

MARIETTA CROSS COUNTRY PARENT HANDBOOK

FALL 2011

Welcome!

Your son or daughter is part of the Marietta Tiger/Marietta St. Mary's Cross Country Family (MXC). Cross Country is a fall sport that offers a unique experience: middle distance running over varied terrain in team competition. This handout has been prepared specifically for you, the parent of a daughter or son who is a member of our cross country team.

We hope that you will support and encourage our program. We want our runner and your daughter or son to reach his or her full potential as a student, athlete and citizen, and enjoy the cross country experience.

- **Caveat:**

Cross country is not a particularly controlled sport. Unlike games such as basketball, football, baseball or soccer, our competitive arena is likely to encompass several square miles and our practice venues are much larger. Every day a runner practices he or she is exposed to the hazards of the outdoors: runners can slip and fall, trip, stumble or otherwise come into contact with all that nature has to offer, including unfriendly flora and fauna. Running along roads and through city streets presents a different set of risks and challenges.

Your student's coaches care for their well being, but we cannot insure their absolute safety. It is not a perfect world out there.

That said, running injuries are typically of the overuse variety, and can often be addressed by relative rest and rehabilitation. We don't see torn ACLs or damaged meniscii. We occasionally see aggravations of such injuries, but running is typically not the root cause.

- **Our Philosophy:**

Running should be a joy. Using nothing more than our bodies to propel ourselves through space is as close to natural flight as we can come. We want our runners to share this joy.

Running also is a disciplined sport: you practice, and build on each practice, to improve yourself. Our runners are investors: the greater their effort and investment in themselves, the greater is their ability to draw on that investment and enjoy the returns. While natural ability confers some advantage, ability alone is of little value in cross country. It must be developed through an investment in training.

We believe that athletics should be a positive experience: little is to be gained, and much can be lost, by a negative approach.

Marietta's cross country coaches are runners. That gives us a valuable perspective on our team members. We never ask our runners to do anything that we ourselves have not done many times over.

We are very proud of our program's accomplishments and those of our alumnae who have or are currently competing at the collegiate level (see current list below) and those who continue to pursue the sport post-collegiately.

- **Our Home:**

Through the good graces of The Broughton Foundation and the Broughton family, our home course and primary practice venue is The Broughton Nature & Wildlife Recreation Area. It is located 7/10ths of a mile north of State Route 60 on State Route 821. Left at the flagpole/building complex, then left to the pavilion. The area is generally open to the public and has miles of wonderful trails for walking and hiking.

- **Our Heritage:**

See the list of MXC runners formerly and currently competing at the collegiate level. We'd like to list all of our athletes who have subsequently completed marathons, biathlons, triathlons, road races and other athletic events, and who have made running a part of their lives, but that would entail listing almost every participant! Each and every former MXC runner has contributed to the culture and tradition of this program, just as your son or daughter will in his or her own time and fashion.

- **Academics:**

Our primary focus is academics; our secondary focus is athletics. Our experience is that participation in a program such as this typically enhances the academic aspects of our athletes' lives. As coaches, we are, first and foremost, teachers and we take our roles seriously. Our students qualify for many academic honors every year and many will be found at or near the top of their classes.

Did You Know:

Running is the number one participatory sport in the nation for college, high school and middle school students?

- **Goals of MXC**

- to foster individual growth and development, both within and outside of athletics
- to promote a love for running, as a lifetime pursuit
- to achieve success
- to experience failure, and to learn and grow from it
- to honor and respect each other, our competitors, and our sport

- **2011 Marietta Tigers Cross Country Schedule :**

Saturday, August 27:	Elizabeth S. Broughton Memorial Cross Country Invitational (home course)
Saturday, September 3:	Scenic Hills Lions Classic Cross Country Invitational (Warren HS)
Saturday, September 10:	McGowan Invitational (Watkins Memorial HS)
Saturday, September 17:	Colt Invitational (Meadowbrook HS)
Tuesday, September 20:	Mid-Ohio Valley Challenge (Mineral Wells Fairgrounds)
Saturday, September 24:	Lancaster Bob Reall Invitational (Lancaster HS)
Saturday, October 1:	Pickerington North Panther Invitational (Pickerington N. HS)
Saturday, October 8:	OPEN

