



# NORTHWEST HOMESCHOOL ATHLETIC COOPERATIVE (NHAC)

## "NORTHWEST NIGHTHAWKS"

### 2018-19 HANDBOOK

~ Updated 12/4/2018; details subject to change ~

*Changes since the last season (cross country 2018) noted in blue.*  
*Changes since the above date noted in green (updated 2/25/2019).*

#### **Purpose and Vision**

Welcome to the team! The Northwest Homeschool Athletic Cooperative (NHAC) was formed in 2014 to provide home schooled 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 (10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades) and junior high (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades) are eligible to participate in Nighthawk athletics. 9<sup>th</sup> grade prospects must contact the program directors to determine eligibility. "Homeschooled students" are those who submit an annual Letter of Intent to their school district<sup>1</sup>. 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 running* 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 different individual and relay events which 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

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<sup>1</sup> If you are taking PSEO classes, please contact us for specific eligibility information.



above, usually without a team component. *Cross country skiing* 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 St. Olaf College team. 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 home schooled children reached competitive running ages. In an effort to introduce their kids to running while engaging their local home schooled 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' 17-acre hobby farm.

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. The Swansons operate it as a historic hobby farm with horses, free-roaming poultry, and other animals. 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, electric fences, and other hazards. Visitors must sign a liability release. Parents must carefully supervise their children who come for special events; buildings and fences are off limits. No pets.

Finally, we have established a **traffic pattern** and parking instructions for days we practice at the farm. 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 of Greenfield and the Hennepin County Sheriff happy. Maps are posted on the team GoogleDrive. The future of our program depends on following these directions.

### **Time Commitment**

**Practices.** Cross country and track & field are relatively short sports seasons (10-12 weeks—see team website for schedules). We hold fewer weekly practices than our competitors, so commitment to attending our scheduled practice times and running on your own (following coaches’ instructions) is that much more important.

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 expected workouts for each week.

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 are optional.

**Meets.** While the structure for cross country meets is different from track & field, the basic premise is the same: multiple teams join to compete together. More sport-specific meet details can be found in the sports-specific sections that follow.

We are a team, and part of being on a team is 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 as well as shows good sportsmanship.

**Participation in meets is an earned privilege.** Much of your time 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.

**Meet Etiquette.** Good sportsmanship means cheering for teammates at the meet who are competing in events other than your own. Unless it's a particularly long meet with major gaps between Nighthawk-entered events (e.g., the Section track & field meet), 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](http://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. We know "other people are doing it," but we as the extended team (athletes, family, friends, etc.--anyone associated with the Nighthawks) need to be the ones providing the positive example. Also, not all coaches and race directors appreciate dogs, especially at cross country meets, so we ask that you leave your pets at home.

**3 days' notice.** Because coaches often must submit team rosters and event participation in advance, an athlete must notify coaches 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 at team camp at least 40 \(ideally 60\) minutes before your event, or you may not be permitted to compete.](#)

### **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.** (We are generally able to offer more flexibility for JH participants due to meet structure.)

**All practice absences must be cleared at least three (3) hours in advance** by notifying the coach *in writing* (email is fine) with the reason, or it will be considered unexcused and affect an athlete's good standing. Many workouts are prepared in advance to account for individual skill development or to organize small groups to work together, so if someone simply doesn't show up, it can affect everyone.

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 for injuries, 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 a Running2Win 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 who miss more than 20 minutes of a practice or leave a meet before their teammates have completed all events will be given 1/2 credit for their attendance. Athletes will be allowed to compete in meets as long as they maintain greater than 75% attendance and follow training instructions (and log) on the days they miss practice. 90% attendance is a minimum requirement for the Dedication Award.

**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. Any excused “missed days” will be given up to 1/2 credit per day for successfully completing and logging your assigned workout on Running2Win. 85% participation is a minimum requirement for varsity lettering. 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 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 (note the Wednesday WEST policies are steeper). 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 have things (like children, dinner, and evening chores) to tend 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. A good rule of



thumb is to stay home if you have a fever or if you have colored nasal excreta. Be judicious about your condition and be respectful of your teammates.

### **Basic Equipment**

**Running shoes.** These are the number one, most important piece of equipment 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 every 6 months or 400-500 miles, whichever comes first. Newer athletes with lower mileage can usually get away with one new pair of shoes per season (two pairs per year)—as long as they are only used for running. Historically, Gear West (Long Lake—ask about their price matching), Running Room (Maple Grove), and TC Running (Maple Grove) have offered a 20% discount for student athletes on regularly-priced items. Call to verify.

