be an athlete, which I’ve always wanted to do ever since I joined AYF. I’m so excited to soon become a member of the Senior chapter

and keep participating at Olympics,” said Junior Chapter chair Sareen Bedrossian.

Throughout the weekend, our chapter was unified and showed up to each other’s events to support one another. After the opening ceremonies on Sunday, our athletes took on the track finals to give them everything they had. “I had an amazing time competing at my first AYF Olympics as an athlete. It was great to see the support I received from my chapter, being a new member, and I really enjoyed watching and cheering for my teammates,” said Avo Sarkissian. Kevorkian, who has been an active AYF member for years, was pumped to compete. She faced challenging competition in all her runs but raced smart until the end. “I’m so lucky that I got the opportunity to come to Senior Olympics this year. Not only was I happy to see everyone but also brought home two gold medals for the AYF NY Hyortik Chapter. My summer training has been really consistent, and I knew I was confident coming into Sunday for the track events. Breaking six minutes in the mile wasn’t something that I thought would even happen due



NY “Hyortiks” starting softball team lineup

to the heat, but I was able to stay strong in my race and win,” Kevorkian said.

The Olympics gave the NY Hyortiks the chance to celebrate a successful year, in which they developed a close-knit circle of supportive *ungers* by hosting multiple monthly events, a regional event and local Hai Tahd efforts. Chapter chair Isabel Hagobian said, “As an AYF Junior, I never experienced the feeling of seeing the NY Hyortiks on the Olympics scoreboard

strong. I am thrilled to finally see my chapter on the way up and excited to have our Junior members look up to our senior athletes, so that in the future they too proudly represent our recently revived chapter.”

The NY Hyortiks placed sixth for the weekend and had the highest increase in points and participation in years. Thank you to the AYF Washington D.C. “Ani” Chapter for hosting, and we cannot wait to compete in Detroit next year!

SWIM

By Bob Tutunjian

At the Friday night swim meet, only three points separated Greater Boston and Detroit going into the final four events and the relays. Yet the Nejdehs dominated those events while winning the final three relays to score a total of 61 points, which was 17 more than Detroit. Last year’s swim meet winner Providence ended up third scoring 24, while Philadelphia was close behind with 19 points. New Jersey and Chicago each had seven points, and Racine completed the chapter scoring with two points.

WOMEN’S SWIMMING

Natalia Oganessian from Providence won three events, just as she did in 2021 at her first Olympics, coming back strong after losing two close races last year. Oganessian started off by winning the 50 yard breaststroke with a time of 35.07, which was just off the 2009 record of 34.80. Veteran Ally Devedjian from Chicago topped Philadelphia’s Gabrielle Sickler for second place. Oganessian then cruised the 100 freestyle in 56.25 seconds to win by over eight seconds. Nora Vartanian from Greater Boston touched out Hailey Gillett of Detroit for silver by 0.4 seconds. Oganessian finished her triple sweep by shattering the 50 yard butterfly record by over seven seconds with a time of 28.69. Rookie Natalya Katcherian from Detroit took second, while Vartanian settled for bronze. Katcherian started the individual event finals by winning the 25 freestyle, which was the closest race of the day. Her time of 13.87 was only 0.01 better than that of Devedjian, and the result had to be confirmed by both judges. Alisa Ficiciyan took third for Greater Boston. Katcherian also won the 50 yard backstroke to post a total of 13 points for Team K-T. Her backstroke time of 34.06 was well ahead of Isabel Vartanian of New Jersey and Ficiciyan’s, who grabbed another



The winning Detroit relay (l-r) Teny Topouzian, Knar Topouzian, Hailey Gillett and Natalya Katcherian (Photo: Mark Gavoor)



Arman Edilyan (Member at Large) pulls ahead in the breaststroke (Photo: Tamar Kanarian)

er bronze. The only other event was the 50 yard freestyle where Nora Vartanian added a gold to her silver and bronze medals. She finished in 28.95, less than 0.5 seconds faster than Hailey Gillett, while Sickler won her second bronze medal. Finally, the women’s 4x25 freestyle relay saw Detroit win the title with a time of 57.47, over three seconds faster than Greater Boston and New Jersey.

MEN’S & CO-ED SWIMMING

In the men’s events, the high scorer from 2021, Nareg Minassian from Greater Boston, re-

peated his triple gold effort. Minassian had to miss last year’s Olympics due to freshman commitments at Yale University, where he is a member of the swim team. Minassian won his first event in the 50 yard freestyle. His time of 22.29 was only about 0.8 seconds faster than AYF member at large Arman Edilyan from Twinsburg, OH. Veteran Armen Vartanian of Detroit placed third. Minassian bested Edilyan again in the 100 free with a 50.46 clocking. Vahe Kzelian from Philadelphia won the bronze. Minassian completed his trifecta in the 50 butterfly with a time of 25.13.



Greater Boston wins both men’s relays (l-r) Joey Charchafian, Sebu Najarian, Avi Najarian and Nareg Minassian (Photo: Mark Gavoor)



Women’s 100 freestyle medalists (l-r) Nora Vartanian (Greater Boston), Natalia Oganessian (Providence) and Hailey Gillett (Detroit) (Photo: Mark Gavoor)

Vartanian took silver while Avi Najarian from Greater Boston settled for third. Edilyan did get some consolation, winning gold in the 50 breaststroke. His time of 30.27 was much faster than Vartanian in second and Nejdeh Sebu Najarian in third. Kzelian won the only other men’s event, the 50 yard backstroke, touching in 30.38 seconds. Najarian and Providence’s David Ayrasian finished behind.

The first men’s swimming relay was the 200 yard medley, where Greater Boston won in 2:14.09, while Detroit and Philadelphia grabbed the next

two places. The Nejdehs later took the 200 freestyle relay in 1:50.53. Detroit and Philadelphia finished behind once again.

The co-ed relays were the final two events of the competition. The Greater Boston 4x50 yard freestyle team anchored by Minassian came from half a pool behind to touch out Detroit in 1:54.38. Providence was well behind in third place. The same three teams finished in the same order in the 4x50 medley relay. Greater Boston recorded a time of 2:17.87 to complete the swim meet.



This page was sponsored by:
Lorig Kevorkian



GOLF

Text and Photos
by Mark Gavoor

The Olympics golf tournament was held at the beautiful Oak Creek Golf Club in Upper Marlboro, MD. From the AYF, 23 men and six women participated. As usual, a large number of alumni and supporters, 33, also came out and played.

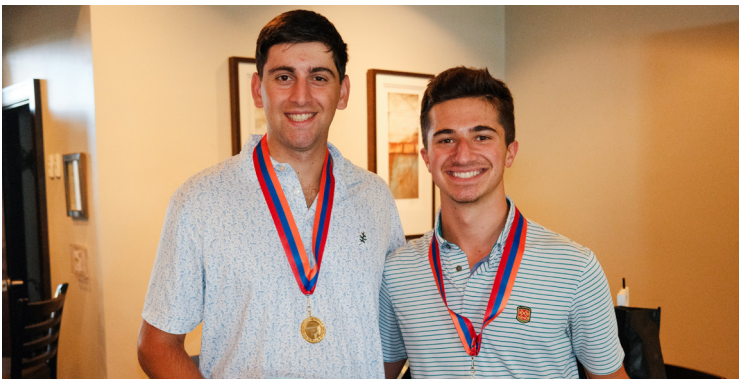
For the men, Alex Kassabian continued his impressive showing at AYF golf. Since Mark Santerian aged out, Alex has taken the gold medal in golf three times in a row, setting a record by shooting a 69 in Providence in 2021, breaking his own record last year in Worcester with a 67, and winning again this year with a 69. Alex, a reinsurance professional by day, is an amazing golfer. He was paired again with David Ayrassian, who came in fourth this year.

Alex’s older brother Armen played AYF golf this year. Armen and Alex play golf twice a month at their home course, Plandome Country Club in Long Island.

“The course had an interesting layout. The course was spread out, but the holes were narrow. There were holes with very interesting builds to say the least,” Alex said. He finished three under and was slightly disappointed, because he could have done better – the sign of a great competitor.

Golf aside, Alex said, “We had a fantastic time. David Ayrassian has become a great friend. Some good golf, some bad golf, it is always a good time, and that is what I will always remember about the AYF Olympics. In fact, we have planned a round of golf with Garo Amerkanian’s family and mine.”

Amerkanian, who took the silver, said, “I had a great time playing golf at the Olympics. I got to score my first Olympics points while having a blast on the course with my



Alex Kassabian and Garo Amerkanian

ungers from all over the country. It was a huge honor to represent New Jersey, and I can’t wait to compete in Detroit!”

The 17th hole was the longest drive hole, and not surprisingly, Alex hit his best drive. He would have won the longest drive, but that award was only for the alumni, so he settled for a gold medal. He loves playing golf every weekend and hopes it is something he never has to give up. “I thank my Dad, Levon, for getting me into it at such a young age,” he said.

Alex summed up the social aspects of AYF very nicely: “Having a lunch at the end of the round was a real highlight, because I got to spend time and catch up with friends like Alexan Topalian, Shant Alashaian and my counselor at Camp Haiastan Anto Keshgegian.”

On the women’s side, the reigning champ of the past couple of years, Theresa Jelalian, decided to do the pentathlon in her last year of competition. This cleared the path for her Jersey teammate Shayna McCarthy to add another gold to her collection of at least four gold medals and one silver in Olympics Golf.

Krafian and McCarthy offered their reflections of this year’s women’s competition.

Krafian: “The golf course was beautiful, and the weather was also

perfect. I golfed with Shayna McCarthy from New Jersey and Taline Boman from Detroit. I think two of my favorite events at Olympics are golf and pentathlon, because you spend an extended amount of time with the same small group of girls and get to bond a lot, but golf is much more relaxing. It was fun to play with my red, blue and orange Armenian spirit golf balls. Shayna brought her Armenian flag that we draped over the back of our cart. As usual, the sportsmanship was great. I was sad that Theresa Jelalian wouldn’t be golfing with us this year, because she gives me lots of tips and was very helpful, but Shayna took on that role this year and helped me a lot! I hope we can get one or two Boston girls to take up golfing now that I am aging out so we can try to keep getting some points there!”

McCarthy: “The golf tournament is my all-time favorite AYF Olympics event. Walking into one of the first competitions of the weekend, members from different AYF chapters and alumni reunite at the course with a big Armenian *parev* and high excitement for the celebrations over the next few days. Shout out to the D.C. chapter for finding such a beautiful course, Oak Creek Golf Club!