- Saturday, October 15: ECOL Championship (Cambridge HS)
- Tuesday, October 18: East/Southeast District Middle School Championship (TBA)
- Saturday, October 22: District Championship (Watkins Memorial HS)
- Saturday, October 29: Regional Championship (Pickerington North HS)
- Saturday, November 5: State Championship (Scioto Downs)

- **Parental Commitment:**

We travel far and wide to seek challenging competition. Every one of us is busy, but supporting our children should be a very high priority. Sometimes that means spending a day at a cross country invitational at the expense of another leisure time activity. In the long run, it's worth it.

We have two significant events each year which require extensive parental involvement. The first is our home invitational meet. See the schedule above. The second is our February Cabin Fever Run. Every parent must make a commitment to assist in these two events. If you are unable to attend the event itself, there is plenty of preparatory work to be done. These two events are the cornerstones of our program and must be well organized and supported.

- **Also, for the last three years, we have had the honor of hosting the Eastern/Southeastern Ohio District Middle School Championship. The commitment of our parents has made this possible.**

- **Motivating Runners:**

The most successful athletes are self-motivated. That's especially true for runners.

A high school cross country runner is required to push his or her body to its limits for twenty or so minutes, without respite, and with unwavering focus. That is what makes cross country unique.

Some runners develop self-motivation early, others later. Recognize this in your son or daughter by providing support for practice and summer running, without lecturing or criticism. Let your runner develop at his or her pace.

If running becomes a chore, it loses its magic.

- **Meet Transportation :**

With the exception of the Washington/Wood Challenge meet, all of our pre-ECOL meets are invitational, meaning that there will be many teams in attendance without particular emphasis on league affiliation.

All of our athletes travel together on district buses. The buses leave from the Davis Avenue parking lot at the high school. Departure time for each Saturday is announced during the preceding week. At the announced time, we leave. No exceptions.

Students are required to travel to and from meets as a team. These trips are an important part of developing camaraderie and collegiality. Exceptions may be made but only with the specific consent of a coach, and a written acknowledgment by the parent that the student will accompany the parent. Absent special circumstances (for example, an SAT or ACT test), students may only leave after conclusion of the meet: after all races have been completed, the team has warmed down, stretched and has discharged all team responsibilities such as breaking camp and loading the buses.

- **Meet Preparation :**

Each athlete should have his or her uniform and warm-ups, nutritious food, water or athletic drinks, dry clothing, including socks, shoes and lots of extra layers when wind or rain is in the forecast or when temperatures are likely to drop. Athletes can wear their team shorts but should not put on their singlets until they are ready to race. Written directions to each meet are distributed to the athletes before the meet. Directions to all Ohio high schools can be found at www.ohsaa.org. Click on Administrators' Corner, and you will find a link on the left side: Maps to Member Schools.

- **Pre-Race:**

Get acquainted with the race course and the strategic spectator points as well as the start and finish lines. Identify our team uniforms.

Numerous races will be run during the course of the meet. A cross country meet may last anywhere from two hours to a full day. Races may be organized by the number of schools entered, by the divisions of the schools or by the class level of the runners. Find out what time your child is running and in which race.

DO not necessarily expect the attention of your child at the race site. They need time to mentally and physically prepare for the race with the coaches and their teammates.

- **During the Race:**

Cross country is not a sport easily observed from a stationary point such as bleachers. There are many ways for spectators to enjoy watching a race. The start is always exciting. After you watch it, you should move to another point along the course to cheer on and watch runners as they pass by. As the race develops, you may want to move to the finish area as the runners complete the race.

