



NORTHWEST HOMESCHOOL ATHLETIC COOPERATIVE (NHAC)

"NORTHWEST NIGHTHAWKS"

2026-27 HANDBOOK

~ Updated 5/13/2026; details subject to change ~
Changes (11/30/2025, 5/13/2026) noted in color.

Purpose and Vision

Welcome to the team! The Northwest Homeschool Athletic Cooperative (NHAC) was formed in 2014 to provide homeschooled students in junior and senior high the opportunity to participate together in interscholastic athletics, giving these athletes a true competitive team experience while fostering relationships among participants, their families, and the local community.

This handbook contains a great deal of information and it is essential for parents and athletes to read it in its entirety. We're a team, and it's important that we all work within a common understanding. The handbook is split into three parts: (1) the information applicable to all Nighthawk athletics, followed by sport-specific sections for (2) cross country running and (3) track & field. You are responsible for this information and any updates that may occur throughout the season. Every section has a story behind it. ☺

Nighthawk Core Values. Coaching staff members coach and teach from Christian principles. There are numerous moral character values that we want to promote and teach through the Nighthawk athletic program. Most of these traits can be exhibited through the core character values of respect, integrity, and gratitude. These values drive how we treat each other and those around us and are interwoven in all aspects of our training and competition.

Eligibility. Homeschooled high school (9th-12th grades) and junior high (7th-8th grades) are eligible to participate in Nighthawk athletics, **depending on the sport**. "Homeschooled students" are those who submit an annual Letter of Intent to their school district. Please report your student's grade based on expected graduation year, regardless of schoolwork level in any subject, as there are participation limits. See "The League" section for details. Additionally, team membership is based on geographic distance from a given team-central location, with specifics determined on a year-by-year basis. See team website for current parameters.

Definitions. *Cross country* is a fall sport of long-distance racing through parks and golf courses. *Track & field* is a spring sport involving running around a 400-meter oval, jumping over things, throwing heavy objects, etc.; athletes specialize in various individual and relay events that are combined for the team score. *Road racing* is a year-round, individual sport typically run on public streets and rarely involves team scoring. *Running club* might include any of the above, usually without a team component. *Cross country skiing ("Nordic")* is a winter sport with slippery boards strapped to your feet and poles held in your hands. *Gym class* is a fun time of varied physical activities without team accountability.

The lessons learned in cross country running and track & field apply to many areas of life: goal setting, reflection and evaluation, pushing through discomfort or apathy, listening to your body,



and so much more. Community is a natural outcome of the time and training spent together—not just for the athletes but for their families as well. Training allows for a great deal of creativity, and the coaches enjoy making things fun as well as challenging. We invest a great deal in these kids and hope their years on the Nighthawk team will comprise some of the best memories of their lives.

History

Kirk and Jennifer Swanson ran track and cross country in high school and met on the track team in college. After graduation, they continued running in road races of various distances, improving their performances and broadening their experience. They also volunteered as assistant coaches for a local school's cross country team. Fast forward to 2014, when their own homeschooled children reached competitive running ages. In an effort to introduce their kids to running while engaging their local homeschooled friends, Kirk founded the Northwest Nighthawks cross country team and served as the head coach. Jennifer served as assistant coach and athletic director, and practices were hosted at the Swansons' hobby farm acreage.

Meanwhile, Mary Stahl had been mulling over a similar vision for her own kids and quickly jumped into the running world as an assistant coach. She provided invaluable insight as a new-to-the-sport parent and kept the coaching staff grounded during the startup process and beyond.

The inaugural season drew 25 runners who participated in seven racing events (fun runs, homeschool championship, etc.) over the course of a nine-week season. These first athletes also helped blaze a trail through the woods on the farm (the first annual Mega Fun Day) to complete the now famous and formidable one-mile loop.

In 2015, the Northwest Nighthawks cross country team became the first-ever all-homeschool cooperative team to join our state's high school league. It was a lengthy process, but it brought us the respect and privileges of a "traditional" school team and opened many opportunities for competition and coaches' training. With all the enthusiasm surrounding cross country, and by request of our athletes, the track & field program was born in 2016.

The Farm

Many practices are held on or based at the Swansons' home, a vintage farmstead established in the mid-late 1800s, currently used as a hobby farm. It's a fun place to meet, run, and party; a team favorite is watching movies projected on the big screen in the barn. With this "living history" comes old buildings, live animals, electric fences, and other hazards. Parents must carefully supervise their children who come for special events; buildings and fences are off limits. No pets.

The League

The Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) is an organization that requires membership to compete against other League members--nearly every public and private school in the state. We worked very hard to clear a path to membership as the first all-homeschool team in our



state. There is a lot of paperwork and expense unique to this, so thank you for your patience and cooperation.

League Eligibility. Rules are outlined in the MSHSL handbook found at www.mshsl.org. Please especially note the eligibility rules: once you declare a student to be in 7th grade, he/she has 12 consecutive semesters of eligibility. This (assigning a grade level) is something parents in homeschooling circles are often told “doesn't matter,” but in the MSHSL, it is critical.

Homeschoolers can be members of the Nighthawk teams and still may be able to participate in other MSHSL-sponsored activities at local schools (athletics, music, drama, etc.), as long as it is not in the same sport. If you have questions, please talk to us before contacting the MSHSL.

PSEO students participating in college-level athletics and certain other activities (including music, visual arts, speech, debate, one act play, etc.) are ineligible for all high school sports going forward. Contact us for specifics before registering for these programs.

If you terminate homeschooling and want to join your new school's athletics programs, that's a different issue and will result in “transfer eligibility” restrictions.

Academics. The MSHSL takes academics seriously. When you sign the MSHSL paperwork, you assert that you are making progress towards graduation. Additionally, the MSHSL and Minnesota High School Coaches' Association award academic honors to individuals and teams that meet certain criteria. This is an opportunity for us, so we will ask for your athlete's GPA. This is not reported to any other agency other than the awarding organization.

Occasionally there will be conflicts between SAT/ACT test dates and MSHSL Section and State Championship dates. These dates are published well in advance, so plan accordingly.

Fees & Forms

NHAC is an entirely volunteer-run organization. Fees are used to offset the costs of uniforms, race fees, league dues, insurance, equipment, supplies, maintenance, incentives and awards, coach training, and other team events. Paperwork is another critical part of our team's eligibility, and all team families must submit forms on time to avoid late fees and possible waiting lists. See website for required paperwork and current policies. Fees (and late fee policies) are posted on the team website. Financial accounts must be in good standing (\$0 balance) to participate in competition.

Fundraising/Service

Team expenses are greater than our participant fees, so fundraising is necessary. As a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit organization, all donations to NHAC are tax deductible. We prefer not to sell mixed nuts or gift wrap, so we rely on the financial support of team families, friends, and local businesses/organizations. We pursue various fundraising/service opportunities each year and need athlete participation for success in these activities. Many organizations are happy to support youth activities of their loyal customers, so please help by asking.



Time Commitment

Service. As with other nonprofit youth sports organizations, families must make financial and time contributions for the program to succeed. Finances are provided through registration fees and fundraising. Time contributions are achieved through volunteer participation. With the hard work and dedication of all team families, NHAC will continue to thrive. Each family is expected to share service to support your team community. Opportunities are described on the team website.

If you have additional time to organize team fun, coordinate with the coaches. *This is your team community, so remember that you can help make things happen. Talk to your captains, too!*

Practices. Cross country and track & field are relatively short sports seasons (10-12 weeks), so commit to attending practices and running on your own (following coaches' instructions).

High school athletes should expect to be training 5+ days/week (junior high 4+ days/week) to prepare most effectively for competition. Therefore, high school athletes will be expected to work out at least one non-practice day per week. (Athletes who hope to be competitive at the Varsity level should optimally be training 6 days/week.) Coaches will provide the workouts.