**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.

Be sure to 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 the throwing 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 (we suggest the “Timex Marathon” as 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. Q: “Coach, how much longer until we turn around?” A: “What does your watch say?” Athletes are expected to train on their own as directed outside practice, and watches are essential to successfully complete and log workouts.



You should 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. GPS watches are specifically prohibited in all running competitions. 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.
- Dress in layers so you can easily remove/add clothing.
- Avoid cotton clothing; choose synthetic fabrics and wool. This includes socks.
- Wear windproof outerlayers.
- 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 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. 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 we choose modesty in our clothing, especially considering our dynamic range of activities. Additionally, we must comply with MSHSL and NFHS regulations for competitors and spectators. With these factors in mind:

1. Tops and bottoms must overlap so midriff skin is not exposed, 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/cleavage when bending forward. Check the mirror—you might be surprised. 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. Think, “Can/would I wear this *over* my team racing jersey?” If not, it is too tight to wear on its own.
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 workouts 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.** 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 \$25 per piece fee for replacement. If you borrowed spikes from the team inventory, you must return them by the last day of practice with the spikes removed 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, 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.

### **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 will result in the revocation of all electronics privileges, 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 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).
- Take photos for later use.

You may NOT use electronics 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 track & field competition area; these distractions are safety hazards causing much concern to meet officials.](#)

### **Facilities**

Within each training season we make use of 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. See team GoogleDrive for instructions.

**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.

**WEST/Faith Family Center.** We have arrangements to meet at their facility on certain practice days that occur during the WEST semesters. A separate WEST/FFC facility use policy is posted on the team GoogleDrive, and all team members are responsible to follow it.

### **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).

### **Fees**

Activity 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. Coaches and directors volunteer their time.

### **Fundraising**

Our team expenses are greater than our activity 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. We pursue various fundraising 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 us in the asking.

### **Safety**

Because the coaches cannot watch every runner 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.** Run against 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. Reflective gear may be necessary early in the morning and late in the evening. 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 running! 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. 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.

### **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. You can find more information on the team website.

### **Injuries, Prevention, and Treatment**

Running is generally a lot 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 over train. 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 in order for us 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 coach or 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 before you buy” and your coaches can demonstrate how to use them effectively.

Ice is your friend. Even mild soreness can be helped with icing, and if addressed early on, it can prevent further damage or injury. Ice can help reduce pain and swelling—some of which you may not even know is there. 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 cloth and apply to the sore area for 15 minutes on/15 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 good treatment regimen involves “RICE”: Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation, and of course informing the coaches of any injury or pain. They can help you decide how best to treat and recover.

- 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.
- Compression – wrapping the injured area in an elastic bandage (e.g., Ace, kinesiotape) can reduce swelling and enhance healing. Consult with your coaches or a therapist about how best to wrap.
- Elevation – best while icing, but also throughout the day when possible, by raising the injury above the heart.

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

**Athletes are also required to attend practices when injured** so that coaches can monitor progress and provide injury-appropriate training options.

### **Code of Conduct**

Most meets are hosted by public schools. Most of the competing schools are also public, and some are private. Many of our competitors (coaches, athletes, and parents) have little or no experience with the “homeschool world.”

Our primary purpose at meets is to compete to the best of our abilities. You will 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 home school stereotypes. Being home schooled should not be an excuse for your behavior. Many people have no direct contact with home schoolers or may come with preconceived notions of what home schoolers are like. This is our chance to be positive ambassadors of the home schooling community.

**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 behavior. No participation in unapproved activities during practices or meets. No drinking, smoking, or drugs. 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) will result in dismissal from the team. Stay clean, people! Finally, no public displays of affection (PDA) at practices, meets, or on the premises of either. We cannot legislate what you do on your own time, but keep in mind your reputation follows you wherever you go.

**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. 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.

### **The League**

The Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) is an organization that requires membership in order 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-home school team in our state. There is a lot of paperwork and expense unique to this, but we're making it work. Thanks for your patience and cooperation.

**League Eligibility.** We follow the rules outlined in the MSHSL handbook, which can be found at [www.mshsl.org](http://www.mshsl.org). Please especially note the eligibility rules: once you declare a student to be in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, he/she has 12 consecutive semesters of eligibility. This (assigning a grade level) is something parents in home schooling circles are often told "doesn't matter," but in the MSHSL, it is critical.