I love that each year you tend to play with the same few girls, but



Taleen Boman, Shayna McCarthy, Nairi Krafian and Katia Markarian

we always end up meeting another girl or two (who then joins the girls’ golf crew in the years to come). I’ve had the pleasure of playing golf over the last few years with my teammates from New Jersey, Victoria Ezgilioglu and Theresa Jelalian, as well as Nairi Krafian from the Boston chapter.

This year felt different without Theresa by my side competing on the course with us. She consistently brought great energy, tough competition and a big smile to every hole. I am sure one day we’ll be playing side by side again in the alumni tournament. Nairi was someone who picked up golf not too long ago and has become such a solid player. I had the pleasure of meeting and playing with Taleen Boman this year, from the Detroit Chapter. It was her first year competing in Olympics, and she was an absolute star! And to my teammate Vic – can’t wait to rip up the course again with you next year.

What I find so unique about the golf tournament is although we are all competing individually for our chapter, we all help each other and cheer one another on...from helping each other pick what clubs to use to roaring excitement when someone makes a nice putt or has an awesome drive.”

It was awesome to see Mike Manoogian with the alumni shot.

While Jelalian did not compete in the women’s golf, she could not stay away from the tournament. She simply played an “exhibition” round with the alumni. It was fun to see the Hagopian brothers, the Shirinians, Paul Arakelian, Peter Jelalian and so many others playing alumni golf.

AYF OLYMPICS OPEN CHAMP RECIPIENT OF THE CORY TOSOIAN TROPHY

Mike Manoogian 75

CLOSEST TO THE PIN

Men’s Paul Shirinian
Women’s Theresa Jelalian

LONGEST DRIVE

Greg Marifian

Garo Hovanissian, an alumni golfer from Los Angeles, summed it up perfectly: “It was a beautiful course and a picture-perfect day. But the real treat was seeing old friends and making new ones. That’s the purpose of all this – Armenians from all points coming together to laugh, reminisce and fortify. Our foursome hailed from New Jersey, Rhode Island, Michigan and California. When these four Armenians met, it didn’t matter how many balls we lost. We all just enjoyed the moment together.”

TENNIS

Text and Photos
by Mark Gavoor

AYF Olympics tennis kicked off on Friday, September 1 at the East Potomac Tennis Center. The courts were nestled on the banks of the Potomac River in the heart of D.C. It was a beautiful, clear, cloudless day. For the first time that I can recall, all the players took a photo together before the start. As the matches kicked off, fans wondered if the New Jersey women would continue their dominance of tennis. Would Providence sweep tennis on the men’s side as they did last year? Would Hagop Taraksian not only defend his crown but also get his seventh gold medal?

AYF once again had a strong number of participants in tennis, with 14 men and 15 women.

For the women, last year’s gold medalist Giselle Krikorian of Granite City was defending her crown. She faced Mia Setrakian of New Jersey in her first game and had a bye in the first round. Setrakian beat Krikorian 8-3 to advance to the semi-finals. Setrakian faced newcomer Lily Janigian of Providence, who won her first two matches to get to the semi-finals. Setrakian won 6-1, 6-2 to advance to the finals. On the other side of the bracket, NJ sisters, Kira and Christa Ariyan, won their first two matches to face each other in the semi-finals. Christa beat Kira 8-2 to advance to the finals. In the all-Jersey final, Setrakian defeated Christa to take the gold. Christa was awarded the silver medal. Jani-



A historic group photo of all the tennis players in this year’s AYF Olympics

gian took the bronze with Kira coming in fourth.

With three out of the top four positions, New Jersey continued to be the force in women’s tennis.

“It was really rewarding to win this year and be part of the NJ tennis dynasty. My toughest match was in the semi-finals against Lily Janigian. She was a very consistent and talented player. I had to push through and battle for each point,” Setrakian said.

“It was my first time playing for AYF, and I had a lot of fun. It was really nice to meet other Armenian tennis players, and there was some great competition!” Janigian said.

The men’s bracket was equally exciting. Detroit’s Michael-Armen Kadian beat his teammate, Jacob Niffin, to make the semi-finals, where he faced Matt Boghossian of Providence. On the other side of the men’s bracket, Mia’s brother

Peter Setrakian won two matches to face Hagop Taraksian in the semi-finals. Taraksian beat Setrakian 6-0, and Kadian beat Boghossian 6-0, 6-2. As it was starting to get warm, and while the score seemed lopsided, Setrakian and Boghossian fought hard during long matches. Boghossian, who Taraksian calls “the backstop,” made Kadian work hard for each point. As Kadian said, “The match against Matt took a long time, as he is a very good defensive player.”

The final between Taraksian and Kadian, both mechanical engineers at J&J and GM respectively, was one of the best matches I have seen in my years covering AYF Olympics tennis. It was a shame it was in the afternoon, when most spectators had gone to the “SOS Artsakh!” protest or to prepare for swimming.

Kadian said, “The match against

Hagop was fun. My leg cramped up in the first set. I fought through it and won the second. It was very competitive but fun and great sportsmanship. It was the first time I played Jacob from Detroit. It was so much fun, we got together a week after Olympics at home to play more often.”

“This has to be the hottest Olympics I ever competed in. That last match was a marathon. It lasted two hours. I remember telling you that my legs felt like cement. I believe Michael was also gassed. It sounds cliché, but in the third set I dug deep and pulled it together to beat a really solid competitor,” Taraksian said.

He went on to add, “Michael-Armen and I warmed up together that morning, not knowing we would be facing each other in the finals. Michael has a complete game, serves well, volleys well, plays the net, and

baseline. In the semis, I played Peter Setrakian from NJ, and that was my best tennis of the day.”

At the Sunday Night Ball, I spoke with Matt Tarzian, who told me, “I really miss playing tennis. It was competitive and a lot of fun. Hagop and I had some great matches.”

Taraksian added, “This year’s final was the most epic match I had since a semi-final with Matt a few years ago.” The day after tennis, Hagop competed in softball, followed by the javelin and the 4 x 100 relay on Sunday.

Setrakian said, “Playing tennis in the AYF makes an already fun weekend one day longer. You have to arrive on Thursday night and spend that extra day, Friday, with Armenians. It was great to see my brother Peter play and do so well. I am away at college and don’t get to see him nearly enough.”

Our ace AYF Olympics historian and statistician Bob Tutunjian said, “Hagop Taraksian won his seventh gold medal in tennis to go with one silver. He joins Harry Derderian (Springfield/Boston) and Dave Mossoian (Detroit) with the most Olympics tennis golds.”

Olympic King and AYF tennis phenomenon from the 1960s Harry Derderian told me, “I admire Hagop’s persistence and consistency. I am sure his fellow chapter members appreciate his contribution. I look forward to seeing Hagop and everyone else play next year in Detroit.”

Come to AYF tennis next year and see if Taraksian can make some history.



This page was sponsored by:
Aline and Levon Kassabian



SOFTBALL

By Mark Gavoor

Softball at the AYF Olympics is special.

First of all, no points are awarded for softball, so it does not have any bearing on the winner of the Olympics. No points? No worries. That doesn't matter one bit, as every team, whether it be a chapter or a mixed team, wants to win. It is a true co-ed team event that is, arguably, the most watched of any of the Olympic athletic events. There is also a picnic with Armenian food and music. It is a grand time for all, including the AYF participants. They work hard to win but have great fraternal fun doing so. It is a winning formula.

This year in D.C., the Washington Steering Committee, Chapter and community took softball to a new level. They secured the Washington Nationals Youth Academy for the games. There were three fields with stands and home plates a stone's throw from each other. The gathering area and pavilion were seemingly made for the Armenian picnic and softball tournament. There was face painting and balloon sculptures for the kids. Plus, they dialed in a beautiful, sunny day for the event.

Last year's winner Providence was again the favorite. Detroit, who lost to Providence last year, was looking to upset them and take the crown.

Being a youth baseball academy, two of the three fields had



The winning Providence "Varantian" softball team led by coaches Steve Elmasian and Paul Kassabian (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)

shorter fences that made for a lot more home runs. I believe that, on these fields, anything after five over-the-fence homers is considered a foul ball. That, along with playing softball on turf, took some adjustment, but the teams made it work.

Twelve teams participated this year, including one mixed team. Boston and Chicago both had two teams. West Coast, D.C., Philadelphia, North Andover, Manhattan, New York and New Jersey also competed. Providence and Detroit had byes in the first round. The Boston A team looked very good, crushing D.C. 32-3 in the first round. Philadelphia beat the mixed team to advance along

with West Coast, New Jersey, North Andover and Chicago A.

In the second round, Providence beat the West Coast 18-5, Boston bested Philly 21-11, NJ took North Andover 20-7 and Detroit got past Chicago 15-5.

In the semi-finals, it was Providence against Boston A and the classic match-up of Detroit and NJ. Providence defeated Boston 16-6, and Detroit bested NJ 19-4, setting up a repeat of last year's final for all the marbles: Detroit vs. Providence.

In the final game, Providence jumped out to an early lead, but Detroit settled down and played better defense, while the Providence bats got a bit quiet. Detroit fought slowly, but in the end it was not enough, and Providence took the game and title 8-4.

Alex Kassabian, the golf gold medal winner, told me, "I played right field NY Hyortiks, lost in the first round to California, but we held our own and gave them a good game and a little scare."

Allan Kevorkian, the Providence shortstop, was a great defensive asset for the Varantians. When asked about defense, he said, "Defense is very critical. Watching some of the other teams, I was a little surprised how long it took them to get off the field."

Kevorkian went on to say, "Shout out to Hagop Taraksian for some unbelievable outfield

catches at the fence." When asked about the Providence offense in the championship game, Kevorkian took some of the blame. "Last year, I hit way better than I did this year. It was a great game against Detroit, and we were happy to win. Honestly, it is really fun playing with Armenians."

Steve Elmasian took over as coach from Ken Topalian who, due to an injury earlier in the summer, could not make it to the Olympics this year. Elmasian said, "Detroit was a great competition – always formidable. California and Boston were pretty close. They were both hard fighting and spunky. Very competitive, fun games."

Coach Elmasian went on to say, "Zander Semerjian at third and Allan Kevorkian at shortstop were awesome. They are vacuum cleaners. Nothing gets by them. Over the summer, we practiced every Monday evening and worked on fundamentals and some strategy."