By coming to practices and completing the assigned workouts on non-practice days (and logging them promptly on Running2Win), the coaches gain a better sense of who needs to train at what levels. Those who train less often than instructed will need workout and competition adjustments to avoid injury due to under training.

If an athlete does not or is unable to complete the planned workout at practice the day before a meet, they will not participate in the meet the next day. Exceptions to this may be made at coaches' discretion.

Captains' Practices are allowed during the two weeks prior to the regular season, and attendance is optional but encouraged. [Attendance is limited to team members registered for the upcoming season.](#)

Meets. We are a team, which means arriving and leaving the meet as a team. We arrive before the meet to set up team camp together, make announcements, and warm up as a team. After the meet is complete, coaches provide important coaching and feedback, and we attend any awards ceremonies as a team. This builds team camaraderie and shows good sportsmanship.

Participation in meets is an earned privilege. Much of your time at meets will be spent unsupervised, so you must show trustworthiness as a good representative of the team in order to wear the Nighthawk jersey. If you are faithful in the little things (practices), you will be entrusted with the big things (meets). Be respectful of others, do your best at all times (warmups, drills, workouts, etc.), and encourage your teammates to do the same.

3 days' notice. Coaches often must submit team rosters and event participation in advance. Additionally, coaches have a number of details to manage leading up to and including race day. Advance notice gives more time to manage information, communicate with all coaches, modify meet-day logistics, etc., while keeping up with life and work responsibilities.



Each athlete must notify coaches *in writing and with the reason* of any planned absence, late arrival, or early departure at least 3 days prior to the meet (and 7 days before Subsection and Section meets). Not doing this could prevent a teammate from being given a competition opportunity.

If you must arrive late to a meet due to a class, you must check in with the head coach 60 minutes before your event, or you may not be permitted to compete.

Late arrivals with less than 3 days' notice will be considered tardy.

Early departure. You must find the head coach and check out before leaving early from any practice or meet, even if coordinated in advance.

Participation and Attendance

Cross country and track & field are team sports, and our team performs its best when everyone is present. Practice affects team unity, morale, and success. **You are expected to be at all practices and meets on time and for the duration**, unless prior arrangements have been made well in advance with the head coach. **If you anticipate regular (once/week) absences, contact the coaches *before* you register.**

In the case where there are more interested participants than openings in the program, those who end a season with attendance below 75% may be moved to the waiting list for the next sport season for which they register.

All practice absences must be cleared at least three (3) hours in advance by notifying the head coach *in writing* (email is fine) *with the reason*, or it will be considered unexcused and affect your good standing. Workouts are prepared in advance to account for individual still development or to organize smaller workout groups, so we need to know who will be there.

Examples of acceptable reasons to miss a practice or meet include (not limited to this list and subject to change at coach's discretion): illness, family emergencies, doctor appointments, or other educational activities pre-approved by your coach.

Athletes are required to attend practices when injured so that coaches can monitor progress and provide injury-appropriate training options. Maintaining attendance also ensures continued coaching/teaching, announcements/communication, and team camaraderie.

Training log. Nighthawk Athletics has a subscription to the online training log system "Running2Win" which provides a web-based application for runners to log their training and allows coaches to monitor progress and keep in contact with the team. New team members must register for an account upon joining the team. We require athletes to use this logging method during the season. Benefits of logging training include historical mileage tracking, goal analysis, and injury monitoring and prevention. This is an important training discipline that should be practiced year round, and it's one that extends into much of life.

For meet privileges and end-of-season recognition, attendance and participation are calculated as follows:



Attendance is your physical presence at team practices and meets (1 practice/meet attended = 1 credit).

- To be considered for regular-season competition, athletes must have attended practice a minimum of two weeks (ref. MSHSL Bylaw 411.10.B.) or at least 8 coach-led practices and be running consistently on their own as instructed outside organized practices.
- Athletes are expected to be at practices and meets for their duration. Arriving more than 20 minutes late, leaving more than 20 minutes early, or leaving before their teammates have completed all events will result in 1/2 credit for their attendance. Athletes must attend at least half of the practice/meet to receive this credit. Exception for PSEO classes will be made with coach approval.
- **To compete in meets, athletes must maintain greater than 80% attendance and follow training instructions (and log in detail) on the days they miss practice.** See Participation requirements below.

Because early-season absences due to short-term overlapping activities/vacations can result in long-term effects on cumulative attendance numbers, temporary exceptions to the 80% rule will be considered with advance notice. This is with the understanding that (1) attendance will be a priority upon return, and (2) complete, detailed, and timely training logs show that the athlete has followed all workout instructions while away and is ready for competition. Any workout modifications or adaptations must be negotiated in advance with the Head Coach.

Participation is based on a 5-credit-per-week system.

- This includes attending practices and meets (1 credit per day) and logging your assigned workouts on non-practice days (typically once per week) (1 credit) on Running2Win. Logs must include time, distance, and comments that clearly indicate that the workout instructions were followed.
- Any excused “missed days” will be given up to 1/2 credit per day for successfully completing and logging your assigned workout on Running2Win. If you are ill, you may log a rest day and it will not count against end-of-season awards, but you must explain what you did to take care of yourself (no need to report symptoms).
- **80% participation is a minimum requirement to be considered for high school competition, and 85% is required for varsity.** Athletes who wish to be more competitive at the varsity level should expect to add at least one additional (6th) day to their weekly training plans, though this will not be incorporated into your attendance/participation calculation.

Punctuality. Being on time to practice shows respect to your coaches and teammates, and it allows us to more readily accomplish our training goals. Punctuality is an important aspect of working together as a team and is an important trait to cultivate for your future (think employment) as well. We begin practice at the official start time. When everyone arrives on time, we can get right to work and accomplish our objectives for the workout. Athletes who are not present at this time will be noted as “tardy” unless the coach was notified in writing at least



3 hours in advance. After the third tardy, each subsequent tardy will result in a 25% deduction of practice credit for that day.

We also end practice at the official end time, and we expect athletes to be picked up promptly. Students whose rides arrive more than 5 minutes late for pickup will be invoiced \$15. Late fees must be paid before the next meet to be considered for competition. We really don't want to have to enforce this, but the coaches do have other commitments after practice.

Illness. Do not come to practice if you are sick or contagious. While we admire dedication and hard work, you do not want to be responsible for making the rest of the team ill. Stay home if you have had a fever or vomited in the past 24 hours or if you have colored nasal or cough excreta. Be judicious about your condition and be respectful of your teammates.

Withdrawing from the team. The team thrives when all are working toward a common goal and demonstrating honest efforts and contributing positive attitudes. If, after coach-athlete and coach-parent discussions, an athlete feels that the sport is not a good fit for them, is unable or unwilling to follow instructions to the best of his/her ability, or does not show respect to coaches and/or teammates, then withdrawal will be advised without refund of fees.

Basic Equipment

Running shoes. These are the number one, most important equipment investment for our athletes. Everything is literally riding on your shoes, and many injuries are traced back to improper footwear. While we will incorporate as much soft-surface running as we can into practices, the majority of training will be done on roads. Make sure you have good, high-quality running shoes (not “trail” shoes) for those road miles.

All athletes, regardless of discipline (e.g., throwers), must have running shoes that are *only used for running* and should not have been used previously for other activities (especially walking) and/or by another person. Do not buy used shoes or borrow from someone else. Shoes break down with use, and wear differs from person to person; you don't want to acquire someone else's body mechanics problems.

The rule-of-thumb recommendation is to *replace shoes at least every 6 months or 350-450 miles*, whichever comes first. Newer athletes with lower mileage can usually get away with one new pair of shoes per season—as long as they are only used for running.

