

Marietta Blue Devils



**Cross Country
Parent & Runner
Handbook
2023**

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Mission Statement**
- 3. What is Cross Country?**
- 4. Cross Country Terms**
- 5. Equipment**
- 6. Season**
- 7. Injury treatment**
- 8. Nutrition**
- 9. Online Running Log**

Marietta XC

2017, 2018, 2020,2021,2022 Girls State Champions
2014, 2015, 2020, 2022 Boys State Champions
2016, 17, 18 Girls Area 2 Champions
2016, 19 Boys Area 2 Champions
2015 NXN SE Champions
2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 20, 21 Girls Cobb County
Champions
2008,09,10,12,13,14,15 Boys Region Champions
2008, 2010, 2013, 2014, 2015 Boys Cobb County Champions
2012 & 2021 Boys State Runner-up
2013 Girls State 3rd Place
2019 Boys State 4th Place

Introduction

Welcome to Marietta Blue Devils Cross Country. You are joining a dedicated group that has been very successful the past 16 years. The success the teams have enjoyed came through the hard work and dedication of many runners, parents and coaches alike. Cross Country requires a serious commitment and will definitely challenge you both physically and mentally. I hope you find Cross Country a rewarding part of your High School experience. Please use this handbook as an introduction into the sport we enjoy greatly.

Thanks,

Jack Coleman: Head Coach XC; Assistant Track & Field Coach

Dave Ravenscraft: Assistant XC Coach

Yolanda Payton Assistant XC; Assistant Track & Field Coach

Brianny Reed Assistant XC; Assistant Track & Field Coach

Jonathan Gambrell: Assistant XC; Assistant Track & Field Coach

Mission Statement

The mission of Marietta City Schools guides the Cross Country program of Marietta High School. We believe that participation in Cross Country can prepare students for success in life. Being part of the Cross Country team positively prepares a student for the challenges they might face in life's pursuits and encourages healthy lifestyle choices and habits.

Marietta Cross Country Fundamental Beliefs:

- The relationships I form with my teammates and coaches will directly affect our team's performances and outcomes.
- Good Runners should be good students. I should plan so that I fulfill all of the commitments I have made.
- Running is a fun activity in and of itself.
- Quality distance running takes time to achieve. A long-term approach is required.
- There is no substitute for consistent hard work.
- Aerobic Fitness is the foundation of Cross Country Fitness. If you want to be faster, you must run long distances regularly.
- Sleep, Diet, and Hydration, all affect performance and allow me to run my best.
- Major Injuries can be prevented through consistent training; accurate logging; keeping track of shoe wear; and addressing minor injuries at their outset.
- Consistent Summer training prepares me for success in the Fall Season

What is Cross Country?

Cross Country is a foot race that takes place in a natural setting away from the normal road and track races. Usually it takes place at parks, nature preserves or on large school campuses. In most states High School athletes run a 5k race (3.1 miles). The courses vary, but in most cases dirt, gravel, grass, or rough terrain are incorporated into easy to follow routes, which the runners compete on. Participants race for both team and individual recognition. This is middle distance running and requires extensive training and conditioning to become even an average runner.

The great thing about Cross Country is that there is no bench. All runners get an opportunity to run in races throughout the season and challenge themselves to improve each time.

Scoring a Cross Country Meet

Cross Country is a unique sport in that you can have individual winners and team winners. Individual winners are obvious as they are at the front of the race. Team scoring is a bit more complicated. Each person in the race that is on a team is given the number value of the place they are in at the finish. In a typical varsity race seven runners will race and the top five runners will score. To get the team score, you will add up the finish places for the top five runners. For example, a team having runners that finish 1st, 2nd, 5th, 8th, and 15th would give the team a total score of 31 points. The team with the lowest score wins. If there is a tie between teams then you go to the 6th place finisher of the teams to determine the winner. The 7th runner on the team is important in bumping other teams back a spot in the scoring. Every runner on the team counts. Your spot could be the one to determine how the team finishes.

Cross Country Terms

- **Cool down:** an easy-paced run or jog after a race or workout designed to help the body recover from the stress of the previous activity. It always includes stretching after the running portion.
- **Dynamic warm-up/stretching:** Body movements designed to actively stretch muscles while simultaneously warming up the muscles before a workout, run or race.
- **Fartlek:** A Swedish term, which literally means speed play. A run that involves bursts of speed randomly dispersed throughout a run.
- **Invitational:** A meet between a larger number of teams. (usually 10 or more)
- **Pace:** Rate of speed maintained over a prolonged course
- **PR: Personal Record:** Running your fastest time at a particular distance or on a particular course.
- **Loop course:** A course that follows a large circle. Some courses are 2 or 3 loop courses.
- **Out and back:** A course that goes to a particular point and then returns the same way. Lithia Springs is example of an out and back course.
- **Pack running:** running in close proximity as a group
- **Racing Flats:** A lightweight shoe designed primarily for racing: not training.
- **Starting Box:** Designated area on the start line from which a team starts the race. Sometimes called the gate or lane
- **Strides:** gradual acceleration to a sprint then a deceleration. These should be 60-100meters in length. Usually completed before workouts and races and sometimes after runs. They help with form and with speed.
- **Surge:** A racing tactic involving an increase in pace that is meant to discourage an opponent.
- **Warm-up:** exercises and running that prepare the body for the intensities of competition.

