

## **Some advice and comments from other girls' cross country coaches out there:**

### **Progress is NOT Linear**

- A period of stagnation is normal when girls hit a growth spurt. It usually lasts 6-9 months (which ends up impacting 1-2 seasons).
  - Many girls are more injury prone during that growth spurt. Try to do strength work four times a week. We have had significantly fewer injuries than when we were only doing strength two times a week.
  - Many of the girls struggle with the mental side of stalling for a season. We do get a number of girls that are not willing to continue working when they do not see immediate results and decide to spend their time doing other things (especially in the summer and winter). Those are typically the girls that don't improve. I don't think I have ever had someone that has maintained their level of commitment and not ended up faster as a senior than as a freshman (even if there was a slow sophomore or junior year in there). My biggest challenge as a coach is keeping girls mentally engaged when they do not make progress in one season.
  - We talk very openly about the fact that your running will not always show linear progress, that bumps in training are normal and that this sport requires delayed gratification.
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### **A few things to consider:**

Boys will naturally get better as they mature and usually will get faster even if they don't work that hard. Girls who are maturing can kind of get stuck or plateau. If they don't work hard, they clearly won't get better, but even if they do work hard they may not get better as fast as they want to.

Puberty hits some girls really hard and those may not ever be able to get back to the performances they had before puberty. I believe that number is a minority though. I believe a lot will certainly go through a plateau or slight regression period which in my experience covers roughly one track and one XC season. It just depends on which one is first. In my coaching experience this most often starts at some point during sophomore year in high school. The tricky part about this, especially with girls who are committed and have been successful is they don't like regression, so mentally it can be very difficult to get through. But a majority of the girls that I have coached who stay committed and patient will usually bounce out of this phase middle of junior year and can achieve better performances at the end of their high school career. Then there are some girls that puberty does not affect their times and performances much at all.