Team members have reported the most problems after buying shoes at stores such as general sporting goods, outlet malls, etc. Running specialty stores like Gear West (Long Lake—our personal favorite—ask for Corey or Speedy) have a better selection and more experience fitting runners with shoes appropriate to an individual's body mechanics and foot shape. They also offer insole fitting to fine-tune things where needed. They offer a 15% discount for student-athletes on regularly-priced items. Call to verify. If you use a store's service and expertise, honor this value by purchasing your shoes there (vs. ordering online elsewhere).

Racing spikes and other competition shoes. “Spikes” are specialized, lightweight shoes worn only for racing. They are worth the investment and highly recommended for those who want to improve their race times, but they are optional. Because there is marginal support in the



footbed and use can cause soreness (especially in the calves), we recommend these for athletes with a decent training base—ask us if you’re unsure whether that includes you.

Go to a running specialty store for these; and if it’s your first time buying/wearing spikes, say so. For track & field, there are different styles of spikes depending on the intended event. There are specialty spikes for every type of event (sprints, middle-distance, long distance, jumps, etc.) as well as multi-purpose spikes for more generalized use. “Cross country” spikes are different, although they work well for most track events; their versatility makes them a good choice for newer runners. The shoes come with metal spikes that can be replaced when they wear down, and the team keeps a supply of spares in a variety of lengths. Specialized training and competition shoes are also available for throwing and jumping events.

Watch. A watch with a chronograph (stopwatch) is an essential piece of training equipment, only behind shoes and clothes as the most important equipment an athlete needs. Basic models cost about \$15 (the “Timex Marathon,” for example, is a low-cost model with enough basic features). For \$35+, you can get more convenient features and better ease of use. Runners need watches to know how long they’ve been running, when to turn around, learn pacing, etc. Athletes are expected to train on their own as directed outside practice, and watches are essential to successfully complete and log workouts. GPS watches are useful for training and make great gift ideas; see the team website for recommendations.

Wear your watch to meets so you can keep track of the schedule, warmup time, etc. Before a *race*, however, remove all electronics (watches, Fitbits, etc.) as they are distractions and do not provide real advantages. Unplug and focus on the race and running as fast as you can.

Clothing. Dress appropriately for the conditions, considering that practices and meets are conducted outside. With multiple layers (e.g., a short-sleeved shirt under a looser long-sleeved layer; pants over shorts), your clothing can accommodate your varying temperature needs. You will also want rain gear for wet-weather days.

Put your name somewhere on your clothing (unless it is team property)—especially warmups that are removed at practices/meets! Your clothes look like everyone else’s.

Cold-weather training considerations. If dressed properly, athletes can train in most cold Minnesota temperatures. Performance will be affected by the conditions, so keep your expectations reasonable. And always adjust if you have a medical condition that warrants special attention.

- Warm up and cool down indoors when possible.
- Dress in layers so you can easily remove/add clothing.
- Avoid cotton clothing; choose synthetic fabrics and wool. This includes socks.
- Wear windproof outer layers.
- Wear a hat! You lose 75% of your heat through your head. Ear warmers are not as effective but can be helpful to those with sensitive ears in higher-but-still-cold temps.
- Cover your hands. You lose a lot of heat there, too; mittens are often better than gloves.
- Protect your face with a breathable buff or scarf
- Get and stay hydrated.



Unless the coaches notify you otherwise, you must wear or bring long sleeves and full-length pants to every practice and meet, whether you think you need them or not. We do not have a specific temperature guideline for wearing shorts/short sleeves, as appropriate clothing depends on the workout and the weather. Maintaining proper muscle temperature is important to good training and racing results. Further, heat acclimatization is important in the spring as summer weather is inevitable. The coaches will tell you when you can shed these layers. If you forget, we have some lovely “I forgot my pants” sweatpants available for you to borrow, launder, and return to practice the next day.

Dress Code. The Nighthawks train and compete in a co-ed environment and perform a dynamic range of activities. Additionally, we must comply with MSHSL and NFHS regulations for competitors and spectators. With these factors in mind, check the mirror:

1. Tops and bottoms must overlap so midriff skin is not exposed (e.g., ribs should not be visible), even when sitting, stretching, or raising arms. Single layer tops may not be removed during practice or competition.
2. Tops: Necklines should not be revealing of chest when bending forward. Tank tops, loose fitting shirts, or tops with open sides are acceptable if they are accompanied by an under layer with adequate coverage to meet the above considerations. Straps must be at least one inch wide.
Compression tops should be covered with another layer.
3. Bottoms: Pants must be loose enough to wear over shorts. Running tights and leggings are considered a base layer and should be covered by another layer (e.g., shorts over tights). Shorts must have an inseam of at least 3 inches and/or be worn over a compression layer that meets this criterion.

Water bottle (non-disposable). *Put your name on it* and water in it. Bring it with you to all practices and meets.

Uniforms. Uniforms (racing singlets and shorts) are property of the team and will be issued early in the season. **Please take care of your uniform by washing in cold water and hanging to dry after every meet.** Use a laundry bag to prevent snags and holes. Meets occasionally require stickers to identify runners, and these can be difficult to remove. Goo Gone (available at Target, Menards, etc.) is your best bet: (1) Peel off the paper part of the sticker. (2) Saturate the remaining sticker backing with Goo Gone. (3) Peel off the goo and be amazed. (4) Rinse thoroughly, then launder in cold water with a little extra detergent and an extra rinse cycle. Hang to dry.

Uniforms must be returned clean, dry, and in good condition by the last day of practice, or the athlete will be invoiced \$15 per piece. Damaged or lost uniforms will result in a replacement fee of \$50 per jersey and \$25 per pair of shorts. If you return spikes to the team inventory, you must clean them and remove the spikes or be subject to a \$20 cleaning fee.

Warm-ups are not provided but are required for races/meets: a sweatshirt/jacket and long pants. Zippered legs make them easier to remove without taking off your shoes, but any gym



pants are fine. Keep in mind that the sun drains your energy, so bring light layers to cover your skin on hot days.

In competition, shirts and compression shorts/tights (any length) may be worn *under* uniforms, but all under layers that project beyond the uniform must be **solid black** in color. Socks can be whatever color you like. 😊

Pre-race checklist (what to bring to each meet): Gear bag (to keep your stuff together), uniform (singlet and shorts), warm-ups (long sleeves, full-length pants, and more as dictated by the weather), black underlayers, shoes (training shoes and spikes if you have them), socks (a pair to wear and a spare), hat, gloves, watch, water bottle, a healthy pre-race snack, and a healthy post-race snack. See team GoogleDrive for a printable checklist.

Lost and Found. As a service to the team, the captains will store personal items forgotten at practice or meets. Athletes may redeem these for \$1 per item. The end-of-season Captains' Auction of remaining items is a highlight of the last day of practice.

Code of Conduct

Our primary purpose at meets is to compete to the best of our abilities. You may be exposed to inappropriate behavior, colorful language, and interesting clothing choices. You will also witness amazing displays of sportsmanship, loyalty, competition, and guts. Our goal is to notice, develop, and display the latter virtues. This is not about being anything other than ourselves, but it's also not the time to call attention to negative homeschool stereotypes. Being home schooled should not be an excuse for your behavior. Many people have preconceived notions of what homeschoolers are like. This is our chance to be positive ambassadors.

The Do's. Adhere to the assigned workouts. Demonstrate good sportsmanship: be kind and respectful to coaches, teammates, competitors, and spectators; cheer for teammates and other athletes; and ask what you can do to help. Leave each situation (practice, meet, facility, interaction, etc.) better than when you arrived. Look out for each other and be generally awesome, and you'll have a great time.

