2016 Punxsy Cross Country Team Handbook

Welcome to the 2016 cross country season! I hope everyone had a good summer. Please take a few minutes to read over this information so you know what to expect during the fall cross country season.

1. All things being equal, the team is more important than the individual. Please consider how your actions reflect on your teammates and always do what is in their best interests. Put others ahead of yourself when it is reasonable to do so.
2. Distance running should be part of who you are, not just what you do. If you do not enjoy the lifestyle of a runner, perhaps this is not the sport for you. Live a Spartan life as much as possible in 2016, with proper rest, diet and training all being important components of your success.
3. The outcome is important, but the process is more important. There can only be one winner in each race, but everyone can train and act like a winner. You may not be able to be the fastest runner on the team but you can be the most dedicated.
4. Always strive to make your teammates better through your attitude and actions. Encourage your teammates at all times, and lead by example as well. Always strive to bring your best self to practice and leave the negativity behind.
5. Remember that this is your team. Take ownership of the team and do everything you can to help make the team successful. The command style of coaching is not nearly as effective as the cooperative style, which requires more of a commitment from each individual.

**Contact Information: Please sign in to the Remind group text feature. This will be the preferred method for sending out information to the athletes and parents this season. Follow the instructions on the sheet provided if you have not done so to this point.**

**Additional contact info for Mr. Wehrle:**

Phone: 938-6162 (home)

Phone: 938-5151 x7001 (work);

Phone: 952-5889 (cell) Cell phone is the best option to get ahold of me.

Email: georgewehrle@icloud.com (phone)

Email: gwehrle@punxsy.k12.pa.us (work)

**2016 Dual Meet/Invitational Schedule**

Friday, September 2nd-Punxsy XC Relays @Punxsy

Tuesday, September 6th-@DuBois with Elk County (Wasson Elementary Course)

Saturday, September 10th-@West Middlesex Invitational

Tuesday, September 13th-@Saint Marys with Elk County

Tuesday, September 20th-@Brookville with Bradford

Saturday, September 24th-@PIAA Foundation Invitational in Hershey (Parkview XC)

Tuesday, September 27th-Kane/DuBois/Hollidaysburg@Punxsy

Tuesday, October 4th-@Kane

Saturday, October 8th-@Ridgway Invitational (Grandinetti Elem. School)

Tuesday, October 11th-Brockway @Punxsy

Tuesday, October 18th-Brookville @Punxsy (Senior Night)

Saturday, October 29th-District Championships @Ridgway

Saturday, November 5th-PIAA State Championships @Hershey (must qualify)

**Attendance Guidelines**

 **Team members are expected be at every practice and every meet unless they are excused**. You owe it to yourself, and more importantly your teammates, to be reliable. Being reliable means attending all practices and competitions. You should strive to have perfect attendance this season. However, here are some **acceptable** reasons for missing practice.

1. Absences will be excused for regular doctor, dentist, orthodontist appointments, etc.
2. School activities, such as band, field trips, etc., are excused.
3. If you are sick and do not come to school, you are excused from practice. If you leave school early due to the nurse sending you home, you are also excused from practice. Please try to send a text notifying me if you are sick from school. Do not run on days you are not in school due to illness.

If you need to be excused early from practice for a valid reason, please let me know in advance. Attendance will be taken daily and the coach should never be “ in the dark” about any one’s attendance. Communication is the key. There is no excuse for not letting a coach know in advance if you need to miss practice. If you are going to miss practice for a valid reason, you are expected to complete the scheduled workout on your own if possible. Workouts will be handed out prior to the start of every week, so all athletes will be aware of what is scheduled for a particular day they may need to miss.

In general, needing to go to work is not an acceptable reason for missing practice. You cannot miss practice/meets to attend work. I strongly recommend you consider not working at all during the season, if that is possible. Going to school, practice and work will make for a pretty long day, and dedicated athletes need their rest. Let me know in advance if you have a conflict, and I can try to make the situation work for everyone involved. Remember that most coaches do not excuse athletes from practice in order for them to attend a job. Your teammates deserve and expect you to be committed to this team.