Detroit coach Alec Kourtjian said, "It was a tight defensive game, especially by DKT's own shortstop Nick Sarafian, who made plays on his back, and our outfielders David Coburn, Armen Oknayan and captain Michael 'FB' Nercesian hawking every fly ball. Unfortunately, we came up short, but I was really proud of the effort our team showed, from the people on the bench to the people in the stands who cheered us on. The camaraderie and our bonds are really

motivational and inspiring. Congrats to Providence for repeating as champs. That being said, I think I can speak for the DKT chapter that we can't wait to meet them again in the championship next year in Detroit."

"We went out to dinner on Saturday after the game," Elmasian said. "Everyone got up and spoke about the game. They reflected on the perspective of athletics versus what is going on in Artsakh. It was a heartfelt moment to see the AYF and Armenian spirit living in these kids."

Coach Greg Krikorian of the West Coast team offered his impressions: "We had some fun games against both New York and Providence. If we didn't draw Providence in the second round, we might have made it to the semi-finals."

Then, as AYF alumni and coaches often do, Krikorian reflected on the bigger picture and what the AYF Olympics are all about: "We, the East Coast transplants in California, strive to keep our East Coast connections strong and thriving. Our kids have become friends with Detroit, Boston, NY, Jersey and Philadelphia. Camp Haiastan was a huge factor in forging these relationships. My son Shant built the first softball team, and that has had a great impact on bringing the West Coast back to the AYF. From kids to parents, 100-200 people from California come to Olympics. The Detroit connection and the spirit that Coach Sonny Gavoor instilled in the kids is a large part of this strong bond."

Saturday at the AYF Olympics was more than just softball – with the teams competing; their abundant fans cheering them on; and the fraternal spirit at the end of each game when everyone congratulated each other, hugged and took photos of both teams together. It was also a picnic. The beautiful music of the Norkef Ensemble was the soundtrack of each and every game. Seeing all the kids with their faces painted totting their balloon sculptures was so cute and heartwarming. The lines for the food were endless with a tasty end result.



Greater Boston "Nejdeh" Nora Vartanian working to make second (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)

BASKETBALL

Text and Photos
by Mark Gavoor

One of the best kept secrets of Saturday at AYF Olympics is the three-on-three basketball tournament that was added as an event at the 2019 games in Chicago. That year, the basketball tournament took place on Friday at the same time as golf and tennis. Since then, it has become a Saturday event at the same time as the softball, staged so that participants can play both softball and basketball.

Basketball, like softball, is played for chapter pride, bragging rights and for the sheer fun of it. No points are contributed to the chapter scoring.

This year, the basketball tournament was held at outdoor courts right next to the Nationals Baseball Youth Academy—the first time this event was held outdoors. As swanky as the softball venue was, the basketball courts were a testimony to the urban outdoor courts where three-on-three basketball began and became popular. There were double rims, and the tarmac had cracks with grass growing out. There were no stands. The only

thing missing was the chain nets. In a word, the courts were perfect for the basketball tournament. Aram Keshgegian of Philadelphia said, "Courts were fine. I liked the urban vibe. It felt like I was at Rucker Park."

On the women's side, there was only one game between a mixed team and a team from Philadelphia, which Philadelphia won. Victoria Selverian of Philly said, "It was a competitive game. I enjoy playing basketball in the AYF, because I get to play with my sister Rebecca, and of course, my other teammates." Selverian played on her high school team and then on a club team at Fairfield University. She majored in nursing and works at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Her teammates, Ava Danaras and Rebecca Selverian, also played in high school. "It was a tough adjustment playing outdoors, with double rims and cracks in the pavement, but we made it work. I just want to add that Lila Paul of D.C. who played on the mixed team is a great basketball player and super fun to play against," she added.

There were 10 teams on the men's side, including several

mixed teams. The top teams were Philadelphia, New Jersey and the West Coast. The Philadelphia team looked invincible on paper. They were tall, strong, athletic and very experienced. Danny Fleming, the tallest of this crew, played basketball at Holy Family University in Jersey; Anto Keshgegian played at Temple and Aram Keshgegian played rugby at St. Joseph University.

While Philadelphia did win, it was not the cake walk we all expected. After a bye in the first round, they faced the West Coast team, who won their first round game. Aram Keshgegian said, "The West Coast shooting gave us trouble, and we had to figure it out. We had to adjust our defense to beat them."

In the finals, Philadelphia faced, as expected, New Jersey, putting on quite a show. Keshgegian noted, "We matched up well against them, and they came to play. Andrew Zoraian's ball handling for Jersey was superb. There were pieces of our game that were working and pieces that weren't. It was difficult for us to shoot out there, maybe due to the double rims. We kept adjusting, especially in the one allotted



The winning Philadelphia "Sebouh" men and women's basketball teams

time-out. We fought, persevered and won." He added, "It is always fun playing the Jersey guys from the NATs on three-on-three. It's all about the heart. We are cut from the same cloth."

All the Philadelphia basketball players played softball, as well as many of the athletes from other teams. Most participated in other events on Friday and Sunday.

In summary, Selverian said, "I had a really fun time. I encourage other chapters to participate next year and make it more of a tournament. It is not for points but a real fun way to play basketball and make new Armenian friends."



Anto Keshgegian (Philadelphia) shooting the ball in basketball action



This page was sponsored by:
Vartkes Tamrazian



COACHES' COMMENTS

A compilation of quotes from the coaches of the top three teams at this year's Olympics



DETROIT

The winning Detroit chapter was coached by Ara Markarian, Armen Derderian and Michael Kazarian. They shared these feelings about their victory:

"A clean 200 points! Finally, the efforts of three years of rebuilding momentum came to fruition this past Labor Day in Washington, D.C. The cup returns, back to Detroit. In the past two Olympics, we faced intense competition in a three-way battle for the top spot. Trailing so closely both years – 5 points behind Boston/Providence in 2021 (3rd) and just 23 points behind Boston in 2022 (2nd) – was enough to spark the fire.

The 2023 win holds significance for several reasons. It marks Detroit's first victory in nine years, dating back to 2014 when Coach Ara was competing in Detroit, and the first outside the Midwest in 21 years, tracing back to 2002 when Coach Armen was competing. As coaches, we aim to provide our kids with the same Olympic experiences we had, and this victory felt like passing the torch to the next generation. We are very proud of this team.

The most important yet challenging factor for Olympics comes down to how well the chapter 'travels.' The past two years, we sent pieces of a championship team and made it close. This year, we sent a championship team of 42 athletes – an impressive feat for a midwest chapter traveling to the east coast. We have a very strong core group in the chapter that continues to show up and a handful of junior transfers that were a huge addition to the team this year. We preached at every opportunity that every point matters, scoring almost 60 points over last year, which was a huge endeavor. This year, over 40 points came from 3rd and 4th place winners.

Our veterans, who we can always count on bringing a minimum of 10 points each, were just outstanding. We had Sasoun Tcholakian winning the pentathlon for the third year in a row, his brother Mher bringing in two golds (hurdles, triple jump) and silver (high jump), and of course our two high scorers Melanie Sarafian (50-100-200) and Knar Topouzian (high jump, triple jump, shot put). Siblings Michael (shot, disc, javelin) and Talene Nercesian (400-800-1600) rounded out the veterans, accumulating one gold, two silvers and two bronze. This group has really settled into their events, all besting their times and distances significantly from a summer of practices, including Knar – the heart of the team. Watching her shatter heights during high jump was a highlight of the day and testa-

ment to a season of hard work.

The junior transfers and 17-year-olds were outstanding and a big part of this year's victory. We had Taleen Boman start off with picking up points in golf and then field events, Hailey Gillett and Natalya Katcherian continuing the trend in the pool, and then Mary Coburn, Mano Karjian, Garen Vartanian and Van Saroukhanian gathering points on the track.

Friday: To position ourselves for victory, we understood the need for a stronger start leading into Sunday's track and field events. In 2022, we had just 22 points, all from the pool. This year, our kids not only doubled last year's pool points (44), but they also excelled in golf and tennis – led by Michael-Armen Kadian's challenging loss in the two-hour gold medal tennis match. We were very competitive in the pool and all swimming relays – led by veteran Armen Vartanian on the men's side and the Gillett/Katcherian duo on the women's side. Detroit secured gold in the women's 4x25 free (Topouzian sisters, Gillett, Katcherian) and silver in the remaining relays, including a narrow 0.09-second loss to a fast Boston team in the co-ed 200 free-style relay.

Sunday: Track Sunday has been Detroit's standout day the past two years, and this year did not disappoint. Detroit showed up that morning, picking up points early in the morning field events and qualifying at least two people in every heat. Post-opening ceremonies, DKT went to work – grabbing back-to-back golds in the men's and women's 4x100 relays (Nercesian, Tcholakian twins, Karjian; Nercesian, Topouzian sisters, Sarafian), a sweep in the women's 100 meters (Sarafian, Coburn, Tufenkjian) and gold in the hurdles (Tcholakian) that put the team into the lead.

The team continued to execute and surprise as we entered the final third of the day. In the pentathlon, not only did Sasoun Tcholakian distance himself from a competitive men's field for an impressive threepeat, Stepan Topouzian battled to get fourth place and Teny Topouzian solidified another silver on the women's side. Detroit drove it home in the final three relays, marking the second year in a row of sweeping the track relays: golds in the women's 4x200 – Topouzian, Coburn, Nercesian, Sarafian; men's 4x400 – Mher Tcholakian, David Coburn, Garen and Armen Vartanian; and the new record-breaking co-ed 4x200 team – Michael Nercesian, Mano Karjian, Knar Topouzian and Melanie "The Rocket" Sarafian.

This team is really special, and they continue to show this on and off the track, pool or softball field. Every single athlete played an integral role on this team. Whether they contributed with points or moral support for their fellow teammates, each kid helped bring home the trophy.

For the coaches, it's a lot of fun to be around and to be a small part of this group. We set an ambitious goal at the conclusion of last year's Olympics – retiring the cup in 2025. This year's win is monumental towards that goal as we look forward to hosting next year for the 90th annual games. Look out for a bigger, stronger and hungrier DKT chapter, as we look to repeat on our home turf. The Showdown in Motown starts now."



Detroit "Kopernik Tandourjian" Softball Team (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



Greater Boston "Nejdeh" Team at Saturday softball (Photo: Tamar Kanarian)



Philadelphia "Sebouh" Softball Team (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)

GREATER BOSTON

The Greater Boston chapter was coached by Ara Krafian, one of the highest scorers in AYF history, a past Governing Body member and an Olympics King. He gave his thoughts on this year's team:

"We graciously tip our caps to Detroit. They did a great job from start to finish. Our kids were not prepared to defend against this Detroit team. Our numbers were down, following a summer that saw sparse participation at practice. Detroit brought their usual talent, strengthened by significant contributions from new members and exceptional team participation. To keep pace, Boston's leaders need to inspire and motivate the next generation of athletes to get in the game.