The Don'ts. No swearing (including misusing names of God). No disrespectful or disruptive talk or behavior. [No disparaging remarks \(trash talking\) about our competitors or those around us.](#) No participation in unapproved activities during practices or meets. **No alcohol, smoking (which includes vaping of any kind), or drugs (including cannabis).** See the MSHSL Eligibility Brochure for details, and note that this "clean living" is required year round. Energy drinks are prohibited on practice and meet days – see Nutrition and Health. Any illegal activity (including that which occurs outside team events) may result in dismissal from the team. Stay clean, people!

We strive to maintain a positive, encouraging environment and team community. Thank and encourage your coaches and others (parents, meet volunteers, sponsors, etc.) who support you and make this team possible. Remember, a team is as strong as its families, and negativity damages the team. Gossip or slandering will not be tolerated at any time including on electronic/social media. Practice constructive communication and reconciliation. If in doubt about how to handle a situation, ask the leadership for guidance.



Finally, no public displays of affection at practices, meets, or on the premises of either. We cannot dictate what you do on your own time, but keep in mind your reputation follows you wherever you go.

Electronics policy at practices. Athletes may not use cell phones or other electronic devices during practice times, except in an emergency with a coach's permission.

At meets. When in doubt, ask for a coach's permission. *Abuse of this policy may result in confiscation until the end of the event and potentially the revocation electronics privileges for all*, so this is good practice in keeping each other accountable. You work far too hard all season to throw it away through distractions.

You MAY use electronic devices at meets to:

- Call or text your parents to keep them informed of event timing.
- Listen to music with headphones--as long as you are well aware of your surroundings and event timing. This must be out of the competition area and not during team warmups, etc.
- Take photos for later use.

You may NOT use electronics at meets to:

- Play games, watch videos, or use the Internet or any other “entertainment” that could be distracting to you or your teammates.
- Call, text, video call, or engage in social media.

NO ELECTRONICS (coaches excepted) in the competition area; these distractions are safety hazards causing much concern to meet officials—and you may be disqualified.

Disciplinary Action. Participation on the Nighthawk teams is a privilege. A good deal of independence and trust is given to each member of the team, and violations of that trust will result in disciplinary action. This may include revocation of competition privileges, temporary suspension of participation in practices, or other unpleasant consequences for the athlete including possible dismissal from the team (without refund). In general, you can expect the first violation (unless it's seriously major) to result in a coach-athlete conversation; the second will involve the athlete's parent/guardian. We'd really prefer not to have to explore this in depth, so just behave in a respectful and reasonable manner and we'll all be in good shape.

Meet etiquette for competitors and spectators. Good sportsmanship means cheering for teammates at the meet who are competing in events other than your own. Pay attention to the meet and leave the games at home.

Sportsmanship also includes following all the rules of competition. These rules are available on the MSHSL website (www.mshsl.org). Additionally, actions interpreted as aiding (or impeding) a competitor or teammate may result in individual and/or team disqualification. This includes walking or running alongside a runner in a race in which you are not competing.



No balls or other projectiles may be thrown around at meets. Yes, “other people are doing it,” but we as the extended team (athletes, family, friends, etc.--anyone associated with the Nighthawks) need to be providing the positive example. Also, not all race directors appreciate dogs, especially at cross country meets, so we ask that you leave your pets at home.

Team camp. We love having the support of families and friends. However, team camp is a place reserved for team members. Think of it as our locker room or the team bench/dugout at a different sport's venue. If your son/daughter needs to check in with you, they can do so after everyone on their squad has completed their event or at the end of the meet. The cross country/track environment may be different from that of other sports, but the competition venue is still fundamentally reserved for athletes.

Also, you may hear discussion among spectators regarding standings or results. Keep in mind that this is only speculation until results are declared official. The outcome of the event should be kept from being broadcast until it is done so by the meet officials. In the age of instant on-line information, this can be a challenge; some meets even restrict or limit posting of preliminary results for this reason. If, however, you believe that there is a discrepancy in the results, please ask a coach and we can bring it to the attention of the meet host as appropriate.

Many parents would like to know what to say to their athlete(s) after a meet. **The most important: you love them, you're proud of them, and you love to watch them run.** They already know who they beat and vice versa, so pointing that out can be counterproductive. If they want to discuss the race, let them lead that conversation. Practices are where the most growth and development happen. Post-practice questions could be things like whether they worked hard and had fun. Meets are a celebration of what happens in practice.

Facilities

Within each training season we make use of several different facilities, either through rental or good-faith agreements. Use of any facility is based on the good graces of the facility owner and our relationship with them, and all athletes are expected to treat the facility with respect and courtesy. This includes leaving all facilities we visit (for practices or meets) in as good or better shape than when we arrived. Continued use of these spaces is subject to our stewardship of these facilities.

Please also note that most of our practice locations require specific **traffic patterns** to ensure future use. Please allow extra time for this, and consider it a service to your team. The purpose is for safety, to minimize neighborhood traffic, and to keep the city leaders and the county sheriffs happy. Maps are posted on the team GoogleDrive. The future of our program depends on following these directions.

Track Rental. We negotiate track rental on a season-by-season basis with local public schools to secure track training time. During the track & field season, we hope to have on-the-track training approximately twice per week. Because schools and community education programs have priority for these facilities, we typically must wait until February to secure spaces. We cannot guarantee facilities (and therefore any particular events) and ask for your continued patience and flexibility each season.



Hanover City Hall. The City of Hanover has graciously offered our team the use of their community room for stretching and warm-up for some of our practices. Wet or dirty outdoor shoes must be removed in the entryway of the City Hall building and kept clear of the hallways.

Transportation

All practices and meets require parents to provide transportation. Many parents appreciate carpools, so ask veteran team-parents about creative carpooling strategies and/or post a message to the Team Forum (message board).

Safety

Because the coaches cannot monitor every athlete at every moment, we rely on the athletes to follow safe running practices and look out for each other.

Headphones. Body awareness (breathing, heart rate, muscle fatigue, pace, etc.) is key to athletic improvement and competitive success, and headphones detract from this. They also decrease one's awareness of traffic, other runners, bikers, dogs, etc. It is particularly important that girls/women do everything possible to be alert to their surroundings; those wearing headphones are considered easy targets for attackers.

Road running. Use trails and sidewalks when available. Follow the rules of the road. Run against/facing traffic (left side of the road)—single file on busy roads or any time you see cars. Cross at intersections, bearing in mind visibility and adjusting as needed. Wear easily visible clothing, appropriate for the time of day you run. Wear reflective gear early in the morning and late in the evening. Avoid running on eastbound road at sunrise and westbound roads at sunset. Be mindful of your surroundings and pay attention – do not assume that drivers are paying attention!

Trail running. When training on trails, expect uneven footing and adjust your pace and attention accordingly. Allow a gap between yourself and the next runner so that you can look ahead for obstacles and avoid colliding if someone trips. Shorten your stride and take quicker steps.

Weather. Rain and/or cold won't stop us from training! Expect some practices to be conducted in inclement weather, so be prepared. We will not, however, begin a workout during a lightning storm. If we are out running and lightning moves into the area, use the "10-second rule": if you hear thunder within 10 seconds of seeing lightning, seek shelter. If you cannot get indoors, head for low ground (e.g., a ditch) and crouch down: wrap your arms around your knees, and lower your head, and get on the balls of your feet, minimizing contact with the ground. Stay away from trees and other tall objects, and we will come looking for you. You will have a marvelous story to which you can add outlandish details. Don't forget to smear mud on your face for effect.

Hydration. Running in hot weather can lead to heat exhaustion and/or heat stroke. This is the extreme case, but dehydration can also greatly impair performance. If you find yourself feeling light headed and/or unstable while running, stop and talk to a coach. Because we cannot carry water through all training and races, you must be hydrated beforehand. It is extremely



important to maintain hydration throughout the day—before, during, and after practice and especially at meets—by drinking plenty of water, no matter the weather. Certain allergy medications may increase your likelihood of dehydration, so talk to your doctor.

