



2023

Parent Handbook



**MANDARIN
CROSS COUNTRY**



Greetings Parents and Friends,

Whether you are an experienced parent from our team, or brand new to distance running and high school athletics, we welcome you to this wonderful experience...Mandarin High School's "World Famous" Boys' Cross Country Team and "Unbreakable" Girls' Cross Country Team.

We operate under the rules of the Florida High School Activities Association (FHSAA), the Duval County School Board, and the Mandarin High School Athletics department. However, we have found over the years that we are much more responsible to the principles of dedication, perseverance, teamwork, honesty, sacrifice, and fairness. To limit the cross country experience to the world of sports is to weaken the potential impact this activity can have in the lives of the young men and women who persevere in this most difficult of challenges. Although skill and talent have a place in what we do, the athlete who dedicates him/herself to improvement will eventually prevail, not only on the field, but in every aspect of future life. No other activity in high school approaches the intensity of cross country as it prepares athletes to be the leaders of tomorrow. Cross country runners develop the ability to deal with life's difficulties, understand lifelong healthy behaviors, and ultimately make connections between hard work and the rewards that come from it.

As our parent team, we hope to enlist your support, not just by attending meets or providing team treats, but by encouraging the principles which we try to develop in each of our young athletes, regardless of physical talent or prowess. For the past twenty-five years, I have sought to provide the best possible environment for each athlete to develop their skills according to our team values. Allow us to provide the best opportunity for success by supporting them fully as they learn what it takes to work for personal excellence.

Please feel free to communicate with me at any time. We understand that our involvement with these athletes may go far beyond the field as we work with you to encourage them to become the best...in running as in life.

Peace and Cheers,

Jim Schmitt, Head Coach
Boys and Girls Cross Country
Mandarin High School





THE ULTIMATE SPORT - CROSS COUNTRY

Cross country is an event of worldwide acceptance and support. Virtually every high school across the nation sponsors boys' and girls' teams, with a 5 kilometer standardized distance. Collegiate races have men racing 8k or 10k with international races of 12k while women typically race at 5K distances. The courses vary, but in most cases dirt, gravel, or rough terrain are incorporated into an easy-to-follow course. Championships are held for high school runners at the county, district, region, and state levels with Mandarin competing in the large school sections.

Cross country is often the great discloser of a human being's internal character. We encourage athletes to draw upon the inner strength of character developed by this sport. It is truly more than just a sport of running.



Our Team

The Mandarin High School boy's and girls' teams have been elite public-school programs in Duval County and throughout the state for the past twenty years. Both teams have dominated the Gateway Conference since 2002, with highlights that include district and regional championships for both squads and multiple visits to the state championship meet. We are looking to continue this success this year as we rebuild our two successful squads from last year.





The Commitment

Although the Florida state cross country season begins in August and ends in November, our athletes train virtually year-round. Most of our athletes begin training in May, with team runs five-six times a week through the summer. Once the season starts in August, athletes work out almost every day with weights, cross-training, and a variety of training runs. During the hot season, practices will go after study hall, to enable students to complete schoolwork and allow the sun to cool down. During our build up phase students may have morning practices during the week.

Since each workout is part of a holistic approach to training, each workout, whether morning or afternoon, is important. Athletes who are not able to complete the workout schedule or are unable to make the commitment to train effectively do not have a fair opportunity to succeed and therefore do not compete for our school. We ask athletes to schedule every possible appointment around workouts that are given to the athlete at the start of the season. Those athletes missing practice are subject to missing the next competitive event, a penalty which is universal to every competitive program at Mandarin High. Athletes are also expected to attend special events, from fundraising, to banquets honoring their achievements.

While the commitment is great, and at times forces parents to wiggle vacations into tight spots, and to travel around the state to spend time with their child in their sport, we believe that the benefits outweigh the costs. Each sport at Mandarin High School has its price; we believe that cross country offers a tremendous bargain for competitive opportunity and lessons learned versus time spent in the program.