We had several strong performances this year – starting with the best part of our youth movement in the pool, where all five of our individual event scorers are under 19 years old, led by Nareg Minasian's 15 points with wins in the 50 free, 100 free and 50 butterfly, in addition to being a supreme difference maker on four winning relays. Nora Vartanian added 10 points including a win in the 50 free. Alisa Ficiician and brothers Avi and Sebu Najarian added 13 points.

Our women performed exceptionally well on the track, led by Anoush Krafian with a record-setting win in the pentathlon (3,170 points). Knar Krafian's 13 points included two firsts in the hurdles and shot put and second in the javelin. Lori Ganjian had three second place finishes in the 200 meter dash, long jump and high jump. And Sena Changelian won the javelin and took second in the baseball throw. Lia Aftandilian, Nairi Krafian, Taline Guzelian and Anoush

Gigargjian together added a valuable 14 points.

On the men's side, we ran into several headwinds – excellent new sprint talent on the track, great participation by all chapters and one heartbreaking injury. Alex Avakian led our men with a win in the discus, second in the shot put and third in the javelin. Daron Hamparian took third in a very close and competitive pentathlon event, where the top three places finished with only 50 points of separation. Gabe Avakian finished fifth with over 1,900 points. Shant Mahrokhian, Greg Cormier, John Avakian and rookie Sam Charchaflian rounded out our scoring on the track.

This was the final campaign for Nairi Krafian and Shant Mahrokhian, two exceptional Armenians, trailblazers and high character individuals. Despite incredibly busy lives, they found time to practice and participate. Nairi is a graduate student and entrepreneur with her charitable organization 'Oknooshoon' providing canine-assisted interventions in Armenia, giving vulnerable populations access to therapy dogs. She finished her final year with a second in golf and fourth in the long jump. Shant, a fourth-year medical student, who was expected to score big for us, pulled his hamstring in the long jump (still finishing a close second) and was unable to compete in the triple jump or the finals of the 100 meter dash – not the way he hoped to go out. To Nairi (73 career points) and Shant (58 career points), know that you have made very big contributions to the most recent stretch of great Olympics success for Boston.

Besides COVID, my other key takeaways from this Olympics weekend include: Boston needs to find a higher level of competi-

tive commitment if we intend to get back on top. We need a youth movement and better overall participation. The AYF is absolutely in a great place with members that are well-informed, galvanized and delightful to be around. We look forward to 2024 in Detroit."

PHILADELPHIA

Former Philadelphia track star, Olympics King and past Governing Body member Dave Papazian has been coaching the Sebouhs for ten years. He shared his feelings on his team:

"The Philadelphia Sebouh Olympic Team was in a good place coming into the 2023 games. They knew who they were – a team who has been and continues to be defined by a total-team concept. This was reflected in our relay teams. While our top finish in the relays was a bronze, we had five of them, two in the pool and three on the track. This was important in climbing the standings on Sunday afternoon upon hearing the announcement that we were in fifth place after Opening Ceremonies. The willingness of the members to fill in where needed was one of the things that makes this team tick.

While I take special pride in our relays year after year, our top individual participants were first-time high scorer Alex Dardarian and pentathlon silver medalist Aram Keshgegian. We could not have finished third without either one. They are both highly involved with our relay success as well, setting an example for the entire team. Alex, a distance runner, filled in for the 4x100 relay, which was held between his individual events.

Gabby Sickler and Vahe Kzelian led us in the pool, combining for 13 points (and of course relays!). Vahe Minasian competed for us for the first time after an injury last year to take gold in the Philly-tinged men's high jump, plus bronze in the 100 and long jump. He came through for us when he lost his sprint-mates Eric Papazian (hamstring) and Mher Mardirosian (sickness) early and was overworked in the relays. Vahe is the one who ASKS for the relay batons and starting blocks in practice. He is the one who WANTS to get timed in practice to see where he stands.

Another member that was overworked was Jessica Selverian. She did the 400, 800 and 1600 and waived off relief in the relays to do them at the end of the day. She has been competing for us for some time now, and she deserves special praise.

Finally, and especially important to our success, was Ernest Nahigian Sportsmanship award winner Anto Keshgegian, who sacrificed some individual honors this year. He gave way to Vahe in the high jump, knowing that Vahe might wrest his hold on high jump gold. Anto took bronze in the high and triple jump and also went out of his comfort zone to give teammates some relief in the mixed 200 free-style relay on Friday.

This year we had just enough participation and skill to do the Philly Chapter dance for the first time since 2019. It was a great celebration, and I sincerely wish that every AYF participant could do it at some point in their career."



This page was sponsored by:
Maro Garabedian Dionisopoulos - 2009 Varadian Spirit Award Recipient



PENTATHLON

By Bob Tutunjian

Two years ago, Anoush Krafian participated in the pentathlon for the first time. Even though the pentathlon and heptathlon were her specialties in NCAA competition, she entered other events at Olympics to allow her sister Nairi or Lori Ganjian to represent the Nejdehs in the pentathlon. Yet in 2021, she entered the event, perhaps to break a record set in 1979. She ran the final two track events that year with nobody pushing her, but she missed the record by a single point. This time, she returned to make sure she added this event to her list of four AYF records. She won all five events decisively to rack up 3,170 points, eclipsing the old standard of 3,037. Teny Topouzian from Detroit scored 1,747 points for the silver medal, and New Jersey's Theresa Jelalian took third with 1,183.

Detroit's Sasoun Tcholakian won the men's title for the third straight year with 2,583 points, but this was the closest competition he has faced. The 2017 and 2019 champion Aram Keshgegian from Philadelphia was close behind with 2,538 points. 2018 winner and last year's runner-up Daron Hampar-

ian of Greater Boston finished five points behind Aram. The last time three athletes scored over 2,500 points each was in 2016. That year, Keshgegian and Hamparian also took silver and bronze but were behind current Detroit coach Ara Markarian, who competed for New York at the time.

The men began in the discus circle, where Tcholakian and Keshgegian both threw 109'10", which was about six feet better than Hamparian. Tcholakian won the shot with a put of 40'3.25", two feet further than Keshgegian and three further than Hamparian. The lead at this time was only 37 points, with Hamparian 55 points out of second. Tcholakian then long jumped 18'5" to win that event and build a 153 point lead over both Hamparian and Keshgegian, who were tied for second. Tcholakian and Keshgegian ran the 200 meter dash in 25.21 and 25.23 respectively, with Hamparian close behind in 25.60. Going into the final 1500 meter event, Keshgegian trailed first by 154 points, while Hamparian was 31 points behind him. Hamparian ran a strong race from the start finishing in 5:16.25, trying to move up, but Keshgegian stayed about five seconds behind him to secure

the silver, and Tcholakian was close enough to take the gold.

The women's competition started with the shot put on Sunday morning. Krafian threw over 35' to establish an early lead of almost 200 points over Jelalian. Her long jump of 17'1.5" expanded her lead to almost 500 points ahead of Topouzian. The high jump also belonged to Krafian, as she cleared 5'1.75". Topouzian jumped 4'6" to build a 291 point margin over Jelalian. The three women finished in the same order in the 200 meter dash and 800 meter run. Krafian posted times of 26.41 and 2:46.04 respectively, securing the record.

The old record holder, Allison Aylaian, and Anoush's father Ara were both members of the Boston Siamanto chapter. I reached out to Allison to let her know that Krafian broke her 44-year-old record. She offered these words:

"That's wonderful to see the daughter of my old teammate break my pentathlon record! I am so happy for the continued interest, hard work and talent of the next generation, keeping the spirit of the AYF Olympics still going strong. Congratulations Anoush on your accomplishment!"

Comparison of Events - New and Old Pentathlon Records

	SP	LJ	HJ	200	800	TOTAL
Anoush Krafian	35' 5"	17' 1.5"	5' 1.75"	26.41	2:46.04	
Points	581	620	701	762	506	3170
Allison Aylaian	26' 11"	16' 0"	5' 0"	26.10	2:32.20	
Points	412	527	644	788	666	3037



Pentathlon champ Sasoun Tcholakian (Detroit) takes the 200 meter dash (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



Anoush Krafian (Greater Boston) clears the high jump bar in the pentathlon (Photo: Tamar Kanarian)

Ara Kouchakdjian: Olympic King and Much More

By Harry Derderian

Moments after Ara Kouchakdjian was announced as Olympic King, Ken Sarajian offered the following response: "As an AYFer, Ara represented the good in all aspects of Junior and Senior AYF... every day after AYF days, he contributed and motivated those who followed...now in a sterling professional life, he has helped develop opportunities for youth in Armenia...he knows what it is all about."

The grandson of Genocide survivors and an exceptional student, Kouchakdjian graduated from Columbia University with a bachelor of science and earned a masters' degree from the University of Maryland in computer science and software engineering.

Throughout his AYF career, he was a proud member of the Washington D.C. "Sevan" and "Ani" chapters and competed in the AYF Olympics. An all-around athlete, Kouchakdjian is remembered for softball, long jump, placing in running events over several years, anchoring a second place finish in the 400 relay in 1982 and as a medalist in the 1984 pentathlon, scoring over 2,000 points to place third.

Kouchakdjian offered the following recollections about the pentathlon: "In this event, with Rich Chebookjian and David Shahrighian, I understood what real athletes are, and they were real athletes...they are friends to this day."

"I still have a picture in my den of Ara and I in the 200...he is a great lifetime AYF memory...fraternal in so many ways," Shahrighian said in offering congratulations.

Predictably, Kouchakdjian's contributions to the organization did not stop after his AYF years. He served as an ARF advisor to the Washington, D.C. Senior and Junior chapters for several years. He also was a member of two Washington, D.C. Olympics Steering Committees, serving as co-chair in 1992 and advisor in 1997. "Ara was a staple in the D.C. AYF and community for many years...he was the epitome of a good AYF mem-

ber...he even coached when he left the Seniors and continued to support the AYF by being an advisor and supporter to both the Junior and Senior Washington AYF chapters and even in greater Boston," said Hratch Najarian, Olympic King at the Washington 2013 Olympics, about his friend.