Practice will be held everyday regardless of weather. If for some reason we need to cancel practice or be let out early you will be notified in advance. I will also notify you in advance of any Saturday morning practices, which may be held on occasion if the need arises. It is possible that we may schedule a day off from practice during the school week and then have a Saturday practice, as sometimes this makes more sense from a training standpoint. Many other sports teams practice six days a week, so you need to be prepared to do so as well. If we do only have five practices scheduled for a week, you will be asked to run one additional day on your own and will be given an appropriate workout.

Potential Consequences For Unexcused Absences

\*First unexcused absence from practice Warning

\*Second unexcused absence from practice 1 Meet Suspension

\*Third unexcused absence from practice Dismissal from the team

\*First unexcused absence from a meet 1 Meet Suspension

\*Second unexcused absence from a meet Dismissal from team

No one should have any issue with these generous guidelines. Be honest and reliable at all times and treat your teammates as you want to be treated. Successful teams must have a level of trust and the majority of team members need to strive to not let others on the team down with negative actions and attitudes.

Being late to practice on a habitual basis and/or leaving early may result in a meet suspension, depending on the frequency and reasons associated with missing practice time. Participating in a competition is a privilege, not a right. If you have sporadic attendance, regardless of the reason(s), do not expect to participate in all the meets.

Always keep me informed of your situation and we should have no problems. It is assumed that you want to be at every practice in order to help yourself and the team.

**Injury Policy**

Unfortunately, injuries do sometimes occur in cross country. While we hope there won’t be any significant injuries this season, here is some information and a general policy should any issues arise:

1. Injuries can be prevented in some cases by wearing proper footwear. You will need to practice in genuine running shoes. It is recommended you have two pairs of running shoes that you rotate throughout the season. One pair is ok, but if they are wet, muddy, etc. you can at least have an extra day to take care of them if you have another pair to wear to practice. Please do not run in anything else beside proper running shoes. You can easily find a decent pair for around 50-60 dollars if you shop online. See me if you need any more information about running shoes.

2. Notify me immediately if you have any pain during running. We will most likely refer you to our athletic trainer, Mr. Albright. It will then be your responsibility to inform us of what course of action is recommended by Mr. Albright. In most cases what Mr. Albright recommends will be followed to the letter.

3. If you are told not to run, we can try to do supplemental exercises in the fitness center or in the pool, if available. There is almost always something that can be done to help you aerobically even when you are unable to run. Just because you are injured and unable to run does not mean you are excused from attending practice. Again, communication is the key.

4. If you cannot practice fully, you will most likely not be able to compete in a meet. This will be handled on a case-by-case basis, but you need to demonstrate your fitness and ability to run pain-free in practice before you can compete.

5. Athletes who do not take care of themselves physically are more likely to break down with an injury. Every runner on this team should strive to get at least 8-9 hours of uninterrupted, quality sleep per day. Proper rest and nutrition will allow your body time to heal itself from the demands of daily training.

6. You were all given a summer running program to follow. If you completed the summer running program as instructed you will be much less likely to incur an injury than someone who hasn’t run all summer.

7. We will always try to err on the side of caution regarding injuries. Keep me informed of any issues you may be having and hopefully we can address them early and successfully.

**Equipment Needs For Cross Country**

Cross country is a very simple and basic sport. Little equipment is required as compared to many other high school sports. However, there are several items that you must have and bring to practice on a daily basis.

**1. Proper Running Shoes** are a must (as mentioned in the injury section). With the mileage that we will be running, having running shoes that are specifically designed for distance running is a necessity. A pair of quality training shoes will last an athlete about one season before they will need to be replaced. Running with shoes that are broken down may increase the risk of injury. You are encouraged to visit The Gingerbread Man Running Store in Indiana, Pa., as they will help you select the best shoe for your needs. Racing spikes are also highly recommended. A quality pair of racing spikes will cost around $50 and will last for several seasons if cared for properly. Please see one of the coaches if you need any additional information regarding shoes for cross country running.

**2. A Running Watch** is an absolute necessity. Runners are responsible for bringing a running watch to each practice. Relying on others or the coach to time your run makes you overly reliant on others regarding your training. You need to be in charge of timing yourself as much as possible. Running watches can be purchased for not a lot of money (Basic Timex running watch is around 20 dollars) at WalMart or similar stores.

