

# MND Cross Country Update

Volume 2, Number 3

August 27, 2016

## Lakota Results

[http://www.finishtiming.com/meet\\_details.php?uniqueid=5697DC456AE](http://www.finishtiming.com/meet_details.php?uniqueid=5697DC456AE)

Weather: Extremely hot, muggy.

Varsity Race 14 <sup>th</sup> of 16 teams 146 runners			Junior Varsity Race 11 <sup>th</sup> of 14 teams 268 runners		
Athlete	Place	Time	Athlete	Place	Time
Beth Heimbuch	40	22:35.3	Taylor Kincaid*	70	26:21.0
Addison Werling*	57	23:00.5	Gretchen Waning*	76	26:35.7
Emma Sander	87	23:49.1	Gretchen Rack*	77	26:37.0
Fiona Young*	90	23:59.1	Gabrielle Marcum	102	27:19.9
Amy Wanamaker*	111	24:55.7	Sarah Horton	116	27:35.4
Faith Harold	113	24:59.4	Abby Waning*	134	28:17.4
Reilly Haas	116	25:19.8	Anna Chambers*	138	28:25.3
Katie Hindersman*	131	26:52.6	Abby Von Nida*	150	29:22.1
Anna Hale	134	27:30.3	Michelle Dickert*	181	30:31.4
Jordan Cline	137	27:44.2	Abby Rider*	186	30:47.1
			Ava Denegar*	201	31:38.1
			Julia Barnes*	224	33:17.2
			Mariah Bradley	239	34:26.7
			Maggie McDonald*	257	36:33.4

\*Indicates a runner who is first-time cross country runner (freshman or otherwise) making her time a PR or Personal Record.

At this meet last year, it was our 3<sup>rd</sup> year and 4<sup>th</sup> year runners that led the team. Most of those runners have graduated and this year, instead of a new batch of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year runners stepping up, it was our first year runners that turned in the stellar performances.

Last year, at this same meet, in slightly better conditions, Faith Harold was our top finisher among first year runners. Faith ran 24:55 and was our 10<sup>th</sup> finisher. Erin McLean was our top sophomore in 23:51 and she was our 4<sup>th</sup> finisher.

This year, however, first year runners dominated our top 12 finishing positions:

2<sup>nd</sup> Addison Werling (Fr), 23:00.5

4<sup>th</sup> Fiona Young (So), 23:59.1

5<sup>th</sup> Amy Wanamaker (Sr) 24:55.7

8<sup>th</sup> Taylor Kincaid (Fr). 26:21.0

9<sup>th</sup> Gretchen Waning (Fr) 26:35.7

10<sup>th</sup> Gretchen Rack (Fr) 26:37.0

11<sup>th</sup> Katie Hindersman (Jr) 26:52.6

Our other first year runners clearly demonstrated that they were first year runners. In our Alumni race two weeks ago, Abby Von Nida was our #4 finisher and Abby Waning finished just a few seconds behind Sarah Horton. But in this race, they did not run with the same confidence. (The best thing about your first race is that there is only one “first race”.) Anna Chambers actually out performed her alumni race but she believes that she can run much faster (I agree). Michelle Dickert, Abby Rider, Ava Denegar, and Maggie McDonald all made a huge jump to 3.1 miles considering they were only ready for the 1-mile race in our Alumni meet. I do not know for a fact, but I would guess that, after the race, their first thought was “That wasn’t as bad as I thought it would be.” All of our first year runners will lower their time by minutes, literally, over the course of the season (ask Gaby Marcum and Sarah Horton). Keep up with your training and keep working together.

Several of our 2<sup>nd</sup> year runners competing very well, too. Gabrielle Marcum ran 28:10.7 last year and 27:19.9 this year while Sarah ran 28:11.0 last year and 27:35.4 this year. Faith Harold was only 5 seconds slower than her time from last year. However, Jordan Cline and Mariah Bradley did not run as well this year as they did last year. Jordan is clearly in better shape now than at this time last year but Mariah could not train with the team on a consistent basis before the start of classes.

It is very encouraging for our future that we have so many first and second year runners performing well. But, their performances, while good, were not good enough to justify their dominance of our top 12 finishing places. But our most experienced runners did not run well. Beth took her rightful place as our #1 runner but our #1 runner must finish among the #1 runners of our competitors if our team is going to have a chance to improve. For the next race, Beth has agreed to run with the top runners from the start. Even if she does not finish with the top runners, she will at least have accomplished the first step toward being one of the best runners in the city: running with the best runners in the city. Reilly Haas has been running extremely well all year and clearly is excited to take her place as a valuable contributor to the team. So I was surprised that she ran about 40 seconds slower this year than last year. Finally (and that is part of the problem, we only had 3 “experienced” runners) Anna, Hale ran almost 90 seconds slower this year than last year.

Technically, we had a 4<sup>th</sup> experienced runner, Emma Sander. But Emma ran only one race last year due to injury. This year, fortunately, she is healthy but after so long a layoff, I was

not surprised that she ran timidly. I am sure that her times will begin to drop drastically as she continues to gain confidence.

We have a very young team with 26 of our 39 runners having 0 years of high school cross country experience.

### **Observations:**

We are so much better than last year that I felt we had a chance to compete at a high level at the Lakota Fall Classic. I firmly believed that we matched up so well against Mercy (the 2013 and 2014 GGCL CC champions) that I would not have been surprised if we had beaten them. But, not long into the race, it became apparent that that was not going to be the case. We finished 14<sup>th</sup> of 16 teams in the Varsity race and 11<sup>th</sup> of 14 teams in the JV race. Mercy finished 4<sup>th</sup> in both races. I was terribly disappointed with our finish and I spent the weekend reviewing all the data that led me to believe that we could compete with what is clearly one of the best teams in the city.