Kouchakdjian and his wife Lisa (former Kaprielian) moved to the Boston area and are the proud parents of four teenagers: Aram, 18; Zaven, 17; Maral, 15 and Diran, 13. In his spare time, Kouchakdjian still continues to run, competing multiple times in greater Boston road races. His legacy continues through his children, who are members of the Middlesex County West "Musa Ler" AYF Junior and Senior chapters, while also attending St. Stephen's Armenian Saturday and Sunday Schools in Watertown.

Currently, Kouchakdjian is vice president of product development and healthcare innovation at Securitas Healthcare. Over the years, he has published many scholarly papers, earned patents and received numerous professional awards in product management, strategy and innovation and software engineering. As vice president, he has outsourced company work to youth in Armenia.

Noticeably grateful for the award, Kouchakdjian was humbled that he was remembered. "I have been out of D.C. for a long time. I am really flattered that I was remembered...I had great advisors, peers and especially parents who gave me day-to-day direction and motivation."

Paul Jamushian, Olympic King at the 1992 Washington Olympics for his AYF and community years and Olympic tennis participation, was Kouchakdjian's AYF advisor and offered these final words: "Ara is a classic example of a complete AYF member (athletics, educational, social, Hai Tahd), AYF advisor and continued community activist...I was proud of Ara then and more so now."

AYF Varadian Spirit Award: To the 120,000 People of Artsakh, accepted by Yeghisapet Chouldjian

By Harry Derderian

The Washington, D.C. Olympics was dedicated to the people of Artsakh from the start, with a moving and notable award at Friday's Alumni Night—recognition of devoted activist Yeghisapet Chouldjian, who accepted the Varadian Spirit Award on behalf of the "120,000 people of Artsakh who are the true representation of the Varadian spirit—standing strong against Azerbaijan's genocidal blockade so that their children, our children, will have a better future in our ancestral Artsakh homeland," she said.

The Varadian family warmly embraced and was honored by Chouldjian's dedication to the people of Artsakh, stating, "Yeghso is a great choice to personify our spirit...we are honored by this gesture."

Paul Jamushian, long-time Washington community activist and former AYF advisor, offered his respect to Chouldjian: "She is special...very appropriate and a classic example of the meaning of the Varadian Spirit award. Yeghso is hayaser. The word 'reward' is not in her vocabulary. Her acceptance and subsequent respect for the people of Artsakh reflect the meaning of the award...it is never

about her."

Chouldjian began her AYF career on the West Coast as a San Francisco "Rosdom" Chapter member. As an AYFer, she received her bachelor's degree in material science from UCLA and then switched coasts, transferring to become a Washington, D.C. "Ani" member before leaving AYF in age, not spirit. Throughout her 30 years in the Washington, D.C. community, Chouldjian has established herself as a mainstay. She has served on four Washington, D.C. Olympics Steering Committees, including this year.

Her multifaceted energies and talents have served many committees well, including Ad Book, Alumni Night, Social, Welcoming, PR and Opening Ceremonies. Additionally, she has served as ARF advisor to the Washington, D.C. chapter for over 20 years. Her guidance has motivated countless young AYF members in the Washington, D.C. area, always encouraging them to get involved in Hai Tahd, athletic, social, educational and cultural activities. Chouldjian has also been lecturer at the annual AYF Junior Seminar for years, where Juniors throughout the Eastern Region have had the opportunity to hear her captivating and awe-inspiring lectures.

"Elizabeth has been a member and advisor to the Washington, D.C. Junior and Senior chapters for over 30 years and has encouraged a well-rounded AYF chapter, including Hai Tahd...her willingness to support the D.C. chapter and community with unwavering time and energy is unsurpassed... Elizabeth and I have worked on four Olympics Steering Committees together...she is peerless," said Hratch Najarian.

Through her advisorship, the Washington, D.C. chapter has continued to thrive over the years and has proven itself to be one of the strongest chapters in the AYF Eastern Region. The "Ani" chapter has had strong membership numbers, nonstop support and fundraisers for Artsakh and Armenia, and a persistent focus on the template of Hai Tahd activities.

"Yeghso is an example of a modern day Fedayee," said Washington AYF and CE member Maral Areni Margossian. "She has dedicated her life not only to Hai Tahd, but to ensuring that our youth are committed Armenians. She is the beating heart of the Washington, D.C. 'Ani' and 'Sevan' chapters and continues to inspire so many of us with the work that she leads."

Chouldjian is the grandchild of Genocide survivors and currently serves as communications director for the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), where she has selflessly and humbly driven our Armenian Cause for some 30 years. "Yeghso is the heart and soul of our operation. Her skills in communication with the various publics we deal with are incredible, and her spirit is an energetic thread in the operations of ANCA. She is who we are," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian.

With deep devotion, Chouldjian accepted the Varadian Spirit Award:

"To Artsakh with Love"—Yeghso



AYF Central Executive with 2023 AYF Olympic King Ara Kouchakdjian and Yeghisapet Chouldjian, who accepted the Varadian Spirit Award (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



This page was sponsored by:
Shooshig DerManuelian Aghjayan - 2021 Varadian Spirit Award Recipient



AYF Olympics 2023: Breaking Records

▶ Continued from page A1

teammates, as they finished third.

The pentathlon trophies went to Anoush Krafian of Greater Boston and Detroit's Sasoun Tcholakian. Krafian graduated last spring from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business with a master's degree in management studies and a GPA of 3.86. While competing at Dartmouth as an undergraduate, Krafian had personal bests of 3539 points in the pentathlon and 5016 points in the heptathlon. Krafian is still undefeated in the AYF competition after eight years and is second on the active career scoring list with 120 points. Tcholakian was victorious in the pentathlon for the third straight year. Tcholakian played wide receiver at Ohio Wesleyan University, where he majored in sports management and business management. Since graduation, he has worked with his alma mater as an assistant football coach. He could not practice for Olympics as much as usual this summer, because he was busy coaching, and he was thankful to pull off a win. His final thought was, "Winning is fun!"

The first record for the weekend went to Oganessian in the women's 50 yard butterfly. This event has not been contested for many years, since the women have swum a 25 yard butterfly instead. The first four ladies in Friday's race all swam faster than the old record set in 1981 by Grace Chakarian from Lowell. Anoush Krafian also set a new mark in the pentathlon. She scored 3170 points this year, breaking the old record of 3037 set in 1979 by Boston's Allison Aylaian. Krafian missed this record by a single point in 2021, so this year was doubly sweet. Another record was broken during the final event of the weekend, the co-ed 4x200 meter relay. Detroit was clocked in at 1:43.96, breaking Greater Boston's old record of 1:45.27 set in 2019. Last but not least, the Ernest Nahigian Award for sportsmanship was presented to Anto Keshgegian from Philadelphia.

MEN'S TRACK & FIELD

The men's events were dominated by four athletes, who won 10 of the 13 individual events. First was high scoring sprinter Avo Sarkissian from New York. Sarkissian won the 100 meters in 11.54, with defending champ Armen Almasian of North Andover in second and Philadelphia's Vahe Minasian in



Men's long jump medalists (l-r) Vahe Minasian (Philadelphia), Armen Almasian (North Andover) and Shant Mahrokhian (Greater Boston) (Photo: Mark Gavoor)

third. Sarkissian then took the 200 with a time of 23.60, beating Detroit teammates Mano Karjian and Michael Ohanesian. He finished his day by running the 400 meters in 53.71. Chicago's Armen Jerikyan won silver, and Karjian took bronze.

The second men's high scorer was 17-year-old distance runner Alex Dardarian of Philadelphia. In the morning, Dardarian and Providence's Matt Ursillo finished 1-2 in the 3200 meters, just like they did last year. Dardarian was clocked at 11:31.04, with New Jersey's Alec Avedian in third. Alex then outran 2021 distance king David Barsamian from New Jersey in the 800 with a time of 2:15.81. Detroit's Garek Vartanian won bronze. Dardarian went on to win the 1600, where he placed third last year. His time of 5:09.48 was 20 seconds ahead of Van Saroukhanian's from Detroit, with Ursillo in third.

All the medals for the throwing events were won by the same three athletes. Zach Semerjian won the javelin for the fourth straight year, with a throw of 164'11". Detroit's Michael Nercesian took second place over Alex Avakian from Greater Boston. Semerjian then won the shot put with a heave of 44'5", and Avakian beat Nercesian by about a foot for the silver. Alex bounced back to win his discus specialty, throwing 146'8", which was about 7' off his AYF record. Semerjian settled for second in this event, while Nercesian took the bronze.

The fourth men's double winner was Mher Tcholakian from Detroit. Tcholakian began by winning the triple jump by bouncing 38'11". This was more than 4' ahead of Philadelphia teammates Mher Mardirosian and Anto Kes-

hgegian. Tcholakian then won the 110 meter hurdles in 16.83, which was only 0.05 seconds better than Koko Kassabian from Providence, who edged Tcholakian by 0.03 seconds last year. Nejdch Greg Cormier placed third. Tcholakian almost won his third event in the high jump but narrowly lost to Vahe Minasian. Both jumpers tied at 5'6" with only one miss, so they proceeded to a jump-off where Minasian took the gold. Defending champ Keshgegian settled for the bronze.

The only other men's event, the long jump, was probably the tightest competition of the day. After the first three jumps, Shant Mahrokhian of Greater Boston recorded 18'11.5", which was 0.5" ahead of two-time champion Armen Almasian. After a 17" jump and a foul, Almasian leapt 19'0.5" on his sixth and final attempt. Mahrokhian had the final say but fouled on his last jump, as he pulled his hamstring. Vahe Minasian took third place in the event.

The relays were both easy victories for Detroit. They took the 4x100 meter in 46.54, about two seconds ahead of Greater Boston and Philadelphia. In the 4x400 relay, Team K-T won in 4:04.13, while New Jersey placed second and Philadelphia was third.

WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD

The women also featured a high scorer who won the three sprint events. Detroit's Melanie Sarafian won the 50 meter dash for the fourth consecutive year. Her time, 6.81, was a bit off her record of 6.41 in this event but fast enough to best perennial rival Meline Almasian from North Andover as well as teammate Tiffany Tufenkjian. Sarafian then led a Detroit sweep in the 100 clocking 12.95. Mary Coburn and Tufenkjian took the silver and bronze. Finally, Sarafian won the 200 with a time of 28.04, which was about two seconds faster than Lori Ganjian from Greater Boston and Coburn in third.