**3. Water bottle (optional)** You may want to bring your own water to drink at practice. In general, the only time you need to drink fluid is before and after we run, not during. The most important thing you can do to recover fully from our practices is to drink a carbohydrate/protein liquid (like chocolate milk) within 30 minutes of running. If you refuel soon after running, your muscles are much more receptive to what you are giving them. More information about the “refueling window” will be given out/discussed.

I also recommend you check the weather on a daily basis and be prepared for excessive heat, cold, rain, etc. You should have cold-weather gear such as hats, gloves, tights, long sleeves, etc., for when the need arises. Always be prepared for whatever the day may bring. Being uncomfortable during a run will take away from your performance, and make it less enjoyable.

Unless otherwise instructed, no earbuds/music, etc. during practice. GPS devices are ok to use but don’t become a slave to their data. If you know how to use a chest strap heart rate monitor they can prove effective on easy days for making sure you don’t run too hard. You would need to know some basic information such as your maximal heart rate for this to prove useful.

**Earning a Varsity Letter**

For the 2016 season, you must earn 100 points to receive a varsity letter, in addition to meeting all the practice requirements discussed in the attendance guidelines. Points will be earned in the following manner:

1. 1 point for every summer group run attended
2. 1 point for every runner you finish ahead of in a dual meet or invitational, varsity or junior varsity division.
3. 10 points for turning in a **completed, accurate** summer running log on the first day of practice (August 15th)
4. 5 points for every seasonal best you earn throughout the season (for example, 5 seasonal bests = 25 points toward your total)
5. 20 points for recruiting a “rookie” runner who completes the season in good standing. If you bring 2 runners to the team you get 40 points, etc.
6. 25 point bonus for outstanding attendance (a total of 3 or fewer missed practices/early excusals, etc. for the entire season for any reason other than school-related functions). I expect most everyone to be able to achieve this bonus as attendance should be perfect except in cases of illness, appointments, or similar unavoidable circumstances. (These absences will count toward your total of 3, even though they are valid reasons for missing practice). Any unexcused absences will result in no bonus points for attendance regardless of total days missed.

Considering that during a typical season we compete against approximately 1000 runners, earning a varsity letter is very realistic for every member of this team.

All seniors who complete the season in good standing will receive a letter, regardless of point total.

All athletes are expected to meet all the practice requirements discussed in the attendance guidelines. The coach reserves the right to withhold a varsity letter for athlete conduct detrimental to the team.

\*A varsity letter will only be awarded to runners who finish the season in good standing. If you do not complete the season because of a disciplinary issue or you decide to quit the team, you will not receive a letter.

**Academic/Discipline Guidelines**

1. Athletes who become ineligible will be unable to compete in any competitions until cleared by the athletic office. If practice time is missed due to academic ineligibility the athlete will be held out of competition until those practice sessions are made up to the satisfaction of the head coach. Members of the cross country team should be leaders in the classroom and not allow academics to affect the team.
2. Discipline at school should be a non-issue for this team as well. You are expected to do what you are asked to do by your teachers and treat all students and staff with courtesy and respect. Arrive at school on time every day. Whenever possible, sit up near the front of the class. Participate in classroom discussions. Stay off your phone during school hours. Be a leader and do your job well. I expect to hear nothing but positive reactions from all your teachers should your name be brought up in conversation.

**Team website/social media info**

 You are responsible for checking the website on a regular basis and contributing as needed. This is supposed to be your team. The website address is **2016punxsyxc.weeblycom**  It will also be linked on the school website. Please tell your parents about the website and make sure they can access it. We will post photos, results, schedules, etc. We might have a facebook page for the 2016 season as well and I will let you know. Videos will be posted on YouTube and I can provide you with that information as needed.

Instagram: Punxsycrosscountry

Twitter:@Punxsyteamxc

It goes without saying that you need to be mindful of what you post on social media. We do not want anything posted by Individual members to reflect poorly on the entire team. Inappropriate material should never be posted, and do not engage in any “trash talking” with other teams, on social media or otherwise. The only thing I use social media for is to promote the team in a positive fashion, and I ask that you do the same.