This chart helps with dehydration by considering urine color:

<http://hubpages.com/health/Urine-Color-Chart-and-Meaning>. You should not be even "mildly dehydrated" before exercise. To avoid dehydration, a rule of thumb to consider is 1/2 ounce of water per day per pound of body weight. For example, if an athlete weighs 120 pounds, that's 60 ounces of water per day *without exercise*. Plan for another 12 ounces per 30 minutes of exercise—more if it's hot. You will not want to chug it all right before a run; hydration is an all-day process. Find what works for you to remind yourself to drink enough. There is always the possibility of "too much of a good thing," so don't go overboard and make yourself ill.

Strength training

Strength training is important and should be part of your routine. This does not replace cardiovascular training but helps reduce injury and makes you a better athlete. We emphasize strength at practices, and you can find more information on the team website.

Injuries, Prevention, and Treatment

Running is generally safer than most sports, but it still involves risk. Coaches strive to teach good stretching, warm up, and cool down habits; find safe places to run; and create well-planned workouts. Injuries can occur from missteps and falls as well as from muscle pulls, overuse, bad shoes, and/or old injuries or imbalances from prior sports/activities. Parents and athletes must sign a liability release waiver to participate on the team.

We expect you to do your best and to work hard. But there must be a balance between striving for greatness and pushing too hard. Do not overtrain. Do not run through injuries. Take care of yourself and do not abuse your body. Listen to what your body is telling you. If you have pains that persist, back off and talk to your coaches. Soreness and mild aches are to be expected, but pains that persist or get worse as the run progresses are indications of something wrong.

Your coaches can help with understanding, preventing and treating injuries; but to do that effectively, we need to know about it so we can help you get better. It is also imperative that athletes do their part in the treatment and healing process. This includes notifying their coaches of the injury to discuss treatment options, as well as following the treatments suggested by their health care provider.

Muscle rolling and/or self-massage is a way to target areas of muscle tightness and trigger points (knots) to assist in healing and recovery. The team has a variety of different rolling implements for you to try, and your coaches can demonstrate how to use them effectively.

Ice can help reduce pain and swelling, but it can also delay healing, so often it's best to let your body's inflammation do its work. This is determined on a case-by-case basis. If you choose to ice: Fill a plastic zip-close bag (usually a quart or gallon size works well) with ice and add cold water, push out the air, and seal the bag. Wrap it in thin cloth and apply to the sore area for 15 minutes on/30 minutes off, twice in an icing session, twice per day. If possible, elevate the area



while you are icing it. Do not rest the body part on top of the ice; put the ice on top of what you are icing. Also, do not press down on the ice bag as this will restrict blood flow to the area being iced and can result in frostbite or other damage.

Injuries should be treated appropriately and with the seriousness they deserve to help speed recovery. A classic treatment mnemonic is RICE--Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation—with careful consideration regarding the icing part. You should of course also inform the coaches of any injury or pain as they can help guide you in treatment and recovery. Coaches may also direct you to orthopedic specialists, physical therapists, etc.

- Rest the injury. “Active Rest” is best – involving a non-running activity that doesn’t aggravate the injury. Coaches can help with cross-training ideas.
- Ice – see above, with caveats.
- Compression – wrap the injured area in an elastic bandage (e.g., Ace, kinesiotape, compression shin sleeves) to reduce swelling and enhance healing.
- Elevation – raise the injury above the heart.

Additional injury prevention and treatment tips can be found on the team website.

Nutrition and Health

Nutrition and health are important elements of a competitive season. Be sure to eat right, drink lots of water, and get plenty of rest. These provide fuel, lubrication, and recovery, and are aspects of your training that are just as important as running and working out. We have a basic guideline sheet for athletic nutrition on the team website. Ask your coaches questions, too!

Junior high and high school athletes are still in their growing years, so proper nutrition and appropriate calorie intake are important. If you are hungry, eat. Don’t purposefully limit your calorie intake, and on training days, figure that you need an extra 100 calories for each mile you run. Avoid junk foods, refined sugars, carbonated beverages, etc. Occasional treats are O.K.! But the less processed the food is, the better it will be for you.

Energy drinks, caffeine, and other stimulants. Because these are not on the standard "drugs, alcohol, tobacco" list, we are elaborating here. The effects of caffeine include increases in heart rate, blood pressure, speech rate, motor activity, gastric secretion, and body temperature; sleep disturbances, dehydration, and anxiety; and is known to play a role in triggering cardiac irregularity. There are also concerns regarding the use of caffeine and its effects on the developing neurologic and cardiovascular systems in youth and the risk of physical dependence and addiction.

"Energy drinks" are **unregulated supplements**—NOT sports drinks. They have no place in the life of an athlete--particularly those still in the growing years. Energy drinks (Monster, Red Bull, Rock Star, Full Throttle, Jolt, Go Girl, etc.) are loaded with potentially toxic levels of caffeine, sugar, and other ingredients that claim to give you an edge but are not proven to be effective nor regulated to be safe. "Energy drinks are designed for adults, and that level of caffeine may not be healthy for teens or children. Energy drinks often are very high in sugars and stimulants that make these drinks not a good option for young athletes. Additionally, excess caffeine



found in many energy drinks may be dehydrating, potentially exacerbating the effects of heat and humidity." Source: <https://truesport.org/hydration/benefits-enriched-water/>

Similarly, coffee and other caffeinated beverages--as well as tablets or other forms of caffeine intake--are not advised. While adult athletes are known to use these, there is little research on youth athletes. **Consistent sleep (9+ hours/night) is the best avenue to improved performance and alertness through rest and recovery.**

We advise student athletes not to consume these drinks at all, but because of the risks involved with these products, **you may not consume energy drinks on practice or competition days.** Those who do so will be sent home for the day and their parents will be notified.

Supplements. The MSHSL does not publish a list of banned substances as there are thousands of Appearance and Performance Enhancing Drugs and Substances (APEDS) on the market. APEDS include various steroids, stimulants, hormones, energy drinks (with caffeine), "pre-workout drinks," creatine, etc.--even protein powders.

"Nutritional supplements" are not subject to federal regulations or testing regarding content, safety or effectiveness, and potential risks are magnified when used by growing athletes.

Because of the lack of testing, there is a solid risk (estimated 25%) of contamination with anabolic-androgenic steroids, stimulants, other banned substances or illegal drugs, and/or high levels of heavy metals (e.g., lead, mercury). These ingredients are not listed on the labels. *However, "NSF Certified for Sport" verifies that the label is accurate and there are no banned substances or contaminants such as heavy metals, microbials, or pesticides.*

Not all supplements are bad, but you do need to know what you're consuming and whether it's safe for your body or even effective for your goals. The best and safest route to athletic improvement is strength and performance training, proper nutrition and hydration, and sleep. For more information about supplements, see <https://taylorhooton.org/dietary-supplements/>

Medications. No medications, including over-the-counter medications (ibuprofen, acetaminophen, decongestants, etc.) may be shared with teammates. This also includes "sports" creams/sprays (Tiger Balm, Biofreeze, etc.), the use of which we generally disapprove. These primarily work as counterirritants and often contain additional ingredients that metabolize into NSAIDs. These products can do more harm than good, especially during exercise. Coaches will only dispense medication when authorized by a parent.

Treats. If you are bringing treats to share with the team after a practice or meet, please avoid sugary snacks like cookies. It is important to replenish depleted cells with healthy options. Things like watermelon, apples, clementines, fruit snacks/leathers, low-sugar snack bars (Lära Bars are great)...at a meet, athletes are not picky!