While Sarafian was taking care of business on the track, veteran teammate Knar Topouzian did the same in the field events. Topouzian first three-peated in the discus, throwing 84'5", with Anoush Gigarjian of Greater Boston in second and Detroit's Gasia Oknayan in third. Topouzian then leaped 32'11.5" in the triple jump, missing the record by just 3". In doing so, she topped Meline Almasian and Anahid Jerkikian from Chicago. Last year, Almasian won the event on her final jump, beating Topouzian by only 3". Topouzian also three-peated in the high jump by clearing 4'8", which was 6" more than Ganjian and Providence's Ani Comella.

Another field event specialist, Nejdeh Knar Krafian, won two golds and narrowly missed out on a third. Krafian first threw a shot put of 32'9" to top Chicago's Lauren Bilbeh and Anoush Gigarjian. Krafian then went on to win the 100 meter hurdles for the fourth straight year in a time of 17.29. Ani Come-



Women's triple jump medalists (l-r) Anahid Jerikian (Chicago), Knar Topouzian (Detroit) and Meline Almasian (North Andover) (Photo: Mark Gavoor)



Women's 800 meter medalists (l-r) Sarah Varadian (Granite City), Lilit Kevorkian (New York) and Talene Nercesian (Detroit) (Photo: Mark Gavoro)

Ila and Detroit's Sara Kurkchian placed second and third. Krafian's third event was the javelin. She won this event for the past two years, and she was leading when she had to stop to run the hurdles, which was being held at the same time. At that point she had a toss of 82'4" and was just 4" ahead of Washington's Tatevik Khachatryan. Yet on her final attempt, Greater Boston's Sena Changelian threw 90'10", moving up from third to first. Khachatryan and Krafian had one more attempt each but both came up short. Changelian almost won the baseball throw on her final attempt but came up a foot short of Taleen Boman from Detroit, who threw 162'9". Philly's Ava Zanaras placed third. The only other field event was the long jump, where Meline Almasian three-peated with a leap of 15'4". Lori Ganjian and Anahid Jerikian took the other medals.

The women's distance events saw some veterans battle with new faces. In the 1600 meter run, 2021 champion New York's Lilit Kevorkian won easily with a time of 5:55.55. Yet 16-year-old Sarah Varadian of Granite City edged defending champion Lia Aftandilian



Women's javelin medalists (l-r) Tatevik Khachatryan (Washington), Sena Changelian (Greater Boston) and Knar Krafian (Greater Boston) (Photo: Mark Gavoor)



Men's 3200 meter medalists (l-r) Alec Avedian (New Jersey), Alex Dardarian (Philadelphia) and Matt Ursillo (Providence) (Photo: Mark Gavor)



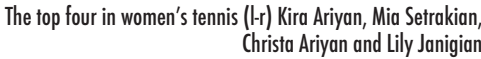
Men's shot put medalists (l-r) Michael Nercesian (Detroit), Zach Semerjian (Providence) and Alex Avakian (Greater Boston) (Photo: Mark Gavor)



Women's baseball throw medalists (l-r) Ava Zanaras (Philadelphia), Taleen Boman (Detroit) and Seng Changelian (Greater Boston) (Photo: Mark Gavoor)

**This page was sponsored by:
Ned and Aroxie Apigian**





**Photos by
Mark Gavoor**

TENNIS RESULTS

MEN'S

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	McCarthy, Shayna	New Jersey	49
2	Krafian, Nairi	Greater Boston	58
3	Boman, Taleen	Detroit	59
4	Markarian, Katia	New Jersey	66

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Kassabian, Alex	New York	69
2	Amerkanian, Garo	New Jersey	77
3	Semerjian, Zander	Providence	80
4	Ayrassian, David	Providence	82

MEN'S

	NAME	CHAPTER
1	Setrakian, Mia	New Jersey
2	Ariyan, Christa	New Jersey
3	Janigian, Lilly	Providence
4	Ariyan, Kira	New Jersey

	NAME	CHAPTER
1	Taraksian, Hagop	Providence
2	Kadian, Michael-Armen	Detroit
3	Boghossian, Matthew	Providence
4	Setrakian, Peter	New Jersey

SWIMMING RESULTS

MEN 100 YD FREESTYLE

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Katherian, Natalya	Detroit	13.87
2	Devedjian, Ally	Chicago	13.88
3	Ficiyan, Alisa	Greater Boston	15.38
4	Khaligian, Azniv	Racine	15.84
5	Dulgarian, Araz	Middlesex West	16.00
6	Semerjian, Simone	Providence	16.90
7	Tcholakian, Karoun	Detroit	17.85

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Vartanian, Nora	Greater Boston	28.95
2	Gillett, Hailey	Detroit	29.42
3	Sickler, Gabrielle	Philadelphia	32.12
4	Ficiciyan, Alisa	Greater Boston	32.32
5	McCarthy, Shayna	New Jersey	34.10
6	Semerjian, Simone	Providence	37.08

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Minassian, Nareg	Greater Boston	22.29
2	Edilyan, Arman	Member at Large	23.08
3	Vartanian, Armen	Detroit	27.57
4	Ayrassian, David	Providence	29.93
5	Najarian, Sebu	Greater Boston	30.82
6	Charchaffian, Joseph	Greater Boston	32.03
7	Zoraian, Andrew	New Jersey	36.36
8	Amerkanian, Garo	New Jersey	39.30

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Minassian, Nareg	Greater Boston	50.46
2	Edilyan, Arman	Member at Large	55.59
3	Kzelian, Vahe	Philadelphia	59.78
4	Pogharian, Daron	Philadelphia	1:20.94
5	Amerkanian, Garo	New Jersey	1:31.06

MEN 50 YD BREASTSTROKE

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Oganesian, Natalia	Providence	56.25
2	Vartanian, Nora	Greater Boston	1:04.41
3	Gillett, Hailey	Detroit	1:04.81
4	Sickler, Gabrielle	Philadelphia	1:13.56
5	Vartanian, Isabel	New Jersey	1:15.00
6	Aftandilian, Melanie	Greater Boston	1:29.97

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Katcherian, Natalya	Detroit	34.06
2	Vartanian, Isabel	New Jersey	38.75
3	Ficiciyan, Alisa	Greater Boston	40.00
4	Khaligian, Azniv	Racine	41.36
5	Semerjian, Simone	Providence	56.16

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Kzelian, Vahe	Philadelphia	30.38
2	Najarian, Avi	Greater Boston	40.60
3	Ayrassian, David	Providence	41.78
4	Najarian, Sebu	Greater Boston	41.91
5	Charchaflian, Joseph	Greater Boston	42.85
6	Pogharian, Daron	Philadelphia	44.31
7	Semerjian, Zander	Providence	49.93

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Edilyan, Arman	Member at Large	30.27
2	Vartanian, Armen	Detroit	37.10
3	Najarian, Sebu	Greater Boston	41.61
4	Zorajian, Nicholas	New Jersey	46.66
5	Pogharian, Daron	Philadelphia	48.93
6	Boghossian, Matthew	Providence	53.23
7	Shamlian, Haig	Philadelphia	54.32
8	Shamlian, Nishan	Philadelphia	55.07

MEN 200 YARD MEDLEY RELAY

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Oganesian, Natalia	Providence	35.07
2	Devedjian, Ally	Chicago	41.13
3	Sickler, Gabrielle	Philadelphia	42.62
4	Gillett, Hailey	Detroit	42.81
5	Khaligian, Azniv	Racine	44.85
6	Dulgarian, Araz	Middlesex West	47.28
7	Aftandilian, Melanie	Greater Boston	48.15
8	Tcholakian, Karoun	Detroit	57.83

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Oganesian, Natalia	Providence	28.69 R
2	Katherian, Natalya	Detroit	30.35
3	Vartanian, Nora	Greater Boston	33.43
4	Devedjian, Ally	Chicago	33.47
5	Vartanian, Isabel	New Jersey	39.53

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Minassian, Nareg	Greater Boston	25.13
2	Vartanian, Armen	Detroit	30.19
3	Najarian, Avi	Greater Boston	33.12
4	Kzelian, Vahe	Philadelphia	34.47
5	Zoraian, Nicholas	New Jersey	49.69

	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Greater Boston	2:14.09
2	Detroit	2:26.84
3	Philadelphia	2:41.57
4	Providence	2:59.71
5	New Jersey	3:09.56

MEN 200 YARD FREESTYLE RELAY

	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Detroit	57.47
2	Greater Boston	1:00.72
3	New Jersey	1:01.04

	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Greater Boston	1:54.38
2	Detroit	1:54.47
3	Providence	2:12.13
4	New Jersey	2:14.72
5	Philadelphia	2:27.97

	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Greater Boston	2:17.87
2	Detroit	2:22.94
3	Providence	2:40.55
4	Philadelphia	2:43.87
5	New Jersey	2:57.25

	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Greater Boston	1:50.53
2	Detroit	1:57.22
3	Philadelphia	2:12.28
4	Providence	2:15.37
5	New Jersey	2:34.97



This page was sponsored by:
Violet Gavoor - In memory of Aram "Sonny" Gavoor



TRACK RESULTS

WOMEN 50 METER DASH

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Sarafian, Melanie	Detroit	6.81
2	Almasian, Meline	North Andover	7.03
3	Tufenkjian, Tiffany	Detroit	7.69
4	Haroutunian, Ani	New Jersey	7.89
5	Kourkounian, Nyree	North Andover	7.91
6	Markarian, Meline	North Andover	7.97
7	Paul, Lila	Washington	8.40
8	Selverian, Victoria	Philadelphia	8.83

WOMEN 100 METER DASH

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Sarafian, Melanie	Detroit	12.95
2	Coburn, Mary	Detroit	14.86
3	Tufenkjian, Tiffany	Detroit	15.20
4	Haroutunian, Ani	New Jersey	15.57
5	Kourkounian, Nyree	North Andover	15.76
6	Tarpinian, Maral	New Jersey	16.96
7	Nalbandian, Mira	Granite City	17.16
8	Paul, Lila	Washington	19.56

MEN 100 METER DASH

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Sarkissian, Avo	New York	11.54
2	Almasian, Armen	North Andover	11.84
3	Minasian, Vahe	Philadelphia	11.86
4	Karjian, Mano	Detroit	11.96
5	Kassabian, Koko	Providence	12.20
6	Avakian, John	Greater Boston	12.25
7	Peltekian, Alec	Chicago	12.68

