

MUSTANGS



CROSS COUNTRY

**TEAM & PARENT
HANDBOOK
2022**

XC is a Team Sport!

FACT:

Cross Country season begins in May in Florida. It begins two weeks after track season ends. We do encourage a two week break between seasons to let the body and mind recover. Lakewood Ranch High School Cross Country athletes must be dedicated to their training. You represent a school with a tradition of excellence in one of the oldest sports in the world. It is a tremendous sense of accomplishment to look back on a summer of training and rejoice every time you race well during the XC season as a result of the hard work you put in. Likewise, it is a constant source of disappointment when you look back for a year and always dream of "what could have been." It is tough to do well if you have not put in the summer miles.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPORT:

Cross Country is a team sport. Teams of runners compete to complete a 5K course over typically rough terrain faster than other teams. It differs from road running or track running principally in the course, which may include a combination of grass, mud, trails, sidewalks, roads, hills, woodlands, and water hazards. When scoring, it is the lowest score that wins. Scoring teams consist of seven runners. The seventh runner is just as important as the first runner on a team. This is why cross country teams are so close, like family. We depend on each other, support each other, and succeed as a team. **Cross Country is also an individual sport.** You literally get out of it what you put into it - especially with summer training. A common slogan in XC is "No bench, no half time, no substitutions - the only true sport." In addition to team awards, individuals may also win awards by placing in the top 10 or 20 places in a meet. It varies by meet. Popular abbreviations for Cross Country are XC or CC.

THE XC TEAM:

At Lakewood Ranch High School, we encourage athletes of all shapes, sizes, ages, and athletic abilities to try Cross Country. It is a sport unlike any other. The Lakewood Ranch

XC is an Individual Sport!

High School Cross Country team is a family where we support and encourage each other and celebrate each runner's improvement and accomplishments. We enjoy team dinners, trips to parks, a nice end of season awards banquet, and lots of great team "goodies" such as T-shirts, sweatshirts, bags, and socks to name a few. Make no mistake, we work hard running mile after mile on hot afternoons. But, through that hard work, we have fun, pushing each other to improve, and appreciating the success of the team and each individual.

The team's success is due to the hard work and preparation of all the individuals over the summer and coming together as a team during the season.

XC PRACTICE:

We train Monday through Thursday after school and Saturday mornings that we do not have a race. Practices will typically last 2 to 2.5 hours. The practice schedule is on <http://www.LRHSC.com>. We practice at various locations, including Adventure Park, LRHS, Celery Fields, and Robinson Preserve. You need to attend every practice and meet. If you have a valid reason to be absent, please notify your coach **24 hours or more in advance**. If an emergency comes up after school, just let us know. A set appointment is not a last minute emergency. **Please schedule all appointments (and other reasons to miss practice) on Fridays when we do not have practice.** We are only asking for Monday-Thursday each week.

YOUR REQUIREMENTS:

Attend every practice and meet. If you have a valid reason to be absent or late, please notify your coach 24 hours in advance. If it is a last minute emergency, notify us before practice begins that day.

Everyone must have a water bottle and watch for every practice and meet. Please also bring a towel or mat to use for strength and core work and stretching, which are done on the ground.

Injury Prevention

***** Never share water bottles! And do not put the water cooler spicket inside your water bottle as that spreads germs. *****

Wear or bring a T-shirt or tank top to practice and all meets. Girls can train in just a sports bra and boys can train without a shirt but you need to wear a shirt during all awards ceremonies, meetings, photos, and on any team transportation.

Turn in all required paperwork and fees:

- EL2 - physical
- EL3 - consent forms
- \$50 athletic insurance - pay online
- Returning runners - summer training logs
- Pay the player pack/team fee which covers part of the team expenses such as meet entry fees, awards banquet, team dinners, snacks for meets, team activities, and the many items you get to keep, like shirts, hoodies, socks, bags, etc.

TEAM WEB SITE:

<http://www.LRHSXC.com>

This site contains the schedule, our team Google calendar, important links and news, results, paperwork, fundraisers, an online store for purchasing LRHS XC merchandise, and a way to contact your coach.

XC SEASON:

Cross Country season starts in May with summer training/conditioning, which lasts until the first day of official practice at the end of July.

We do practice on teacher in-service days, record days, and other days off from school. Our meets (races) are 5K (5 Kilometers = 5,000 meters = 3.11 miles). The meets start at the end of August.

