

# *Welcome to Cardinal Cross Country!*

The Nelson County High School Cross Country Coaching Staff would like to welcome you to the exciting sport of Cross Country and to the great tradition of our NCHS Teams!

*Please read the following handbook carefully, and be sure to check out all the updated information on our team website [www.ncxctf.com](http://www.ncxctf.com) often!*

## **WHAT IS CROSS COUNTRY?**

Cross country is a team running sport that takes place in the fall on a measured 5 kilometer (about 3-mile) course over varied surfaces and terrain. Races may be held on school campuses, dirt trails, park grounds, and sometimes on golf courses. Teams consist of seven runners per squad, and most schools usually have varsity, junior varsity, and middle school squads. Freshman squads occasionally race as well.

## **HOW IS CROSS COUNTRY SCORED?**

A cross country meet is scored by each team adding up the places of its top 5 finishers. As in golf, the low score wins. For example, a team that scores 26 points places ahead of a team that scores 29 points. A team's 6th and 7th finishers can also figure in the scoring if they place ahead of the other teams' top 5 finishers. When that is the case, they become "pushers" by pushing up their opponents' scores, as follows:

<b>NCHS</b>	<b>St. Xavier</b>
2	1 ( <i>X wins individual</i> )
3	4
6	5
8	7
9	12
SCORE <u>28</u>	<u>29</u> ( <i>Cardinals Win Team!</i> )
10	13
11	14

## **ABOUT OUR TEAM**

The NCHS Cardinal Cross Country team serves students of the Nelson County School District grades 6-12. There are no cuts from the cross country team, and all participants compete. Placement on various squads (varsity, junior varsity, freshmen, or middle school/elementary) is based on three criteria (in order of importance): 1. coach's discretion, 2. observed performance, and 3. age or grade. Middle school runners can qualify for high school varsity competition.

## **TEAM REQUIREMENTS**

In order to participate, runners must have all of the following on file: 1. a completed physical, 2. a completed parental consent form, 3. a signed participant/

parent contract (found at the end of this packet), and 4. a weekly academic progress report. Like all NCHS athletes, runners must be passing 3 of 4 classes to remain eligible to compete. Physicals can be scheduled with your family doctor or through a local chiropractor (who are fine for athletic physicals and tend to be a bit cheaper). Like all teams and clubs at NCHS, participants in Cross Country must have their parents attend a drug testing forum and must pass a pre-season drug test, as well as remain eligible for random drug tests throughout the season. Furthermore, all runners must be in good team standing and a model for his or her teammates in attitude and behavior. Disrespectful behavior to anyone—coaches, teammates, opponents, anyone—will not be tolerated.

## **YOUR COACHES**

### **Dan Bradley: Head Coach**

Coach Bradley has coached the NCHS Cross Country team since 1993 and NCHS Track & Field since 1995. He has been part of a Region Champion Cross Country team, and Region Runner-up and Conference Champion teams in both sports. Several teams and many individual athletes have qualified for state championships under him, and many have earned athletic scholarships to college (including 5 NCAA Division I athletes). Coach Bradley is the race manger of the Hillbilly Run CC Race, the Rolling Fork Iron Horse Festival 5K Road Race, and the Little Boston Marathon. An avid runner and racer himself, Coach Bradley has averaged over 1,000 road miles per year for the last five years and is a 2010 USATF Masters-level road race series gold medalist. He also holds a Level I USATF coaching certification. He teaches English and is the Journalism advisor at NCHS. He can be reached at 349-7010 or [dan.bradley@nelson.kyschools.us](mailto:dan.bradley@nelson.kyschools.us)

### **Jessica Sparrow, Assistant Coach**

Coach Sparrow keeps the NCHS Cross Country program on track. In her eighth year coaching cross country, she supervises the progression of our newer runners. In the past, she has also served as an assistant NCHS Track coach. She played tennis for Kentucky Wesleyan University and tennis and soccer for Nelson County High School. She is the Instructional Coach at NCHS. Coach Sparrow can be reached at 349-7010 or through e-mail at [jessica.culver@nelson.kyschools.us](mailto:jessica.culver@nelson.kyschools.us)

### **Joanne Sugrue, Middle School Coach**

Coach Sugrue is in her first year as Middle School coach for NC, after volunteering in that position last season. She's an accomplished runner and road racer, and is excited to be working with the kids this season. She'll be here Tuesday through Thursday, and is available for contact through Coach Bradley.

## **PRACTICES**

### **1. Practices are mandatory**

Practice will be held from 3:30-5:00 Monday through Friday at Nelson County High School. Runners will meet outside the trackhouse promptly at 3:30 for a warm-up/stretch routine led by a senior captain.