The athletes appreciate your support and positive encouragement. All comments should be positive in nature and never negative to our team or any other team. All athletes who participate in the great sport of cross country deserve our respect.

At no time is a spectator allowed to run with or by the side of an athlete with the purpose of aiding or pacing them. Please be mindful of that. Be aware and look out for other athletes who are in the race. Runners should never have to run around spectators.

Dress for the conditions. Fans need to drink water as well as athletes, and to have proper shoes. Learn the names of the other athletes on the team and encourage them as well.

- **Post Race :**

After a runner comes through the finish chute they may be given a place card or have a tag to turn in to the coach, the manager or scoring personnel. The runner's responsibility is to report to the coach or manager, and then to cheer the rest of the runner's teammates on their finishes.

Immediately after the race, our athletes need time together. They need time to share their excitement, joy, frustration, or pain, and to hear coaches' evaluations and instructions about the race. This will build strong team togetherness.

Also, be aware that runners have certain responsibilities after they finish a race. **The runners need to warm down as a team** after the race as well as actively support teammates who are still running or have yet to race. **Taking the athlete home immediately after the race may be convenient but is not best for the team. This practice does not take place in other sports and should not happen in cross country.**

It is important to note that after a race a runner will possibly be more physically spent than you would anticipate. Symptoms may include rubbery knees, general weakness, the appearance of fainting, glassy eyes, nausea or salivating. These symptoms usually pass quickly.

- **Scoring A Cross Country Meet :**

- **Dual Meets-**

You can compare team scoring in cross country to the scoring in the game of golf: Low score wins.

Each individual finishing a race is given that place-finish number of points for her or his team. For example, the first place finisher earns but one point (a very positive result!), the third place finisher earns three points, and so forth. The points of the first five finishers for each team are then added together to compute the team score. Low score wins. In tie scores, the team whose sixth runner finishes higher wins.

A total team score of 27 or less in a dual meet (two teams) is a sure victory. A total team score of 15 points is a perfect score.

There are usually seven runners on a complete team. While not actually figuring in the team score, both the sixth and seventh runners may help a team win by "displacing" an opponent's fourth or fifth runner. This would increase the opponent's score. In the examples below, Team B wins because its 6th and/or 7th runners finish ahead of Team A's fifth runner.

Example #1		Example #2	
Team A	Team B	Team A	Team B
1	3	2	1
2	4	3	4
6	5	5	6
8	7	7	8
12	9	11	9
Total = 29	Total = 28	Total = 28	Total = 28
13 14	10 11 These two runners helped displace the other team's #5 runner	12 14	10-tie breaker 13

In Example #1, Team B wins with the help from their 6th and 7th runners. In fact Team B did not have the first or second fastest runners, but they still won the meet. In Example #2, Team B wins. The key to the victory was the #6 runner, who is the tie breaker.

Note that the winning team does not need to have the fastest #1 runner.

• **Invitationals:**

From five to thirty-plus teams may compete in a given race at an invitational meet. Running in a "pack" is important for a team in order to keep the team score as low as possible. For

example, if the five scoring runners from one team finish 1,2,3,4, and 80 (total score of 90), while the five runners of another team "pack" closer together (12,13,16,17,30 for a total score of 88), team two will win the meet. Scoring for invitationals is just like the dual meet scoring shown above, only with more arithmetic required.

- **Race Distances:**

High school competitions are 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) in Ohio and West Virginia. The accuracy of course measurements vary. Further, because this is cross country and not track competition, comparing times from course to course, with varying terrain and footing conditions, is challenging. Middle school runners generally compete on 2 mile courses in Ohio and 3 kilometer (1.86 miles) courses in West Virginia.

- **Awards:**

At dual meets, there are generally no awards given. At invitationals, awards are usually given for individual (sometimes at the end of the finishing chute) and team finishes (at the end of the meet). These awards are an added "plus" to a cross country runner.