Home schoolers can be members of the Nighthawk teams and still may be able to participate in other MSHSL-sponsored activities at local schools (be they athletics, drama, etc.), as long as it is not in the same sport. However, the MSHSL policies for home schooled athletes are somewhat cryptic as written. While the MSHSL website has all the necessary information, it can be difficult to find and understand how all the pieces fit together. If you have questions, please talk to us before contacting the MSHSL.

PSEO students participating in athletics and certain other activities (including choir, etc.) at the college are ineligible for all high school sports going forward. Contact us for specifics.

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 awards academic honors to individuals and teams that meet certain criteria. This is an opportunity for us as members of the League, and we take pride in the academic achievement of our athletes. As such, we will ask for your athlete's GPA. This is not reported to any other agency other than the awarding organization (e.g., MSHSL or the Minnesota High School Coaches' Association).

Occasionally there will be conflicts between SAT/ACT test dates and MSHSL Section and State Championship dates. These dates are set well in advance and can be found on the League website and/or team schedule.

### **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.
- **Athlete of the Meet:** An athlete who demonstrated exceptional performance, sportsmanship, or other remarkable contribution or accomplishment at a specific meet.
- **Most Improved Award:** The athlete who demonstrated significant improvement over the previous year and/or within the current season.
- **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 (a.k.a. MVP):** While the calculation comes from consistently contributing the most points to the team, 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 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. Responsibilities are agreed upon before the positions are granted for the next season.

**Managers.** Team managers are also important members of the team. A manager's priority is to be helpful to coaches, providing additional focus to teammates. A document detailing managers' responsibilities is available on the team GoogleDrive.



**Congressional Award.** This is a prestigious award given annually by the United States Congress to young Americans. Participants earn certificates and medals for each award level. Each level involves setting goals in the areas of Volunteer Public Service, Personal Development, Physical Fitness, and Expedition/Exploration. Participating in Nighthawk athletics is a straightforward way for you to earn the Physical Fitness component of the award, and coaches can be your validators. Your participation in other activities (music, theater, 4-H, hobbies, community service, etc.) provides natural possibilities for the other components. Visit [congressionalaward.org](http://congressionalaward.org) for information.

**Presidential Volunteer Service Award (PVSA).** This is an excellent opportunity for home schooled students to earn recognition (think “résumé”) for voluntary service to their team, community, church, other groups, etc. Nighthawk athletes who offer volunteer service to the team will be able to submit service hours to us for verification, both for team service (outside regular practices/meets) as well as other volunteer service you might be doing. At least 10 of your total annual hours must be in service to NHAC. Written records must be kept and submitted for validation. See the team website.

*Additional award/recognition opportunities are described on the team website.*

**Team member service ideas (or propose your own):**

- Attend fundraising (e.g., Cub Foods grocery bagging) and community service events (Hanover Harvest Festival setup, Corcoran Night to Unite, etc.)
- Help with trail and practice area maintenance (mowing, brush removal, filling holes, removing stumps, trimming trees, picking up sticks)
- Practice facility maintenance (trash clean up or other ways to help maintain our practice rental site)
- Design team clothing (t-shirts, etc.)
- Run errands (e.g., pick up uniforms, equipment, and other team orders)
- Help with uniform try-on’s (recording sizes, counting, etc.) and returns
- Organize or help with team picture day (take photos, edit, and upload to team GoogleDrive, etc.)
- Take photos at meets and events. Reduce your selections to only include the best shots that clearly show the athletes—nothing dark, blurry, or far away
- Help organize, set up, and/or clean up the end-of-season banquet

**What Else Can Team Families Do to Help?**

Coaches are often so consumed with what needs to be done on a day-to-day basis that they often don’t know what or how to ask for help. But there are plenty of ways to share the load! [Assistant coaching and other volunteer job descriptions are posted on the team website;](#) [additional](#) possibilities include:

- 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; negativity damages the team, and your words get back to the coaches and make us sad. :(



- Free the coaches' time by helping with farm work (chores, projects, gardening, yard care, snow removal etc.)
- Organize team fun. Examples include hosting a pre-race spaghetti dinner, picking up prizes for game days, serving coffee/breakfast after a Saturday morning practice, hosting a movie night, organizing a park/lake day, etc. *This is your team community, so remember that **you** can help make things happen. Talk to your captains!*

### **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.

Speaking of beverages, "energy drinks" are NOT sports drinks and 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. Because these are not on the standard "drugs, alcohol, tobacco" list, we are elaborating here:

"Understand that energy drinks pose potential health risks primarily because of stimulant content; therefore, they are not appropriate for children and adolescents and should never be consumed..." The effects of caffeine include increases in heart rate, blood pressure, speech rate, motor activity, gastric secretion, and 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 and the risk of physical dependence and addiction."

