INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Welcome to the Warren High School Cross Country team! Whether you are a veteran or a newcomer, I hope that you bring a great enthusiasm for our sport and your team, and that you are ready to embark on a fantastic journey of discovery – discovery of who you are, and what you can become. The time to start is now! Your attitude and dedication now will send ripples through this program for years. Never underestimate the impact that you can have on those around you, and those you may never even meet!

The cross country teams at Warren have traditionally been very competitive and talented, and we are coming off one of our best seasons as we have consistently qualified teams and individuals to the Regional and State Meet. Can we continue the tradition of excellence that has been established or maybe even go beyond it? Of course we can!

The key to becoming the best distance runner and cross country team you can starts with the most basic premise: consistency. You can never ever count out a group of consistently running, mentally strong, hard as nails young women and men when it comes to success in cross country! Consistent, sometimes hard, work by a group will almost always defeat talent in the end – that is what makes our sport great. This is YOUR opportunity to establish yourselves and leave your mark!

It all begins early in the summer, with team members accumulating miles out on the roads and trails. The benefit, the necessity, of summer running cannot be overemphasized! Although the official practices start in August, and the meets later that month, truthfully the cross country season begins in June and then continues through early November with the state championships. It is important to realize the long term commitment and patience that will be required, and also the necessity for remaining mentally fresh while maintaining the necessary training. "Burnout" is not a term to use. More commonly it is not a matter of doing too much work; it is doing too much, too fast, too soon, and not giving the body an opportunity to adapt and grow. In other words, "under-recovery", not "over-training." Usually, under-recovery, under-adaptation is the result of not living the lifestyle of a successful runner. Take steps to ensure that you are following recovery enhancing practices after your runs and following the suggested mileage and pace guidelines, and you will adapt in a healthy manner. Sleep, nutrition, and avoidance of unhealthy substances are a key in allowing your body to adapt and become stronger. Remember that in order to burn-out you must first catch fire!

During the summer, your goal is to achieve a sufficient aerobic fitness level and training background to ease into the in-season training with the least amount of trauma. Injury in-season is usually a result of not preparing well during the summer, and performance declines are usually the result of dramatic and sudden changes in training. To avoid this and accomplish a sufficient training background, you must pay close attention to the attitudes that will allow you to optimize the gifts you have been given. Your mental attitude towards your training and preparation will be by far the most critical element in whether or not you succeed, because from your attitude will flow the training. Be open to adjusting your training upwards and adding new things.

To be a successful distance runner, running should become a part of your lifestyle as surely as brushing your teeth or sleeping. Running does not need to be your entire life, but it does need to be a significant part of your daily lifestyle – for good health, wellness, stress management, as well as good performance. Be passionate about your sport, but not obsessed! Keep your sport in perspective behind family, faith, and academics, but also realize that the same things that allow you to become a better runner will more importantly allow you to be a better student, citizen, family member and more. Find a balance that incorporates and embraces all aspects of living and living well. If you
like running, you will like it more if you get better at it. You only have this opportunity to run high school cross country once …it will all too soon be a memory, so give yourself the chance to experience it fully!

In this handbook, you will find everything you want to know about the season – from all the latest knowledge on why we run to our summer training information. I hope you will also notice information on changes that are in store for the 2009 season. I always try to learn and improve, and so I have incorporated some things that I have learned from spending 2 days with four coaches of Olympic medalists and also tried out on myself and found to beneficial. In actuality, we were already doing most of them, or trying to do them, just not consistently, so I am hoping to make these things more of a consistent and permanent feature of our training.

Finally, I would like to encourage you to get together during the summer and train as a team or in groups to provide support and motivation for each other. In the folder titled “Motivation”, you will find some articles about successful teams, and one of the most consistent aspects is that they train together…they become blood brothers and sisters against the wind..forming the ties that bind. We will be having the usual optional summer runs 1 or 2 days a week, but I believe that the more you can get together and train as a team, the more that you will get done and more improvement each of you will see.

Three other things I’ll encourage strongly:
- Following the summer training program as closely as you can, using common sense;
- Keeping a training log;
- Running a few road races to work on eating, warmup strategy, racing strategies, etc.

The most important part of this summer training program CD of course, are the workouts. However, as you have time, I hope you will spend a few minutes here and there to read through some of the other material as I think there are some things that could help you. I wouldn’t write it if I didn’t believe it would help you become a better runner, and perhaps, just maybe, a better student and the best person you can be. I am working hard to make sure this year’s XC experience is the best it can be for everyone. Please let me know what I can do for you to help you achieve your team and individual goals. I will do what I can to help you – but you have to help yourself by first doing the training. No amount of coaching can overcome a lack of summer training. Give yourself the opportunity to see what you can achieve and to achieve your potential, starting with a good summer of training!

I can’t guarantee success, but I can guarantee that you will get to compete and will have the opportunity to get better…regardless of your skill level…some sports no matter how hard you work, you may never see the field…but you will have the opportunity to participate and compete to the best of your ability in cross country.

Let me know if you need anything or have any questions. Have a great summer and I hope to see you out on the roads and trails!

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