SPRING LAKE PARK HIGH SCHOOL CROSS-COUNTRY

2026 Cross-Country Manual

COACHING STAFF/CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Head Coach: Peter Falcon (pfalco@district16.org)
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3. Assistant Coach: Jenna Terrio (jterrio12@gmail.com)
4. Assistant Coach:

- Download the "Remind" App or go to remind.com/join and select add class/join existing class with code "slpxc1" OR text @slpxc1 to 81010

TEAM PHILOSOPHY AND EXPECTATIONS

Cross-country is a unique sport in that all athletes are welcome to compete and participate at either the varsity or junior varsity levels as long as program expectations and guidelines are followed and implemented. There is both a team an individual component that allows each runner to feel part of a cohesive unit and to compete against themselves by displaying a variety of qualities and characteristics. At Spring Lake Park High School, we as coaches believe in developing athletes both on and off the field in order for them to be the most successful version of themselves.

1. ***Effort*** - each athlete giving their best effort at practice, meets, and during all team related activities.
2. ***Purpose*** - practicing, competing, and being intentional with how we operate as a team and a daily basis.
3. ***Attendance*** - showing up each and everyday on a consistent basis and participating in a manner that is up to SLP athletic standards.
4. ***Sportsmanship*** - treating teammates, coaches, officials, and staff with respect and courtesy throughout the entirety of the cross-country season.
5. ***Growth Mindset*** - a willingness to learn from mistakes and see them as an opportunity to improve and grow as an athlete both on and off the field (apply skills you learn as a runner to other areas of life).
6. ***Community*** - develop a positive and accepting environment with teammates, coaches, and others in order improve team cohesiveness and culture.
7. ***Consistency*** - distance running requires a lot of dedication, discipline, and handwork. The more consistent an athlete can be in getting in their easy miles, workouts, warm-ups, cool-downs, strength training, core work, and all the other core principles of training, the better all-around runner they will be! Stacking consistent weeks, months, and even years of training together is the key to becoming successful in the sport of cross-country.
8. ***Attitude -*** come to practice, meets, and other team activities with a positive attitude that contributes to improved team cohesiveness, performance, and overall togetherness.

PRACTICE

- Practice will go from **3:30pm - 5:30pm** (unless otherwise noted) starting **Monday, August 31st** (before Labor Day this year). There may be days later in the season when practice is out earlier. Changes will be announced via the Remind App.
- Morning practices before the start of school will go from **8:00am - 10:00am** starting **Monday, August 17th - Friday, August 28th.**
- Team meets at the south end zone on the football field near the track.
- Warm-ups will include a dynamics, form drills, hurdle drills, and light jogging.
- Strength Training (Weight Room) will be conducted 2x/week, along with other core, band work, and other strength based exercises as a means to prevent injury and improve overall athletic performance to not only be better distance runners, but better all-around athletes.
- Workouts will be sent to both athletes and parents in advance (prior to each week of training) via the Remind app in order to better prepare athletes and allow them to know what to expect throughout the season. Athletes will be divided into different mileage/training groups based on experience and athletic ability to better individualize training, minimize injuries, and maximize athletic performance.
- Various types of workouts will include: easy/recovery runs, long runs, tempo runs/intervals, threshold runs/intervals, race pace intervals, strides, hill reps, anaerobic work.
- On days where we run our "quality sessions", we may bus kids out to different areas away from school to run on different terrains to better prepare for upcoming cross-country meets. Transportation will be provided to and from the school.

GEAR AND EQUIPMENT

- While distance running doesn't require as much equipment as other sports, there is certain gear that is more important than others.
- A good pair of running (training) shoes are by far the most important piece of equipment a runner can own. We highly suggest getting fit for a pair of running shoes at a speciality running store in the Twin Cities. Most running stores will offer a "gait analysis" where arch height, knee/hip alignment, and other physical modalities are measured to ensure each athlete is fit into a proper pair of running shoes individualized to them. They will also watch you walk/run in various types of brands of shoes to ensure you're in the proper pair. Running shoes usually last around 400-500 miles (around one season) before they need to be replaced. It's highly recommended to replace them sooner to help avoid and prevent injury.

    1. Mill City Running Company
    2. TC Running Company
    3. Fleet Feet

- Cross-country racing spikes are not required, but they are recommended for races. These can also be purchased at a speciality running store to ensure proper size, fit, etc.
- A running watch is also HIGHLY recommended as it will be used to time runs and various workouts throughout the season. GPS watches aren't required. It can be a cheap timex, ironman, or basic athletic watch. Most of our workouts and runs will be time based, so having a watch will be extremely helpful!

