

WILLMAR CARDINAL XC MID-SEASON REPORT

Dear Parents and Running Enthusiasts:

This is a little overdue...sorry. It seems like this summer/fall has been a little overwhelming at times. But, I really wanted to get out a "**LATE MIDSEASON REPORT**" on the kids and teams thus far so you can have a coach's perspective on where we are as we head into the final weeks of the season.

First, "Thank You" once again. You have simply amazing kids. You don't get to see how hard they work in practices and the enthusiasm they bring each day to the sport. I really am honored to be able to say I work with such a great group of kids on a daily basis. You and I both know they are not always perfect, but as my grandson, Miles, told me last spring... "It's OK, I'm a kid. Kids make mistakes." And the few mistakes they do make are far overshadowed by the positives they display on such a consistent basis. We enjoy each of them!

I hope your kids are bringing home the weekly meet results and comments sheets. You can really gain a perspective on how we feel they are doing at each race. Even though only a couple lines, we try to emphasize something positive along with something they need to look at...for the most part, we can do that for every single runner...and if there are negatives, we do so hoping they will use those as constructive comments to improve their performances.

We are around 100 kids yet. We actually had a high of 106 but we lost a few to injuries and a couple who were just not super dedicated; a few chose to do the musical. The kids we have continue to perform at a very high level.

At our first two meets, Willmar was the dominant program competing. We walked away from Moorhead and Gale Woods knowing we had the highest overall team finish of any school there when combining all races. At our third meet, Heartland Preview, the Minnetonka group edged us for that honor...even though they were the only school to beat us that day. We went from there to Hutch (63 schools beaten, 3 losses), Rocori (60+ schools beaten; 3 losses) and finally, this last Saturday at Willmar where it took one of the very best programs in the country (Wayzata) (their boys are ranked #3 in the United States; their girls #8—both are ranked #1 in Minnesota) to stop the Cardinals from once again claiming team honors for the day.

We are getting to the final stages of the season. We compete in a very large meet at Alex this Saturday, we follow that on Tuesday with our last regular season competition at St. Cloud Tech...and then, it is on to CLC and Sections. There is a Lefty Wright Grade Meet on the week of sections for all kids not competing in the section tourney. (We are only allowed to run 7 boys/7 girls at sections so many of the kids will still run there) 6th graders are not allowed to compete in CLC (conference guidelines) or Lefty Wright so their last race will be Tech...what a super talented and hard working group they are. We have high goals as we enter the championship part of the yr. We want to be one of the top 2 overall teams at Alex, we would like to win at least 3 of the 6 races at CLC, and then compete well enough at sections to challenge to advance to State. Only the top 2 teams advance from the section to state.

Nike Heartland is the week following state. ALL runners are eligible to compete in those races and details will be posted on our website in the next few weeks.

Thank you again for the privilege of working with your kids. As always, don't hesitate to call/email with questions and concerns. And if you get a chance, be sure to thank our assistant coaches who have done such a super job all yr working with our teams. We—the kids, parents, and coaches...really are a "TEAM"!!!

Coach Popp