Team events. Throughout the season, we hold team events involving food. We try to keep these as healthy as possible, with the exception of a couple of "treats," typically at the beginning (e.g., Mega Fun Day) and end of the season (e.g., post-Sections/State). **Team dinners/potlucks** are great social opportunities that are healthy and affordable as well. Be sure to let the hosts know you are coming.



Replacing nutrients in your body post-race is just as important as putting good fuel in your body pre-race. For **occasional post-meet dinners out**, Chipotle is a popular choice, but let us know if you find other healthy and convenient options. We try to limit the number of official-yet-optional restaurant outings, but we add these to the team calendar before the season starts to give time to budget some celebration for those interested.

Iron. Athletes should have their blood-iron (ferritin levels) checked at their annual physical or well-check visit. Female athletes in particular need to be aware of potential iron deficiencies, and all athletes should take iron supplements if recommended by their physicians. Talk with your coaches or physician if you are concerned about your nutrition or before changing anything significantly with your dietary intake.

Sleep and rest are important aspects of athletics. **Sleep is your superpower!** Your body does its best growing, recovering, and strengthening while you are asleep, so make sure you get plenty of it each night. **Teenage student-athletes need 9-10 hours of sleep per night! This helps performance as well as mental well-being.** Keeping the same sleep hours throughout the week is better than staying up late some nights and trying to sleep in to make up for it.

Special considerations for female athletes: Once you hit puberty, your body starts changing. You will need to train harder and get STRONG. But you will also need to eat properly to provide your body with the energy and nutrients it needs to maintain optimal health and avoid injury.

As an athlete, you will need to be intentional about avoiding the Female Athlete Triad—low energy, missed or irregular periods, and bone density issues that can result in stress fractures and more. Any one of these symptoms means your body is not getting what it needs. Please read this article: <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/triad.html>.

Again, you must provide your body the fuel it needs to fully function: EAT! You need to fuel your body's normal functions *plus* the added energy you use to train. Undereating is an unacceptable performance shortcut that ultimately cheats you. Not consuming enough high-quality fuel can result in the setbacks of the Female Athlete Triad. No short-term improvement is worth a lifetime of health issues. You don't want that, and your coaches and teammates don't want that for you, either. *Strength* is the goal. Having said all that, *overeating* also has consequences; the key is to balance your level of intake with the level of your workouts. Keep your coaches in the loop if anything is “off,” and let us know if you have any questions.

Off-season training

Off-season training builds the foundation for a great season. It is a time to set your sights on what you hope to achieve—and to prepare your body for the short and intense season of training and competing. By following a regular training schedule and setting goals, you will be better off and farther ahead of your competitors who do not. Training is on your own, but coaches are available for general guidance. The team website hosts a variety of basic training plans to help you. Athletes are encouraged to maintain training logs year round for their own benefit. For cross country, pre-season training during the summer is highly encouraged.

Mileage should be built up progressively over the off-season, allowing your body to adapt to the stresses placed upon it. As with any new or increased activity, your body will adjust if given



time, and you will become more capable of handling tougher workouts. However, if you overstress your system, you will set yourself up for injury and disappointment. Overtraining is easy: just go out and run as far as you can every day of the week without any time for rest and recovery. But moderation, stress within limits, and learning to listen to your body—skills that take time to develop—will serve you well in training and in life.

Take the time for stretching, strength conditioning, and working on your form (including stride rate). Health, flexibility, strength, and efficiency will work together with cardiovascular fitness to make you faster. And be sure to wear good shoes.

Awards and Recognition

End-of-Season Awards. Awards are presented to athletes at the end-of-season banquet. Athletes who complete the season in good standing are eligible for the following awards. The awards listed will not necessarily be given each season.

- **Dedication Award:** Pins are given to all athletes who achieve at least 90% Attendance and 90% Participation.
- **Athlete of the Meet:** An athlete who demonstrated exceptional performance, character, sportsmanship, or other remarkable contribution or accomplishment at a specific meet.
- **Most Improved Award:** The athlete who demonstrated significant improvement over the previous year.
- **Rookie of the Year Award:** A first-year Nighthawk who contributed significantly to the team performance and who shows the most promise for future team contribution.
- **Top Nighthawk Award:** While the calculation comes from consistently contributing the most to the team score, the honor comes from the character developed along the way.
- **Varsity Letter:** For requirements, see the sport-specific sections that follow.
- **Captains:** Current captains are recognized and next season's captains are announced.
- **Graduating Seniors:** Special recognition is given to graduating senior athletes.

Honor Roll. This list acknowledges the all-time top Nighthawk performances and is usually updated after each meet.

Captains. The title of “Team Captain” is a commitment that holds both honor and responsibility. Captains are servant-leaders and examples to their teammates, helpers to their coaches, and ambassadors outside team functions. They are held to a high standard of character on and off the field. Captains are appointed by the coaches through an application process and are selected based on seniority, contribution, personal character, demonstration of responsibility, and commitment to the team. A document detailing captains’ responsibilities is available on the team website.

Volunteer Service Awards. We participate in national-level recognition programs to provide opportunities for our home schooled student-athletes to earn recognition (think “résumé” for job, college, and scholarship applications) for voluntary service. Nighthawk athletes can submit service hours for verification, both for team service (outside regular practices/meets) as well as other volunteer service you might be doing. Written records must be submitted for validation. *Additional details and other recognition opportunities are described on the team website.*



CROSS COUNTRY

What is Cross Country Running?

Cross country is a team sport. We train and race together. A typical meet has races for junior high, varsity (typically the top 7 runners), and junior varsity (“JV”—everyone else). Varsity boys and girls run separately, JV may be separate boys/girls or a combined race, and junior high races also vary. Currently in Minnesota, varsity and JV girls and boys run 5000 meters (also called “5 km” or “5K” – equivalent to 3.1 miles). Junior high races are shorter, vary in distance from meet to meet, and are limited to grades 8 and under.

There are many aspects of cross country that set it apart from other sports. There is very little “equipment,” and your training ground is as big and varied as you make it. The girls’ and boys’ teams train together and compete at all the same meets, and athletes compete and score both as a team and as individuals. If you do play other sports, cross country will increase your strength, endurance, and mental toughness.

Cross country is also an objective sport: you run your race, and you get a timed result. Unlike other sports where you might or might not get to play your favorite position much, in cross country everyone races at every meet and has a fair chance to show what they can do. No one gets cut or benched based on performance, and everyone has a chance to earn a spot on the varsity team.

At meets, points are scored according to your finishing place in the race, and the top 5 finishers’ points are combined to form a team score. Teams are then ranked with scores lowest to highest, with the lowest score winning. Team finishers #6 and #7 do not add to our score (unless there is a tie with another team), but they can contribute to adding points to *other* teams’ scores, thus improving their own team’s overall placing. All other team finishers are listed in the final results but do not affect the team score.

Team scores and top individual finishers are usually recognized after each race with an awards ceremony, although some races give awards in the finish chute. The number of awards given varies from one meet to the next, and examples of awards include ribbons, medals, and trophies.

Meets. Races begin in late August (some of these early runs may be “scrimmages” or “fun runs” and not official varsity meets) and can run into early November (the State Championship), depending on team or individual progression. We compete in a variety of meets held at parks, golf courses, and school properties. Consistency in schedule from year to year is advantageous because the athletes can learn each course and compare their performances over time. Races can include anywhere from a handful of schools to 20 or more; you will see hundreds of runners gathered at a time. Every meet has a lot of energy and excitement! Spectators are encouraged to run to various points along the course to cheer for the runners—just don’t run or walk alongside them as this puts them at risk for disqualification. See also the Meet Etiquette section above.



