

June, 2019

Dear Girls' Cross Country Runners,

I hope this letter finds you enjoying your time off from school and considering the transition into summer lifestyles and commitments. Certainly, there is a lot to be done in these weeks ahead, with visiting family, summer jobs, maybe some college visiting and, of course conditioning and preparations for the upcoming season!

For most of you, running or cross training (biking, swimming, hiking, etc) is something you should do **at most** five days out of the week this summer. Girls' physiology is markedly different from boys' so we train differently. Girls' bodies require more time to recover (rest days) between hard workouts, avoiding injury and burnout. Most new or novice runners should consider the summer-long goal of being able to run at a moderate pace (a speed at which you can run and carry on a conversation with a friend, without keeling over or feeling shortness of breath) for 30 - 45 minutes. Start off slowly if this is new for you - just 15 minutes a day, every other day, for two weeks. Then increase to 20 or 25 minutes, and try once or twice that week on consecutive days, and so forth. Again, if you have questions, please call. We can arrange a workout schedule for you over the phone. Running or training **FOR TIME** is a more efficient and safe way of training, than is running for distance. For example, plan on running for 20 minutes a day, rather than running for two miles a day. For all returning and new runners, summer is the time for ENDURANCE training, rather than strength (hills and speed) training. Please just enjoy the gift of time, run for enjoyment rather than pushing yourself, and put those miles in the "bank" if you will, for you will need them in the fall!! This is the main way to avoid injury this summer, and during the season. If running is new for you, make sure you have some good training shoes, which are new and have enough support for your feet and arches. If you have any questions about running shoes or training in general, please call me at the number below. Returning runners, a training shoe lasts two seasons max! So if you used your current shoes last fall and then again this spring in track, time for some new shoes!!

You will never have more days ahead of you this summer to take care of this next item. **It is a requirement of the school that all pre-season athletes hand in their medical forms PRIOR to the start of pre-season, Monday August 12th.** Failure to do so will forfeit the right to participate in pre-season athletics; your participation in athletics will commence only after the athletic trainers have received your forms. If the forms have been turned in but for some reason your name is on my list for non-participation, please have a copy of your health forms with you, in a sealed envelope, when you come to practice, and we will make sure those copies make it through the proper channels at school. Although any absences accrued during pre-season will not count against you, that time together as a team is a unique opportunity to get to know your teammates and to gel as a team. We implore all of you to take this time now to fulfill this requirement and look forward to seeing you for pre-season. Coaches will have a list at the start of pre-season of those who have and have not turned in their forms.

Our schedule for the 2019 season should be on the SSA Athletic Department webpage some time over the summer, on the Girls' Cross Country section of the athletic department webpage. In addition to our Tuesday WPIAL section meets, we have invitationals on Saturdays: Red, White and Blue (Schenley Oval, early September), the Altoona Invitational (overnight trip to Altoona) mid to late September, the Freedom Invitational (in mid-October), and the Tri-State Invitational (a week before the WPIAL championships, same venue as WPIAL finals). Mr. Deal usually schedules scrimmage meets for us in the weeks leading up to the start of our WPIAL schedule. Keep an eye out for our schedule when planning your fall activities.

Our preseason training should commence on August 12th, Monday, at 8:30am. We gather at Coach Whit's home, 526 South Braddock Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15221, on the edge of Frick Park in the Point Breeze neighborhood of the city. We gather on the porch between 8am – 9am, after which we head out to stretch, warm up and then train. Practices usually last 60 – 90 minutes total, with smoothies served after! Parents and other guests traveling from near or far are welcome to stay on the porch, walk or run the trails while the team trains, rather than leave and come back for pick up later. We are sympathetic to family vacation time that might conflict with our preseason training, and encourage families to prioritize previous commitments over our preseason schedule. The beauty of running is that training can happen anywhere, at any time! Well...almost anywhere...at almost any time. Again, don't hesitate to contact Coach Whit with any preseason questions you might have.

A wonderful running opportunity is called the Run Around the Square, in nearby Regent Square, a neighborhood adjacent to Coach Whit's. The race is usually scheduled for the last Saturday in August, a week before Labor Day weekend. This year, that would put the race on August 24th. The length of the race is a 5K (5000 meters, the equivalent of 3.1 miles), exactly the length of a high school cross-country meet. Thus the timing of this race couldn't be better in providing a "test run" for girls who have never raced a 5K before, but have two weeks of training under their belt! We encourage you all to register for this event, once registration opens online. Information can be gleaned from a Run Around the Square website online.

Again, thank you for your consideration in running on the girls' cross-country team. It is both a privilege and an honor for me to coach such disciplined, hard-working, friendly, collaborative and focused athletes. Call me if you have any questions or concerns about summer conditioning or about the schedule for this fall. Happy running!!

Fondly,

Susan Whitney, Head Coach, Girls' Cross Country
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