Regular season meets are usually Saturday mornings but we may have some on weekday afternoons/evenings. The Tri-County Championship at North Port on October 15th is the last meet for JV runners or those who are not eligible for District. We may take 7-10 runners to District depending on how many we

Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate!

are allowed to run there. The **State Series** starts with the 4A District 4 Championship at North Port on October 22nd, followed by the 4A Region 2 Championship at North Port on October 29th, and finishes with the State Finals in Tallahassee on November 5th. **How we finish as a team at District determines if we advance to Region and then how we finish at Region determines if we advance to State. Specific advancement details are on our team calendar.**

INJURIES OR ACHES & PAINS:

It is our goal to prevent injuries through our extensive dynamic warm up (lunges, skipping, glute activation, etc.) and gradual increases in mileage, strengthening exercises, and stretching. If you do have an injury or some unusual aches and pains, please keep your coach informed. **Communication is very important.** We do have access to our LRHS athletic trainer, Sydney Suppa, and the training room near the weight room and the gym. Always follow all training room rules. Always tell your coach if you are working with the trainer.

HYDRATION & NUTRITION:

All Cross Country athletes must drink water all day long. Start each day by drinking 12-16 oz. of water right when you get up in the morning and continue to **drink all day** at school. Bring a large water bottle with you at all times. Try to drink a sports drink or juice at lunch. If you do not drink regularly throughout the day, you will feel the negative effects of dehydration once you start practice in the hot afternoon. You cannot drink enough right after school to make up for not drinking all day; it just isn't possible. If you are even slightly dehydrated, your body will have to work much harder to do the same workout it did with ease the day before. Stay hydrated and you will feel better and run easier. Your urine should be light yellow in color like the color of lemonade. Dark yellow = dehydrated and conversely, clear = you may have flushed out all your electrolytes.

Equipment

It is extremely important to eat a good/big breakfast every day. You may find that you need to eat a little lighter at lunch if you feel too full for our hard practices, especially if you have a later lunch period. This is why a bigger breakfast is important. Your afternoon workouts will be challenging so you must fuel your body. A light, easy to digest snack right after school is okay, but please do not eat too much or anything too heavy that takes a long time to digest. You will have discomfort and other issues if you try to run hard on a full stomach. Please be smart about your meals; eat breakfast and lunch every day. If the cafeteria does not offer items you like or the line takes too long, bring your own lunch. You will not be able to run well in the afternoon if you skip meals.

After Cross Country practice, it is important to eat something right away to start refueling your muscles. If dinner is not ready right away, have a small snack such as fruit or veggies with some protein like cheese, meat, or sun butter or a nut butter, or cereal with milk is an easy way to get carbs and protein in your pre-dinner snack. After running hard or running in the heat, you might not have much of an appetite, but **the first hour after a workout is the most important time to eat.** That first hour is when you are able to best refuel your muscles to recover from the day's workout and to prepare your body for the next day. Cold, low fat chocolate milk is a popular recovery drink after a run because it contains both carbohydrates and protein. If milk is not your thing, have a sports/recovery drink or bar. Be creative but just be sure to start refueling right away.

XC EQUIPMENT:

The equipment needed for Cross Country is minimal - good running shoes, moisture wicking socks (no cotton), sports bra, tank top or t-shirt, shorts or skirt, towel, water bottle, and a watch (a Garmin or other GPS watch is helpful but not required).

Fundraisers

You need "synthetic" or "moisture wicking" running socks – NO COTTON. You do not have to spend a lot of money on socks, just be sure they are made of materials such as Coolmax, Dri-Fit, polyester, spandex, or lycra. When you sweat, cotton socks get wet and stay wet, which causes friction and heat in the shoe, and then results in blisters on your toes and feet. Products such as BODYGLIDE and Blistershield can help, but good socks are your best bet.

BODYGLIDE is a great way to prevent chafing from shorts on the inner leg and sports bras as well as blisters. If you already have some chafing or blisters, Aquaphor is a great product to help those areas heal.

PLEASE BRING YOUR WATER BOTTLE, TOWEL OR MAT, AND WATCH TO EVERY PRACTICE AND MEET.

You must have a water bottle with you all day at school, so bringing it to practice should be no problem. **Please do not share water bottles! This is how sickness spreads and could wipe out the whole team.**

Please see article on our website titled "Care and maintenance of our two most important pieces of equipment" for suggestions to care for your shoes throughout the season.

