

Being on the Team 101

Be prepared...for the weather. We live in Minnesota, how else was I going to start this off?

Anticipate cold, wind, and rain every day. Athletes need to get in the habit of checking weather forecasts as well. If we encounter inclement weather we will follow MSHSL recommendations. For example, lightning is as follows: **“Wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder before returning to the field or activity”**. We will also follow recommendations for temperature related guidelines. Typically, we will use our best judgment to err on the side of athlete safety and use more caution than the recommendations call for.

Cross country and track are no-cut sports. If you sign up and go to practice, you are a team member.

Depending on the year and season, numbers may vary. However, we typically have around 40 students for cross country, and 75 students for track. We are fortunate enough to have at least 3 coaches that see the students for cross country and track. We will be adding a 4th this track season. If anyone would like to help out for either, feel free to contact the coaches.

We are a group of 6th-12th graders with a variety of needs, abilities, and expectations. We will train and compete together over a 12 week period (sometimes longer) to work on meeting the needs of all participants. Many parents may wonder if an environment, which includes such a large age range, is an appropriate one for their 6th, 7th or 8th grader. The answer to that: this system seems to work well for everyone. Primarily because the older kids are great mentors to the younger members!

Each athlete should compete in large number of scheduled meets. The exceptions to this would be middle schoolers, or that you have to qualify (or meet coaches requirements) to run in the conference, section, and state meets. Middle school athletes may have specific meets for them (usually only in track), while the rest of the team will compete at Varsity or JV meets. 6th graders are NOT eligible for MSHSL sanctioned post-season events; so they will never compete on the Varsity or JV teams.

The selection of the varsity team for a meet is usually based on race times or marks, not age or grade or length of time on the team. It is possible to go to a meet and see middle schoolers competing at the varsity level. We will not have middle school athletes compete at the varsity level unless we feel they would be competitive. The varsity lineup at a meet will change during the season, as performances change or injuries occur. Substitutes, or alternates, train at the highest levels to fill in where needed.

We encourage all students to ride the bus to and from meets. For meets that we travel to, please communicate well in advance with your teachers (the ideal minimum is 1 week prior) to find out what work or assignments you will be missing. Please make sure you are ready to board the bus at the designated leave time. We will not wait for anyone that is late. Once we get a head count and turn that information into the school, the bus will be rolling. Should a student-athlete need to drive to a meet, be driven to a meet, or leave early, please communicate with the coaches beforehand so we can plan accordingly.

Team members are expected to begin warming up together (no less than 40 minutes before your race), ride the bus to and from meets together, and attend team dinners and fundraising events together. These are fun times for the runners and really let them bond as a team. Following the conclusion of meets, you may ride home with a parent if your parent communicates a) verbally at the meet or, b) via message no less than 1 day before the competition. You may not leave the meet with anyone other than your own parent or guardian.

Athletes are expected to attend EVERY meet, even when they are not participating. The coaches may need help taking splits, setting up the tent, supplying student workers etc. When we are at a meet, athletes should either be engaged in the meet or supporting their teammates. Homework, in moderation, is acceptable. Standing in circles around the team tent area goofing off during a meet is not. The expectation is also for all athletes to stay for the entire meet and support our teammates.

Speaking from experience, if you have younger kids, these are the groups of student-athletes you want them to hang out with. They are usually very good students. They are very encouraging because they know what it takes to start out and succeed in this sport. They are good role models and are often leaders in other groups, whether it is in school or outside school.

Get Yourself Some Gear

Cross country and track typically are not, nor do they need to be, expensive sports. There is an initial investment you make (usually for shoes and some clothing/gear). However, your child may already have suggested articles of clothing (like gloves, hats, shorts, and jackets). If they don't they will most certainly acquire these things over the years. Don't look to outfit your kids with new wardrobes and accessories, unless you really want to. Stick to the basics. Finding yourself the appropriate attire isn't complicated; it's all about layering! The colder the weather, the more layers. Cold weather and rain gear are needed as runners train and run races in all weather. This includes running through rain and snow!

A good pair of running shoes is the single most important thing your runner needs for gear. It's generally best to go to a store that specializes in running in order to get the personalized attention your athlete needs to get the right pair of shoes. These places typically are staffed by runners, and they aren't trying to 'push' unnecessary expenditures on to you. Having the right running shoes is also key to injury prevention. They don't have to be the most expensive pair of shoes in the store; they just have to fit and feel right. There is no one "best" brand—every runner usually has a brand they swear by.

We would recommend any of the following locations:

- RunMN (Burnsville)
- Mill City Running (Minneapolis)
- TC Running (Eden Prairie)
- Run N Fun (Woodbury or St Paul)
- Gear West (Minneapolis)
- Marathon Sports (Minneapolis)

Make sure that you mention that you are a high school runner when checking out. Most of these stores have discounts for high school athletes! Also, if you like a good deal (*parents, we are thinking of you*) don't hesitate to ask for a previous year's model. Take shoes for instance. There's nothing wrong with a year old model. The store is only trying to move its inventory, and they may discount as much as 30% off retail price. The worst thing they can tell you is that they don't have an older model.

i.e. If a shoe is \$120 normally, this is standard for a good training shoe, 30% off of that would be \$84. Also, they won't compound discounts on top of each other.

Good shoes will last 350-500 miles. Depending on who you are it is a safe assumption that you will likely look to invest in a new pair of shoes for each season. Some people may go through 2 pairs in a season! Keep track of when new shoes are purchased and the mileage. Worn out shoes can lead to injury. Always

pay attention for excessive wear and tear. Get rid of shoes when they are uncomfortable, i.e., don't have much padding, or when they reach 350-500 miles. Or when they outgrow them!

Suggestions for gear/accessories

Bare necessities:

- Shoes

- Socks

- Shorts

- T-shirt

- Water Bottle

- Watch (does NOT need to be GPS)

 - This is a useful tool for practices as it allows athletes to time runs and workouts. Look for one with a stopwatch feature, an alarm feature, and memory for splits.

Public Service Announcement: When looking for things like socks, t-shirts, and other clothing accessories, try to avoid cotton or other heavy, non-breathable materials. Instead, opt for synthetic or blended fabrics (like polyester, spandex, nylon, or rayon), as those will be better at wicking moisture and preventing chafing or blisters! Most of the apparel in run specialty stores will not contain cotton.

Other things that may come in handy throughout the season are:

- extra socks

- extra shirt

- long-sleeved shirts

 - A thermal type of long-sleeved shirt which is fairly tight to the body, and a looser long-sleeved shirt which can be layered over the undergarment but is under the jacket

- knit cap or headband

- sweat shirt, sweat pants, or tights

- gloves/mittens

 - 1 lighter pair, and 1 heavier pair

- wind/rain resistant running jacket

- towel

- gym bag (with a name tag)

 - to put everything in/pack blankets, pillows, snacks or other necessities

- spikes or racing flats

 - Spikes are lightweight and have metal inserts on the forefoot of the sole.
Spike length can be changed, but there are length restrictions on length.
 - Flats, think spikes without spikes, are extremely lightweight training shoes.
 - Neither spikes or flats provide the foot or leg with much support, so they are primarily worn for races or track specific work. These are NOT mandatory. So newer athletes tend to compete in their training shoes