**Practice Guidelines**

1. Everyone should be ready to begin practice at 3:30. This means using the restroom, filling your water bottle, seeing the trainer, etc. On most days, we will simply meet inside the stadium gate, right in front of the restroom area. Roll call will be taken promptly at 3:30, so please be in attendance at that time.
2. Bring everything you need to practice. No one should forget their running shoes, watch, etc. Be responsible and be prepared. Dress appropriately for the weather. If it is going to be cold, you must bring cold weather gear. Nothing is more frustrating than watching runners shivering during practice because they are in shorts and a t-shirt on a 40 degree day. Pack your bag with items you may need throughout the season.
3. We will warm-up as a team. No one should be off on their own “warming up”.
4. Your attitude at practice is extremely important for the overall good of the team. If you are positive and energetic, it makes the team atmosphere that much more enjoyable. Regardless of what went on at school, you need to block that out and focus on having two enjoyable hours with your teammates doing a healthy activity like running. You should be looking forward to the challenges of each practice, as well as time spend with friends. Negativity has no place at practice, so make every effort to contribute in a beneficial way to the team every day. Encourage each other and don’t try to hold anyone back or bring them down to your level. Always strive to be better than you currently are, and help others to strive to achieve their goals.
5. We will do many strength training/strengthening activities that require both discipline and athleticism. Take pride in doing all the drills correctly. Really make a conscious effort to build a better body and become a better runner. We will be in the fitness center a minimum of twice a week, for no more than 30 minutes each session. You must be disciplined in the weight room and do the assigned lifts/exercises in the appropriate fashion.

**Nutrition/Recovery**

You will receive more information about proper nutrition and recovery principles throughout the season, but here are a few general items that we recommend:

1. Cross country team members need to eat a significant amount of calories in order to fuel the training that we will be doing. You will not be successful in the long run (get it?) if you don’t take in enough calories. Try to eat something before school (glass of orange juice and a banana if nothing else, maybe a yogurt, cereal bar, etc.)
2. Make sure you eat enough for lunch to last you until after practice. School lunches aren’t the best nutrition, but they are better than undereating in most cases. You should not be “starving” at the beginning of practice, so make sure you eat enough at lunch. You can always pack your own lunch with slightly healthier items if you wish.
3. After practice, it is very important for you to refuel quickly after exercise, preferably within 30 minutes. This is where you might want to bring your own type of healthy snack to eat right after practice (a few pretzels, fruit, chocolate milk, dried fruit, etc.). Waiting an hour or more to eat may not give your muscles adequate fuel for the next day’s practice. In general I think Gatorade and similar products are a waste of money and are not necessary.
4. In general, as long as you are eating a moderately balanced diet that contains enough calories, you should be fine. Healthier food choices are always preferred, but as long you are eating enough that will take care of most nutrition issues for young runners. Do not try to lose weight through running cross country! You must fuel your body properly to be able to train effectively.
5. It is recommended that you drink enough water throughout the day, which can be a challenge. Allowing yourself to become dehydrated may affect your running performance negatively. Drink water when you are thirsty, and get in the habit of consuming water as your first beverage choice. If you drink coffee or pop, keep it in moderation. Energy drinks should be avoided as they are a waste of money and are not healthy in any way.
6. Taking a multivitamin is a good idea, just to provide you with some “insurance” in case your diet is lacking in any of the basic vitamins and minerals. Other than that, avoid supplements of any kind unless you have consulted your physician.

**Basic rules of cross country**

1. Cross Country is a fairly basic sport, with only the simplest of rules. Most of the race distances are 5 kilometers, or 3.1 miles. Typically cross country courses are run on grass, wooded trails and golf courses, although sometimes there is pavement or gravel involved. The uneven terrain and sometimes inaccurate course measurements make race times somewhat secondary in cross country, as opposed to the precision of track and field.
2. Typically, a team’s schedule in cross country consists of weekly dual meets and several weekend invitationals. Dual meets are typically held against at least one other team, although occasionally there are three or even four teams participating. In an invitational, there can be anywhere from a handful of runners to several hundred.
3. Scoring in cross country is always done with the intent that the low score wins. The first five runners to finish account for a team’s score, and their 6th and 7th runners to finish can also contribute by getting ahead of another team’s top five runners and “displacing” them, thereby inflating the other team’s score. For example, in a dual meet , if our runners take 1st, 4th, 5th, 7th and 10th, our score would by 27 points. The other team would then have 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 8th and 9th, for a score of 28. If their 6th runner would have gotten in ahead of our fifth runner, the score would be 28-28. In cases of a tie through five places, the tiebreaker goes to whichever teams 6th runner finishes first; in this case the other team wins because their 6th runner was ahead of ours.
4. Invitationals are scored in similar fashion. Typically, invitationals allow 7 runners to compete in the varsity race, and all other runners get to run in the junior varsity competition.