FUNDRAISERS:

We have several fundraisers set up for various times before and during the season. Please see our website at <http://www.lrhsxc.com> for complete details. If you have suggestions for fundraisers, please let us know. We are always open to suggestions and help from our parent/boosters club.



XC Meets

Awards & Banquet

MEETS OR RACES:

Will I run in the JV or Varsity race?

We are one team, the Varsity Cross Country team. We are a "non-cut" team; however, you may be removed from the team for excessive absences, lack of communication, or behavioral issues. This rarely happens because XC athletes are always the smartest students and strive for excellence in all they do! We do ask that you keep your GPA at 3.0 or above. If you fall below 3.0 we will ask you to take time away from the team to get extra help to bring up your grades. If you come to practice every day and work hard, you are on the team. Even though we are one team, not every athlete will compete in every single meet. Certain meets or races are only for the top five, seven, or ten, depending on the meet. If you are not in the top seven at the beginning of the season, you will have a chance to move into a scoring spot at any time during the season.

Most invitational meets will allow seven to ten runners in the "Varsity" race, so everyone else will compete in the "JV" race. In these cases, times from both races will be compared when determining who will be in the top seven at the next meet. There is no set order on the team. "The clock never lies." It can change every week depending on how you perform, so keep working hard! Keep in mind that meet entries are submitted/due two weeks prior to each meet and are at the discretion of the coach. If you are cheating on workouts (walking or cutting short) or not giving your full effort at practice, you may not be entered in the next meet until we see an improvement at practice. You have to put in the work to earn the opportunity to race.

Please check our meet schedule on <http://www.lrhsrc.com>

MEET PROCEDURES:

- All team members are expected to be on time for meets.
- Arrival and warm-up: When we arrive the team helps to set up a team area. The team will assist in carrying team equipment, cool-

ers, tent, tarps, etc. and then head to the restrooms.

- Team and parents, please keep shoes off the team tarp so that it stays clean and dry for athletes to sit, stretch, change shoes, etc. Most of our meets will result in wet/muddy shoes and we need to keep those off the tarp. Thank you.
- All athletes are expected to start the warm on time according to that day's meet warm up time schedule. The schedule is there to minimize your race day stress. Just follow it and you won't be rushed or forget to do anything.
- Cool down and departure: All athletes please wait at the finish line for all teammates to finish then return to team area together to turn in timing chips and then run the cool down jog, do any additional running or strength workouts as instructed by the coaches, and then foam roll and stretch before you leave. Everyone on the team will then assist in cleaning up, breaking down team area, and carrying equipment back to the cars. It's all a team effort!

AWARDS BANQUET:

Details about the awards banquet will be posted on the team's Google calendar. If anyone would like to host the awards banquet at their house, please contact your coach. If no one wishes to host at their home, we will use the LRHS cafeteria.

AWARDS:

There are many awards that can be earned by anyone on the team: Varsity Letter, Most Valuable Runner (MVR), Coaches Award, Most Improved, Outstanding New Runner, Team Spirit Award, and Unsung Hero to name a few.

Only those members of the team with good Attendance, good work ethic, and a positive attitude are eligible for awards. **You must compete in a minimum of five (5) meets in order to be eligible to run at District and be considered for a varsity letter.**

Your Coaches

How to Earn a Varsity Letter

YOUR COACHES:

BOYS: Coach Bill Zarrella is returning for his fourth year as head boys cross country coach. He is also the head boys track and field coach here at the Ranch. Zarrella brings valuable experience in cross country and indoor and outdoor track. Zarrella coached at the high school level for 8 years in Massachusetts before moving to Florida to pursue a career in Law Enforcement.

During his time as a Deputy, Zarrella continued coaching and mentoring AAU athletes. Zarrella retired from the Manatee County Sheriff's Office in 2019 after 22 years.

"Coach Z" brings a seasoned perspective and valuable knowledge. He is excited to continue strengthening the program.

Contact Coach Z: 941-726-0179 or kathi1818@aol.com

GIRLS: Coach Rae Ann Darling Reed is beginning her first year as head girls cross country coach at the Ranch. She joined the track and field coaching staff as an assistant in the spring of 2022. Darling Reed has coached high school cross country and track for 19 years at schools in Florida and Massachusetts.

