

MND Cross Country Update

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Maria Bradley	So	Sarah Horton	So
Nastia Cappozzo	So	Sarah Katenkamp	Jr
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Taylor Chatios	Sr	Katelyn Martin	Fr
Jordan Cline	Sr	Erin McLean	Jr
Madison Cooke	Sr	Nicole Perozek	Fr
Sydney Collins	Jr	Gabby Parra	So
Julia DiVita	Jr	Gretchen Pack	Fr
Bella DiCarlo	So	Sarah Ray	So
Olivia DiCarlo	Sr	Abby Rider	So
Michelle Dickert	Fr	Allison Rogiers	Alum
Emily Edwards	Fr	Emma Sander	Jr
Maddie Farlow	Alum	Audrey Stevenson	Jr
Moira Fiebig	Alum	Abby Von Nida	Fr
Chloe Griffith	Alum	Amy Wanamaker	Sr
Reilly Haas	Jr	Abby Waning	Fr
Anna Hale	Sr	Gretchen Waning	Fr
Faith Harold	Sr	Addison Werling	Fr
Hanna Hauer	So	Fiona Young	So
Annie Heimbuch	Sr	Kennedy Webb-Glenn	Jr
Beth Heimbuch	Sr		

Coach's Comments:

I am very pleased with the level of participation in this summer's conditioning program. We have had 39 MND students participate in at least one conditioning practice, plus 4 alums. Not all of the 39 will run CC this year, but we should end up with more than the 24 we had on the team last year.

A few of our returning runners have commented that this team is already "so much better" than last year's team.

I will agree that, in certain areas, this team is so much better than last year's.

The first area that this team is so much better is in it's understanding of what it takes to get in shape and stay healthy. Why? Experience. Last year was my first year coaching at MND and the entire team had to learn every aspect of my training philosophy and how I intended to keep them healthy. So, last year, we spent a lot of time learning how to do all of the things that comprise a sensible approach to training, racing, and staying healthy. For

example, everyone had to change their approach to ice baths, especially how much ice went into the bath (way less) and how much time to spend in the ice bath (way, way less). We altered our warm-up so that we now have dynamic stretching before the workout and a static stretching after the workout instead of both types of stretching before the workout and no type of stretching after the workout. We changed the difficulty level of our workouts from something to be dreaded, and avoided, to something that was challenging but well within our abilities to accomplish. We learned the difference between Easy, Medium, and Tempo runs and we learned the importance of running an even pace for each mile of the race. Finally, we learned the value of rest. All of these lessons were important but they took time to learn and, while the team was learning them, and relearning them, they were not getting the benefit of from implementing them.

Move ahead one year to this season. There are 23 girls participating in summer conditioning that I coached last year in cross-country, track, or both. That means there are 23 more girls on the team with experience in the way they need to train, race, and stay healthy than at this point last year. Yes, I still have to explain the plan to freshmen and new runners. But that is a much easier task when you have 23 girls who are nodding their heads in agreement or simply going out and executing the instructions that I am trying to explain to the freshmen. In fact, on several occasions, before I could explain to a puzzled freshmen why we did things a certain way, a returning runner would jump in and explain it herself. To have such support from the returning runners is a wonderful thing. Last year, I pleaded, begged, and bribed girls (Wyoming Pastry Shop cookies always worked) to do what I needed them to do to stay healthy. This year, what we do has stopped being “my” approach, but simply just the way we do things at MND.

Another reason that this team is so much better than last year is that our freshmen have a much better head start on their fitness than our freshman did last year. On July 13 of last year, I sent a panicked email to the MND Admissions Office which stated: “I have 0 freshmen participating in Cross Country conditioning! I have never been associated with a team that had 0 freshmen. At Mercy, 14 freshmen have been showing up for conditioning practice for the last 3 weeks. At MND, no freshman has EVER shown up for a conditioning practice.” (Hey, I said it was a panicked email.) The Admissions Office was kind enough to send an email to all incoming freshmen and a week later, we had 2 freshmen on the team. We added a few more freshmen during the first week of August. This year, however, we have had 10 freshmen participate in at least one practice in the first two weeks of conditioning. That means we had 10 freshmen participating in CC conditioning three weeks before we had our first freshman participating in CC conditioning last year. So yes, we are so much better in terms of the head start our freshmen have on their fitness versus last year.

Finally, this year, we have 3 managers, Hanna, Julia D, and Sarah K. Last year, we had 0 managers. While it may seem that all we do in CC practice is run, there are quite a few things that have to happen for a successful practice, like core, bands, ice baths, measuring the running course, getting splits. Last year, without a single team manager, or a team that had any experience in what those had to happen to have a successful practice or meet, I was the one that had to do a lot of set up and tear down so that the teams could use its time

efficiently. But, while I am setting up ice baths, bands, and the weight room, I am not actually coaching. This year, I am able to spend more time with the coaching the team and less time setting things up because I have 3 capable managers. So, we are a much better team this year because we have 3 managers to help practice run smoothly and that allows me to focus on coaching.

So, for these reasons, we are so much better than last year.

But in two areas it is not yet clear if we are truly so much better than last year. Unfortunately, these two areas are the most important areas for determining our season's success.

The first area, and most important, is our performance. Last year, we had several runners run their fastest times ever, or fastest times in a long time. For example, just in the GGCL meet, 11 of our 18 runners we had in that meet ran PRs (Personal Records, or the fastest times they have run in their lives). It is very difficult to run a PR. Some runners go an entire year, or three, without running a PR. So, to have 11 runners run PRs in the same season is amazing. To have 11 runners run PRs in the same meet, and one as important as the GGCL, is astounding. Furthermore, 5 of the remaining 7 runners in the GGCL meet ran SRs (seasonal records, or the fastest times that season). But we graduated 5 seniors from last year's. Four of those seniors ran Varsity in the GGCL meet and all five ran Varsity in Districts. So, for our team to be so much better than last year's team, we need 5 runners on this year's team to step up and run better than last year's seniors! And after we have those 5 step-up, we need a significant number of our remaining team run with confidence and make every effort to improve their PRs this year.

The other area that will determine our season's success is Leadership. Last year, I named each of our 5 seniors as captains. Those 5 seniors ended their careers with a total of 18 cross country seasons between them. But, they really had no reason to return for their final CC season. Their CC experiences, up to their senior year, bordered on disastrous as they suffered broken bones, dislocated joints, re-opened growth plates, and a host of other issues and injuries caused by overtraining. But they all came back for their senior year anyway, worked hard, and were great teammates. For those reasons, I named all 5 captains and all 5 represented MND at the District meet. This year, we have more than 5 seniors but it is an open question whether our current seniors will lead the team, by example, the same way our seniors did last year. For the leadership on this team to be so much better than last year, each of our seniors will have to be the best runner possible, the best teammate possible, and the best role model for our younger runners possible.

Every season presents challenges and opportunities. Yet, I am looking forward to this season because we can be so much better than last year. But MND has been last place in the GGCL for 6 straight years. If we are to climb out of the GGCL cellar we must make the necessary sacrifices and commitment to our training and our health. And we must be positive influences on our teammates as they try to reach their potential, too.

Good luck this season and Go Cougars!