

MND Cross Country Update

Volume 2, Number 4

September 10, 2016

Miamisburg Invitational Results

Beth**	16 th	20:27.6
Emma*	79 th	22:52.4
Fiona**	80 th	22:53.9
Amy**	89 th	23:20.2
Reilly*	92 nd	23:28.9
Faith*	122 nd	24:20.9
Gretchen W*	127 th	24:27.8
Kaitlin*	131 st	24:33.1
Gabrielle M**	132 nd	24:35.0
Gretchen R**	133 rd	24:35.2
Anna H**	139 th	24:38.4
Taylor K**	151 st	24:53.7
Sarah H**	154 th	24:59.4
Katie**	156 th	25:00.7
Abby VN**	162 nd	25:08.6
Jordan*	165 th	25:10.4
Abby W**	183 rd	25:50.0
Allie*	197 th	26:37.4
Anna Co**	201 st	26:41.8
Anna Ch**	217 th	27:15.5
Michelle**	223 rd	27:34.0
Kennedy**	236 th	28:04.3
Sarah F**	245 th	28:23.0
Abby R**	246 th	28:24.2
Maddie**	249 th	28:31.3
Hayley**	253 rd	28:42.9
Mariah*	255 th	28:52.4
Ava**	256 th	28:55.4
Taylor C*	275 th	30:48.0
Nichole**	286 th	32:26.8
Maggie**	291 st	33:16.8
Gabriella P**	298 th	35:55.8
Katelyn**	301 st	39:03.0

* Season Record (fastest time this CC season)

** Personal Record (fastest time ever)

<http://www.finishtimingresults.com/2016/09-03-MIA/>

Season Summary		
	Lakota	Miamisburg
Beth	22:35.3	20:27.6
Emma	23:49.1	22:52.4
Fiona	23:59.1	22:53.9
Addison	23:00.5	-----
Amy	24:55.7	23:20.2
Reilly	25:19.8	23:28.9
Faith	24:59.4	24:20.9
Gretchen W	26:35.7	24:27.8
Kaitlin	-----	24:33.1
Gabrielle M	27:19.9	24:35.0
Gretchen R	26:37.0	24:35.2
Anna H	27:30.3	24:38.4
Taylor K	26:21.0	24:53.7
Sarah H	27:35.4	24:59.4
Katie	26:52.6	25:00.7
Abby VN	29:22.1	25:08.6
Jordan	27:44.2	25:10.4
Abby W	28:17.4	25:50.0
Allie	-----	26:37.4
Anna Co	-----	26:41.8
Anna Ch	28:25.3	27:15.5
Michelle	30:31.4	27:34.0
Kennedy	-----	28:04.3
Sarah F	-----	28:23.0
Abby R	30:47.1	28:24.2
Maddie	----	28:31.3
Hayley	----	28:42.9
Mariah	34:26.7	28:52.4
Ava	31:38.1	28:55.4
Taylor C	-----	30:48.0
Nichole	-----	32:26.8
Maggie	36:33.4	33:16.8
Julia	33:17.2	-----
Gabrielle P	----	35:55.8
Katelyn	----	39:03.0

Race Recap

At Miamisburg, we ran a race that was more indicative of our ability than then we did at Lakota. The weather was much better but I do not believe that weather, alone, accounted for the tremendous drop in times our runners experienced.

My coaching philosophy is to try to keep the team healthy and I do that by making only gradual increases in mileage and workload each week (~10% increase each week). Such an approach keeps us healthy and gives us a good chance at making gradual improvements from week to week (and year to year). On the other hand, to try to make a “drastic” improvement in our performance each week would require drastic increases in weekly mileage and workload and that would drastically increase the chance of injury. “Gradual” improvement from week to week may mean an improvement of as little as 5 seconds but rarely more than 30 seconds. So, with my philosophy, our planned improvement over the course of the season is, at best, 90 seconds, even less for very experienced runners. Brand new runners typically improve by far more than 90 seconds because most of their improvement is due to running far below their ability until they gain the confidence to race at their fitness and talent level.

At Lakota, we did not start the season well. In truth, we started the season very poorly. I was genuinely concerned that even if we made gradual improvement over the course of the entire season we would still fall well short of our end of season goal of being a better team than last year’s team.