Cross country is often the great discloser of a human being's internal character. When you challenge yourself in this sport, you are forced to look inside yourself and confront what makes up the measure of the man and woman you will be.

- Coach Schmitt





MHS CROSS COUNTRY CORE BELIEFS

Mission Statement

To inspire and develop sportsmanship, community, and leadership – one person and one mile at a time.

Vision

Our team vision is to help young adults realize their full potential. This includes growing as runners and as leaders in our community. We believe that in doing this, we will continue to compete as an elite running program and will continue our goal to becoming the most successful and impactful team in our community.

Values

It doesn't matter who you are today. It only matters who you want to become and how hard you are willing to work to become that person.

Our Core Team Values:

- **Patience.** Positive results will come to those who continue to grow.
- **Confidence.** Believe in yourself.
- **Enthusiasm.** Championship teams are surrounded by enthusiasm.
- **Persistence.** To continue in the face of adversity shows the strength of your character.
- **Desire and Determination.** Champions must pay the price each day.
- **Positive attitude.** Belief is the first step on the road to success.
- **The mind must control the body.** The good athlete stops when they feel competitive pain. The great athlete realizes that discomfort can be overcome on your path to excellence.





TRAINING EXPECTATIONS

Our training philosophy centers on developing the individual into a well-balanced athlete. It is important to work on all aspects of Bio-motor development to improve the athlete. Success in cross-country is correlated to an athletes' dedication to training over the summer and throughout the season. To earn a uniform in season, athletes must commit to the team training philosophy. **The components of our training program include speed, strength, endurance, coordination/skill and flexibility.**

In-Season Practices

In season Practices begin July 31st and are usually held after school. **Monday through Friday**, practices are generally held at 3:00PM (team meetings with Head Coach start at 2:15PM) at the school track and at Julington-Durbin Creek Trails. **Saturday** we will have either meets or practice sessions. We will have occasional practices before school depending on upcoming meets and opportunities for cross-training in the pool and weightroom.

Summer Conditioning

The schedule for summer conditioning is as follows:

- Monday and Friday @ 7:00AM at the Julington-Durbin Preserve Trails off Bartram Parkway
- Tuesdays @ 7:00AM at MHS
- Wednesday @ 7:30AM at MHS Pool and Weight Room
- Thursday @ 6:00PM at MHS/Palmetto Leaves/Downtown Bridges
- Saturday @ 7:00AM at various trails in Jacksonville

***Practice updates and changes are posted on the team Heja app*

Team Summer CC Camp

Each year our team participates in a comprehensive summer training program focusing on the fundamentals of cross country – drills, pacing, strength and endurance, as well as mental toughness and nutrition. The camp experience helps athletes strengthen our family-like culture, with plenty of fun and exciting team-bonding activities. We encourage all athletes to attend as great cross country teams are built in the summer, not in November.





INJURY PREVENTION, NUTRITION, AND HYDRATION

Cross country rarely sees catastrophic or long-term injuries, but nagging pains and/or discomforts should always be reported to the coaching staff. Athletes will be able to avoid most injuries by following these guidelines:

1. **Follow the training program set up by the coaching staff.** Athletes who alter their training schedule are not trained in physiology, sport science, or training theory. Each workout builds upon the one which went before; alteration diminishes recovery and limits improvement.
2. **Wear proper footwear and monitor it closely.** There is no excuse for bad shoes. Keep an eye on the condition of your shoes.
3. **Report injuries to the coaching staff.** Low-grade, temporary pain is not a problem unless it extends beyond a few days. Clicking, popping, or snapping noises should be evaluated by a trained professional. Alert coaches and then follow through immediately with medical treatment.
4. **Seek medical help promptly.** Athletes are never held responsible for training injuries, but they are certainly held responsible for delays they cause in seeking adequate treatment. Delays in getting treatment only prolong the injury and prevent you from being able to improve.