Meets are held on various days of the week. A full meet often requires a good portion of the late afternoon but is finished by sunset. Athletes are expected to arrive 60 minutes before the first race and stay through the post-race awards ceremony.

End-of-Season Tournaments. In cross country, the last competitions of the season are the Section and State meets. These are sponsored by the MSHSL and represent the final season tournaments. Participation in the State Meet is considered a pinnacle in athletic achievement, since it presents competition against the fastest runners in the state.

The Section Meet is the qualifying event for the State Meet. In our Section (5A), there are approximately 24 cross country teams. At the Section Meet, the top two (2) teams (boys and girls separately) qualify for the State Meet as teams, while the next 6 individual boys and girls runners *not* on a qualifying team qualify for the State Meet as individuals.

Summer Mileage Club. Runners who set goals and follow a schedule will be far more prepared when the season starts than those who do not. The Summer Mileage Club runs 10-12 weeks: from Memorial Day through the Saturday before cross country practices begin. T-shirts will be awarded for logging the goal mileage based on grade level and gender. Award levels will be announced at the beginning of the summer. All summer mileage participants must log their miles on Running2Win. Use a map/mileage calculator such as the distance measuring feature of Google maps to ensure accurate reporting.

Note: Good planning and goal setting includes appropriate mileage goals. Increasing training volume too quickly sets you up for injury/exhaustion before the season even begins. Start with a reasonable goal and increase each year—ask your coaches how. Also, allow some buffer in your schedule. By building some “extra” into your plan, you have room for unforeseen circumstances. **Do not hurt yourself in the last week of summer trying to log those last miles.** Earning a t-shirt is not worth sacrificing your season! Rules and training plans for earning summer miles t-shirts can be found on the team website.

Varsity Lettering

A varsity athletic letter represents a significant accomplishment and a high level of commitment. Letters will be considered for those who meet the following criteria.¹

- **Commitment:** Attendance of 80% or higher and Participation of 85% or greater (as defined in “Participation and Attendance”), has no unexcused absences, completes assignments on time (e.g., goal sheets), and completes the season in good standing.
- **Positive Attitude/Coachability:** Enthusiastically accepts coaching, performs to his/her ability at practices and meets, serves as a good role model, and exhibits good sportsmanship.

¹ At the head coach’s discretion, a varsity letter may be awarded to an athlete who has not met a stated standard. Similarly, coaches may withhold a letter if a time standard is met but is inconsistent with the athlete’s overall season.



- **Performance:** In addition to the above requirements, to receive a letter an athlete must meet the minimum time standard of 25:00 for girls and 21:30 for boys, and at least *one* of the following standards.
 - Finish among the Top 7 Nighthawk runners in over half the varsity races.
 - At a sanctioned race², meet a performance standard:
 - 5000m 21:45 (girls), 18:40 (boys)
 - 3200m 13:30 (girls), 11:35 (boys)
 - 3000m 12:35 (girls), 10:50 (boys)
 - 2500m 10:20 (girls), 8:50 (boys)
 - Finish in the top 1/4 of finishers at the Section meet.
 - A senior with at least 2 seasons completed in good standing (having met the Commitment and Coachability requirements above) on the Nighthawk cross country team.

Alternative Performance Standards: An athlete who fulfills the Commitment and Coachability requirements above but does not meet the regular Performance standards may earn a varsity letter by achieving certain alternative requirements and submitting an application. Details can be found on the team website.

² If a course is found to be exceptionally fast or short, times may be discounted or time adjusted. Unfortunately, junior high courses are frequently mis-measured, especially the 2500m. Junior high athletes must demonstrate consistent high-level performances to be considered for a varsity letter.



TRACK & FIELD

What is Track & Field?

Track & field includes athletic events of running, jumping, and throwing. At a meet, each athlete competes in one or more events representing the team as an individual or as part of a relay. Scores from each event are added together to form a team score.

Track & field is another objective sport: compete in your event, and get a finishing time, distance, or height. It is relatively straightforward to compare one performance to another and gain an objective evaluation of improvement throughout a single season or from year to year.

Official regular season practices begin mid-March and end late May/early June.

The standard list of events at a high school³ track & field meet includes 18 different events:

- Sprints: 100m dash, 200m dash, 400m dash (“quarter”)
- Distance runs: 800m run (“half”), 1600m run (“mile”), 3200m run (“two mile”)
- Hurdles: high hurdles (110m for boys, 100m for girls), intermediate hurdles (300m for both)—boys’ hurdles are 6 inches higher than girls’.
- Relays: 4X100m relay, 4X200m relay, 4X400m relay, 4X800m relay
- Jumps*: long jump, triple jump, high jump, pole vault
- Throws*: shot put, discus

*Event options for our team members are subject to availability of volunteer coaches and appropriate facilities/equipment; not all specialties are offered. [See team website for current list \(no field events at this time\).](#)

At a track & field meet, points are given according to an athlete’s finishing place in the event, with placing and points assigned in descending value. Common scoring at a full 8-team invitational is: 1st place = 10 points, 2nd place = 8 points, 3rd place = 6 points, and 4th through 8th place earning 5-4-3-2-1 points respectively⁴. The team score is combined from the individual scores from all events. Some meets recognize individual (and/or team) performances with awards such as ribbons, medals or trophies. This will vary from one meet to the next.

Meets. Outdoor meets begin in mid-April and can run into early June (i.e., the Section and State Championships), depending on individual progression. Indoor meets might be considered earlier in the season. Athletes are generally expected to arrive as a team 60 minutes before the first running event and stay to the end of the meet. Arrival times are posted on the team calendar.

Track & field meets typically last 4-6 hours, depending on the number of teams involved. Be sure to bring plenty of food and water as well as a variety of clothing for all possible weather (see meet packing list on team GoogleDrive). **Again, if an athlete must leave early due to extenuating circumstances, it is essential to notify the coach 3+ days in advance of the meet.**

³ Some meets may include different events (e.g., a “sprint medley relay”), depending on the meet host.

⁴ Point values for places in individual and relay events depends on the number of teams competing.



We try to place athletes in their preferred events, but in many meets the number of entries is limited, so we do our best to balance what events you compete in with overall team needs. Meet participation is based on attendance, completion of assigned workouts, logging on Running2Win, and available event slots at the meet. Priority in event assignment is given based on attendance and effort at practice; athlete's attitude, requests, and past performances; and coaches' discretion. It is a privilege to hold a spot on a relay team, and relay slots will be filled based on the same overall criteria as individual events.

Spectator Etiquette. The track and infield are restricted areas; only coaches, competitors, and volunteers are allowed on the infield. NO parents or siblings are allowed (unless specifically designated as a volunteer) as this could lead to disqualification. See also Meet Etiquette above.

End-of-Season Tournaments. In track & field, the last competitions of the season are the Subsection, Section, and State Meets, all sponsored by the MSHSL. Participation in the State Meet is considered a pinnacle in athletic achievement, since it presents competition against some of the best high school athletes in the state.

In our Section (5A), there are over 25 schools that host track & field teams, so preliminary meets are first held at the Subsection level. Current standards for our Section advancement are that the top five (5) individuals from each Subsection and the next six (6) fastest times from both Subsections in an event will advance. For relays, the top three (3) relays from each Subsection and the next two (2) fastest times advance. There are currently no auto-qualification standards to advance from Subsections to Sections. At the Section meet, finishing in the top two (2) in an individual event or top two (2) in a relay, or meeting a State-qualifying standard for the event at the Section meet, will earn a spot for competition at the State Championship.

Section and State meet-qualifying standards change each year. See team website for updates.

Varsity Lettering

A varsity athletic letter represents a significant accomplishment and a high level of commitment. Letters will be considered for those who meet the following criteria⁵.