So, how do we get back on track? When I set out each girl’s race plan for Miamisburg, I considered that the weather would be better and I considered that, for an inexperienced team, the 2nd race of the season tends to see better than gradual improvement. But even considering these factors, I could not bring myself to ask the girls to drop the amount of time I felt they needed to drop to get us “back on track” toward our season goals. So I settled on asking each girl to improve by about 1 minute (with some exceptions). I was still very uncomfortable asking so much of the team and I was concerned that if they did not hit their goals, the damage to their confidence would be very difficult to repair.

Then we ran the race and the 22 girls that ran both Lakota and Miamisburg improved their time by an average of 2:23.

I have no explanation for how we made such a drastic improvement from one week to the next. I do not expect or plan for the team to make such improvements every week. I do know that we had a great week of practice. I hope that the girls went to bed early on Friday night. (By the way, attending football games the night before a meet is a bad idea. Attending the first half of the game is OK, but the girls really need to leave at/after halftime and get home and get to bed.)

Even though we improved more than could be expected from one week to the next, there is still room for more improvement. In general, everyone ran the second mile too slow. And everyone ran the first mile much faster than their goal pace for the first mile. But running your first mile faster than goal pace is not a problem if you can maintain that pace for the entire race. Our race strategy is to run even splits (that is, the same mile pace) for the entire race. So, the fact that our first mile was faster than goal pace is not the problem. The problem was that, for everyone, the 2nd mile was considerably slower than the first mile. And almost everyone ran the 3rd mile faster than the second mile. Running “fast, slow, fastest” over the 3 miles indicates to me that we lose focus, confidence, or both, during that 2nd mile and so we feel the need to “rest up” during the 2nd mile to get us through the 3rd

mile. But as the team's race showed, we did not slow down during the 3rd mile and most actually ran the 3rd mile faster than the 2nd or even the 1st mile indicating that we do not need to "rest up" for the last mile.

So, for the remainder of the season, our goal will be to stay focused on the 2nd mile so that we can run even splits the entire race.

We had 11 runners competing in this race that did not compete at Lakota. Almost all of the new runners are in their first year of running and were running in their first CC meet ever. As a set, these runners did very well. The only legitimate goal for a 1st race ever is to finish so I give these runners a very conservative goal of 29:30. Most ran under 29:00. This group will form the future of the team next year and beyond. That future looks very bright if we bring these runners along at a reasonable rate.

Individual Race Summaries

Leading the team was, again, Beth. Beth ran a great race and set a PR. Beth is training very well, is on course to run under 20:00 very soon, and has the fitness and talent to compete for the individual championship at the GGCL meet. But, Beth is going to need to be closer to the lead pack if she wants to have a chance to win a race. So, Beth's goal for the rest of the season is to be in the top 5 – 8 by the end of the first 800m and stay with that group for the rest of the race.

Emma made a big step toward returning to the form that saw her run 21:21 as a sophomore. I was not coaching MND when Emma ran 21:21 but I would guess that she is in better shape now than she was then. Over the next three races, Emma's task will be to drop her time by a total of 90 seconds. That is bordering on "drastic" improvement but Emma is a veteran and an improvement of 90 seconds will still not be a PR for her.

It cannot be overstated how well Fiona is running. Her first CC season is bordering on phenomenal. Her 2 mile (actually 3200m) PR is 14:45 from track season and track races are always faster than CC races (there are no hills on a track). At Miamisburg Fiona ran 14:55 over the last 2 miles of the race.

It is difficult to pick a "runner of the meet" when we had so many strong performances. But, if such a distinction were to be made, Amy would be the one so designated. I am not sure why anyone would choose to join a cross country team as a senior. But Amy clearly has a reason because she trains with purpose and races with confidence. It is my job to make sure that Amy does not try to squeeze 4 years of training and racing into a single season.

Reilly improved by 1:52 from last week and, even better, she was approximately 30 seconds faster than she ran in the 2nd meet of last year's season. Reilly's had a delayed start on conditioning because of basketball but her attitude and work effort has been outstanding. Reilly is training well and if she simply makes normal progress for the rest of the season, she has a very good chance of breaking 22:00 and earning a Varsity letter.

