



Blackman Middle School

Cross Country

2023

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I. Program Goals

The goal of the BMS Cross Country program is to help student athletes achieve success athletically and academically. This is accomplished by:

- Helping the student athlete learn how to set goals to reach personal bests.
- Promoting a healthy lifestyle by fostering a love of running, creating an understanding of healthy habits and building confidence through hard work.
- Teaching athletes how to display sportsmanship no matter the circumstances and to celebrate the success of others.
- Involving athletes as leaders at Blackman Middle School and their community at large.
- Qualifying the maximum runners to compete at TMSAA State Championship

II. Runner Expectations

- Strive for excellence by working hard and pushing yourself.
- Be punctual.
- Attend all meets and practices.
- Cheer on your teammates at both practices and meets. You are expected to stay the entire meet regardless of your race time in relation to your teammates.
- Exhibit a positive attitude in all circumstances.
- Respect yourself, coach, and teammates as well as other runners and coaches.
- Address concerns with coaches and teammates in a mature manner.
- Be a leader at school through behavior and schoolwork.
- Remember you are representing your family, your school, and yourself; therefore, be mindful of your words and actions.

III. Grades

As a member of the cross-country team, you must remember that you are a STUDENT ATHLETE and the STUDENT comes first.

- For a D (70-74) or F (0-69) received on a progress report or report card, you will spend practice completing a study hall. If the grade is not corrected and raised before the upcoming meet, you will not be allowed to run in the meet following the progress report or report card. Even if the grade is corrected and you are able to run, you may be moved to JV if originally on Varsity. If the student cannot run, the student will still be expected to attend the meet to cheer on his/her teammates.
- (3) F's on a progress report or a report card will result in dismissal from BMS Cross Country.
- All other grading issues that arise and are brought to Coach Cooper will be handled in a timely and appropriate manner.

IV. Behavior

By being a Blackman Middle School Cross Country runner, you understand that you are held to a high standard. Coaches, administration, teachers, and peers expect you to be a leader. Misbehaving in any form during school, in the community, or at home will not be tolerated.

Detention

- 1st Offense: Discussion with coach and possible change in varsity position
- 2nd Offense: Change in varsity position (from varsity to JV if applicable), possible meet suspension*
- 3rd Offense: 1 meet suspension
- 4th Offense: Dismissal from team

In-School Suspension (ISS)

- 1st offense: 1 meet suspension
- 2nd offense: Dismissal from team

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

- 1st offense: Dismissal from team

All other behavior issues that arise will be handled in a timely and appropriate manner.

*If at any time a student is suspended from a meet due to grades or behavior, the student will still be expected to cheer on his/her teammates at the meet despite not running.

NOTE: The above disciplinary action plan is a general guideline. Additional conditioning/suspension/dismissal procedures are at the complete discretion of the head coach.

This may include reasons due to grades, general behavior, attitude, missing practice, etc.

V. Attire/Equipment

- Athletes should have an appropriate t-shirt and shorts for running during practice.
- It is highly encouraged that each runner has a pair of running shoes (trainers) in which to practice. While regular tennis shoes can work, they are not always the best for running long distances.
- Additionally, athletes should always have a water bottle with them.
- A watch (digital or smart) is also advantageous and encouraged.
- Socks that are a material other than cotton, such as nylon or polyester, are recommended.

Meets:

- The team t-shirt should be worn over the uniform when arriving at meets. This will be the warm-up attire.
- The uniform should be worn to every meet and only at meets.
- Compression shorts under the uniform shorts are allowed and common amongst male runners.
- It is recommended to have flats and/or racing spikes. These are lighter and made for racing. Plus, spikes are advantageous for the cross-country terrain.

VI. Practice/Conditioning

Summer Practice

- Practice will begin June 6th. The expectation for team members is that you will be in attendance if you are in town. It is important for building team fitness and unity.
- All June & July practices will take place from 7:00-8:15 am to avoid the extreme heat and humidity.
- Parents: Be on time when picking up students from practices. After 3 late pick-ups, there will be a discussion surrounding consequences and possible expulsion from the team.
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After-School Practice

- When school begins, practice will take place three days a week, typically Monday- Wednesday-Friday. Practice will happen directly after school at BMS from 3:15pm to 4:30pm.
- Every runner is expected to show up in proper running attire with a water bottle.

- **Parents:** Be on time when picking up students from practices. After 3 late pick-ups, there will be a discussion surrounding consequences and possible expulsion from the team.

