

Everything You Might Want to Know About Being in Girls Track at North High

Basic Questions for Curious People

How do I join?

First, you need to make sure you have a physical on file in the Activities Office. A physical is good for three years, but after that time you need to get another one. Then you will need to pay the Activities Fee – for 2009 the fee is \$165. Once you've done these things you will be given a green card, which you should bring to the first day of practice.

I play another sport during the spring – can I still do Track?

It depends. If it is another school sport, like Softball, then no – the demands on your time are too great. You would end up being frustrated in both sports. If you play on a club team outside of school, then you probably can work it out. Most of the girls on the team play on another team during the spring, such as soccer or basketball, so it can be done. The real question is when conflicts come up. If you miss track practice for this other sport we will hold you out of meets as a consequence, and that could affect your ability to letter. If you can live with a few consequences and are only missing on occasion, that is ok. If you will be gone all the time, then it doesn't make much sense. Feel free to talk to Coach Cahill if you want a more specific answer for your situation.

If I really am focused on another sport, why would I do Track?

There are a ton of reasons. I can't think of a sport where it is better to be slow than fast, better to be weak than strong, and better to get winded easily than to have endurance. Being in track can improve your fitness in all of those areas. Our main focus is improving the athleticism of our athletes, and the bulk of our practice time is spent doing that instead of practicing skills or learning game strategy. Further, if you are a good enough athlete to be varsity somewhere else, there is a good chance you could do well with us. Unlike other sports where you need to have been practicing since grade school to have any shot at doing well, we can teach you enough in one or two years to be successful.

What kind of things do you do in track? Is it all running?

We have three training groups. Distance runners run the half-mile, mile and the two-mile races, and so they do a lot of running. Throwers compete in the Shotput and the Discus Throw and spend most of their time getting stronger. The third group covers a lot of different events: short sprints and relays, jumping events, and hurdle races. All of those events train together because they are improving their speed and explosiveness while learning technique in a particular race.

Can I just try it out for a few days?

This almost never works out. Track and Field is so different from other sports that practice isn't enough experience to really understand it. We expect everyone who begins the season to stick it out until the end, but everyone should commit to being in at least one meet.

Practice

What do I need to bring to practice?

Each day you need to wear new running shoes and comfortable athletic clothing including a sports bra. Some times early in the year we go outside even though it may still be quite cold, so be prepared for that. As it gets warmer you may want to bring your own water bottle.

What happens at practice?

Most practices can be split into three parts. First, we warm-up as a team. Afterwards we split into event groups. Once in event groups you will work on techniques first – drills to learn how to high jump properly or throw the discus, for example (distance running does not need much in the way of technique, so this part of practice is short for them). The last part of practice is when the training takes place.

What kind of training do you do?

It depends on your event because the training is specific to what you do. Throwers' focus is on strength, so the bulk of their work is strength training. Sprinters need to get faster and more explosive, so they run a lot of short, fast repeats. Distance runners need a combination of speed and endurance, and so their workouts vary from long, easy jogs to fast-paced intervals on the track.

Do I really need to be at every practice?

Yes. Each practice serves a different purpose, and they work together to get you ready to compete. Missing one means you are missing an important piece of the puzzle.

What happens if I miss practice?

Sometimes missing practice is out of your control – you might be sick from school or on vacation with your family. In those cases you only need to bring a note to your coach. If you miss practice for something within your control (attending a non-school activity is included in this) it will be considered unexcused. The first unexcused absence will result in you being held out of half of your events at the next meet. The second absence will mean you sit out the entire meet. Once you have a third you will not compete again until we have a sit-down meeting to discuss whether you should remain on the team.

Sometimes I need to stay home to study or stay after-school to make up a test or get help. Are these excused?

Academics come first, it is true, but we expect you to honor your commitments. If you have to stay home to work on a project that was assigned a week earlier and you left to the last minute then, no, we won't excuse that. If you are really struggling and need help before a test you should get it, but please see if your teacher is willing to help you during zero hour.

Competition

How do you win or lose a track meet?