Source: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2011/05/25/peds.2011-0965.full.pdf>

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.

**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). **Pre-meet spaghetti potlucks** are great social opportunities that are healthy and affordable as well. (See Team Calendar for suggested hosting dates--if you'd like to reserve Hanover City Hall, let us know and we'll pay the rental fee.)

*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 at similar price points. We try to limit the number of official-yet-optional restaurant outings as not everyone can attend or afford eating out very often; we add these to the team calendar before the season starts to give time to budget some celebration for those interested. We've also heard of **post-race "sandwich potlucks"** after meets, so if anyone wants to organize a tailgate party, let us know!

**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. Your body does its best growing, recovering, and strengthening while you are asleep, so make sure you get plenty of it each night. 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. Surprise your parents and go to bed early, so you can get up early and enjoy the day.

**Special considerations for female athletes:** Once you hit puberty, your body starts changing. You will need to train harder and get STRONG to maintain your pre-puberty race times. 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: [http://www.femaleathletetriad.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Final\\_Hoogenboom\\_Public\\_Flyer-10.pdf](http://www.femaleathletetriad.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Final_Hoogenboom_Public_Flyer-10.pdf).

Again, you must provide your body with 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. As stated in the article above, 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. Remember, *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. As always, keep your coaches in the loop if anything is "off," and let us know if you have any questions along the way.

**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 much further ahead of your competitors who do not.

Training is on your own, but coaches are available for guidance. On the team website, you can find a variety of basic training plans, to help guide you in the off season.

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. Special recognition t-shirts are given to runners who log certain cumulative miles during the summer, whether at summer team runs or on their own. See Cross Country.

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 only 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 to stretch, do strength conditioning, and work on your form. Health, flexibility, strength, and efficiency will work together with cardiovascular fitness to make you faster. And be sure to wear good shoes. As discussed in the Equipment section, these form the connection between your body and the ground and are a critical element to healthy training.



## 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 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 best high school 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 8 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 10-11 weeks: from Memorial Day through the day 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.**

**X-miles.** Cardiovascular cross training may count toward summer mileage. This is to help strengthen your body and prevent injury. Cross train all you want above your goals, but **only 20% may be applied to your total summer award mileage.** Example: A mileage goal of 200 can have a maximum of 40 x-miles; the other 160 miles must be running unless you are injured *and have received coach approval*. Be sure you are logging on Running2Win appropriately and record x-miles and *not actual miles!* (For example, if you bike 15 miles and it takes you 50 minutes, you would log 5 x-miles.) See detailed instructions on the team website.

**“Wish miles.”** If you do not see an activity specifically listed here, you must receive coach approval before logging or it will be deducted from your totals. **Note: chores do not replace cardio training.** Strengthening chores provide have a great advantage in getting stronger, even if these activities do not “count” toward your cardio-cross training. You’re looking for activities that give you breathing and heart rate levels equivalent to those you would experience while running. Remember, we are ultimately training to *run*. Don’t cheat yourself!

**Cardio-Cross Training Mileage (= 1 mile running):**

- 10 min. spinning/biking
- 10 min. pool/lake running with AquaJogger belt
- 10 min. lap swimming
- 10 min. jumping rope
- 10 min. stair climber
- 10 min. rowing machine
- 15 min. rollerblading
- 15 min. elliptical machine
- 15 min. continuous Nighthawk cardio-strength circuit (see team Training files)
- 20 min. soccer, basketball, or ultimate Frisbee game
- 45 min. soccer or basketball practice
- 100 rods portaging 30+ lbs.

**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.<sup>2</sup>

- **Commitment:** Participation (as defined in “Participation and Attendance”) of 85% or greater, 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 the minimum time standard of 26:30 for girls and 22:30 for boys, and at least *one* of the following standards.
  - Finish among the Top 7 Nighthawk runners in over half the varsity races.
  - Run 5000m in 21:45 (girls) / 18:40 (boys) or better at a sanctioned race.
  - Top 25 finisher at the Section meet.
  - A senior with at least 2 seasons completed in good standing on the Nighthawk cross country team.

If a course is found to be exceptionally fast or short, times may be discounted or time adjusted.

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<sup>2</sup> At the head coach’s discretion, a letter may be awarded to an athlete who has not met an above standard.