**Riding home with parents/bus policies**

1. We realize there will need to be times when riding home with a parent is necessary, but hopefully both you and your parents understand the importance of spending time with your teammates at away meets. Team unity is an important part of being successful, plus it’s more fun with everyone together celebrating the team’s success after a competition.
2. If, however, you do need to ride home with a parent, please notify a coach in advance and make sure you have your note requesting permission to ride home with a parent signed by the athletic office. Please try to ride home on the bus as often as possible so you can relax and socialize with your peers.
3. Everyone should be dressed in their uniform and/or warm-ups on the bus. No street clothes, please! Always bring your full warm up tops and bottoms to meets. You won’t always need to wear them, but you should have them just in case. We will encounter all types of weather this season, so please be prepared. If the coaches ask you to wear your full warm-ups to a meet and before the race, then that is what needs to be done. Expressing your individuality is fine at times, but there are times when you need to be recognized as part of the team.
4. You can wear flip flops/sandals, etc., on the bus to and from meets, but make sure you change into running shoes when off the bus. No shoes other than running shoes should be worn while we are at meets, including invitationals.
5. Please sit only with members of your own gender on the bus. You can talk quietly to those around you, but be seated and courteous to those around you.
6. Along those same lines, the bus driver should never have to correct a member of the cross country team for their behavior on the bus. Sit in your seat, talk quietly, sleep, listen to music, etc., but do not cause a disruption in any way. Sometimes we get too loud or put our feet up on the seat or turn around to face the person behind us, causing the bus driver to be distracted.
7. Cell phone use on the bus should be kept to a minimum.

**Basic policies for invitationals/meets**

Keep in mind that your first priority at a competition is to perform to the best of your ability, thereby helping the team. We also want to put the Punxsy cross country team in the best possible light, so please read over the following so you know what is expected at all competitions.

1. For home meets, you are to be at the stadium by 3:30, dressed to compete.
2. Please limit your socializing to before our warm-up. Once warm-up begins, you should pretty much be with your teammates until the race begins.
3. Do at least some portion of the warm-up as a team. Some runners may not be able to keep pace with others, but for the most part the team should stay together. Encourage others to keep up with the majority of the team.
4. After the race, we will always have a cool down/post-race workout to complete. The race is not over when you cross the finish line. You will be expected to have the discipline to begin your post-race running within 15 minutes of finishing. The entire team is to start this together, soon after the last runner has finished. Make sure your parents understand that you need to do this after the race, so they can plan on you needing another 30 minutes or so before you can leave, if that is possible.
5. For away meets, not much will be different. We will walk the course as soon as we get off the bus (after a restroom trip), then do a team warm-up. After the race, we will do the cooldown together. If we are at an invitational, there will probably be some extra time to wait for other races, awards, etc.
6. Please keep your cell phone put away as much as possible at competitions. You can use it to call or text home to say how you did, but that should be about it. Converse with your teammates and other runners while at competitions.
7. Running shoes only at all races, once you are off the bus.
8. Be courteous to all workers/officials, coaches, etc. when at a meet. Also, make an effort to talk to other runners, even those on other teams! Runners can be really neat people, so try to make some new friends while you are there.
9. Dress in proper attire for the awards ceremony when we are at an invitational. If not in full uniform, wear your warm-up top, or, at worst, a Punxsy cross country shirt. You should look like a runner and a member of this team. Be proud of the team you represent.
10. Please do not show outward displeasure over your performance. All of us know we could have done something better in ever race. Keep this to yourself and only display positive reactions. No one likes to see a runner complain about how poorly they did-no whining allowed!