Faith improved her time by 39 seconds but was disappointed. Faith may be suffering from Senior impatience. As a senior, Faith really wants to have an impact on the team. But she

needs to realize that her best chance of success this season is to train within herself. We have one race per week for a reason: it is difficult to race twice per week. So we cannot turn our workouts into races by running too hard or we will not be able to race well on the weekend.

Gretchen W was our first freshman to finish at Miamisburg. Gretchen ran very well last week but she improved by over 2 minutes at Miamisburg. That is an amazing improvement and will require that I reassess her training level and that she reassess what she thinks she is capable of running by the end of the season. As a new runner, Gretchen is still trying to determine what she can or cannot do. That is understandable but to truly find out what she can do, she will have to test herself by trying to run something special, like 23:00.

We welcomed back Kaitlin to the team after she took a year off from CC. And in her first race, Kaitlin demonstrated the talent she showed as a sophomore when she ran 22:03. What makes Kaitlin's race even more impressive is that she missed the entire summer conditioning session. But, just because she is racing well does not mean we can drastically increase her training. Right now she is heavily relying on her talent. But, with 5 more weeks of training, we have plenty of time to get her fitness level to match her talent.

Gabrielle M improved by about 2:45 from the first meet to second meet, broke 25:00 for the first time, and she set a PR by almost 20 seconds. Making her performance even more impressive is that Gabrielle missed most of the summer conditioning season while she played basketball. As we get into the heart of our season, she still has great opportunity to improve her fitness and lower her times.

Gretchen R took 2:02 seconds off of her Lakota time. Last year, on Sept 15, Gretchen ran 15:24.7 for 2 miles at the Ross JH meet. At Miamisburg, combining Gretchen's 1st mile and 3rd mile into a single 2 mile race would result in a time of 15:29. The goal for freshman who ran CC in 8th grade is to run their first two miles of our 5k races as fast as their fastest 2 mile race last year. Gretchen is well on her way but she needs to stay focused during the middle of the race.

Anna lowered her time by almost 3 minutes from the Lakota meet. By itself, that would be impressive but Anna also broke 25:00 for only the second time in her career, and she set a PR by 18 seconds. Last year, Anna set her PR at the GGCL, the last meet of her season. This year, she sets her PR 6 weeks before the GGCL meet. Anna is in her 4th year of CC for MND and her success this season is directly related to the commitment she made during the summer conditioning season.

Taylor K joined the team late and missed the entire summer conditioning session. So my expectation for her is tempered by the fact that she has only been training a month. But Taylor is racing like someone that has been training since June. Last week, she led our JV team. This week, she lowered her best time by 90 seconds. Taylor still has work to do, especially on improving her running form so that she stays healthy. But her first two races have been very strong.

Sarah H missed all of last year's conditioning season because she joined the team in August. This year, she consistently attended summer conditioning and the results of that extra

work are becoming obvious. Sarah lowered her time by 2:31 from last week, broke 25:00 for the first time ever, and set a new PR by 22 seconds. Sarah is well ahead of schedule versus last year and she did not break 26:00 until the last meet of the season.

Katie is a junior and, I am sure, would like to run times that are competitive with other juniors and seniors. But most juniors and seniors are not in their first year of running like she is. So, I think a better comparison would be against the performances of other 1st year runners. Last year, Faith was a junior, a 1st time runner, and, after 2 races, her PR was 24:56. Faith ended last year's season with a 22:48 PR. Katie has that same potential. My job is to make sure her enthusiasm does not get the best of her. I am already planning out her senior year and for that year to be a success, she has to stay healthy and run within herself this year.

Abby VN would be another contender for "runner of the meet". For whatever reason, Abby opened up her racing career with a 29:22.1 at Lakota. Her time was in no way an indication of her ability. So, before the Miamisburg race, I told Abby that her goal would be to run 25:30. It is not my nature to ask a 1st year runner to improve her time by almost 4 minutes from her first race to her second but I felt that that was a legitimate request in Abby's case. Apparently, Abby felt the same way as she improved her time by 4:14. Now that Abby is closer to the time her fitness predicts, she can afford to make normal progress the rest of the season.