A runner may have up to three excused absences from practice over the course of the season. Missed practices are excused for the same reason school absences are excused (see student handbook); up to three parent notes, with signature and date, will

therefore be accepted. Any absences beyond three or without valid excuse must be made up through a Friday practice. Excessive missed practices will result in team discipline which may or may not include loss of spot or dismissal from the team. Coach reserves final say regarding team discipline.

## **2. Schedule**

Our workout schedule is a 14-day cycle of increasing demand based on the concept that “every aspiring runner—young or old, male or female, fast or slow—has four inherent capacities: **speed, anaerobic capacity, endurance, and stamina.** Although inherent, these capacities are not fixed; they can be developed and honed through specific training, and the result will be improvement at all running distances” (Lawrence and Schied, *The Self-Coached Runner*, p. 16).

Workouts are available by month on the team website, and will naturally be varied and incorporate multiple activities (such as “back-door” speedwork almost daily. Weekday meets will obviously be scheduled throughout the season and will supplement that day’s workout.

Since competitions are held rain or shine, practice will be held rain or shine, unless there is an announcement stating otherwise. While we may do cross-training circuits and drills indoors on particularly stormy days, we will not run indoors.

## **3. Attire**

Runners should report to practice in proper attire. This includes a t-shirt, running shorts, and running shoes. In cold weather, sweats or a warm-up suit may be worn, but these are usually not appropriate for practice.

Regarding shoes: wear good *running* shoes. Never wear any other type of footwear to run in. Remember, not all good shoes are expensive, and not all expensive shoes are good. Unless an athlete is having foot trouble, any midrange (regularly priced \$50-\$75) running shoe that fits well is fine. Don’t spend too much, because shoes only really last one season. Even if the shoe body and outsole look okay, the midsole (white cushioning) will break down over the course of a season and the shoes must be replaced or problems will occur. Those with a history of foot problems should go to a shoe store specializing in running (Swag’s Sport Shoes in Louisville, for example) for a proper fitting. Never try to self-treat foot problems with orthotics, tape, or wraps. We will have a classroom session early on foot care.

## **4. Practices are closed**

While I encourage parental involvement in almost every way imaginable, weekday 3:30-5:00 practices are closed. Coaches will always remain on campus after practice until the activity buses arrive, and would welcome meeting with you at that time.

## **5. After practice**

Unless with a coach, after practice all runners must report to the front porch of the school to wait for rides. Anyone not picked up by a ride by 5:20 will board the activity bus for a ride to the bus stop nearest home. This year, activity buses will run on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Anyone missing Wednesday practice due to lack of a ride home will be given an excused absence for the day.

## **6. Off-campus practices**

Summer and fall break practices will normally be held off-campus to break the monotony and take advantage of some the beautiful scenery at places like Bernheim Forest in Clermont, Dean Watts Park, or the Bardstown United Methodist 2<sup>nd</sup> Campus on Louisville Road. These feature excellent, well-maintained loops of various distances they're just too great to not take advantage of. Due to liability concerns, we will not be able to provide transportation, so attendance cannot be mandated, but I guarantee those who attend will get an excellent workout. You just have to arrange your own ride.

## **COMPETITIONS**

### **1. Types**

There are generally two types of cross country competitions. One is called a *meet*, and is usually four or fewer local teams competing against one another for team results. These are usually held on weekday evenings. The other is called an *invitational*, and is often twenty teams or more from around the region (and even beyond) competing for team and individual trophies. These are usually held on Saturday mornings.

The only exceptions are the qualification meets for varsity teams: the region championship and state championship. Only our top seven boy and girl runners are eligible for these competitions. Regardless of performance, a runner must have competed in at least four races at the varsity level to qualify for a region team.

### **2. Our region**

We are in Class AAA Region 3. There is little doubt that our region is one of the toughest in the state, if not the toughest. Here's the breakdown: Bullitt Central, Butler, Doss, DuPont Manual, Iroquois, Male, Meade Co., us, PRP, and St. X.

A number of these schools are perennial favorites for state champions. Several of the others would win region every year if placed in a different region. Our schedule reflects a balance between local competition, confidence-builders, and region competition. We will not shy away from the great programs when we compete. We attend invitationals to develop mental toughness as well as physical toughness.

### **3. Attendance**

Attendance to meets is mandatory to all competitors. Any non-competitors for that day are encouraged to attend as well, but usually everyone will be competing anyway. The coach must be notified of any excused absence from competition at least three days in advance (e.g. Wednesday for a Saturday meet), and excused absences will count against attendance requirements detailed under "Practices" above. An unexcused absence from competition will result in team discipline which may or may not include loss of spot or dismissal from the team. Coach reserves final say regarding team discipline.

### **4. Travel**

When traveling to a meet, the entire team competing that day must ride together on the team bus. This includes all grade levels.