Attendance

- Practices are never optional, and every runner is expected to be at every practice on time. Tardiness will not be tolerated. Exceptions include summer practice such as when the runner is on vacation or a trip, just keep Coach Cooper informed.
- If a runner is going to miss a practice for any reason the coaches need to be made aware in advance when possible. Missing practice for these reasons would be accepted as an excused absence: sickness, death in family, injury, family emergency, or discretion of head coach. A signed note or e-mail from a parent is required for missed practices.
- Not having proper clothes for practice is not considered an excuse to miss practice.
- Excessive tardiness to practice can also affect varsity/JV placement.
- 3 unexcused absences (meets or practices) will result in expulsion from the team.
- Runners that sustain any type of injury are still expected to be at every practice and meet, regardless of how/where the injury occurred. The only exception is when ordered to abstain from attending a practice by a doctor.
- If a runner attends a full day of school, and then misses a practice due to “sickness” or “not feeling well” – they will occur an unexcused absence from practice.

VII. Meets

Schedule:

- Most meets will take place on Saturday mornings beginning mid-August and lasting through mid-October.
- Meets can be as far away as Knoxville, although rare. The schedule is subject to changes and cannot be finalized until meet registration opens which typically begins mid-July and continues throughout the season. (The county does not create our schedule, unlike most sports.)

Meet Expectations for Runners and Parents:

- Runners and parents are responsible for providing their own transportation to meets and practices.
- All runners are expected to be at all meets regardless of injuries or grade probation to cheer on teammates.
- Runners are expected to wear their proper uniform at meets.
- ALL runners are expected to stay the entire length of the meet (through the awards ceremony) regardless of the time of their individual running times.

- Runners should arrive one hour before the first race. Coach Cooper will share the expected arrival time.
- Parents cannot run alongside runners during meets. This is called “pacing,” and will lead to disqualification.
- Parents can (and are encouraged to) cheer along runners at various points in the course.

Varsity and Junior Varsity Placements

- The top 7 girls and top 7 boys will run the varsity race. The remaining team members will run the junior varsity race. The top 7 will be determined by the previous week’s meet results. Therefore, the varsity and JV lineup can change weekly.
- Coach Cooper will determine who runs which race. While this is typically an objective decision based on race times, factors such as behavior, grades, and practice performance can affect the placement of varsity/JV. Runners are expected to take their placement with a good attitude and display proper sportsmanship.
- Varsity/JV placement for the meet will be announced at the end of practice on the Friday before the meet.

VIII. Health/Nutrition

Sleep

- Proper sleep is vital for running well, both in practices and meets.
- The night before a meet, runners should be in bed by 9:30 pm and limit vigorous activity in the evening. Sleep well, run well!

Nutrition

- Runners should not skip lunch, especially on days we have practice. A proper lunch is important to sustain long runs and provided the needed fuel.
- Be mindful of junk food intake. What you eat affects your running!

Hydration

- **HYDRATION IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT.**
- Students should carry a water bottle at school and drink throughout the day. We practice in some of the hottest months of the year. Students must be hydrated. Waiting to drink water right before practice starts is not proper hydration.
- Water should be used over Gatorade/Powerade/sports drinks. If used, Gatorade should be consumed after practice, not before practice.
- It is suggested that you drink 8 cups (or approx. 2 L) of water per day. Running in the heat may require more water.

IX. General Expectations for Parents

Being a parent of a Blackman Middle School Cross Country runner, you have made a commitment to not only the success of your child but also the success of the program. This commitment brings with it the following responsibilities in addition to the meet expectations outlined previously:

- Cheer, encourage, and stay positive.
- Encourage healthy habits for your child.
- Do not talk negatively about coaches or other runners to your runner or other parents.
- Instruct your child to abide by the structure set up for the XC program.
- Volunteer when at all possible (fundraising activities, apparel sales, snacks, meets, etc.)
- Do not argue or yell at other coaches or teams.
- Be punctual in picking up your runner from practices and meets. Runners should be picked up within 10 minutes of the end of practice and/or game. If coaches must continuously remain at practice more than 10 minutes for your runner, they will discuss this with the parents and take any action deemed necessary. Repeated parent issues will result in expulsion from meets. (This is rarely, if ever, a problem in cross country.)

X. Fees

The fee for participating in cross country will be \$100 for the 2023 season. This will be due the first week of summer practice. This fee covers the meet entrance fees, end of year banquet, gear for runners, and additional program costs. It also allows us to keep our outside fundraising minimal.

*If your child is on free or reduced lunch, please let Coach Cooper know. The fee should not be a barrier to your child's participation.

XI. What You Can Expect of the Coach

It is our goal to achieve the program goals outlined above. In order to do this, you can expect us to:

- Prioritize safety.
- Encourage your student.
- Push your student to do his/her best.
- Be fair.
- Be approachable to both runners and parents.
- Communicate information clearly and timely.

XII. COVID-19 Guidelines

We will abide by the Rutherford County Schools guidelines based on CDC recommendations. As these are updated, practice schedules and logistics may also change.