Each event offers the opportunity for competitors to score points for their team by placing highly. How high you need to place and how many points you score depends on the number of teams competing, but we can use the Conference Championships as an example. The person who comes in first in an individual event scores ten points for their team. Second place scores eight, third place six, and it goes down by a point for each place (4th:5, 5th: 4, 6th:3, 7th: 2, 8th: 1). After eighth place there are no points scored, so the person who comes in 9th helps their team as much as the person who comes in last! Relay events work differently – each school gets to enter one team. The winning team scores sixteen points, and it goes down two points for each place (for this reason relays are very important at the conference meet) These points are then totaled, and the highest total wins the meet.

How are True Team and Relay meets different?

While in regular meets only the athletes who place impact the results, in these meets every person ends up contributing to the final score. A True Team meet has the same events as a regular meet, but every place is worth a point. If eight teams each enter three competitors, there are 24 athletes in an event. First place scores 24 points, second 23, and so on. Relays score 32 for first place, 28 for second, and so on (relays are less important than they are at regular meets). At a relay meet, every event is a relay – there are no individual events. In the field events the marks of each competitor are totaled and each team scores as a relay. There are also different events that only take place at these meets, such as the Short Sprint Medley Relay (which is a 100m followed by another 100m, followed by a 200m, finishing with a 400m, or 1-1-2-4), the Sprint Medley Relay (2-2-4-8), and the Distance Medley Relay (8-4-12-16)

What are the different events?

The standard events are: 100m Dash, 200m Dash, 400m Dash (Sprints), 4x100m Relay, 4x200m Relay, 4x400m Relay (Sprint Relays), 800m Run, 1600m Run, 3200m Run, 4x800m Relay (Distance), 100m High Hurdles, 300m Low Hurdles (Hurdles), Long Jump, Triple Jump, High Jump, and Pole Vault (the Jumps), Discus Throw and Shotput (the Throws). The Throws and Jumps are grouped as Field Events, while the Sprints, Hurdles and Distance are Track events.

Is there a limit to how many people can compete in a single event?

This also differs from one meet to another. Most varsity meets limit entries to three or four per event and one relay. Some of the meets allow you to enter an unlimited number of people.

How many events can one athlete do?

You can compete in up to four events, but no more than three can be from either Track or Field. That is, you might do three field events and one running event, or three running events and one field event, or two of each. Most people do fewer than four events, however. You are also limited to two running events of 800m or longer.

How do the coaches decide who competes in what?

In unlimited meets, where we can enter as many people as we want in an event, there is a lot of freedom to allow people to choose their own events. In varsity meets, where there is a limit to who can

compete, the goal is to field the best team we can. Because of the difference in how True Team and championship meets are scored, we may decide to put better athletes in relays or individual events to maximize the points. Either way, it is the best performers who will represent the team.

These uniforms are awesome, but can I wear pants if it is cold?

A team-issued uniform must be the outer layer during competition. Before you compete and after you should wear warm-ups depending on the weather. You are allowed to wear clothes underneath your uniform but they must be a single color with only one logo showing. If you are in a relay, anybody who wears something under their uniform must match. For that reason, you should always wear solid black under your uniform.

What about in my hair?

If you wear a hat it must be a solid color with no print, and only one logo showing. Anything else worn on the head (headbands, clips, ponytail holders, pre-wrap) must be soft – i.e. no hard metal or plastic.

I want to look pretty, so I am wearing my favorite earrings.

No way! Any jewelry of any kind can get you disqualified – earrings, rings, piercings, necklaces, etc. The only exceptions are emergency ID bracelets or jewelry that must be worn for religious reasons.

School is lame so I don't do my homework – that's cool, right?

If you have failed a class, then you must sit out two weeks of competition. No, it is not cool.

So I'm gonna skip the meet tomorrow to [work, play in a NESA soccer tournament, go to the doctor, have dinner with my grandparents]. See you later.

If you will miss a meet to attend a school-sponsored function (a choir concert or a trip, for example), please let us know. If you miss a meet for any other reason, let us know and understand that miss will be considered unexcused, and we will hold you out of the next meet as a consequence. If this happens to often it will get tough to letter.

Can I leave the meet after my event is over?

No. The team is still competing, and you are still a part of the team. You should stay until after the 4x400m is over.