- **Winning & Losing:**

While society embraces the "champion," it is our philosophy that our team maximizes its given potential and at the same time the athletes and staff represent themselves as ambassadors of Marietta City Schools. Asking your runner if they won is not a good question. (Consider the odds, with 30 teams of 7 runners each equals 210 athletes of varying abilities.) Better feedback can be gained by a parent who asks questions like: Did you meet your personal goal? Was the course challenging? What schools were there? It is better to give the athlete time to "open up" about the race and their results.

- **Intra-Team Competition:**

There is no "pecking order" within our teams. We encourage our runners to improve by competing against others and also by competing among themselves. A runner can all too easily get

locked into "I'm our number seven runner" mindset. That runner needs to explore his or her own potential, for the good of the team.

- **Goals:**

The setting and assessment of goals is very much an individual decision in cross country. Certainly the team has many goals but individual athletes must set their own. Some particular goals may include:

PR--Personal Record

Race Pace--Maintaining a particular speed throughout a race.

Place--Place of finish relative to the entire field.

Team Position--Place of finish relative to one's teammates.

NOTE: PR comparisons are only relevant if an athlete has previously run that course under similar conditions.

Remember: Expect the possibility of disappointment after a race by the athlete. Although one goal set by the individual may have been achieved, a runner may have fallen short of other goals and not be satisfied with his or her result. Athletes may need some emotional space after the race from both parents and coaches. Many lessons are learned from a race, some from success, some from failure.

- **Shoes:**

Each athlete needs at least one good pair of training shoes. Two pairs are better, preferably different models. Make sure that the shoes you choose are appropriate for the athlete's feet. That is more than just fit. Make sure the person selling the shoes to you is knowledgeable about runners and runners' shoes. Expect to pay \$75 to \$90 for a good pair of running shoes.

Depending upon build, mechanics and other factors, a good pair of running shoes will last 300 to 400 miles for our high school runners. That's typically eight to ten weeks of practice. Don't judge wear just by looking at the outer sole. The midsole, which you can't see, will compress over time and reduce the protection available to the foot, even though the outer sole still looks good.

One of our favorite stores is **On The Run, 2903 Emerson Avenue, Parkersburg, West Virginia, 304.422.8916**. This store sells nothing but running shoes and its owner, who is always there when the store is open, is very knowledgeable about shoe requirements and shoes. Always take the athlete's old shoes for him to check.

See the coaching staff if you have additional thoughts or questions about shoes or other equipment.

- **Spikes:**

For high school runners, spikes are essential for races. Even grass wet from early morning dew can cause loss of traction. For middle school runners, spikes are recommended for races.

- **Clothes & Other Equipment:**

It is not necessary to purchase specific running clothing. Team uniforms will be worn at the meets. Loose fitting shirts and shorts are adequate for daily practices. Clean, dry socks for each practice will help to prevent blisters, athlete's foot and other foot problems. Students should have **layers**: tops and bottoms available for "cold" days. It is better to bring them to practices and meets and not use them than to not bring them and need them at the end of practice, especially when the time changes and the winds come up and the athletes are cool and damp from sweat.

Socks are critical. **Avoid cotton.** Use synthetics or blends (cotton, polyester, nylon). Coolmax® and Supplex® are good materials to look for. Cotton socks get wet on warm days and cause blisters. Shorts should be loose and comfortable. Cotton t-shirts are ok for moderate temperatures unless it's raining. For rain, really hot days or hard workout days, it's nice to have a synthetic singlet, tee or long-sleeved tee. In the fall, when the weather starts to turn cool, especially on rainy days, layering is the key and synthetics, such as long sleeve shirts made from Coolmax® or Supplex® are the best bet. A wet cotton shirt on a cold rainy day can cause serious heat loss. Rain or shine, each athlete should bring a dry shirt, a towel and flops or other slip-on shoes to practice so that feet don't stay wet at the end of practice.

Digital wrist watches are required at practice. We train many runners at many different levels. Every runner needs a runner's watch. These are generally inexpensive and the only requirement is that the watch has a stop watch function.