How to be a spectator

- Bring a comfortable chair. Find a spot where the athletes run by numerous times. If you like, you might also bring your running shoes and move around like the coaches do so you can see the kids multiple times.
- Cheer the kids on as they pass. They love all the cheering and it actually does make them run harder.
- Get a watch and time splits. You can see how well an athlete is doing by looking at their splits.
- Do not run beside the athletes. This is called "Pacing" and can result in the disqualification of the athlete from the competition.
- Do not touch the athletes during a race. (Obviously, someone in need of medical attention is already out of the race so it is ok to help at that point.)

Equipment

Runners do not need a lot of equipment, but what they do need is very important to their success. The transition to running will be much easier with the following items.

- Running Shoes: There are 3 running shoe types: **Neutral, Stability and Motion Control**. They are specially designed for running and more specifically the running action of certain foot types. This is vital to prevent common injuries that occur with certain foot types when running with a normal training shoe. For this reason before buying running shoes you should determine your foot type. **You can expect the shoes to last about 400 miles or 6 months**, whichever comes first.
- Moisture wicking socks: 100% Cotton Socks will cause blisters, as they get wet. Socks should be long enough (ankle cut) that no part of the shoe touches bare skin as this might cause a blister.
- Shorts and shirts (prefer running and moisture wicking, but not a necessity)
- Watch with Lap/Split Timing (I prefer the Timex Ironman)
- Water Bottle
- Towel (Can be old); used to dry off and keep the auto seats from getting dirty and smelly

**Once the season starts and the runner starts racing, the runner may need to buy a pair of Cross Country racing flats or spikes to use in races only. The shoes are designed to be light and fast.

The places to go to get the running shoes that are correct for your child's biomechanics are listed below. It is an excellent idea to get the professionals to analyze your child's biomechanics to determine the right type of shoe for runner especially as a beginner.

Big Peach Running Company Kennesaw

1625 Ridenour Boulevard
Kennesaw, GA 30152
Tel: 678.903.0022

Phidippides Sandy Springs

6136 Roswell Rd.
Sandy Springs, GA 30328
(404) 255-6149
At the corner of Roswell and Hilderbrand

Road Runner Sports

1311 Johnson Ferry Road
Marietta GA 30068
678-279-7990

The Season

Summer Running

The seeds of personal success and team championships of the fall season are planted in the summer. The sooner a person starts the better they will be when the season's racing begins. We begin in early to mid May with informal group runs after school. It will be a great time for beginners to start getting to know their teammates. The early part of the summer training is mainly concerned with logging miles and weight training to get physically stronger and get an aerobic base built. We will have access to the weight room 2 days a week in the summer. I cannot stress enough the need to be running during the summer.

August Blue Devil Dash

We complete the "Blue Devil Dash" in early August to determine the fitness level and training level of the runners. New runners will be assessed as to their fitness for competing in races held in late August and early September. There is a chance that runners will be held out of races if proper fitness is not achieved by August. Returning runners will be expected to be in comparable shape as to last track or cross country season, if not even better. **Returning runners not in good shape may be asked to leave the team or will be held out of races until they return to proper running form.**

I have been asked why everyone should not meet the same standards. Simply put, **more is expected of returning runners on the team.** The first year a runner is on the Cross Country team they **learn about the sport** and get use to the training and racing. Any good or outstanding performances, by a first year runner are really just a "**Bonus**" for our team.

Expectation is more the rule for the returning team members. The good performances from the last season are now expected. Returning team members should be in as good of condition or better at the beginning of the following year in order to keep our team successful at the state competition levels. Team members that have not maintained their fitness are not setting a good example for the newcomers. They are not genuinely committed to doing their part to make Marietta Cross Country successful.

Daily Practices

We will practice daily beginning in August. The basic format at practice most days will include a combination of the following: dynamic warm-up, strides, an easy run or workout, strength work, and static stretching to conclude.

Races

During the Cross Country season, our team will race against teams from our county, our region, and state. We occasionally race against teams from neighboring states. The simplest race is the traditional "dual", "tri", or "quad" meets, which are against one, two, or three other teams. These meets are held after a school day, usually do not have team or individual awards, and are low key races designed just to give the teams a chance to compete. We rarely run races like this.

