

SMA Cross Country The Path Forward

Greeting SMA Cross Country Community,

I hope all of you are safe and well. At the time of this letter it is late October, which in a normal year, the season would be nearing its end. Many of our runners would be completing a 17-week journey that began back in the hot sweaty days of early July. Now our season will end in late April and the proper time for us to really start focusing on training is still a few months off during the cold damp days of early January. I don't know what will happen over the next couple of months, but I am confident that we will have a Cross Country season even if we are still following the distance learning protocols. Many of you have been diligently working on your own this fall to increase your fitness and I want to thank you for all your hard work. We are now at a point where we can begin to slowly start to work together for the season ahead. A goal I would really like our team to accomplish this year is to have more runners start the season in better shape.

Throughout my years of coaching, I have learned that it is the runners who are able to complete most, if not all, the workouts during the season who have the best results at the end. It sounds simple but avoiding injury and staying healthy so you can complete each workout and race is far more important than effort or talent. One of the main reasons athletes get hurt or become ill is because they are not ready to handle the workload when the season starts. To handle the load when official practices start, runners need to be able to easily run 25-30 minutes without stopping, for at least 5 days a week. Here are some challenges for the team to focus on.

- How many runners can start the season on February 22nd ready to handle the work ahead of them? (able to easily run 25-30 minutes for 5 days a week)
- How many runners can complete all the workouts and races during the season? (8 ½ weeks x 5-6 days/week = 50-52 workouts/races)

Here is a plan that everyone can follow to help them accomplish this.

November-December: Maintain fitness and improve strength.

The focus during this time period should be on maintaining the cardiovascular fitness you have built up over the fall and trying to improve on your core strength. Three 30-minute cardio workouts a week is usually all it takes to hold your current fitness. You should also try to do at least two days of both strength work and form drills each week. We have been very fortunate this fall because the weather has been so great making it easy to get out and run on our own. However, soon the days will be dark, cold and wet making it less appealing to run. To help with this, we will begin having optional inperson workouts once a week in groups of 3-5 runners for those who are interested. More details about this are at the end of this document.

December-January: Focus on Frequency and increase how many days you run each week.

After the maintenance period you should begin to slowly increase the number of days a week you run. A good rule to follow is to add one day every two weeks until you reach 5-6 days a week. Keep doing strength workouts and drills at least twice a week. In January, depending on how things are looking for the spring, we might begin to increase the number and size of inperson workouts. See the chart at the end of this document for more details.

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January-February: Focus on the duration and increase how far or long you run for)

Once you have reached the point where you are running at least 5 days a week, you should start to increase how far you run or how much time you run for. Remember, the minimum goal for the start of the season is to go for at least 25-30 minutes without stopping for all your runs. If you reach this point before then, you should keep trying to make gains but at a safe level. To avoid injury, try not to add more than 1-2 miles a week. You should also try to develop a “long run”. A long run is a run you do once a week that is about 1/3 longer than your other runs but at a little bit slower pace. Once you have added a long run for 2-3 weeks you can also start adding a “structured” workout once a week. Examples of structured workouts are hill repeats, tempo runs, Fartleks and intervals.

Weekly Strength Workouts on Zoom:

We will continue our zoom strength workouts every Wednesday at 4:30 PM until the start of the season. Here is the link you can use to attend them. [Weekly Zoom Strength Workouts](#)

In Person Workouts:

At this time, we still do not feel it is in the best interest of the program to conduct large team activities, but we do feel we can safely organize and monitor small workout groups for those who are interested in returning to this type of activity. These optional workouts will be conducted following the strict COVID protocols set by the OHA following recommendations from the National Federation of High Schools Sports Medicine Advisory Committee. Participation is completely optional and will not influence selection for teams during the regular season later in the school year.

Step 1

All students participating in any in-person workout sessions with SMA coaches must complete the registration process on [FamilyID](#). This includes having a current athletic physical on file in the SMA Athletic Office. Physicals are good for 2 years from the date of the exam and must be on the state mandated [OSAA School Sports Pre-Participation Examination form](#). Additionally, all students participating must turn in both the [Parent](#) and [Student](#) versions of the **SMA Season 1/COVID Waiver forms**. Completed forms may be mailed, emailed or dropped-off at the SMA Front Office c/o SMA Athletics.

Please put attention: Kenzie D’Ambrosio on the envelope or email her at: mckenzie.dambrosio@smapdx.org

Additionally, parents of student-athletes must complete and submit the Fall 2020 Season 1 Waivers found on the [SMA Athletic Forms](#) webpage.

Step 2

Once we have enough athletes who have completed the steps above, we can divide them into workout groups of 3-5 runners. After they are established, the groups will not change. Each group will be assigned a coach who will set up and monitor workouts. It will be important for these groups to consist of runners

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who are at similar fitness levels so they can stay together when running but we will take other factors into consideration when forming them. Our hope is that if all goes well, at some point down the road, we can begin to merge groups or expand on their size.

Step 3

These are some of the guidelines we will follow when these groups meet to work-out.

- Students attending these live sessions will need to have all “no” answers to the Covid-19 questions asked before the session begins.
- Temperatures will be taken by the coaches with a thermal scanner and runners will not be able to stay if their temperature is over 99.6
- Runners should not attend any workout if they exhibit ANY symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or if they have recently come into contact with anyone that exhibited any symptoms.
- We will meet outside in a parking lot, or other open area, that allows for appropriate social distancing (minimum of 6 feet) and plenty of ventilation.
- Groups will be small, 3-5 people per group, with appropriate safe distancing while running.
- Groups should maintain social distancing when not running (6 feet of space and no touching) before/after the run, at stoplights, etc.
- Each runner should bring their own water and should not share with running partners
- Group photos should abide by social distancing guidelines – 6 feet of space and no touching.
- I know you’re excited to see your friends, but for now, no hugs, high-fives, fist bumps, or touching of any kind.
- It is important that we run with the same group of people and have discussions to understand and be on the same page with everyone’s exposure risk as well as each person’s pandemic procedures in their daily lives.
- Everyone must have face coverings and they should be worn any time that social distancing is not possible. Buffs or neck gaiters are great for this as they can be pulled down while running and raised to cover the mouth and nose when needed.