- **Uniforms:**

If team shorts present a problem with fit, athletes may provide their own shorts but they must be orange or black (depending on the team) and be uniform in color. They may be adorned only with a single manufacturer's logo not more than 2-1/4 square inches.

Singlets may not be knotted, clipped or pinned to adjust for sizing.

Any visible shirts worn under a singlet or undershorts must be unadorned and of a single color. Not all team members must wear the additional clothing. However, if clothing is worn under singlets or shorts by more than one team member, all such clothing for all those wearing it must be the same color.

During inclement weather, a navy watch style knit cap may be worn. It may not have a bill. Headbands may be worn if manufactured as a headband. Fold-up bandanas or other items may not be placed on the head.

All jewelry must be removed before a race. A runner may wear a watch in Ohio competition, but not in West Virginia.

Each athlete is responsible for his or her team-issued uniform.

- **Sun:**

Runners can keep cool in the summer by wearing a cap or sunglasses or both. Sunglasses fool the mind into thinking it's cooler than it really is. Runners should use sun screen, SPF 30 at a minimum.

- **Practice:**

The cross country team practices daily except for some Fridays. For the 2011 season, practices will be held at 4:30 p.m. unless announced otherwise. Consult the daily schedule for practice locations.

Our practice venues vary. Generally we practice three days a week (typically Monday, Wednesday and Thursday) on our home course at the Broughton Nature and Wildlife Education Area. We practice on the city bike path, meeting at Indian Acres Park, one day a week, usually Tuesday. We occasionally go to the Wayne National Forest or to other venues for variety, and sometimes just for fun. We also run from Masonic Park, at Washington State Community College (we meet at the upper parking lot), at the East Muskingum Civic Association Park on the River Road in Devola and, typically not more than once a year, on our original cross country course at the Career Center (meet at the upper parking lot). The Career Center practice usually coincides with our celebration of Mud Day, so parents transporting athletes should prepare accordingly. This is serious mud.

Once we get into September, the length of practices will be much more predictable. Mondays and Wednesdays will usually last no more than 60-75 minutes (less for middle school runners). Tuesdays and Thursdays will approach 2 hours (less for middle school runners).

- **Hydration:**

Runners need to drink lots of water in hot weather, and just as much when the temperatures turn cooler. Athletes should always bring plenty of water to practice. Temperatures in the high 70s and low 80s can present risks when combined with high humidity. Even on cool days, wind can present dehydration risk. Runners need to drink even when they are not thirsty.

- **Nutrition:**

To run well, runners must eat well. That means a balanced diet including carbohydrates, proteins and fat. The best forms of carbohydrates for very active people are fruit, rice and whole grain pasta. Minimize intake of sugar, candy and soda. Make sure to eat at least seven servings of fruit and vegetables every

day. Ten is better, especially for an active athlete. Chips don't count as vegetables. We generally don't want to run immediately after eating. It's not dangerous, just uncomfortable. On the other hand, it's a good idea to make sure to eat no later than an hour after a good workout.

- **Post-Practice/Post-Race :**

After a strenuous workout or race, we need to replace some nutrients within 30-45 minutes. Low-fat chocolate milk does a great job of addressing the body's needs.

- **Medication :**

We are required to follow high school guidelines on dispensing medications. Only parents or physicians can dispense medications to athletes.

- **Issues :**

Please communicate problems or issues to a coach as soon as possible. If you have a concern, first speak directly to a coach. If further attention is needed, a meeting will be scheduled with the head coach. Finally, if after consideration the parent wishes to have more clarification, the next individual to speak to is the Athletic Director.

- **Varsity Letter :**

Varsity letters are awarded at the end-of-the-season banquet. Earning a varsity letter is done by (i) competing in the top seven in a varsity race or (ii) having one of the top seven times of the day/meet, in at least half of our competitions. Varsity letters may also be awarded to upper classmen who have competed and demonstrated extraordinary courage and perseverance throughout many years of cross country.