CROSS-COUNTRY MEETS

- Athletes will likely miss some portion of school for cross-country meets and are expected to communicate with teachers and staff about missed class time, homework, and tests. We are student-athletes, meaning we are always students before we are athletes.
- Early dismissals will be communicated to athletes at practice and any changes will be communicated to both athletes and parents via the Remind app.
- Team camps will be set-up at meets upon arrival.

- For all races (JV, Varsity, Middle School), each group is expected to warm-up and cool-down as a team. Cross-country is just as much a team sport as it is an individual sport. We want to build team camaraderie!
- Warm-ups will be much like practice before a quality session or more challenging workout: 10-15 minutes of easy jogging, form/dynamic drills, and strides. Warm-ups are usually started around 45-50 minutes before race time.
- Cool-down jogs of 10-15 minutes are expected to be performed as a team at the conclusion of the race.
- Race distances are typically 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) for the majority of meets other than some early season meets and middle school races (1.5-2 miles).

HEALTH, RECOVERY, NUTRITION

- It's vital to take care of our bodies while we are in the midst of our season to be able to get the most out of them.
- Proper sleep, nutrition/eating regiments, and other positive recovery habits are extremely important while we are training hard, day in and day out.
- Using recovery tools such as massage guns, foam rollers, heat/ice, etc. with guidance from an athletic trainer, coach, or healthcare professional is recommended throughout the season.
- Our athletic training staff at the school is on site to assist runners as needed, however, it is recommended each athlete check-in with a coach first before seeing the trainer for further guidance and direction.
- Weight training, core work, and other strength training based exercises will be implemented and taught at practice to further prevent injury throughout the season.
- Sport performance, mental prep, and team goal setting sessions will also be implemented into training as a regular exercise to assist runners in mentally preparing for races, quality workouts, etc. throughout the entirety of the season.

VARSITY LETTERING REQUIREMENTS

- Earning a varsity letter can be earned by meeting either a meet performance standard, time standard, or championship performance standard. An athlete must all be in good standing with both their teammates and coaches, as well as someone that exemplifies and carries out the team philosophy and expectations of Spring Lake Park Cross-Country, athletic department, and school as a whole.

1. Meet Performance Standard
    - Place in the top half of runners in at least half of varsity races run throughout the season. (Example: Place 75th or better in a race of 150 runners)
    - A minimum of five varsity races must be run throughout the season.
2. Time Standard
    - Girls: 22:00 for 5000 meters
    - Boys: 18:30 for 5000 meters
    - Times must be run at least one time or more throughout the season.
3. Championship Performance Standard
    - Earn all-conference or all-conference honorable mention honors.
    - Earn all-section honors.
    - Make section team (top 7 runners).
    - Qualify for the state meet.
4. Other Requirements/Factors
    - Athletes must complete the entirety of the season.
    - Injuries or other health reasons/factors may play a part in earning a varsity letter.
    - Limited about of absences from practices, meets, and required team activities.
    - In good standing with teammates, coaches, athletic department, and school (academics).

2026 Meet Schedule (Tentative - Subject to Change)

1. **St. Anthony Dilly Dash** - Brightwood Hills Golf Course, New Brighton, MN (Thursday, 8/27)
2. **Orono Twilight** - Orono High School, Orono, MN (Wednesday, 9/2)
3. **Anoka Steve Hoag Invitational** - Anoka High School, Anoka, MN (Thursday, 9/10)
4. **Roy Griak Invitational (Varsity Only)** - Fort Snelling Golf Course, Fort Snelling, MN (Saturday, 9/19)
5. **Eden Prairie Metro Invitational (Twilight)** - Flying Cloud Fields, Eden Prairie, MN (Saturday, 9/26)
6. **Osseo Invitational** - Elm Creek Park Reserve, Maple Grove, MN (Thursday, 10/1)
7. **Irondale Invitational (JV Only)** - Brightwood Hills Golf Course, New Brighton, MN (Thursday, 10/8)
8. **NWSC Conference Championships** - Elk River Golf Club. Elk River, MN (Wednesday, 10/14)
9. **Park Center Dundee Invite (JV Only)** - Central Park, Brooklyn Park, MN (Tuesday, 10/20)
10. **MSHSL Section 5AAA Championships** - Anoka High School, Anoka, MN (Thursday, 10/29)
11. **MSHSL State XC Championships** - TBD (Saturday, 11/7)
12. **NXR Heartland Regional Championships (Post-Season)** - Yankton Trail Park, Sioux Falls, SD (Sunday, 11/15)