



Dear Cross Country Parents and Student Athletes,

I hope that you and your family are off to a happy and healthy start to 2018. It was a pleasure coaching the girls last fall and I know that we all enjoyed watching them grow as athletes and competitors. As a coach, there is nothing more satisfying than seeing an athlete develop a competitive fire, perform at an elevated level, and gain confidence through their participation in cross country.

As we enter 2018, I am truly excited for the upcoming season. Even though the season is over five months away, I am already planning and thinking about areas where our program needs to improve to build upon our recent city and conference championships and returning to the WIAA State Cross Country Championships. The one area that has afforded our program to take this step over the past five seasons has been the implementation and adherence of our attendance policy.

Participation on the cross country team requires a full commitment from our athletes. As you know, JMM cross country is a no-cut sport which allows all athletes to participate regardless of ability; however, in order to keep improving, we need to have all athletes at practices and meets.

An example I often share with the team is think about the season as a puzzle. If you work hard and participate at every practice and were given a puzzle piece for each day's practice/competition, by seasons end, you have all the pieces in hand to put together an amazing picture. If you only had half of the pieces, the end picture wouldn't look so good. By attending every practice and competition, training hard, and learning from mistakes, each individual earns their puzzle piece for the day, and has a chance to put together something beautiful.

In 2014, we implemented the attached attendance policy for girls cross country team members. **Please take the time and read the enclosed pages.** It will hopefully clarify team expectations with regards to jobs, illnesses, family vacations, retreats, and document the number of allowable missed days. The policy **will continue to be enforced throughout the 2018 season.** Parents, please help us by understanding the commitment cross country requires.

The 2018 season has the potential to be our best season ever! In order to accomplish this, I am asking for a little MAGIC. That is, each athlete and family Make A Greater Individual Commitment to the program. I am enclosing our season schedule so that you can plan your family's summer schedule, arrange your plans to attend meets, and plan for important dates such as volunteering opportunities, athletic code meetings, and the end of season banquet.

I look forward to seeing many of you during the spring sports season. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call or email.

Sincerely,

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## 2018 Madison Memorial Girls Cross Country Attendance Policy

### Number of Absences Allowed

- ✓ Each athlete will be allowed to miss a maximum of **seven practices or competitions** before being removed from the team. **It does not matter if the reason for missing practice is excused or unexcused.** We realize that in certain situations things do come up in which student-athletes need to miss practice (make-up exams, personal day, college visits, family events etc.). Rather than coaches spending countless hours determining if an absence or planned absences should be excused, we allow the athlete to manage their schedules similar to maintaining a job or being a college student. It is important that planned absences still be communicated to the coaching staff.
- ✓ The expectation is simple, we have nine weeks (50 practices/competitions) from the first day of practice (August 13<sup>th</sup>) through our Big Eight Conference Championship (October 13<sup>th</sup>). Those that wish to gain PERC (gym) credit through their participation in cross country will need to meet the standards identified in this cross country attendance policy (84 percent attendance rate) to be awarded credit. Be honest with yourself and only commit to this extracurricular activity if you can devote the time and effort towards individual improvement and dedication to the team/program.

### Practices before School Starts

- ✓ **Practices begin on Monday, August 13<sup>th</sup>. There will be nineteen (19) practices/competitions before the first day of school! That means that the season will be over 33 percent completed by the time school starts.** These practices are not considered optional, and this time is not considered pre-season. Attendance will be taken and our expectation is that everyone will attend the first day and every subsequent day thereafter. There is so much that is packed into the first three weeks of practice that if it is missed, you are already too far behind. I know sometimes parents/student athletes feel they can “train on their own” during this period and achieve the same result, but it has been my experience that this is not the case. The expectations and foundation for a safe and successful season are established during this time. Also, these practices are crucial for team bonding and technique work (drills, strength etc.). There is proven evidence that athletes who miss this period are much more likely to sustain an injury.

### Family Vacations

- ✓ We understand that family time is tough to schedule and there are a limited amount of days to squeeze in this valuable time. Please make an effort to schedule summer vacations **before August 13<sup>th</sup>**. Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors will be marked absent for any time missed from practices/competitions due to family vacations.
- ✓ An exception can be made for incoming freshman, transfer students, and foreign exchange students if the planned absence is communicated to the coach prior to the absence and all of the necessary paperwork to participate on the team is completed.

### Jobs

- ✓ Student athletes are not permitted to miss practices or competitions for a job commitment. Generally speaking, that means no job commitments should be made until after 6:30 p.m. This does not mean athletes cannot continue with employment past August 13<sup>th</sup>, it just means that student athletes must communicate with their employer and work out a modified schedule. We have found that most employers are flexible with an athlete’s work schedule if the cross country commitment is communicated to the employer well in advance.

### **Clubs/Music Lessons/Club Sports/Tutors**

- ✓ Athletes are not allowed to miss practices for any of these situations. While we do not discourage the participation of any of the events above, our expectation is that the athlete will arrange to ensure that these events do not conflict with attending practice. Attending brief, one time informational meetings for school events are fine, as long as the planned absence is communicated to a coach at least 24 hours in advance. It should be known that an athlete who participates in other club sports during the season is more likely to be injured and not reach their full potential as a runner.

### **Sickness**

- ✓ Chronic sickness is frequently the result of an overly ambitious academic or extracurricular schedule resulting in a lack of sleep. If one is often missing practice due to sickness, and something needs to be relieved on the schedule, it should be running. Most young ladies competing in cross country need a minimum of 8 hours of sleep each night to recover from the academic day and running workout.

### **Missing Competitions**

- ✓ All athletes are expected to attend and compete in all meets unless advised by the coaching or training staff. If an injury prevents the student-athlete from competing, attendance is still mandatory. Hopefully, each athlete will look forward to and enjoy these competitions. We consider missing a meet a huge deal. The foundation of our team and ultimately its success is based on competitive toughness, attitude, and support for one another. Cross country is not a running club, and competing in meets is a requirement for all athletes on the roster.

### **How will attendance be taken?**

- ✓ Six captains and two chosen line leaders will be responsible for taking attendance for 9-12 individuals in their line and communicating absences to the coaching staff.
- ✓ At the beginning of each practice, student-athletes will report to their assigned line. Athletes must report to their designated line and position in line each day. Those in each of the lines will have the responsibility for taking attendance of the person immediately in front of and behind you. Hopefully this will be the same two people every day. Any absences are then reported to the line leader/captain and passed on to the coaches.

### **Checking out of practices**

- ✓ It is critical that the coaching staff knows where each athlete is at all times. This includes the end of practice to assure that the athlete has returned safely from off-campus workouts. At the conclusion of each workout/run, an athlete needs to personally check back in with the coaching staff and log workout with the team manager. Attendance will be taken again at the end of practice to assure everyone has returned and all practice requirements have been fulfilled (team announcements, abs, pushups, strides, drills, rehab etc.).