

## SPORTS

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## View from the lane: the best dancer



Ava Nagy/Guilfordian

Sommer Fanney '18 (far right) and members of the Guilford track team await the start of a race.

BY SOMMER FANNEY  
STAFF WRITER

In the previous "View from the lane," I talked about my typical pre-race ritual before a track meet, which is an extensive process. But now, it is time to get the adrenaline fully flowing.

You are about to race, lined up next to girls that giggle and bounce with anxiety and/or excitement.

Do not forget to hit people with the baton who ask for your personal record — obviously do not actually hit them, even though you want to. They deserve to be passed as well — you will pass them.

Instead of hitting people, you might decide to become a dancer right before your race. Dancers are exempt from pointless or prohibited conversation involving one's PR. This is my preferred method of preparation. Right before I run the mile, I become a hopping Irish dancer and snap my fingers a lot. If you are rhythmic with your pre-race jittery, jelly jumpiness, it is probably going to be a good race for you.

Thus, the number one goal of racing is to aim to be the best dancer at the line. Winning and record-breaking will surely follow.

Eventually, after an eternity, the actual running part happens, and that is shorter than you expect unless your race is two miles or longer. My condolences go out to those unfortunate souls. Hopefully you are running the mile or something shorter.

After you rock your dancing, there is a gunshot and you are off.

You all coast off the line and lean into the curve. You strain into a staggered chorus of whipping ponytails, studded footsteps and anxious breaths. The line straightens out. Runners take a breath and relax, just for a moment.

Another curve, and runners slide into single file, angling for efficiency. Quick hip flicks crack legs like whips. You fixate on

cycling whips in front of you. This goes on for a few minutes.

You pass people or you do not. Your legs keep cycling. Think tired and you will be tired; think faster and you will be faster. Cracking continues — you fly. Some people really fly. Some falter. You cross the line with no breath and jagged movements. Sit down.

Then, you are either really happy about the fact that you ran so fast and danced so well or you are not happy because you did not run so fast. If that is the case, you probably did not dance — shame on you. Regardless, you are finished finally and that is a great feeling, at least for now. You have another race at 3:40 p.m. It is 1:45 p.m. right now, and there is another race at 5:15 p.m.

So, the cycle begins again. Good luck remembering to put on your race stickers and calculating what and when you can eat before your next race, if the option of food is even applicable.

You see, running as a whole is not exactly effortless. There are parts of it that we enjoy and that come more easily to us than others. Meanwhile, there are some things we still do not know how to deal with.

Maybe the actual racing part is easiest for you, while the things that surround it like food, nerves, warming up, competitors, the restroom and other factors make your skin crawl. Or maybe the racing part is just so dreadful to you that you have no other choice but to preoccupy yourself with all sorts of pre-race rituals and obsessions so that you do not have room to psyche yourself out.

And it is also possible that you really are very relaxed about running and racing, and that meets and training are like little vacations for you. But personally, no matter how it might look like I am running effortlessly, I can tell you that it is not so easy. We do it for the parts that are fun to us, or maybe that is just me.

## Warriors, Rockets, Hawks, Cavaliers in playoffs

BY ZACH LINDSEY  
STAFF WRITER

The 2014-15 season has been a whirlwind for many teams in the National Basketball Association. Now, with the NBA playoffs having gotten cranked up on April 18, 16 teams are vying for the coveted NBA Championship.

Each of the top-seeded teams is led by one of the league's most talented players: guard James Harden of the Houston Rockets, guard Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors, forward Paul Millsap of the Atlanta Hawks and forward LeBron James of the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Last year's champions, the San Antonio Spurs, entered this year's playoffs as the sixth seed in the West. Despite not being a top seed like last year, you can never count out a Gregg Popovich-coached team in the postseason. Having been in the finals many times before, center Tim Duncan — a five-time NBA champion and three-time finals MVP — knows exactly how to maximize his team's potential in the post season.

The Golden State Warriors are the team to beat, as they have the key components from top to bottom that have led them to a league-best 67 wins this season. The Warriors are led by Curry and guard Klay Thompson, known as the "splash brothers," who are arguably the top dynamic duo in basketball.

This season, Thompson averaged 21.7 points per game and 3.2 rebounds per game, while Curry averaged 23.8 points per game and 7.7 assists per game. However, additional key role players for the Warriors were huge this season.

The Warriors are currently in a series with the New Orleans Pelicans and center Anthony Davis. The Warriors lead that series 2-0.

James Harden and the two-seeded Houston Rockets are fully reinforced as they have a dominant post player in center Dwight Howard to grab rebounds and block shots. The 6-foot-11-inch Howard has averaged 15.8 points per game, 10.5 rebounds per game and 1.3 blocks this season.

The Rockets are currently facing the Dallas Mavericks led by guard Rajon Rondo and forward Dirk Nowitzki. The Rockets have currently taken a 2-0 series lead.

The West three-seed Los Angeles Clippers are led by legendary coach Doc Rivers, all-star point guard Chris Paul and forward Blake Griffin. This trio could certainly make a deep run in the playoffs. The series is tied 1-1.

Then there are also the Memphis Grizzlies, who have been in contention over the past few years. They currently have a 2-0 series lead over the Portland Trailblazers.

The East is not as volatile. The Atlanta Hawks and the Cleveland Cavaliers are true contenders for the Championship. In addition, Derrick Rose and the Chicago Bulls are not too far away from winning the East either. On the other hand, the Cavaliers and James loom large as a roadblock to the title matchup for one-seed Atlanta.

The Cleveland Cavaliers big three of James, guard Kyrie Irving and forward Kevin Love led the Cavs to a two-seed in the East. The Cavs are envisioned to do great things this postseason and hope to bring a championship back to the state of Ohio, which will be the first Cleveland major-sport championship since the Cleveland Browns won the NFL Championship in 1964.

The Cavs are currently up 2-0 in a series over the Boston Celtics.

While the Hawks won 60 games for the second-best record in the league this year, all eyes are on the Cavs. The Hawks are currently up 2-0 over the Brooklyn Nets in their first-round matchup but are overcoming a rash of injuries. It will be interesting to see if that affects the East's beat-up top seed the rest of the way.

Elsewhere in the East, the Bulls have currently taken a 2-0 series lead over the Milwaukee Bucks. The Washington Wizards have a 2-0 lead over the Toronto Raptors.

It was a surprising season in the NBA where teams such as the Oklahoma City Thunder and Miami Heat did not make the playoffs as they have done in seasons past.

For the Thunder, it was linked to the fact that Kevin Durant — reigning MVP — has not played since mid-February due to injury.

For Miami, it has been a downward fall after LeBron James' departure. The Heat's all-star forward Chris Bosh has been sidelined for most of the season due to blood clots in his lungs since February, and all-star guard Dwayne Wade has battled various knee problems.

At long last, after 82 games of NBA regular season action, playoff basketball is here. The race to the Larry O'Brien trophy is as wide open as it has been in a long time. With great contending teams competing for one goal, the 2015 playoffs should be one to remember.

Will James reach his fifth straight finals? Can Curry and the Warriors end their phenomenal season with a championship? Will the prospective Harden do great

things for the Rockets? Or can the Hawks prove to those with eyes on the Cavaliers they are truly the best of the East?

Stay tuned over the next month to find out.

