

Group A

Summary

Group A exists to provide competitive opportunities for girls interested and able to pursue their potential as an athlete, but to also allow girls the chance to have a full Cross Country experience. Group A girls will generally practice 6 days a week and typically compete in 4-6 races. If a Group A girl is a regular attendee at practice and completes her race commitment of no less than 4 meets (note that's no less than 4 meets, but that a season can typically involve more than 4 meets), then she is eligible to earn a Varsity letter. If she does not earn a Varsity letter (we'll discuss the Varsity letter in a separate email), then she gets a JV certificate.

As a member of Group A, girls are also eligible for inclusion on one of our out-of-town trips. E.g., the team competes at a meet in Chicago in late September and takes between 45 and 48 girls on that trip. The selection criteria for trips is competitive (i.e. based on performance), but we reserve 5-7 spots for Group A freshmen. Not all Group A girls will necessarily be invited on this trip, but all Group A girls are at least eligible for an invitation. The team also makes an annual trip to Cary, North Carolina, and occasionally makes other out-of-state trips as well. Although these trips involve fewer girls, every Group A girl is at least eligible for an invitation to participate in these trips.

Group A girls may switch over to Group B at any point of the season, but before doing so, should speak with her coaches about that switch. Note that poor attendance or other issues can lead to the coaching staff reassigning a girl from Group A to Group B as well.

Joining Group A

In the past, girls were allowed to choose whether to join Group A or Group B. Beginning the Summer of 2018, the coaching staff will assign girls to Group A. I.e. the Group A choice will be made by the coaching staff. In the time between the first official practice and the date of the roster closing, we will assess every girl in terms of her potential and whether we believe she is a better fit for Group A or Group B. Girls who are interested in Group A, but placed initially in Group B, will meet with Head Coach Barry Haworth who will explain what each girl must ultimately do in order to be allowed to move up to Group A at a later date.

The Group A selection decision will be based on the following criteria.

- **Attendance at practice**
 - Prospective Group A girls should attend practice 6 days per week beginning on July 15. Girls trying out for other sports who do not make those teams can still join the Cross Country team and be considered for Group A, but they should begin with us as soon as possible so that we have sufficient time to evaluate their potential.
 - For prospective Group A girls with conflicts (e.g. Summer job, vacation, etc), you should regularly communicate these things with a coach and then let us know what you are running when not at practice.

- **Performance at practice**
 - Girls interested in Group A should begin summer practice on July 15 with an appropriate level of fitness. Note that a good start toward that end comes with participating in our Informal Summer Runs. We encourage every prospective Group A girl to contact Coach Haworth so that we can match their interest, running history, and ability to an appropriate Summer training schedule.
 - There are some basic practice standards we expect all girls in Group A to achieve. Girls who cannot achieve these standards are more likely to be considered developmental runners at least initially more appropriate for Group B.
 - Group A girls should be capable of running 2-3 non-stop miles at what we would consider to be an appropriate pace.
 - Group A girls should be capable of training with their teammates.
 - Group A girls should be more diligent than the average girl in trying to avoid injury. Non-Varsity girls with certain injury concerns may at least initially be assigned to Group B so that we can more easily monitor their training.
- **Performance history**
 - Although there are no specific performance standards for Group A, we will evaluate each girl in terms of her most recent performances in Cross Country and Track. We look first for girls who demonstrate greater levels of commitment to and seriousness with their training over time.
 - Some girls interested in Group A may not be necessarily capable of achieving the performance standards of Group A. For these girls, we will consider their loyalty to and support of our program (both Track and Cross Country) over time. This criteria may allow certain seniors to be accepted into Group A over non-seniors.
- **Team support (non-freshmen)**
 - Group A girls are specifically asked to embrace our team concept, and so we consider non-freshman girls as potential Group A members in terms of their support of team activities during the previous year (e.g. helping at meets) and during the Summer (e.g. Summer Cross Country Camp, Informal Summer Runs, etc.).

Girls who are not initially chosen to participate in Group A may choose to participate in our Competitive Group B group and receive training that is comparable to what they would have otherwise received in Group A, but will practice on weekdays with the Group B girls.

Group A coaches

Program head coach Barry Haworth oversees Group A practices. Coach Joe Walker may assist from time to time as well, although his central focus will be with the Group B girls.

Practice Schedule

Group A girls will meet for a team camp on Wednesday, August 8. They will begin practicing as a group after that. During the first week of school, Group A practices at the same time as Group B. On Monday, August 20, the basic Group A practice schedule is as follows:

- Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday at Seneca Park @ 3:30 pm (the team does occasionally practice at Joe Creason Park as well)
- Saturdays at various locations @ 9:30 am (locations include Iroquois Park and Joe Creason Park until our first Sat meet)
- Sundays at EP Tom Sawyer Park @ 5:00 pm (the team may occasionally practice at Bernheim Forest as well)

Some additional practice-related guidelines for Group A girls.

- On early dismissal days, the Group A girls will meet at 2:00 pm
- Group A girls do practice on holiday weekends (details are announced in advance) and on “no-school days”
- We encourage the girls to set up (permanent) carpools for rides to after-school practice, but this is something that must be coordinated through the girls on the team. The coaching staff can facilitate carpool requests, but we cannot organize the carpools.

Group A practice guidelines:

- Group A girls may not miss practice for work. Our general policy is to drop a girl from Group A to Group B if she misses on more than one occasion for work. Continued work-related absences would unfortunately lead to that girl being dropped from the team.
- School-related activities or events may occasionally conflict with practice. Depending on the nature of any conflict, the activity may or may not be excused. E.g., we do not excuse absences for club meetings or detention, but we do excuse absences (or late arrivals) for AP courses like AP Chemistry, and retreat.
- Girls with testing pool should strive to take their make-up exam before school or in Study whenever possible, but if it’s necessary to take the make-up exam after school, then they will need to coordinate a ride to practice after they are finished.
- Although it may be difficult to do so, we ask parents of Group A girls to keep practice-related conflicts with appointments at a minimum and to consider scheduling these appointments on days when the team is less likely to be running workouts (e.g. Wednesdays) or not practicing (e.g. Fridays).
- As a general rule, we do not want the girls to miss practice in order to complete their schoolwork, but we understand that some legitimate conflicts can and do arise even though it is **extremely** atypical for Group A girls to struggle with juggling schoolwork and practice. When these conflicts do occur, our first recourse is to discuss that girl’s situation with her in order to ascertain the underlying reason for the conflict and determine whether this will be a recurring problem or not. The path we take from that point forward will depend on the nature of the conflict.

Group A girls Meets/Races

Group A girls are eligible to compete in every race on our schedule and will be placed in races that the coaches consider appropriate for each girl’s ability level. These girls will not run in more than 1 race per week and these girls do not compete in every race on the schedule. Except for our top 15-20 Varsity girls who will continue into late October, and the Elite Group girls who will continue into late November/early December, the Group A season ends in early

mid October. E.g., for seniors not included within our top 20 Varsity group, we allow those girls to conclude their season with our Senior Night celebration in early October – assuming they have participated in the minimum number of meets at that point in time.

Participation in team events

Group A girls have several team events that are voluntary, such as participating in Friday Night Spaghetti Dinners and helping with the conducting of our weekday meets, but there are several mandatory events as well. E.g., the team hosts a pair of Chapel Meetings, where all Group A girls are required to attend. These are important team meetings where we gather together to hear from our seniors and the coaching staff at the beginning and end of each season. The Parent Meeting in early August is also a mandatory meeting for both girls and parents as well.