Good Nutrition, sleep, and hydration are the most significant tools to good health and injury prevention. Athletes should eat a multi-faceted diet rich in protein and calcium. Carbohydrates are important to the athlete's preparation for practices but should ideally be unrefined and whole grain options. Some thoughts:

1. **3-4 healthy meals** each day (avoid fried foods; eat a balanced diet: fruits, vegetables, milk, and water (2-3 liters each day, prior to practice)).
2. **Multivitamins** can be a good way to maintain health and fitness.
3. **Ibuprofen** may assist with muscle aches and may be used at home with parental supervision.
4. Athletes should make sure that they are **well-hydrated** throughout the day, not just during practice.
5. We encourage our athletes to eat healthy snacks (pretzels, fruits, fig newtons, carrot sticks, celery) and to drink Gatorade or chocolate milk after workouts.





EQUIPMENT AND UNIFORMS

Sports Bag

Athletes will maintain a **sports bag at practice** with the following equipment:

- Tee shirt
- A motivation tee shirt (orange or green color)
- An extra pair of socks
- Warm-ups/sweats, in season
- Spikes
- Large towel
- Foam roller and ropes
- Snack pack (ideally 4:1 carb to protein grams)
- Big, big water bottle
- 20 oz Gatorade
- Toiletry kit for specific needs (Petroleum jelly, Bug spray, Band-aids/mini-first aid kit, including, Neosporin, ankle wrap, tape)

****Cellphones & headphones are not allowed at practice (must be in team bags during practice)***

Shoes

There are a wide variety of training shoes that athletes can run in. The most basic and straightforward are **Training Shoes**. All athletes must have quality trainers. Athletes will receive information about shoes and purchases on our team website. Shoes can be purchased online, but we recommend 1stPlaceSports. They have multiple stores throughout Jacksonville. Doug and Janet Alred (the owners) are very supportive of our team, and they provide Mandarin High school Runners with a discount.

Athletes will eventually need to consider **racing shoes** as they develop as competitive runners.

Wristwatch

Every athlete must have their running watch at every training session. GPS watches are required for non-freshman runners.





Race Day Gear

The privilege of “wearing the orange and green” is something that is earned throughout the training season. Our team competes as a unit and certain dress code expectations are part of our team goals. We are expected to dress and look the same on race day.

The following are mandatory Team Gear items:

1. Team jerseys (issued)
2. Team racing shorts.
3. Team Meet Day T-shirt (purchased @ MHS CC Team Store)
4. Team Meet Day Long Sleeve T-Shirt (purchased @ MHS CC Team Store)
5. Team Warm-up jacket (purchased @ MHS CC Team Store)
6. Team Warm-up pants (purchased @ MHS CC Team Store)
7. Optional gear may be purchased at MHS CC Team Store.
8. Overnight travel outfit will be dress shirt, ties, slacks and shoes or team polo shirts (boys), dresses, slacks, or team polo/skirts (girls) unless specified otherwise.





DURING SEASON

Meet Schedule

The meet schedule is posted on the Mandarin Cross Country Website, which can be found at www.MandarinCrossCountry.com

Team Expectations

Our first team rule is also the most important - **Do nothing that identifies you as an individual or undermines the team.**

The following **Ten Guidelines** will also ensure a productive season:

1. Athletes **will respond to and support the guidelines and directives of any coach**, regardless of sport or team affiliation. Respect is always the first response of an athlete in our program.
2. **There is no such thing as “no practice”**. If the weather is intolerable, we will work inside until the danger has passed. Rain, by itself, is a positive running environment. It helps to keep the body temperature down.
3. Missed practices lead to missed Meets. Athletes must communicate missed practices in advance. Missed practices **must be communicated face-to-face**.
4. Cutting corners, literally or figuratively, reflects negatively on the team.
5. Have fun but remember the purpose of practice is to strengthen you and lead you to success in competition. **You cannot help the team by giving less than your best.**
6. No runner will compete until they have successfully completed two weeks of strong, effective practices. This will ensure that you are running at a level that is acceptable to the program, and that you reflect positively the team’s core values.
7. Students who are suspended from practice or injured will not be eligible to compete until they have returned to the practice regimen and are *prepared* to compete.
8. Distance training will take place on trails off campus, as well as on the school track.
9. Veteran runners are held to a higher standard when it comes to commitment and fitness. Rank has its privileges; rank has its responsibilities.
10. There will be a race or practice each Saturday. We will never practice on Sundays.