Jordan is a senior but in only her 2nd year of cross country. Jordan is an example that the 2nd season typically results in significant improvement. Jordan's 25:10 was her #2 time ever. At this time last year, Jordan's best time was 26:42. Jordan has been very consistent with her training and has put herself very close to improving on her PR of 24:24.3. But Jordan has to improve her running form. She needs to be a runner and drive off her back foot. It is not a simple change but the results would be dramatic.

This time last year, Abby W was finishing the Sacred Heart Middle School CC Invitational with a 2 mile time of 17:11.0. At Miamisburg, Abby ran her first two miles in 17:05 and promptly picked up the pace. She ran the last two miles of the race in 16:50. As impressive as that race is, Abby's workouts are even more impressive. Her goal for the rest of the season is to break her 2 mile PR (16:25?) during a race and break 25:00 by the end of the season. That will not be easy goal to achieve but what goal worth achieving is easy?

Allie Kendall missed the Lakota meet because of illness so I gave her a conservative goal for Miamisburg. Allie ran conservatively but still ran her #2 time ever. Allie is one of our sophomores that ran CC as a freshman. In addition, she also ran track last season. So Allie has 2 full seasons of running experience. Allie is very quiet and that is okay. But, because of her experience, the team will need her to be a bit more assertive in practice and meets. And set a goal of not simply breaking her 24:57 PR but running close to 23:00.

Anna Co ran her first HS cross country race and she ran very well. Anna did "run" track last year but she was a high jumper and "running" was not her primary focus. But Anna ran CC in 8th grade where she ran 15:16 at the Lakota Classic. That is fast. Anna is not yet in that

kind of shape yet because she did not join the team until August. But my goal is to get her in 24:00 shape, or better. I am sure her Winter and Spring high jumping will benefit, too.

I asked Anna Ch “to improve by 90 seconds but she “only” improved by 75 seconds. Instead of thinking that her race was a disappointment I hope she thinks that she is simply running closest to her ability. Last year, Anna started her JH season running 2 miles in 19:43 and 20:10. Five weeks later, at St X, she runs 17:58. At Miamisburg, she ran her first two miles in 17:48. Anna has made significant improvement over her season last year and I am sure she will continue to improve for the rest of the season.

Michelle improved by 2:56 from her first meet and 2:00 faster than her goal time. I fully expected Michelle to lower her time into the 27’s but I thought it would take her the entire season to accomplish that feat. To drop almost 3 minutes from your time from one week to the next requires tremendous confidence in your ability. I am happy that Michelle took that leap of faith in herself. Now I can start training her as the 27:30 runner that she showed herself to be.

Kennedy ran her first CC race ever though she does have two seasons of track. Kennedy ran well but she joined the team very late and missed the entire conditioning season. As I watched her sprint down the last 100 meters, passing a host of runners, I realized she suffers from the lack of confidence common to new runners. Especially since Kennedy is a 400m runner in track and racing that distance does not prepare you for CC. But over the next 5 weeks, Kennedy’s workouts will increase in intensity and I am sure her confidence will increase too.

Sarah F also ran in her first CC meet and she missed the summer conditioning season because she joined the team late. So her training has been very conservative. She missed the first meet because it was not clear that she even had the minimum number of practices that OHSAA requires of all runners before their first meet. I gave Sarah a goal of 29:30 and she ran 28:23. We are still going to be conservative in her training to keep her healthy but I expect that she will drop considerable time before the season is over.

Abby R is a first time CC runner but ran track (sprints and hurdles) last year. Abby dropped 2:22 seconds from her time in the Lakota race. I am very happy Abby is running CC because her track event will be the 300 m hurdles. That is a an event that requires a high level of fitness and cross country will improve her ability to race well in that event. I also believe that Abby could be a good CC runner once she gets past the common doubts shared by most first-year CC runners.

Maddie is a junior but a first time CC runner who was running her first CC race. I put Maddie in a group with a goal time of 29:30 because I think running 30:00 in a first CC race is quite an accomplishment. Maddie ran 28:31 or about 30 seconds per mile faster than I expected. Now that we have the first race behind us, I can start to set goals for Maddie that are more in line with her ability than her lack of experience. Maddie has a great chance to run very fast before this season is over.