MEN 3200 METER RUN

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Dardarian, Alexander	Philadelphia	11:31.04
2	Ursillo, Matthew	Providence	12:19.69
3	Avedian, Alec	New Jersey	12:55.25
4	Saroukhanian, Van	Detroit	13:04.78
5	Varadian, Ryan	Granite City	14:46.55
6	Bedian, Daron	Chicago	14:58.89
7	Sarraffian, Raffi	Chicago	15:29.83

WOMEN 200 METER DASH

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Sarafian, Melanie	Detroit	28.04
2	Ganjian, Lori	Greater Boston	30.22
3	Coburn, Mary	Detroit	30.84
4	Gezdir, Ariana	New Jersey	32.32
5	Kevorkian, Lilit	New York	32.72
6	Tarpinian, Maral	New Jersey	36.49

MEN 200 METER DASH

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Sarkissian, Avo	New York	23.60
2	Karjian, Mano	Detroit	24.69
3	Ohanesian, Michael	Detroit	24.85
4	Avakian, John	Greater Boston	25.19
5	Cormier, Gregory	Greater Boston	25.20
6	Kassabian, Koko	Providence	25.70
7	Coburn, David	Detroit	26.32

WOMEN 400 METER DASH

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Nercesian, Talene	Detroit	1:07.50
2	Varadian, Sarah	Granite City	1:14.71
3	Selverian, Jessica	Philadelphia	1:17.17
4	Aftandilian, Lia	Greater Boston	1:20.92
5	Nigoghosian, Victoria	Detroit	1:23.49
6	Comella, Ani	Providence	1:37.49
7	Tarpinian, Maral	New Jersey	1:52.87

MEN 400 METER DASH

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Sarkissian, Avo	New York	53.71
2	Jerikian, Armen	Chicago	54.34
3	Karjian, Mano	Detroit	56.92
4	Vartanian, Garen	Detroit	58.22
5	Cormier, Gregory	Greater Boston	1:04.20
6	Charchaffian, Sam	Greater Boston	1:08.41

WOMEN 800 METER RUN

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Kevorkian, Lilit	New York	2:37.99
2	Nercesian, Talene	Detroit	2:44.07
3	Varadian, Sarah	Granite City	2:52.95
4	Aftandilian, Lia	Greater Boston	2:57.81
5	Atakhanian, Taleen	New Jersey	3:00.61
6	Selverian, Jessica	Philadelphia	3:00.85
7	McCarthy, Shayna	New Jersey	3:11.90
8	Dulgarian, Sevan	Middlesex West	3:21.33

MEN 800 METER RUN

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Dardarian, Alexander	Philadelphia	2:15.81
2	Barsamian, David	New Jersey	2:17.62
3	Vartanian, Garen	Detroit	2:25.48
4	Ursillo, Matthew	Providence	2:27.27
5	Adishian, Van	New Jersey	2:31.37
6	Kadian, Haig	Detroit	2:46.37
7	McHugh, Kail	Philadelphia	2:51.08
8	Kouchakdjian, Zaven	Middlesex West	3:01.63

WOMEN 1600 METER RUN

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Kevorkian, Lilit	New York	5:55.55
2	Varadian, Sarah	Granite City	6:18.58
3	Aftandilian, Lia	Greater Boston	6:29.09
4	Nercesian, Talene	Detroit	6:40.87
5	Atakhanian, Taleen	New Jersey	6:43.05
6	Selverian, Jessica	Philadelphia	6:56.78
7	Dervishian, Sonya	Philadelphia	7:02.01
8	Setrakian, Mia	New Jersey	7:04.40

MEN 1600 METER RUN

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Dardarian, Alexander	Philadelphia	5:09.48
2	Saroukhanian, Van	Detroit	5:29.57
3	Ursillo, Matthew	Providence	5:31.41
4	Jelalian, David	Washington	5:44.33
5	Aprahamian, Armen	New York	5:52.22
6	Yeremian, Raphael	Philadelphia	5:52.26
7	Avedian, Alec	New Jersey	6:12.32
8	Varadian, Ryan	Granite City	6:14.78

WOMEN 100 METER HURDLES

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Krafian, Knar	Greater Boston	17.29
2	Comella, Ani	Providence	21.83
3	Kurkechian, Sara	Detroit	22.42
4	Tufenkjian, Tiffany	Detroit	22.63
5	Oknayan, Talia	Detroit	22.86
6	Boyajian, Talia	New Jersey	22.87

MEN 110 METER HURDLES

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Tcholakian, Mher	Detroit	16.83
2	Kassabian, Koko	Providence	16.88
3	Cormier, Gregory	Greater Boston	19.24
4	Ohanesian, Michael	Detroit	20.55
5	Peltekian, Alec	Chicago	21.11

WOMEN 4X100 METER RELAY

	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Detroit	53.32
2	Greater Boston	55.70
3	New Jersey	1:02.44
4	Philadelphia	1:05.41
5	Middlesex West	1:08.25

MEN 4X100 METER RELAY

	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Detroit	46.54
2	Greater Boston	48.46
3	Philadelphia	50.52
4	Providence	51.96
5	Chicago	53.55
6	New Jersey	53.60

WOMEN 4X200 METER RELAY

	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Detroit	1:55.04
2	Greater Boston	2:16.81
3	New Jersey	2:20.06
4	Philadelphia	2:26.53

MEN 4X400 METER RELAY

	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Detroit	4:04.13
2	New Jersey	4:09.15
3	Philadelphia	4:10.77
4	Greater Boston	4:50.70

MIXED 4X200 METER RELAY

	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Detroit	1:43.96 R
2	Greater Boston	1:45.90
3	Philadelphia	2:04.04
4	New Jersey	2:07.47



Armen Almasian (North Andover) 3-peats in the long jump (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



Future AYFers racing to the finish line in the traditional kiddie race (Photo: Mark Gavoor)



Zach Semerjian (Providence) wins the shot put (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



Lilit Kevorkian (New York) races to the finish line in the 800 meters (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



Lauren Billeh (Chicago) with the shot put (Photo: Arev Kaligian)



Melanie Sarafian (Detroit) edges out Meline Almasian (North Andover) in the 50 meter dash (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



Azniv and Alidz Khaligian of the Racine "Armen Garo" AYF Chapter (Photo: Arev Kaligian)

TRACK RESULTS

WOMEN HIGH JUMP

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Topouzian, Knar	Detroit	4-08.00
2	Ganjian, Lori	Greater Boston	4-02.00
3	Comella, Ani	Providence	3-10.00 J
4	Ezgilioglu, Grace	New Jersey	3-10.00 J
5	Oknayan, Talia	Detroit	3-08.00
6	Krafian, Nairi	Greater Boston	3-04.00

MEN HIGH JUMP

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Minasian, Vahe	Philadelphia	5-06.00 J
2	Tcholakian, Mher	Detroit	5-06.00 J
3	Keshgegian, Anto	Philadelphia	5-04.00
4	Shamlian, Haig	Philadelphia	5-02.00
5	Charchaflian, Sam	Greater Boston	5-02.00
6	Mkrtschjan, Nareg	Providence	5-00.00
7	Changelian, Ara	Greater Boston	4-10.00
8	Oknayan, Armen	Detroit	4-08.00

WOMEN LONG JUMP

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Almasian, Meline	North Andover	15-04.00
2	Ganjian, Lori	Greater Boston	13-02.00
3	Jerikian, Anahid	Chicago	12-10.50
4	Krafian, Nairi	Greater Boston	11-05.50
5	Boman, Taleen	Detroit	11-04.50
6	Dardarian, Ani	Philadelphia	10-08.00
7	Selverian, Victoria	Philadelphia	10-00.25
8	Ezgilioglu, Grace	New Jersey	10-00.00

MEN LONG JUMP

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Almasian, Armen	North Andover	19-00.50
2	Mahrokhian, Shant	Greater Boston	18-11.75
3	Minasian, Vahe	Philadelphia	17-06.00
4	Charchaflian, Sam	Greater Boston	17-01.00
5	Mkrtschjan, Nareg	Providence	16-11.00
6	Hardy, Tavit	Chicago	16-04.00
7	Yeremian, Paze	Philadelphia	16-02.50
8	Papaian, Sarkis	West San Fern	15-09.25

WOMEN TRIPLE JUMP

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Topouzian, Knar	Detroit	32-11.50
2	Almasian, Meline	North Andover	32-03.25
3	Jerikian, Anahid	Chicago	27-06.00
4	Dardarian, Ani	Philadelphia	24-10.75
5	Sarafian, Danielle	Detroit	23-03.75
6	Selverian, Rebecca	Philadelphia	20-02.00

MEN TRIPLE JUMP

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Tcholakian, Mher	Detroit	38-11.00
2	Mardirosian, Mher	Philadelphia	34-08.00
3	Keshgegian, Anto	Philadelphia	34-06.00
4	Oknayan, Armen	Detroit	34-04.00
5	Mkrtschjan, Nareg	Providence	32-04.00
6	Hardy, Tavit	Chicago	32-03.50

WOMEN SHOT PUT

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Krafian, Knar	Greater Boston	32-09.00
2	Billeh, Lauren	Chicago	29-03.50
3	Gigarjian, Anoush	Greater Boston	28-06.50
4	Tcholakian, Patil	Detroit	28-06.00
5	Ouligian, Alina	Greater Boston	26-06.50
6	Gevorkian, Tsoline	Middlesex West	25-07.50
7	Bardakjian, Lena	Philadelphia	24-10.00 J
8	Najarian, Mara	Detroit	24-10.00 J

MEN SHOT PUT

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Semerjian, Zach	Providence	44-05.00
2	Avakian, Alexander	Greater Boston	43-00.00
3	Nercesian, Michael	Detroit	41-10.00
4	Surenian, Armen	Chicago	36-11.00
5	Sarafian, Nicolas	Detroit	35-02.00
6	Kiledjian, Kevork	New Jersey	34-10.00
7	Tosh, Jake	Philadelphia	32-00.00
8	Topalian, Shahan	Providence	31-07.00

WOMEN DISCUS THROW

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Topouzian, Knar	Detroit	84-05
2	Gigarjian, Anoush	Greater Boston	77-11
3	Oknayan, Gasia	Detroit	68-10
4	Guzelian, Taline	Greater Boston	63-03
5	Dulgarian, Sevan	Middlesex West	63-00
6	Dervishian, Sonya	Philadelphia	61-00
7	Sarafian, Danielle	Detroit	58-05
8	Tcholakian, Patil	Detroit	58-02

