

# Bulldog XC Handbook

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This cross country handbook has been created to give you clear expectations of our team and what cross country is. The purpose of this handbook is to help runners reach their full potential and enjoy everything the OTC Bulldog tradition offers.

## **Dear parents and runners,**

We would like to thank you for joining the cross country team. We are thankful that athletes will have a chance to compete this Fall. There are a few things I would like to go over with you. Since being a parent is a difficult role, we want you to know how much we appreciate your support. I know there are many new families this season who don't know much about cross country (and that's ok!) I would like to cover all the basics of the program, the training and what it takes to participate. Cross Country provides the opportunity for individual and team accomplishments. Many students join the program for different reasons. Some are here because they have had siblings that ran. Some use it as a way to stay in shape for other sports. Some join because their friends are involved. However they choose to get involved, we welcome all who wish to work hard and improve.

## **Our coaching philosophy.**

We understand that we have an opportunity to create an environment conducive of learning lifelong lessons. We are striving for an environment where each athlete is given the opportunity to succeed. We believe success starts with these 3 steps

- 1: Trust in your teammates
- 2: Trust in your coach
- 3: Trust in yourself.

Success is measured in many more ways than winning. Success is working better together, learning to persevere in the face of adversity, becoming lifelong runners, being a great student, becoming self motivated, learning to have positive attitudes, people skills, and mental toughness. In order to accomplish this, we understand that we must build a relationship with each individual in order to gain their trust and respect, after this, then we can teach them characteristics that will make them successful in life. In the process of doing all this, they will learn to compete and have success on the xc course. In cross country we truly believe that every runner matters. Whether you are the first runner or the last you play an important role on this team because everyone is pushing the runner ahead of them to become better which creates a chain reaction that can only be completed with everyone on board.

## **What is Cross Country?**

Cross Country is an individual and team sport where Varsity and JV athletes run 5 kilometers (3.1 mile) over varied surfaces and terrain, while Junior High runners run 2 miles. Most cross-country meets are held on dirt trails, park grounds, and golf courses.

## **Do you just run everyday?**

There are many different types of training styles we do throughout the season. Training runs, Hill repeats, Fartleks, Recovery runs, Tempos and Intervals just to name a few. While running is definitely an important part of cross country training it is not the only aspect. We will have a strong focus on injury prevention, nutrition, core work, mental toughness, goal setting and team building activities.

## **Schedule/Practice**

### Schedule

Due to COVID-19 and the new restrictions put on by the MSHSL we are currently in the process of redoing our schedule. We are going to be able to have 7 meets in the regular season. The first possible competition date will be August 27th and the latest date being October 24th. As soon as we have a schedule done it will be shared out with you.

### Practice

Practice will start August 17th, on the Battle Lake football field. If you are from Henning or Underwood transportation will be provided to you. You will meet at your school to load on a bus/van to get to Battle Lake, more information will be provided by your activities director. The first two weeks of practice will be from 8am to 9:30/10:00am. During the school year practices usually start around 3:45 and go to 5:15/30.

### **Equipment.**

Shoes -There are a lot of options when it comes to running shoes. I would suggest going into a store to try them on as you will want to make sure they feel comfortable. I know that isn't possible for everyone and there are a couple of great sites that you could use as well like, Asics, Running Warehouse and First to Finish.

- The shoe should feel good on your feet.
- It is not necessary for you to get the most expensive one to run.
- As for cheap shoes, there is a reason they're cheap. They can cause more problems than it is worth. Your feet take the most abuse in running so remember the old saying "you get what you pay for".

If you have any questions about shoes please contact Coach Speicher.

Clothing - Uniforms will be checked out to athletes before the first meet. For practice a t-shirt and running shorts are fine. The most important clothing item will be clean, dry socks to prevent blisters and other foot ailments that can occur. Should the jersey or shorts be lost during the season the runner is responsible for the replacement cost of the item.

Team Gear - We will have a Team Gear store that is designed for runners to purchase. Each year we try and purchase gear that the runners may wear over their uniform before races. The gear is a great team bond, but is not required for purchase.

Watches - Although not necessary, watches are good for runners to be able to see how they are pacing themselves either during practice or during a meet.

## **Levels of Competition.**

One of the best things about cross country is that every athlete gets to compete at every meet. There can be up to six races at each meet.

- Girls' Varsity
- Boys' Varsity
- Girls' Junior Varsity
- Boys' Junior Varsity
- Girls Junior High
- Boys' Junior High

Most varsity races are limited to seven (Top 7) entrants per team. Occasionally races will allow up to 10 varsity runners. We will inform the team when these instances occur. In cross country there is no "bench" and each athlete has the opportunity to compete in every meet.

## **Varsity Requirement**

Top 7 fastest runners are considered Varsity runners, but this can change from meet to meet. Being a cross country coach it is "easier" to decide the varsity athletes compared to other sports since we mainly go off time. If two athletes are close in time a varsity spot can also be determined by attendance, tardies, teamwork, athlete behavior at school and practice, grades, previous race times, and consistency at practice. It is not uncommon for a junior high runner to be in the top 7. Parents are encouraged to always ask about our decision, but they must understand all the criteria that is taken in consideration in order to determine the line-up.