But after taking a second look, I still believe we match up well against Mercy and, ironically, Mercy's high finish leaves me encouraged instead of discouragement. Had Mercy only finished 15<sup>th</sup> then even if we had beaten them we still would have a long way to go before we were a competitive team. But the fact that they finished 4<sup>th</sup> means we can, very soon, be one of the best teams in the city.

So, if we stacked up so well against Mercy, why did they finish so much higher than we did?

Where we stack up well with Mercy is in talent. Where we do not stack up well with Mercy is in the quality of our running experiences. Mercy has had a tradition of running well for many years. The current juniors and seniors have been "raised" in a culture of success and they understand the commitment and sacrifice they must make to continue that success. They know what it takes to run well and they do what it takes and, for that reason, they have a lot of confidence that they will run well every time they step to the starting line. MND, however, has a vastly different tradition of running. Our juniors and seniors have a lot of talent but they have no first-hand knowledge of the level of commitment or the level of effort it takes to be one of the best teams in the city. As a result, our confidence is low and we do not expect to run well when we step to the line. In short, on Saturday, Mercy raced like a team that had a history of running well and MND raced like a team that had a history of not racing well.

So how do we forget our past and start making a better future?

We start by making sure our brand new runners have positive experiences from the start of their career.

Getting our new runners off to a good start was the reason I assigned all the freshman and sophomores (except Addison and Fiona) to the JV team for Saturday's meet. My goal is for our freshmen and sophomores to learn how to compete (and win) at the JV level so that, when they are juniors and seniors, they will be able to compete (and win) at the varsity level. For the rest of the season, freshmen and sophomores will run on the JV team.

So what do we do about our more experienced juniors and seniors? At Lakota, I placed them in the Varsity race and they did not fare well. Turns out most of our juniors and seniors are brand new runners, too. Of the 8 juniors and seniors that raced on Saturday, 2 were brand new and 2 others had only 1 year of cross country experience. And even if they had more experience, their experiences would not prepare them well to compete at this level. So, our juniors and seniors need positive race experiences, too, if they are going to improve their confidence and performances as the season progresses.

So what is the solution?

We have already seen the solution during last year's track and field season.

### Varsity Standards

Last year, in track and field, I created Varsity Standards. Only athletes that made the Varsity Standard in their event were allowed to compete in the Varsity meet at the GGCL championships. Athletes that did not make the Varsity Standard competed in the JV meet at GGCL. The purpose of a Varsity Standard is not to punish those that do not meet the standard. Rather, the goal of the Varsity Standard is to ensure that each runner is placed where they have the best chance to be successful. For example, Moira Feibig, one of our seniors last year, had competed in the 3200 Run in the Varsity meet as a sophomore and a junior and had been last both years. Last year, she did not meet the Varsity Standard in the 3200 (no one did, it was 12:00), so I moved her to JV where she scored in the 3200 and scored and PRed in the JV 1600. These were the first points she had ever scored in the league meet. She had such a positive experience at the league meet that she PRed in the 3200 (12:45) at Districts by 15 seconds, equal to the number of seconds she had dropped in the 3200 in the previous 3 years combined.

Surprisingly, we already have a Varsity Standard for this cross country season. I set it at the end of last season as a way of changing the girls' goals from simply being in our Top 7 to being to being able to beat the Top 7 runners from other teams.

The Varsity Standard for this season is 22:00.

That standard may seem unreasonably challenging to meet considering we did not have anyone run that fast at Lakota. In fact, Beth is the only runner on the team to have ever run that fast. But 22:00 is not very fast relative to our competition. Last year, 22:00 would earn a 15<sup>th</sup> place finish in the JV GGCL race. And in the Varsity race, only 6 girls in the entire field ran slower than 22:00. And 4 of those girls were from MND. So having 7 girls run 22:00 or better will not make us the best team in the city but it will make us much better than last year when we only had 3 girls ran under 22:00.

So how do we use Varsity Standards to improve our running experiences?

The same way we used them in Track & Field: only girls who have made the Varsity Standard will be entered into the Varsity race.

Again, I do not use the Varsity Standard as a punishment but as a means to create positive running experiences. I would like us to experience finishing close to the front, if not actually winning, as individuals and as a team. For example, Addison Werling finished 57<sup>th</sup> in the Varsity race but if she had run in the JV race, she would have been 6<sup>th</sup>. Fiona would have been 17<sup>th</sup> in the JV race, instead of 91<sup>st</sup> in the Varsity race.

Now, before anyone gets offended because they think they are getting demoted, please consider the following:

1. If you meet the Varsity Standard you earn a Varsity letter. Period. Even if you met the standard in a JV race.
2. If, on Saturday, we had entered our Varsity team in the Lakota JV meet, we would not have won the JV race individually (Beth would have finished 4<sup>th</sup>) or as a team (we would have finished 2<sup>nd</sup>).
3. In last year's GGCL meet, our Varsity, JV, and Open teams all finished 6<sup>th</sup> (and last). If we had placed our Varsity team in the GGCL JV race, they would only moved up to 5<sup>th</sup>.
4. Our next meet, at Miamisburg, has a single girls' race eliminating the need to name a Varsity and JV team.

## **Next Week's Race**

The Miamisburg Invitational.

Last year, there were 21 teams at Miamisburg (yes, another big meet), though most are from the Dayton area and unfamiliar to us.

Last year's results: <http://www.finishtimingresults.com/2015/09-05-MIA/index.html>

Plan on being at the meet by 8:00am:

Medlar View Elementary School  
4400 Medlar View Road  
Miamisburg, Ohio 45342