MEN DISCUS THROW

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Avakian, Alexander	Greater Boston	146-08
2	Semerjian, Zach	Providence	114-01
3	Nercesian, Michael	Detroit	109-02
4	Sarafian, Nicolas	Detroit	96-09
5	Surenian, Armen	Chicago	90-00
6	Donoyan, George	Providence	79-05
7	Abrahamian, Emin	Greater Boston	73-01
8	Topalian, Shahan	Providence	70-10

WOMEN JAVELIN THROW

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Changelian, Sena	Greater Boston	90-10
2	Krafian, Knar	Greater Boston	88-02
3	Khachatryan, Tatevik	Washington	82-00
4	Coburn, Lucie	Detroit	76-02
5	Oknayan, Talia	Detroit	71-10
6	Almasian, Tamar	North Andover	69-10
7	Aslanian, Zabella	New Jersey	67-09
8	Dulgarian, Sevan	Middlesex West	66-09

MEN JAVELIN THROW

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Semerjian, Zach	Providence	164-11
2	Nercesian, Michael	Detroit	148-11
3	Avakian, Alexander	Greater Boston	138-02
4	Tossounian, Mourad	Detroit	123-11
5	Niffin, Jacob	Detroit	102-06
6	Donoyan, George	Providence	99-07
7	Sarafian, Nicolas	Detroit	95-10
8	Taraksian, Hagop	Providence	91-11

WOMEN OUTDOOR PENTATHLON

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Krafian, Anoush	Greater Boston	3170 R
2	Topouzian, Teny	Detroit	1747
3	Jelalian, Theresa	New Jersey	1183

MEN OUTDOOR PENTATHLON

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Tcholakian, Sasoun	Detroit	2583
2	Keshgegian, Aram	Philadelphia	2538
3	Hamparian, Daron	Greater Boston	2533
4	Topouzian, Stepan	Detroit	1961
5	Avakian, Gabriel	Greater Boston	1918
6	Dervishian, Armen	Philadelphia	1730
7	Najarian, Aram	Washington	1637
8	Nishanian, Aram	New Jersey	1510

WOMEN BASEBALL THROW

	NAME	CHAPTER	SCORE
1	Boman, Taleen	Detroit	162-09.00
2	Changelian, Sena	Greater Boston	161-08.00
3	Zanaras, Ava	Philadelphia	156-01.00
4	Gevorkian, Tsoline	Middlesex West	152-03.00
5	Almasian, Tamar	North Andover	144-10.00
6	Coburn, Mary	Detroit	139-06.00
7	Soulakian, Sophia	Chicago	129-03.00
8	Selverian, Rebecca	Philadelphia	124-04.00



Yeghia Gharibian (Australia) flying in the long jump (Photo: Arev Kaligian)



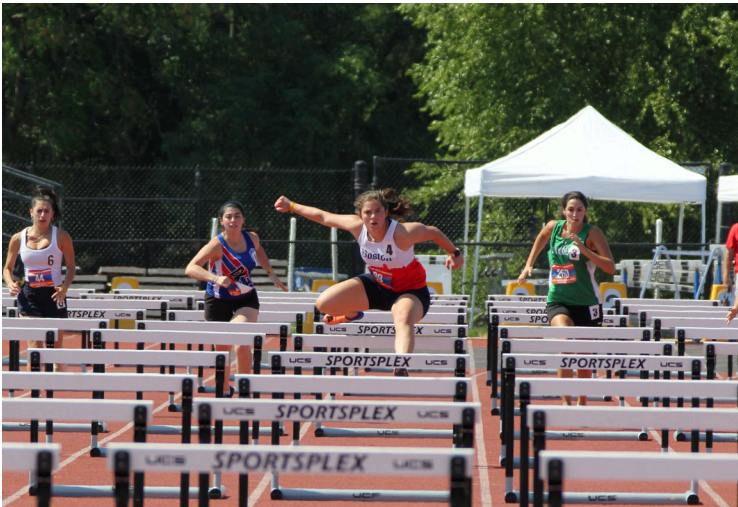
Knar Topouzian (Detroit) winning the triple jump (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



Meline Almasian (North Andover) 3-peats in the long jump (Photo: Tamar Kanarian)



Alex Dardarian (Philadelphia) strides away in the 3200 meters (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



Knar Krafian (Greater Boston) starts strong to win the hurdles (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)



Worcester “Aram” Chapter members, hosts of last year’s Olympics, during Opening Ceremonies (Photo: Arev Kaligian)



Washington, D.C. “Ani” torch bearers Hovsep Seferian and Sune Hamparian (Photo: Mark Gavoor)



Granite City “Antranig” Chapter in Opening Ceremonies (Photo: Sona Gevorkian)

A Somber Wrap-Up

By Mark Gavoor

The Olympics ended on September 4. Like every other year, we all went home to resume our normal lives.

Just two weeks later, on September 19, I was getting ready to write my last article for the *Armenian Weekly* AYF Olympics Special Issue. That day, Azerbaijan launched an attack on the blockaded Armenians of Artsakh. The Armenians had no alternative but to surrender. Everyone at the Olympics knew an attack was likely if not imminent. It was gut-wrenching to see the results we had all feared.

This Olympics issue was postponed, as the devastating news about Artsakh clouded our lives. The *Armenian Weekly* staff was consumed with reporting the horrible news and publishing stories and commentary on this very sad time in Armenian history.

As of writing this, diasporan life here in the U.S. is returning to some kind of normalcy. Our protests and lobbying efforts continue, with the slim chance of garnering some justice from the powers that be. We solicit assistance for the Artsakh refugees and the Armenians held prisoner in Azerbaijan and participate in fundraisers.

It is good that the *Weekly's* AYF Olympics Special Issue is going to press. In these difficult times, we in the diaspora must also focus our efforts on maintaining, serving and sustaining our communities. We are, after all, a nation of survivors, moving forward to the best of our ability, understanding that our pain is nothing close to the existential anguish and total upheaval facing our brothers and sisters from Artsakh. We must continue our traditions, the AYF Olympics being one of them. Life goes on under a veil of sadness.

A key to this is a focus on our youth. Nurturing our young people to preserve our communities and nation in exile was the very mission of Karekin Njdeh in 1933, when the AYF was founded. Over the Olympics weekend in Washington, D.C., we saw all the elements of the AYF on full display. Our current AYFers and alumni were politically active,



Breakfast with friends (Photo: Mark Gavoor)



Dignitaries at the AYF Olympics Opening Ceremonies (Photo: Tamar Kanarian)

participating in a protest in front of the White House in support of Artsakh. Robert Avetisyan, the Permanent Representative of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic to the United States, delivered a solemn and impactful message at the Opening Ceremonies, where the anthems of both Armenia and Artsakh were sung. We witnessed the athletic skills of the AYFers, who competed in the Olympic events with great passion, effort and, perhaps most importantly, the fraternalism that has come to be a hallmark of the AYF in the eastern United States.

I usually write my last article about the people at the Olympics. No matter what the final headline is, the working title is always “The Angel article,” in reference to Angel Perethian. Her articles about the AYF Olympics were an Armenian love

fest written in the style of the 1950-60s gossip column. I was preparing to write my own 2023 version in homage to Angel, when the sad news hit.

While this article was written under a dark pall, there are people who deserve to be recognized and appreciated for the work they have done to make the Olympics such a wonderful and successful weekend. First and foremost are the 89th Annual AYF Olympics Steering Committee co-chairs Shirag Ohannesian and Olympic King Hratch Najarian. This is the fourth Olympics that Najarian has co-chaired. Leading a committee of over 50 people, they did a magnificent job, from the fantastic venues to the record setting Ad Book, from the social gatherings to the management of all the athletics.

I was fortunate enough to spend some time over Olympics



Tradition photo with Kenar Charchaflian and Nareg Mkrtshjan at tennis, this time with their baby Mshag (Photo: Mark Gavoor)



Ara and Alice Sarajian with their children, two-year-old Lucine and baby Talar (Photo: Mark Gavoor)

weekend with Steering Committee members Manoug Habibian, Chris Hekimian and Yeghisapet Chouldjian, gifted individuals who have been tireless in planning the AYF Olympics. I wish I could have thanked each and every committee personally. We seem to set a new standard every year.

Kudos as always to the Olympics Governing Body: Mark Manuelian, Daron Topouzian and Ara Sarajian. They bring continuity to the operational side of planning and running the Olympics, and worked over the weekend with the host committee to make the athletic side run smoothly.

Bravo to the athletes for their training and dedication to their sports and the AYF. Congratulations to their parents and families for cheering loudly and

proudly not only for their own but also the achievements and participation of all.

Thanks to the staff of the *Armenian Weekly*: Pauline Getzoyan, Lillian Avedian and Nanar Avedessian, and the writers and photographers Bob Tutunjian, Harry Derderian, Sona Gevorkian, Tamar Kanarian and Arev Kaligian for their tireless work to put together the *Armenian Weekly* AYF Olympics Special Issue. We honor the memory of Jimmy Tashjian and Tommy Vartabedian, who set the standard of reporting and photography that now requires this small army to achieve.

Lastly, God bless the Artsakh Armenians as they recover and rebuild their lives and homes. We must help them as much as we can.

Tebi Detroit in 2024.

The 2023 AYF-YOARF Central Executive would like to thank all of our members, alumni, supporters and family members for supporting the AYF Olympics this year in Washington, D.C.

In these difficult times, events like our AYF Olympics, Junior Seminar, AYF Camp Haiastan, AYF Internship and more enable our region's youth to not only be an active participant in Armenian activities, but to create new programs and drive our nation's growth.

To help translate our event's success into tangible help for our homeland, five-percent of the proceeds from this year's AYF Olympics Games will be donated to our AYF-YOARF Together for Artsakh Fund.

The Central Executive is constantly inspired by our members and supporters and will continue to work tirelessly for our people and our Cause. We look forward to seeing everyone in Detroit for next year's momentous occasion — the 90th Annual AYF Olympics Games!



AYF-YOARF Eastern Region Central Executive members at the 2023 Olympics (l-r): Daron Bedian, Alec Soghomonian, Harout Tashian, Ani Khachatourian, Meghri Dervartanian, Talene Sagherian, Nareg Mkrtshjan, Niree Kaprielian and Areni Margossian

The 2024 Detroit Olympics Steering Committee is looking forward to hosting another extraordinary AYF-YOARF Annual Olympics next year!

This event has continued to bring so much prosperity to our organization, and we are extremely excited to play our part and add to the storied history of the Olympics by hosting the 90th Annual Games next year. Pack your track and dancing shoes, because the Midwest is waiting for you!

ayfolympics.org



This page was sponsored by:
Mark and Judy Gavoor