## TRACK & FIELD

### What is Track & Field?

Track & field is a sport which includes athletic events involving the skills of running, jumping, and throwing. At a track & field meet, each athlete competes in one (or more) events representing his/her team as an individual or as part of a relay. The events are competed and scored separately, and scores from each event are added together to form a team score.

Track & field is another objective sport: you compete in your event, and you get a finishing time, distance, or height. Since the conditions of competition are generally the same, it is relatively easy 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 school<sup>3</sup> track & field meet includes 18 different events:

- Sprints: 100m dash, 200m dash, 400m dash (“the quarter”)
- Distance runs: 800m run (“the half”), 1600m run (“the mile”), 3200m run (“the 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

Nighthawk track & field has provided coaching for the individual running events, relays, hurdles, horizontal jumps, and throwing events. This is subject to our ability to secure volunteer coaches and appropriate facilities/equipment; not all specialties are guaranteed to be offered every season. Vertical jumps require additional equipment and are beyond the scope of our program 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: 1<sup>st</sup> place = 10 points, 2<sup>nd</sup> place = 8 points, 3<sup>rd</sup> place = 6 points, and 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> place earning 5-4-3-2-1 points respectively<sup>4</sup>. An aggregate team score is combined from the team’s 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, as will the method of presenting the awards.

**Meets.** Outdoor meets begin in mid-April and can run into early June (i.e., the Section and State Championships), depending on individual progression.<sup>5</sup> Indoor meets might be considered

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<sup>3</sup> Some meets may include different events (e.g., a “sprint medley relay”), depending on the meet host. Junior high meets have a slightly different and reduced set of events, specifically excluding the 3200m run, and often the pole vault, discus, 300m hurdles, and sometimes others.

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



earlier in the season, but this is typically only offered at the high school level. Athletes are expected to arrive as a team 60 minutes before the first running event and stay to the end of the meet.

Track & field meets typically last 4-6 hours, depending on the number of teams involved. High school meets can last until 9:00 P.M. Junior high meets are shorter. Be sure to bring plenty of food and a variety of clothing for all possible weather (see meet packing list on team GoogleDrive). **Once again, if an athlete must leave early due to extenuating circumstances, it is essential that you to notify the coach 3+ days in advance of the meet.**

We try to place athletes in their preferred events, but in meets where the number of entries is limited, 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. Suggestions will be considered for the order of relay participants, but the coach will make the final decision.

No practices will be held on JV/Varsity meet days. JV/Varsity runners will have practice on JH meet days but will be excused from practice if assisting with a JH meet. However, they must complete and log the prescribed workout that day.

**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 section 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 30 schools that host track & field teams, so a set of preliminary meets are first held at the Subsection level. Finishing in the top four (4) in an individual event or top two (2) in a relay at the Subsection meet, or meeting a Section qualifying standard for an event at the Subsection meet, will earn a spot for competition at the Section meet. 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, will earn a spot for competition at the State Championship.

Section and State meet-qualifying standards change each year and are published by the MSHSL. The current standards are linked from 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<sup>6</sup>.

- **Commitment:** Participation (as defined in “Participation and Attendance”) of 85% or greater, 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:
  - Score 12+ points in varsity competition during the regular season (excluding True Team and Last Chance meets).<sup>7</sup>
  - Consistently score 1+ points 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.*
  - Place in the top 10 as an individual or top 4 in a relay at the True Team meet
  - Score points as an individual (top 8) or place in the top 3 on a relay team at the Subsection meet.
  - A senior with at least 2 seasons completed in good standing on the Nighthawk track & field team.
  - (Continued on next page)

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<sup>6</sup> At the coach’s discretion, a letter may be awarded to an athlete who has not met the standards as defined.

<sup>7</sup> 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.





- Meet the performance standard in at least one event (updated for 2019):

<b>Event</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>
100m dash	00:14.3	00:12.5
200m dash	00:29.5	00:25.5
400m dash	01:08.0	00:58.0
400m (relay split)	01:06.0	00:56.0
800m run	02:42.0	02:18.0
800m (relay split)	02:40.0	02:16.0
1600m run	06:10.0	05:10.0
3200m run	13:40.0	11:20.0
100m/110m High hurdles	00:19.0	00:19.5
300m hurdles	00:55.0	00:48.0
4X100m relay	00:54.0	00:47.5
4X200m relay	01:56.0	01:38.0
4X400m relay	04:25.0	03:45.0
4X800m relay	10:30.0	09:10.0
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.