Most Invitational races are held on Saturdays, usually in the morning while the weather is still reasonable. These are the “monster races”, with as many as 20-60 teams participating. In these races, there is usually a championship or varsity race (most of the time top 7, sometimes top 10 people on each team running), a JV race (next 7), and an open race (the remainder of the team). Again, the great thing about Cross Country is that **EVERYONE** who is physically fit gets to participate throughout the season. Individual and team awards are available at these meets. These meets are where we get a chance to see how we stand in the county, region, and state. In addition, colleges often get the names of the runners they want to recruit from these meets.

Depending on the time of the season, the three most important races of the year are **County, Region and State**. At the Cobb County meet, the top ten individuals usually get awards. The County team race is important because it gives us an idea of how competitive we are. At the Region Meet, the top 4 varsity teams qualify for the State Meet. At State, the top ten individuals earn medals, and the top 4 teams earn trophies. A high finish at State has become a standard goal for Marietta and it is not easy to achieve in the state’s highest classification.

Only our top 7 runners compete at State if we qualify. However, we always bring alternates with us along for the trip. The alternates will consist of the next few runners that the coaches feel deserve a reward for their hard work. They would run in the event if one of the top 7 could not. Coaches will notify athletes after Region how many alternates there will be in the event we qualify for state.

Recently we have become competitive enough to race in Post Season Races. These are not school sponsored; however, they do represent the best competition for our runners. Participation in these events is not a requirement.

Being Successful at Cross Country

Cross Country is a rather simple sport. Success can be achieved through focusing on a few key ingredients:

- 1) Running: Run the miles! There is no short cut to success for distance runners. Generally, the more a person runs the better they become. Consistently running is the key for the beginner as the body gets use to training.
- 2) Rest: Runners need more rest than non-runners. 8-10 hours of sleep is the norm if you expect to be successful. It is the time that the body repairs itself.
- 3) Diet: A balanced diet is best for runners. A multivitamin with iron is also suggested as teenagers rarely eat like they should. There is data to suggest that runners have lower iron levels due to training and may sometimes need supplements to keep iron levels normal if their diet is not sufficient.
- 4) Strength Training: Runners must have strong bodies to handle the running required to be successful.
- 5) Coaching: Leave the coaching to us. We realize there are many different ways to coach running. Our training program has been successful and is designed so we can individualize training based on different ability and fitness levels on our team.

General Injury Treatment Information

We have a full time Sports Medicine athletic trainer at MHS. We refer all reoccurring or uncommon injuries to him. We trust in his expertise and advice and he is usually able to help you find a sports medicine doctor when needed. **Please understand that anytime you take your runner to the doctor for an injury or illness we will need a release from that doctor for your runner to be able to resume participation in Cross Country activities.**

Stretching is the most common form of injury protection for our runners. We use dynamic stretching before running and static stretching afterwards.

Common running injuries

Sore muscles are the most common injury runners' face. Ice and Ibuprofen are the best remedies.

Blisters are another common injury. Drain the blister (but don't peel away the skin) then use a gel type skin to treat the blister. Ideally you want them to become a callous.

Shin Splints are one of many overuse injuries or an athlete adding mileage too much too quickly. Shin splints are the inflammation of the muscles around the shin. Exercise by pointing your toes on the affected leg and drawing the alphabet. Ice also helps reduce the pain. Calf stretching will help greatly.

Stress Fractures are typically the result of **too much too fast** in mileage increases. Be patient with your body and pay attention to your sore spots. Proper training in the off-season is the best way to avoid stress fractures.

Dehydration or heat exhaustion can be avoided by proper hydration. Pay attention to the warning signs such as dizziness, cold sweats, and nausea.

Over hydration can occur by drinking simply water. Your body needs electrolytes to provide energy so we recommend that you mix or alternate water with a sports drink. Look at the label for sodium/salt content. Pedialyte, Gatorade, and Powerade all provide electrolytes. Some of our best runners have sworn by drinking Pedialyte the last 24 hours before races.

Anemia is a common problem for cross country athletes. The symptoms are general fatigue and listlessness. Typically females are susceptible to anemia but males can experience it also. It is caused by a lack of iron in the diet. Make sure you eat some red meat each week and/or taking a supplement with iron in it.

Nutrition

A key component to success in sports is eating right. Practice good everyday health habits including a balanced diet from wise food choices.

IRON: Iron has been described as the most important element for endurance athletes. Iron is important to runners and their ability to train, race, recover, and avoid injury. The loss of iron can occur very quickly in long distance runners (especially girls) and we want to promote iron-rich foods and avoid taking supplements when we can. Iron-rich foods are: liver, red meat, dried fruits, beef-tomato casseroles, dried beans, farina, and eggs with orange juice. Avoid calcium and caffeine at meals when eating iron rich foods.