Hayley is another first time CC runner running her first race. She also ran about 30 seconds per mile faster than her goal pace. Hayley joined the team in Aug so her training has been

very conservative. Hayley has a great attitude and is very competitive. My task is to remember that she is a new runner and keep her training at a level that will keep her healthy, not at the level that she would like to train. If Hayley is patient, stays healthy, and understands the long-term plan, she could be a big factor for the team next season and beyond.

Mariah lowered her time by 5:31 seconds from the Lakota meet. Mariah is one of our sophomores who ran CC last year. Last year, Mariah did not break 30 minutes until the third week of September. So the fact that she ran 28:52 in the first week of September shows how much she has improved since last year. But Mariah is also playing catch up because she missed a lot of conditioning during the summer. So, I expect that the next 3 weeks will see a great improvement in Mariah's performances.

Ava is a freshman and was running her first CC meet. I placed her in the 29:30 group but I was concerned that even that pace might be too aggressive for her. I was wrong. Ava ran 28:55 and probably would have run a whole lot faster if she ran her first mile closer to her goal pace of 9:30 instead of the 8:17 she actually ran. Running even 20 seconds too fast can cost you a good time so running over a minute too fast in the first mile puts even finishing the race in jeopardy. Ava's goal for the next race is to run slower in the first mile so she can run faster over the entire race.

Taylor C is a senior and relative to her PR of 25:11, she did not run very well. But apparently, she ran injured. Taylor did the same thing last year at Cedarville. My message to her, and everyone is: we do not run injured. No one wants to drop out of a race but I would rather you drop out and not risk a serious injury that could end your season.

Nichole is a freshman and was running her first CC race. I placed Nichole in the 33:00 group. She ran 32:26. That is excellent because it shows that she raced to the fitness level she has displayed in practice. Nichole ran almost 1 minute faster in her first mile than her 1 mile goal pace. Her 2nd mile was 1:13 slower than her first mile. She finally hit her goal pace on her 3rd mile (10:40). Such a fluctuation in mile splits is very common in a first race. But, to be successful, we need to work on our mile splits varying by less than 10 seconds from 1st mile to 3rd mile.

Maggie ran her 2nd race ever and the benefits of being in a 2nd race showed. Maggie dropped 3:17 from her Lakota time. That is an entire season worth of improvement but I believe Maggie has another season worth of improvement ahead of her. But, Maggie does not need to make another 3 minute improvement by her next race. We have plenty of time to work on gradually dropping her time each week for the rest of the season.

Gabriella P is a sophomore but running her first meet. Gaby was a sprinter and thrower in track last year so running CC is a new challenge for her. Gaby's 35:55 was slower than her goal time of 33:00 but that can be attributed to her running 1 minute too fast in her first mile. The key to sprinting and throwing in track is speed. But, in CC, speed, at least too early, can present a lot of problems. I am sure Gaby will learn her pace as the season prolongs.

Katelyn is another candidate for "runner of the meet". Katelyn ran 39:04 in her first ever meet but why she is a candidate for the fictitious award is because she was in a battle for

the entire 39 minutes she was running. I do not like large meets because it prevents us from competing against individuals. There are so many runners in the meet that if someone passes you, there is always someone else to pass. But in a small meet, you have to race against an actual person. And Katelyn found herself in a small meet because there were only 4 runners around her. And they kept passing her and she kept passing them. At one point of the race, she shouted at me "They keep passing me!" and I replied, "Then pass them back!" She could not relax the entire race because they would all pass her. She ran her last mile faster than her 2nd mile and ended up beating 3 of the 4 runners she was racing against.

Next Race

We are splitting our team for the Sept 16 race weekend.

We will be taking the following 20 girls to Notre Dame:

Beth H	Kaitlin Y	Anna H	Allie K
Emma S	Faith H	Gabrielle M	Abby W
Fiona Y	Taylor K	Sarah H	Julia D
Amy W	Gretchen W	Katie H	Sarah K
Reilly H	Gretchen R	Jordan C	Annie H

The rest of the team will be running the Open race at the Milford Invitational. Details on that race will be coming soon.