## **Watching a Cross Country Meet**

### Before the race

When you arrive at the meet site, look for the start and finish, then try to scout central points where you can see as much of the race with as little moving around as possible. Typically we will print out course maps the day before the meet for athletes to have. Meets typically last 2 to 3 hours, we will inform your son or daughter what time they run. Right before a race do not expect the attention of your son or daughter, the athletes need time to warm up on the course, be briefed by their coaches, and prepare for the race with their teammates.

### During the race

During the race, you can move from point to point along the course to cheer the runners'. Please stay out of their path and their way. Rules also forbid running alongside a competitor to pace and encourage him or her.

The finishing of a cross country race is something you have to see to fully understand. It is common after a race is over to see runners weak in the knees, stumbling in a fainting like manner, overall weakness, glossy eyes, and nausea. These symptoms generally pass quickly.

### After the race

After a race is over it is a good thing for them to drink water or gatorade. This replaces the lost fluids and the electrolytes that typically are lost during a race of this magnitude. It is not recommended to give them juice or soda for at least 15 minutes afterward completing a race because it sometimes can cause an upset stomach. Please know that our runners have other responsibilities after the race, they are expected to jog and cool down as a team and actively support their teammates that have yet to race. The mistake parents sometimes make is to take their son or daughters off by themselves to try to take care of them. Please do not do this unless they have specific medical requirements. Lastly, during away school meets the coach is responsible for your child. So after the meet, please do not take your child without having talked with the coach and signing them out. MSHSL does not allow your child to ride home with anyone else unless you are present to check them out. At this point they become your responsibility again. Coaches will not allow a runner to ride home with someone else other than immediate family unless you are physically present to give permission.

### **Medical Conditions**

Please make sure you inform the coaches of any allergies or health conditions you may have. If you have an inhaler coaches need to know, if it is not disclosed to race officials you can be disqualified for having an inhaler at the starting or finish line! We will bring a medical bag to each practice and meet.

### **Scoring and Awards**

The object is to get as few points as possible. The lowest possible score in Cross Country is fifteen. In the race, the first place finisher is scored as 1 point, second place is 2 points, and so on and so forth. Scores are added from the top five finishers of each team even though teams have seven running in varsity and an unlimited number in other divisions.

#### Example 1:

Pelican placed: 1 2 7 9 10 11 13 (team score =  $1+2+7+9+10=29$ )

OTC placed: 3 4 5 6 8 12 16 (team score =  $3+4+5+6+8=26$ )

OTC wins 26-29

#### Example 2:

Pelican placed: 1 4 5 7 11 12 13 (team score =  $1+4+5+7+11=28$ )

OTC placed: 2 3 6 8 9 10 14 (team score =  $2+3+6+8+9=28$ )

When there is a tie in cross country you go to the 6th place runner. The team who has the best 6th place finish wins. So in the above example the winner would be OTC because our 6th runner placed 10th whereas Pelicans 6th runner finished 12th.

### **Commitment and Communication:**

We know that for some of the athletes cross country is not their ideal sport to do in the Fall. But this is a sport which requires a lot of time and dedication to excel. As coaches we ask if you

choose to be a part of this program you dedicate yourself fully to contribute in a positive way to the team.

**Commitment** – We are aware that sometimes unforeseen events come up and a runner will need to miss practice and/or an Invitational competition. We ask if at all possible please give as much advance notice to the coach.

**Communication** — We expect all team members to communicate with their fellow teammates and their coaches. If something comes up, we expect the athlete to speak with a coach directly and not go through a friend to relay the message. This is especially important in regards to practice times. Athletes are considered unexcused when they miss a practice unless they have contacted a coach ahead of time. In the event the athlete is sick, a contact needs to be made prior to practice time. At the beginning of the season an email contact list is put together and distributed among the team. This enables the coach to send out email information concerning the team and parents to communicate with each other.

Like mentioned earlier we know there are a lot of questions for the athletes/families who are doing cross country for the first time. We look forward to working with your son/daughter and hope they will enjoy this exciting sport. Please never hesitate to reach out to either coach for questions. You are more than likely going to hear phrases during the season/race that you haven't heard before so here is a little cheat sheet!

## **XC Vocabulary**

**Invitational/Meet**-A multi-team meet

**Top 7**-The scoring members of a Cross Country Meet

**Starting box**-designated areas to which a team is assigned to on the starting line

**False Start**-leaving the starting before the gun sounds

**Finish Chute**-a rope bordered funnel past the finish line that moves runners into their single file order to finish

**Pace**-running speed over a particular distance

**Surge**-a tactical increase in pace during the race

**Kick**-a burst of speed at the finish of the race

**Pack**-a group of runners in close proximity

**Personal Record (PR)**-Personal best, fastest you have ever ran.

**Racing Flats/Spikes**-special, lightweight shoes designed for racing, and not daily training.

**Training Flats**-running shoes designed for long wear during daily training

**Warm-Up**- a running and stretching routine that gradually warms up the body for intense running.

**Cool-Down**-a jogging routine that allows the muscles to rid themselves of lactates and allow the body to gradually lower its temperature back to normal