Darling Reed competed in both cross country and track in high school and college. After graduating from Brown University and the International University of Monaco, she focused on running longer distances. Darling Reed has experience training for and racing distances from 800 meters up to 57 miles. She has completed the Boston Marathon seven times so far. Darling Reed holds the following coaching certifications: USA Track & Field (USATF) Level 2, USATF Cross Country, Road Runners Club of America (RRCA). In addition to coaching at the high school level, she runs her own business, RunnerGirl Inc., coaches adults of all ages through her non-profit, RunManatee.com, and works part time as a Fit Expert at Fleet Feet Sarasota.

"Coach Rae Ann" is excited to share her knowledge, experience, and love of running with the Mustangs!

Contact Coach Rae Ann: 941-586-9375 or raeann.darlingreed@gmail.com or coach@runnergirl.com

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

- If you need to miss a practice, **you** need to call or text your coach 24 hours in advance so we can figure out how you can make up the missed workout. Do not ask a teammate or parent to pass along your absence—it is not his or her responsibility; it is yours! This is your opportunity to learn to communicate and be responsible. If a last minute emergency comes up, make sure you contact us before practice starts.
- Miss a practice and do not let coach know in advance that you will miss it or anytime you no show, no call = unexcused absence. Two (2) unexcused absences and you have quit the team.
- The goal of the attendance policy is to teach the importance of communication and commitment. Check out the attendance policies for other sports teams or jobs and you will find that when you commit to something, you are expected to be there.

HOW TO EARN A VARSITY LETTER:

Attendance at practice and meets, scoring in a meet, work ethic, meeting the time standard, and attitude all factor in to earn a Varsity letter. Attendance is extremely important. **Even if your absences are excused, they are still absences!** You must compete in a minimum of five (5) meets prior to District to be eligible to race at District and be eligible to earn a Varsity letter. If you miss a lot of practices or meets, please do not be surprised at the end of the season if you do not receive a Varsity letter or other award.

Varsity Letter

Success & Inspiration

Specific Criteria to Earn a Varsity Letter:

- **Attendance, attendance, attendance!**
- *Be at every practice and meet*
- Communicate with coach in advance if you have a legitimate conflict and cannot attend a practice or meet and make up that missed workout
- **Give 100% effort every day**
- **Complete all workouts**
- Complete the entire season
- **Help spread a positive attitude throughout the team**
- Score varsity points for our team in a meet
- Return all equipment that was issued to you
- Participate in all fundraisers
- 5K Time Standards:
 - 20:00 for boys
 - 23:00 for girls

You will not earn a varsity letter if you have excessive absences or do not complete the workouts at practice.



CROSS COUNTRY SUCCESS:

Success in cross country is pretty simple: show up, do the work, and you will improve. Enjoy this time doing a tough sport that you love with your teammates. Your teammates may become some of your best friends in life. Once you leave high school you may not have another opportunity like this.

THE TEAM IS YOUR FAMILY:

If you run it right, cross country is a testament to suffering. Success in this sport requires pushing your body to the brink of exhaustion, demanding all it's capable of delivering for mile after mile of unforgiving terrain. But you do not suffer alone. **You run as part of something bigger. You run as part of a TEAM in its truest sense.** And that's why, when the pain sets in, you keep running.



***Success is one step out of
your comfort zone.***

No sacrifice, no victory.

Suggested Packing List for XC Meets

- wear your uniform and running shoes so you are ready to start warm up when you arrive
- Please arrive 10 minutes earlier than team arrival time if you need to braid your hair at the race. It always takes longer than you think it will.
- hair ties
- extra socks
- racing shoes
- plastic bag for wet clothes
- dry clothes to wear home
- money for event t-shirt (optional only if you wish to purchase one - usually \$20-30 depending on type of shirt) and any food vendors at the meet (again, optional)
- water bottle
- towel
- Garmin or watch (yes you may wear it to race)
- bug spray
- sunscreen
- Sandals/slides to wear home
- Hoodie or jacket
- sweatpants
- please leave valuables at home
- phones silenced and put away as our team tent may be left unattended during races and there will be thousands of runners and spectators around the team tent area
- post race drinks or snacks if you do not like what is provided (we provide water, fruit, bars, fruit snacks, etc.)
- Reminder that you must wear a team shirt or uniform top for all award ceremonies, team photos, and any team transportation.
- For team bus/van travel:
 - Blanket
 - Pillow
 - Airpods/Headphones/earbuds
 - Phone charger