- **Terms to Help You**

TIME - What's shown on your stopwatch.

REAL WORLD TIME - The actual time of day as for non-running athletes. Not to be confused with the time of the interval, rest, minutes run so far or minutes yet to be run.

GO FAST SHOES/RACING SPIKES/SPIKES - A very lightweight shoe designed primarily for cross country races. Not recommended for practices.

PACK - A group of runners running together (usually the lead runners in the big races or the crucial group of runners in the races).

PR - (Personal Record) - Best performance time on a specific course or in the career.

FINISH CHUTE - The roped-off area, after the finish line, through which runners are directed in order to record their official finish order.

K - (KILOMETER) - .62 of a mile.

STARTING LINE, LANE/ALLEY, BOX - Designated spot where the teams line up prior to the start of a race.

- **MXC Runners Formerly and Currently Competing at the Collegiate Level**

Division 1

Rory Arnold - Miami of Ohio, 1995

Kurt Leeper - Colgate University, 1995 (Academic All-American)

Van Arnold - Virginia Tech, 1996

Danny Carlson - Sacramento State University, 2005

Megan McCauley - Bowling Green State University/University of Cincinnati, 2005

Scott Grose - Sacramento State University, 2006

Mark Wiefelich - The Ohio State University, 2009

Division 2

Kara Ulmer - University of Rio Grande (NAIA), 1994

Lori Ulmer - (Michigan College) (NAIA), 1996

Bekah Lehman - Ashland University, 2007

Taylor Varnadoe - Wingate University, 2010

Kyle Browne - Ohio Valley University, 2010

Division 3

Kristo Kriechbaum - Carnegie Mellon University (Academic All-American;
All-American in Track), 1995

Drew Piersall - Case Western Reserve University

Sonia Schoolcraft - Washington & Jefferson College, 2000

Daniel Berentz - Ohio Wesleyan University

Katie Wieferich - College of Wooster, 2003 (Academic All-American; All-American
in Track (4-time); All American in Cross Country)

Nathan Malcomb - College of Wooster, 2003

Nick Brancato - Northland College, 2003

Heather Stalter - Mount Union College, 2006

Jacob Malcomb - St. Lawrence University, 2006

Leah Miracle - Hiram College, 2006

Andy Guimond - Marietta College, 2008

Annalea Thompson - Central College, 2008

Gillian Rossi - Hendrix College, 2009

Casey Morris, Waynesburg University, 2009

- **Interesting Web Sites :**

www.run.wv.com;

www.iplayoutside.com;

www.runnersworld.com (including the high school pages);

www.trackandfieldnews.com

www.baumspage.com/cc (the go-to page for meet results)

www.dyestat.com; and

www.gmap-pedometer.com (lay out and measure running routes!)

- **Books :**

No senior should leave MXC without reading *Once a Runner*, by John L. Parker, Jr., along with a little Shakespeare, Plato, Tacitus, Homer and Mark Twain. Also on our recommended list: *The Four-Minute Mile* by Roger Bannister, *pre* by Tom Jordan, *Running With the Buffaloes* by Chris Lear and *The Perfect Mile* by Neal Bascomb.

Coaches :

Dale Leeper, Head Coach - 373-5455 - leeper@theisenbrock.com

John Hull, Assistant Coach - johnpatrickhull@gmail.com

Ashley Meadows, Assistant Coach - ashleyakiko@hotmail.com

Larry Cassady, Assistant Coach - mttaxc@hotmail.com

Athletic Director :

Rick Guimond - 374-8052
MA-RGUIMOND@seovec.org

"Fitness has to be fun. If it is not play, there will be no fitness. Play, you see, is the process. Fitness is merely the product."

-- *Dr. George Sheehan*
(Runner, Philosopher and Physician)

Updates, Forms, Photos and Much, Much More :

Visit our website: www.mariettaxc.com

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