Eating a variety of foods is the key to nutrition. The amounts may vary with the runners and they should try to get to know what and how much they can eat and when to eat before practices or meets.

The BASIC-4 food groups to consider for food choices:

MEAT AND PROTEIN GROUP: This group includes meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and alternative proteins such as dried beans, peas, and nuts. Two or more servings should be eaten daily.

MILK AND DAIRY GROUP: Dairy foods such as low-fat cheeses, milk, and yogurts also provide protein as well as minerals and vitamins.

BREAD AND CEREAL GROUP: Whole grain breads, rice, and cereals provide energy and nutrients needed for growth and muscle development as well as the energy needed for athletic performance. These foods are less expensive and lower in fat than many meats. Many nutritional professionals recommend that Americans eat less meat and more carbohydrates.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: Other foods high in carbohydrates and vitamin-mineral content are fruits and vegetables. Vitamin-rich fruits highly recommended for everyone are: strawberries, bananas, grapefruit, tangerines, apricots, oranges, prunes, melons, and dried fruits. They are an excellent source of fiber. Also good to eat are dark leaf lettuce, romaine, and endive. Iceberg lettuce is of little value because it contains mostly water and a minuscule amount of vitamins. Deep yellow vegetables, carrots, sweet potatoes, and squash are super foods full of Vitamin A. Other high quality vegetables are broccoli, green pepper, fresh peas, lima beans and parsley. Four or more servings should be eaten daily.

Sample foods for each meal:

Breakfast

Moderate Meal

soft boiled eggs
whole wheat toast
bran muffins
pancakes
english muffin
lowfat yogurt
apple juice
rasin bran
oatmeal
lowfat milk
banana
orange juice

Lunch

Lightest Meal

chicken noodle casserole
mixed vegetables
rye bread with margarine
turkey sandwich
whole wheat bread
carrots
lowfat yogurt
fresh fruit
baked potato
lowfat muffin
chocolate milkshake

Dinner

Most Important

brown rice
boiled fish
broccoli and cheese
salad
pasta-tomato sause
red-meat
fresh fruit
lowfat milk
cheese pizza
vegetable pizza
lowfat ice cream
sherbert

Snacks: yogurt, dried fruits, popcorn, juices, nuts, fruits, cheeses, and cereals.

Day of the race

Food to avoid: gravies, creamed foods, fried foods, donuts, pastries, soft cheeses, luncheon meats, bacon, rich sweets, ice cream, whole milk, margarine, and butter, special athletic drinks, fructose tablets, salt tablets, and special powdered drinks.

A pre-meet meal should be light, low in fat, and should be eaten at least 3 hours before competition. The meal itself can consist of any food the runner believes is improving his or her performance. However, there may be some things that should be avoided as mentioned above. Remember, it is important to drink water before an event. Most physiologists recommend 1 to 3 cups of water 30 minutes before a competition.

Hydration (Water):

Water is often a forgotten nutrient. Without it we would only live 5 to 6 days. Water is an absolute in all meal planning and especially specified during training periods and meet competition. Runners must replenish their bodies with frequent drinks of water. One to 3 cups of water 30 minutes before practice and before an event is recommended by most physiologists, but our runners should drink enough water throughout the day to be properly hydrated. If you are feeling thirsty it is too late! We recommend our runners to try and drink 32 to 64 oz of water daily. The amount will vary depending on the runner. It will be the runner's responsibility to make sure they are properly hydrated for safe training, running and racing.

More nutrition info is available at mariettacc.com on the Coaches Corner web page.

VDOT Log

We use the VDOT02 app for posting your daily training and for you to edit the log with your training. **The VDOT registration tab is on the same page as the team registration link.** In creating an account please use **your name** for registering so I know who you are when posting your workouts.

How to log runs and workouts using Vdot02

Log into VDOT02 from the app on your phone or computer.

Click on **calendar date**.

Click on the **Run or Workout scheduled**

You should:

- If mileage or workout is accurate you **add a comment** in the **“Your Notes”** Section
- **Edit the run** to reflect what you did that day and **add a comment “Your Notes” Section**
 - Ex #1: Change 35 minute run to 4.2 miles.
 - Ex #2: Change a 6 mile run to a 4 mile run.
- **Add a run** that you have completed on the day you did it **if it is not listed** and **add a comment** to **“Your Notes”** Section

Comments might include:

- Listing the time you ran your run in. Example: “I ran a Dunnam loop with Taylor in 40:23.
- Telling me how it went on the run: **“Felt tired today”**.
- Any other factors: “I was tired from staying up late doing homework.

Make sure to save the entry to “your notes” section.

Good logging helps me to train you properly.

Coach Coleman

bluedevisxc@gmail.com

Cell: 404-641-4773