- **Commitment:** Attendance of 80% or higher and Participation of 85% or higher (as defined in "Participation and Attendance"), has no unexcused absences, and completes the season in good standing.
- **Positive Attitude/Coachability:** Enthusiastically accepts coaching, performs to his/her ability at practices and meets, serves as a good role model, and exhibits good sportsmanship.
- **Performance:** In addition to the above requirements, to receive a letter an athlete must meet one of the following standards:

⁵ At the coach's discretion, a letter may be awarded to an athlete who has not met the standards as defined.



- Consistently score 1+ points⁶ in varsity competition in at least 50% of the regular season meets (excluding True Team and Last Chance meets).
Relay points are divided equally among team members in this case.
- Place in the top 10 as an individual or top 4 in a relay at the True Team meet.
- At the Subsection meet: score points as an individual (top 8), place in the top 3 on a relay team, or qualify for Sections.
- A senior with at least 2 seasons completed in good standing (having met the Commitment and Coachability requirements above) on the Nighthawk track & field team.
- Meet the performance standard in at least one event:

| Event | Girls | Boys |
|------------------------|----------|-----------|
| 100m dash | 00:14.2 | 00:12.4 |
| 200m dash | 00:29.4 | 00:25.4 |
| 400m dash | 01:08.0 | 00:58.0 |
| 400m (relay split) | 01:07.0 | 00:57.0 |
| 800m run | 02:43.0 | 02:17.0 |
| 800m (relay split) | 02:42.0 | 02:16.0 |
| 1600m run | 06:10.0 | 05:10.0 |
| 3200m run | 13:20.0 | 11:20.0 |
| 100m/110m High hurdles | 00:19.0 | 00:19.5 |
| 300m hurdles | 00:55.0 | 00:48.0 |
| 4X100m relay | 00:55.0 | 00:47.5 |
| 4X200m relay | 01:56.0 | 01:42.0 |
| 4X400m relay | 04:27.0 | 03:45.0 |
| 4X800m relay | 10:40.0 | 09:00.0 |
| Long jump | 14-06.00 | 18-00.00 |
| Triple jump | 30-00.00 | 36-00.00 |
| Shot put | 27-00.00 | 36-00.00 |
| Discus | 83-00.00 | 100-00.00 |
| High jump | 4-06.00 | 5-03.00 |

Note: Time standards are for fully automatic times (FAT). To convert hand times, add 0.5 seconds to your performance for the 100m and 200m and 0.25 seconds for distances above 200m. 100m and 200m hand times are not eligible for the team honor roll.

⁶ If meets are scored incorrectly (e.g., too many points given for too few teams attending), the coaches may adjust for consistency with NFHS rules.



NHAC Youth Protection Policy

Barriers to Abuse. NHAC has adopted the following policies for the safety and wellbeing of its members and athletes. These policies primarily protect youth members; however, they also serve to protect adult leaders. NHAC coaches/leaders in positions of youth leadership and supervision outside the program will find these policies help protect youth in those situations as well. NHAC screens all coaches through criminal background checks and the National Sex Offender Registry and updates these checks every 3 years.

All coaches, leaders, parents, and youth members have responsibility. Everyone is responsible for acting in accordance with biblical principles, following Christ's examples. Physical violence, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, unauthorized weapons, hazing, discrimination, harassment, initiation rites, bullying, cyberbullying, theft, verbal insults, drugs, alcohol, and pornography have no place in our program. Violations may result in revocation of membership and in the ability to compete on or lead any team. Coaches and leaders are responsible for monitoring the behavior of youth and other coaches/leaders and interceding when necessary. See also Code of Conduct.

Not all situations mentioned in this document are expected in any given year/season (e.g., overnights), but they are included in this document to provide policy and guidance.

Two-deep leadership required. A minimum of two NHAC Board-approved adult coaches/leaders/parents is required for all practices, meets, and events otherwise lacking adult supervision. One of these adults must be 21 years of age or older.

Adult Supervision

- Male and female adult leaders must be present for all overnight coed trips, even those including parent and child. Both male and female adult leaders must be 21 years of age or older.
- One-on-one contact between adults and youth members is prohibited.
 - This includes transportation except in extenuating situations, in which case consent must be secured by the parent, and the youth must sit in the back seat.
 - Any personal conference is to be conducted with the knowledge of and in view of other adults and/or youth.
- Two-deep leadership and no one-on-one contact between adults and youth members includes digital communication. Coaches/leaders may not have one-on-one private online communications or engage one-on-one in other digital activities (games, social media, etc.) with youth members. Coaches/leaders should copy a parent and another coach/leader in digital and online communication, ensuring no one-on-one contact exists in text, social media, or other forms of online or digital communication.
- Discipline used in coaching must be constructive and reflect Christian values. Corporal punishment is never permitted. Disciplinary activities involving isolation, humiliation, or ridicule are prohibited.



- Youth leadership is monitored by adult coaches/leaders. Adult coaches/leaders must monitor and guide the leadership techniques used by youth leaders and ensure policies are followed.

Buddy System. Due to the nature of the running sports, this is not always practical. However, as a safety measure for athletes, the buddy system will be strongly encouraged.

Hotels/Camps/Overnights

- Age-appropriate and separate accommodations for adults and athletes are required.
- No adult may share a room/suite with the opposite sex unless he or she is that adult's spouse, sibling, or child.
- No youth may share a room/suite with an adult or a person of the opposite sex other than a family member or guardian. Assigning youth members more than two years apart in age to sleep in the same area should be avoided unless the youth are relatives.
- No girls in boys' rooms, and no boys in girls' rooms.

Changing/Shower Facilities. Adults and youth must respect each other's privacy, especially in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers. Whenever possible, separate shower and latrine facilities should be provided for male/female adults and male/female youth. Adults may enter youth changing or showering areas when health and safety requires it. If separate facilities are not available and youth and/or adults wish to use showers, then separate shower times should be scheduled and posted. Use individual stalls where available for changing, showering, etc. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations.

Electronic Devices. Inappropriate use of smartphones, cameras, imaging, or other digital devices is prohibited. Although most people use cameras and other imaging devices responsibly, it is easy to unintentionally or inadvertently invade the privacy of other individuals with such devices. The use of any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in or near shower houses, restrooms, or other areas where privacy is expected is inappropriate.

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

All persons involved in NHAC must report to local authorities any good-faith suspicion or belief that any child is or has been physically or sexually abused, physically or emotionally neglected, exposed to any form of violence or threat, exposed to any form of sexual exploitation including the possession, manufacture, or distribution of child pornography, online solicitation, enticement, or showing of obscene material. This duty cannot be delegated to any other person.

Immediately notify the NHAC Board of this report, or of any violation of NHAC's Youth Protection policies, so he or she may take appropriate action for the safety of our athletes, make appropriate notifications, and follow up with investigating agencies. State-by-state mandatory reporting information: www.childwelfare.gov



Incidents requiring an immediate report to the NHAC Board of Directors

The following must be reported to the board for immediate action, include:

- Any threat or use of a weapon.
- Any negative behavior associated with race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or disability
- Any reports to authorities where the NHAC's Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse policy or your state's mandatory reporting of child abuse laws apply.
- Any abuse of a child that meets state reporting mandates for bullying or harassment.
- Any mention or threats of suicide.
- If someone is at immediate risk of harm, call 911.
- If an athlete is bullied because of race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or disability, and local help is not working to solve the problem, contact an NHAC Board representative.

Your Responsibility

- Stop the policy violation or abuse.
- Protect the youth.
- Separate alleged victim from alleged perpetrator.
- Summon needed assistance (911, EMS, additional leaders, etc.).
- Notify parents.
- Notify the appropriate NHAC leader/coach.

This policy is approved by the NHAC Board of Directors. For questions or concerns, contact an NHAC Board representative.