Transportation

Any time the team leaves the school for competition, we travel together - using the same mode of transportation. Travel will be arranged by the school for county and invitational meets. For some travel events the team will caravan with team parents providing the transportation. Athletes may be released to parent/guardians at the end of the meet and post-race routines. While travel by bus is an option for many of our events, we do rely on parental assistance with driving to out of town and overnight Meets.

End Of Season Awards & Events

MHS Athletics hosts our seasonal Varsity Awards Night in November. Awards, Letters, and pins will be presented at this ceremony. The CC Team will host an end of the year luncheon in January to recognize the official end of season. All-conference athletes will be recognized in May at the DCPS Gateway Conference Celebration.

Earning A Varsity Letter

Lettering in a sport at Mandarin High School is a privilege. An athlete who earns a varsity letter must demonstrate that they are a positive example of a student athlete. In our running programs, this is an essential component to being recognized as a varsity athlete.

An athlete must be a runner in “good standing” to be eligible. This is a coaching decision based on the following factors:

- Attendance at practice and all meets
- Positive Behavior
- Leadership ability and potential

An athlete **in good standing** is eligible for lettering based on the following standards:

- 18:15 (Boys) and 21:15 (Girls) on a legitimate course (verifiably accurate measurement)
- Selected to compete in Gateway Conference Championship and District Championship for the Varsity Team
- Competing on Varsity Roster in 3 Meets

****The Coaching staff may relax standards based on sportsmanship, leadership, and longevity (runner in good standing on previous cross-country and track and field teams).*





PARENT ASSISTANCE

You can help our team by assisting as follows:

1. **Help emphasize the importance of commitment.** Practice should be a priority to a team-centered individual.
2. **Schedule SAT/ACT tests** on dates that do not conflict with our season.
3. Recognizing that the boys and girls **bear the responsibility** of getting out of bed, arranging rides, and behaving.
4. **Logistical help:**
 - a. Transportation to various parks/meets on Saturdays.
 - b. Filming meets/ pictures of athletes for publication and distribution.
 - c. Transportation to some out of town meets.
 - d. Gatorade, bagels, and fruits for Meets.
5. **Support our booster club and fund-raising efforts.**

Booster Club & Fundraising

The CC Booster Club supports our team fund-raising efforts, travel and food for our athletes at the various meets. Families are encouraged to join as we rely upon this assistance to remove some of the administrative distractions to our coaches, and to help create a community of running support for our team and athletes. Fundraising efforts this year will include participation in local water stations for community runs, restaurant matching fund programs, corporate sponsorships and other donation campaigns to provide funds for invitational meets, uniforms, and warm-ups, as well as motivational shirts and bags.

We thank you for all you do. In many ways, your role is more challenging and “coach-like” than ours. We have access to your sons and daughters for two to four hours of stress; you are responsible for the recovery phase. Help our athletes take responsibility for rest and recovery. They cannot grow as athletes if they do not take care to eat, sleep, and relax appropriately.





TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Coaching Staff

Jim Schmitt, Head Coach, Boys & Girls Cross Country Programs - schmittj@duvalschools.org

Sarah Smith, Assistant Coach, Boys Squad - smiths25@duvalschools.org

Theresa Varney, Assistant Coach, Girls Squad – duncant1@duvalschools.org

Booster Representative

Debbie Schmitt - smithdeborah3@hotmail.com

Lead Parents

Parent Communication & Travel Logistics:

Jen Ritz (boys)

Teresa Munn (girls)

Water Stations, Local Meets & Parent Tent Coordination:

Christie Sipe (boys)

Melissa Price & Jan Kemper (girls)

Team Website

www.MandarinCrossCountry.com