Runners will need to report to the front porch of the school at least 15 minutes before departure. Buses will leave on time regardless of who is running late. Due to space limitations, buses are closed to non-participants, but parental support is crucial at races, so I encourage you to support your runner by coming out and cheering them on.

After the post-race cool-down/stretch and team meeting, runners may leave with a parent or guardian rather than ride the bus back, but staying to cheer on the other team members in later races is encouraged. If you will not be riding the bus back with the team, you must check in with the coaches before you leave. If the parents you are leaving with are a teammate's parents, you must present a dated permission slip signed by your parents that states who you will be riding home with. Phone calls won't work—no note means you're riding the bus.

We will make cell phone calls on the way back to let rides know to come to school for pick-ups. It is very important that parents/guardians be available to pick up runners at school when the bus returns after a race. If you will not be available to pick up your runner after a race, you must make other arrangements beforehand or elect to pull your child from competition on that day and take an absence.

## **LETTERING**

A runner at any grade level can earn a high school varsity letter through one of two ways. 1. Single season—a runner must earn a varsity spot and compete in at least 50% of a season's varsity competitions. He or she must be in good team standing and a model for his or her teammates in attitude and behavior. 2. Multiple seasons—a runner completes a third consecutive season in the cross country program, with at least the last year at the junior varsity level. Again, he or she must be in good team standing and a model for his or her teammates in attitude and behavior.

## **UNIFORMS/WARMUPS**

Every runner will be issued a uniform consisting of top and bottom. Warm-up suits may be issued as well. It is the responsibility of the runner that these uniforms be kept clean and in good condition, and returned promptly at the end of season. Usually the last day to check in uniforms is the day of the post-season awards banquet. Failure to do so could result in the athlete being held responsible for the cost of the uniform. Should this occur, the school will bill the student the cost of a replacement uniform, and if left unsettled could result in report cards being withheld and loss of school privileges.

## **FUNDRAISERS**

It will be necessary for us to do a number of fundraisers over the course of the season; we have a goal of new uniforms and warm-ups, and also need some new equipment. Our major fundraiser is hosting the Hillbilly Run Invitational, and it will require everyone pitching in to make it another success. We also host the Ndurance Labor Day 5K in Bardstown and the Mid-Kentucky Conference Championship, and can keep all T-shirt and concession proceeds relating to these events. A minor fundraiser is the Run-A-Thon, where runners take pledges per mile and collect money after the event. The top \$10 or so of a runner's Run-A-Thon money normally goes toward his or her team T-shirt, so no runner has to pay for his or her own shirt directly. In addition, we are always on the lookout for new effective fundraiser ideas—if you have any, please let us know soon so we can work them in!

## **WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?**

I'm glad you asked. The answer: plenty! Here are some ideas...

1. **Communicate**—always let us know how things are going. A runner might tell you something he or she may not tell us. An ache or pain they may call "no big deal" could become a big deal quickly if we don't know to adjust workouts.

News about upcoming family trips, difficult times in a runner's life, or just a "how's it goin'?" from time to time are important. We need to know.

2. **Cheer us on**—it's vital to a runner to know that they have your support. Please DO come out to races, DO wear school colors, DO yell like crazy and call runners by name, but when you DO come out, please remember a few DON'Ts:
  - a. DON'T run with or touch an athlete during a race, even if he or she falls; doing so will disqualify them from the competition
  - b. DON'T put undue pressure on an athlete about his or her performance
  - c. DON'T expect to leave right after your runner's race as he or she still has a cool-down/stretch and team meeting to attend
  - d. DON'T expect to speak at length with a coach after a race as we are probably getting ready for the next race of the meet
3. **Support**—actions go a lot farther than words sometimes, and any help you can give us is appreciated. Maybe you can help a manager keep book, or call out split times at a mile marker; anything helps. And it's true: the easiest way to a runner is through the stomach. Non-carbonated drinks, bananas or oranges or watermelon, even brownies or rice crispy treats, all make great post-race snacks. If you do bring snacks, get with somebody to make sure you've got enough to share with everyone. Even coaches (hint, hint).
4. **Recruit**—always be a salesperson for the team. We are always on the lookout for new members. Siblings are a great place to start!
5. **Fundraise**—the fact is, the fundraising we do through hosting races is great, but it requires a LOT of work. We'll need workers on the course, at the start and finish lines, at the scorer's station, and selling concessions and T-shirts. It simply can't happen without your help. And don't forget, if you have a good idea for how we can make some money without too much work above our running, be sure to share it so we can consider working it in.

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### NCHS Cross Country Participant/Parent Contract

Read, sign, detach at dotted line, and turn in before the start of practice.

I have read the NCHS Cross Country Handbook and understand its contents.  
By signing this I agree to abide by its rules, policies, and conditions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)